Wilmette Park District, Illinois
Managing Budgets & Reducing Operating Costs

At a Glance
Population: Approximately 27,000
Location: Approximately 20 miles north of Chicago, Illinois
Uses: Tyler’s Incode Financial Software
Results: Used Incode to empower employee budgeting processes while decreasing revenue reporting time from one week to half a day.

Situation Overview
Ken Eppelheimer, the superintendent of finance and personnel for Wilmette Park District, Illinois, knows the importance of a good business model.

“There’s been a real change to the business model of park districts. We essentially operate as a business now, to make sure that we’re providing the best services with the best facilities to our citizens,” he said.

With tax support providing only so much revenue, Eppelheimer explained that his park district, like many others throughout the country, needed to find a viable way to study, analyze and allocate funds to provide the activities, services and facilities that citizens wanted.

Wilmette Park District only receives 30% of taxes from its citizens – enough to provide parks and basic services, but not nearly enough to offer the kind of programs and activities that citizens in the northern-Illinois city craved. That’s what makes Eppelheimer’s business-like approach such an asset.

“To offer the kind of services people like, we need to be able to make sure we’re collecting enough revenue and allocating it properly,” he said. “You have to have a better way to look at your financials so you can look at each program’s model, see if they’re priced properly and collecting the right amounts of revenue. It’s not something you can guess at. You need to have the right software that helps you do that and trust the system.”

In Their Own Words:
“It absolutely has helped the staff understand their budgets, they know how it’s put together now. It’s really come full circle. Now they can develop their own plans; directors can run monthly variance analyses and make plans from there. The staff has really responded well and the business as a whole has had more success. It’s decentralized a lot of the myth surrounding accounting. Our staff is engaged in budget meetings and involved in problem solving.”

— Ken Eppelheimer,
Superintendent of Finance & Personnel
Wilmette Park District, Illinois

Empowering Employees through Financial Insight
“There’s so much that our park district does, we have fitness centers, golf courses, ice rinks, a beachfront, pool memberships and more,” Eppelheimer explained. “If all of that revenue is brought to accounting just once a month, nobody has a real-time picture of what’s happening. But our software allows our staff to go in each day and look at their financials.”

The ability for staff to access, analyze and make decisions based on real-time financial data is a cornerstone of Wilmette’s business mindset.
Employees no longer have to request information from various departments to get information needed for budget requests, plan approvals, etc. Tyler’s Incode® software places all of that information at their fingertips. The result is an empowered staff that knows the ins and outs of their budgets and how best to apply that knowledge.

“Take a golf course manager, for example,” Eppelheimer said. “He needs to be able to see how many people are playing and how much money he’s bringing in each day. Incode gives him an opportunity to see that daily and throughout the month. He gets to use accurate information to make better, informed decisions. I think it allows our staff to see the big picture. They see the overall operation as well as detailed activity.”

Prior to Incode, Wilmette Park District’s staff as individuals weren’t privy to the budgeting process or the district’s financials as a whole. Since implementing Incode, Eppelheimer explained that the staff is better educated and able to contribute to the overall health of the district’s financial picture.

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In Their Own Words:

“We have about 70 employees, and with our old software, they weren’t involved with the financial reporting at all. But within a year of having Incode, all of our staff are doing their own budgets. They have the tools they need to pay invoices and make sure things go to the right accounts. It used to take a month to get all of our financials over to accounting, but with Incode, that task has gone from taking one week to just half a day, with fewer errors.”

— Ken Eppelheimer, Superintendent of Finance & Personnel Wilmette Park District, Illinois