

## City of Lowell, Massachusetts

### Munis<sup>®</sup> Financials—Streamlining the Purchasing Process

*Winner of 2009 Munis Public Sector Excellence Award*

**Industry:** City Government

**Location:** Lowell, MA

**Employees:** 3,000+

**Tyler Products Used:** Munis Financials

**Budget:** \$300 million

**Years as a Tyler Client:** 13

**The Facts:** Established as part of the first English settlements on the Merrimack River in 1635 and incorporated in 1836, Lowell's unique location at the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord Rivers allowed it to become the first large-scale factory town in America. Today, it is considered to be the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. With a diverse population of over 105,000 within an area of 14.1 square miles, Lowell is now the fourth largest city in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and is home to the University of Massachusetts Lowell, Middlesex Community College, the Lowell National Historical Park, the Lowell Spinners (an affiliate of the Boston Red Sox), the Lowell Auditorium and the Merrimack Repertory Theatre.

**Contact:**

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[www.lowellma.gov](http://www.lowellma.gov)

#### Key Challenges

- Streamline procurement processes to realize cost savings
- Combine City databases and improve the flow of information to increase productivity and communication between departments
- Revise current processes to ensure permits and business licenses are issued by authorized personnel and only to compliant property owners and businesses

#### Benefits: Financial and Beyond

- Paperless procurement processing resulting in significant savings in paper, toner and overhead costs
- Centralization of more than 30 databases into Munis Permits & Code Enforcement and Munis Business Licensing applications
- Increased collection of outstanding bills
- Improved management of contractor and tradesman records and contractor compliance

#### City of Lowell's Best Practices

- Utilized Munis functionality in innovative ways to streamline processes, improve efficiencies and save money
- Created standardized operating procedures and end-user training guides and made them available to all Munis users
- Shared enhancements to Munis Permits & Code Enforcement and Munis Business Licensing applications with the general code stream to benefit all Munis users

#### In Their Own Words:

"By investing in our Munis system and using its flexibility to develop new processes the City saved over \$100,000 during 2008."

*-Mirán Fernandez, Chief Information Officer*

#### Why Tyler?

- Tyler provides all consulting, product enhancement, implementation, training and support services
- The Munis Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) suite is a fully-integrated software solution
- Tyler is the largest sole provider of software and services for the public sector, covering all solutions for Financial, Document, Pension and School Management; Land & Vital Records; Appraisal & Tax; Courts & Justice; Public Safety; and Citizen Services

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## Moving Beyond “Doing Things as they’ve Always Been Done”

Technology has always been at the heart of the City of Lowell—and as a Munis client for 13 years, technology has had an important impact on how the City manages the flow of financial information. “Similar to how the power looms and canals of the 19th century’s Industrial Revolution increased productivity, efficiency and responsiveness, so too has Munis bridged the City’s leap into the 21st century,” stated Mirán Fernandez, chief information officer for the City. But it was only in 2008 that the City truly embraced Munis as an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) tool with rich functionality flexible enough to meet all of their needs across the organization.

According to Fernandez, City procurement operations had barely evolved in decades, departments were operating in silos with little communication, and important data was decentralized across the City. It was clear—Lowell needed to overhaul its processes and improve communications. They did this by investing in their Munis system and using its functionality in innovative ways.

## Significant Savings through Streamlined Purchasing Processes

The first step: overhaul the City’s use of Munis Requisitions and Munis Purchase Orders to reduce costs. By utilizing electronic sign offs and attachments of quotes and supporting documentation, the City was able to move to paperless processing of requisitions and POs, resulting in approximately \$5,000 in paper, toner and overhead cost savings.

The City was also able to save thousands of dollars by redesigning their POs to incorporate new elements, such as including the ship to address of the ordering department instead of the purchasing department; adding terms and conditions to vendor copies; and utilizing electronic signatures and approvals.

## Key Enhancements & Standard Procedures

Next, the City tackled issues associated with permits and licensing: lack of communication between City departments; decentralized databases; sparse inspection and violation data; and inconsistently checked, verified and maintained contractor and tradesman information. These inefficiencies had resulted in permits and business licenses being issued to property owners and businesses that had outstanding balances elsewhere within the City, or even against addresses that didn’t exist.

The City invested significantly in enhancements to the Munis Permits & Code Enforcement (PCE) and Munis Business License (BL) modules to address these challenges and ensure compliance with Commonwealth laws. The results:

- Enhanced communication and productivity through the centralization and de-duplication of more than 5,000 business records from more than 30 databases to approximately 1,000 records housed within one database
- Increased collection of outstanding bills by alerting clerks as applications are entered into the system, halting the application process and ensuring that bills are paid prior to issuing new permits and/or licenses
- Improved contractor compliance through improved management and maintenance of all contractor and tradesman insurance and licensing validation

Recognizing that employees needed an easy way to learn these processes and adapt to new ways of using their Munis applications, Fernandez and other City administrators developed standardized operating procedures that serve as comprehensive manuals for Munis PCE and BL training and made them available to other Munis users. City employees now have complete instructions for many day-to-day tasks, including how to process permit applications with outstanding obligations, how to manage contractor and tradesman information and licensing and how to efficiently maintain parcel information.

## Flexibility = Tangible Benefits for the City of Lowell

According to Fernandez, by investing in their Munis system and using its inherent flexibility to develop new processes the City saved over \$100,000 during 2008. “It’s the flexibility of the Munis applications that allows the City to think outside the box in the way we implement these modules, and the way in which we make them work successfully with each other.”