



Overview

United States
Government

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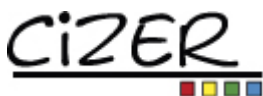
- Improved decision-making
- Real-time access
- Greater accuracy
- Administrative costs reduced
- Telecommuting support

EPA Adopts Reporting Solution Supporting Better Decisions, Reduced Administration

"The Cizer and Microsoft solution has accelerated our decision-making process by months. We can always see the big picture as it really is."

Glenn Davis, Team Leader, Climate Protection Partnerships Division, EPA

The Environmental Protection Agency is making better decisions about its grants and contracts to clean the nation's air, thanks to Cizer Quick Query Online, a Web-based reporting solution based on Microsoft® SQL Server™ Reporting Services and the Microsoft .NET Framework 1.1. The solution gives the EPA real-time access to highly accurate information, which enables effective, data-driven decision-making. In addition, the EPA saves by eliminating the administrative costs of manually rolling up data into aggregated reports. The solution is so easy to use that EPA users do not require any training on it. And it is so flexible that the EPA is deploying the solution more broadly in the agency and anticipating greater benefits, both from integrating with legacy systems and through providing remote access to telecommuting employees.



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Doug Harts, Chief Technical Officer, Cizer Software

Situation

Since 1970, the mission of the Environmental Protection Agency has been to protect human health and the environment. In recent years, between 40 and 50 percent of EPA's enacted budgets have provided direct support through grants to state environmental programs. The EPA's grants to states, non-profits and educational institutions support high-quality research to improve the scientific basis for decisions on national environmental issues and help the EPA achieve its goals.

Keeping track of those grants can be challenging. In just one EPA division – the Climate Protection Partnerships Division (CPPD) – the agency awards approximately 120 grants and 50 contracts each year to regional non-profit organizations around the country to promote energy efficiency and related EPA goals. Data on the grants and contracts was maintained on a series of Microsoft® Office Excel spreadsheets that could be found on central servers or users' workstations.

It was sometimes difficult to know which version of a spreadsheet contained the most current information – and, hence, which spreadsheets should be included in rollups of data. And because those rollups were handled manually, the rekeying of data could introduce further inaccuracies. An additional complication was the EPA's decentralized structure. Data – and the people who needed it – could reside anywhere in the EPA's Washington D.C. headquarters, 10 regional offices, or off-site laboratories.

The CPPD had to make real-time decisions about how to disperse money based on an understanding of exactly how much money was available at any one time. But its system couldn't provide a fully accurate and timely financial picture. Difficulties in aggregating data meant that information was often not

available as needed during meetings. In addition to hindering the division's mission, the reporting system was consuming valuable personnel time as administrators struggled with the data. And the division, like government agencies everywhere, was under the constant threat of losing funding if it could not demonstrate that it was operating efficiently.

“We needed a better solution,” says Glenn Davis, Team Leader, Climate Protection Partnerships Division, EPA. “We wanted a solution based on Microsoft Excel, because that's what our users were familiar with. But we wanted a Web-based solution that would be easy to implement and give authorized users immediate access to a centralized database. We didn't think all that was possible.”

Solution

In February 2003, the EPA's CPPD deployed its Excel- and Web-based Business Activity Tracking System (BATS), based on Cizer Quick Query for Microsoft Reporting Services. The single-server solution offers thousands of EPA employees around the clock, real-time access to up-to-date reports on CPPD grants and contracts from any EPA location inside the firewall, using a standard Web browser. Users can then view those reports in Excel and use Excel reporting features such as PivotTable® dynamic views or the program's powerful charting capabilities.

The Right Company: Cizer Software

After considering several vendors, the CPPD chose the solution from Cizer Software, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner that has been providing Microsoft-based data reporting solutions for government and commercial customers for 20 years.

“We chose Cizer from the General Services Administration-approved vendors because it was very clear that they understood reports

EPA employees use SQL Server Reporting Services to create and edit XML reports based on data in SQL Server 2000.

and they understood what we wanted," says Davis. "They could see the potential for a Web browser to deliver the power of Excel. They had the Microsoft expertise. And we saw they would be great to work with—and they were. They delivered the solution on-time – in just three months—and it addressed and solved our issues head-on."

