The Anatomy of an Effective Agreement for Staff Sharing

Cindy Waxer | June 28, 2011

Honest communication, friendly power lunches and the right IT folks can make or break a successful cross-sourcing arrangement. But it takes more than warm and fuzzy feelings among colleagues to get a project of this magnitude off the ground. Gwen Simmons, CIO of Mecklenburg County, N.C., delves into the nuts of bolts of swapping government workers.

Sign on the Dotted Line

In Mecklenburg County's case, its director of project management worked with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' CIO through a series of edits until both parties agreed on a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding (MOU). According to Simmons, an MOU should include important details such as:

- the scope of services being offered;
- the name of the outsourced IT professional;
- a detailed project description; and
- estimated resource level, e.g., one full-time employee at 100 percent for effort from February to April (800 hours).

Other crucial components of an effective MOU include:

- employment terms — commencement and completion dates;
- grounds for termination — stipulates the amount of time required to terminate the MOU; and appropriation of funds — describes duties surrounding payment for projects in the event of non-appropriation of funds.

Another important step: An MOU should be occasionally reviewed, especially in the event of unanticipated staffing changes, like an employee promotion or illness.

Getting Paid

Once a quarter, Mecklenburg County's Information and Services Technology (IST) department invoices the city of Charlotte and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools for services rendered by the county's IT staff.

Each employee's hours are reported by his or her respective manager. As for hourly rates, Simmons said these are negotiated beforehand, outlined in the MOU, and applied to the hours worked each quarter for a final tally.

The amount of each employee's quarterly earnings and a description of services rendered are entered into Mecklenburg County's financial system, which generates one unique invoice per staff member. Invoices are then mailed via courier or e-mail to city and CMS contacts.

Payment is processed via Mecklenburg County's finance department, which prepares the deposit tickets and makes the deposit. A copy of the deposit ticket is sent to the county's IST department to reconcile invoices in its financial system.

Cindy Waxer is a journalist whose articles have appeared in publications including The Economist, Fortune Small Business, CNNMoney.com, CIO and Computerworld.

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