The Right Technology: SQL Server and .NET Framework

Making the solution possible is a range of Microsoft technologies including SQL Server™ Reporting Services and the Microsoft .NET Framework 1.1, an integral component of the Microsoft Windows® platform that provides a programming model and runtime for Web services, Web applications, and smart client applications.

In the Cizer solution, SQL Server Reporting Services exposes Web services to create reports from data in the Microsoft SQL Server 2000 database, and delivers them to users as powerful Microsoft ASP.NET Web pages. Users can enter data into the solution the

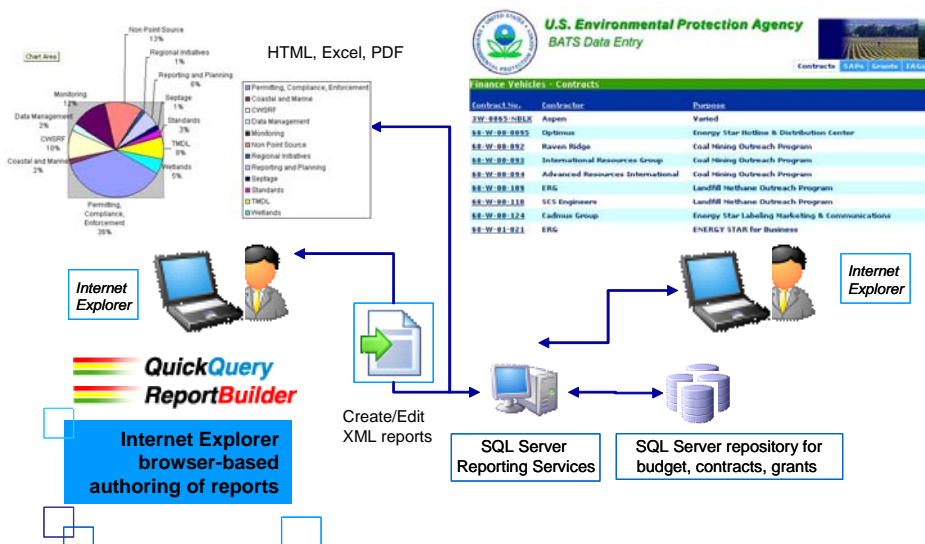
same way – via ASP.NET Web pages that pass XML data back to SQL Server Reporting Services. The solution currently runs on Microsoft Windows 2000 Server. The CPPD plans to upgrade to Windows Server™ 2003 to take advantage of the newer operating system's enhanced reliability and performance.

"SQL Server Reporting Services is an ideal technology for this solution because XML enables us to solve many of the reporting problems of customers like the EPA," says Doug Harts, Chief Technical Officer for Cizer Software. "Reporting Services was designed from the ground up to be an open, extensible, server-based solution. And it's based on industry standards such as XML, which makes it easy to integrate with and extend to meet unique customer needs. And because SQL Server Reporting Services ships with—and thus will remain synchronized with—future releases of SQL Server, the EPA doesn't have to worry about keeping a reporting solution from one vendor synched with a database management system from another vendor."

Equally important are the .NET Framework and the tools—the Microsoft Visual Studio® .NET 2003 development system and Microsoft Visual C#® .NET development language—used to create the solution.

"Visual Studio .NET and Visual C# .NET allowed us to connect to Excel more effectively than J2EE or anything else we might have used," says Mike Melzer, EPA Project Team Lead for Cizer. "That enabled us to create the automated Excel spreadsheet reports that are native Excel within the browser."

Integrating with Excel was only one benefit of using Visual Studio and C#, according to Harts. "The entire application is only a few megabytes in size—the rest is all taking



Users can query the solution quickly to identify all grants and contracts meeting user-defined criteria.

advantage of code in the .NET Framework and its common language runtime. We developed the solution in one-quarter of the time it would have taken with J2EE. That's tremendous because we could bring the application over to the EPA, copy it to one directory structure, and it just works. It took just one hour to deploy and an hour later they were using it. That's astonishing. And of course the small size of the application means maintenance and upgrades will continue to be faster, easier, and less expensive for the life of the solution."

Using SQL Server Reporting Services and the high-end Report Designer in Visual Studio .NET, Cizer created a series of report templates for EPA, including grants, contracts, interagency agreements, large business activity tracking, and summary. To use the reports, users select the report they wish from the division's intranet site. The ASP.NET query-by-example screen makes it easy for users to specify the parameters of the report they want. Users also have the ability to move beyond the standard report

templates to create reports-on-the-fly, if they wish.

Benefits

Better Information for Better Decisionmaking

The biggest benefit of the Cizer solution for CPPD, according to Davis, is that it has replaced outdated, inaccurate reports with accurate, real-time reports – enabling the division's employees to make better, data-driven decisions.

"The Cizer and Microsoft solution has accelerated our decision-making process by months," says Davis. "We used to update grant data once a year. Now, we update it daily. And we can roll up data to any aggregated report that we want. That means we can always see the big picture as it really is. The resources available to us change repeatedly throughout the year. Now, for the first time, we have the information we need to respond to those changes. We are truly meeting the mission of our agency."

Lower Total Cost of Ownership

Thanks to the Cizer and Microsoft solution, the EPA is not only making better grant and contract decisions, it's spending less money – taxpayer money – to do so. The solution – with the familiar Microsoft Excel spreadsheet at the heart of the user interface – is so easy for EPA users to exploit that they needed no training and began using it immediately.

"The manual process we used wasn't just inaccurate, it was also time-consuming and expensive," says Davis. "Thanks to the Cizer and Microsoft solution, we have saved in employee time that can be redeployed to more effective uses."

The EPA saves in other ways, too. By eliminating the per-user license fee for the average report writer, the EPA has reduced its

Finance Vehicle Type	Branch Abbreviation	Finance Vehicle Title	Type	Title
Contracts	ESB	Energy Star Buildings Technical & Analytic Support	WA	Support for ES in the Gov
Contracts	ISTAR Database	Cross Division Information Technology	TO	CPPD Database Require and Design
Contracts	ISTAR Database	Cross Division Information Technology	TO	Energy Star Website Dev Maintenance
Contracts	ISTAR Database	Cross Division Information Technology	TO	Energy Star Website Mon
Contracts	ISTAR Database	Cross Division Information Technology	TO	CPPD Database Operati Maintenance
(reserved)	ISTAR Database		WA	CPPD Website Develop
Contracts	ISTAR Database	Energy Star Labeling Marketing & Communications	WA	Energy Star Evaluation R
Contracts	IO	Energy Star Labeling & Homes Technical & Analytic Support	WA	Climate/Ozone Protection Ceremony
Contracts	IO	Energy Star Labeling Marketing & Communications	WA	Support E* Activities in C. States

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For more information about Cizer Software products and services, call (800) 622-1240 or visit the Web site at: www.cizer.com

For more information about Environmental Protection, visit the Web site at: www.epa.gov

application costs by 90 percent – down to just \$20 per user. And as it scales up its server to support more users, even that number will likely drop in half, says Davis.

Flexible Platform for Growth

Davis anticipates that the Cizer and Microsoft solution will become an even more productive and cost-effective tool for his division – and for the broader EPA, which is deploying it in other divisions of the agency. For example, the use of SQL Server Data Transformation Services will enable the EPA to seamlessly integrate legacy Oracle and mainframe data into Cizer and SQL Server reports.

And Davis and his team are also now beginning to explore the remote-access possibilities of the ASP.NET-based solution. “We have a lot of people who work from home one day a week,” says Davis. “Flexiplace is a popular program. Being able to access our Cizer reports from home will make EPA employees even more productive.”

Microsoft Windows Server System

Microsoft Windows Server System is a comprehensive, integrated, and interoperable server infrastructure that helps reduce the complexity and costs of building, deploying, connecting, and operating agile business solutions. Windows Server System helps customers create new value for their business through the strategic use of their IT assets. With the Windows Server operating system as its foundation, Windows Server System delivers dependable infrastructure for data management and analysis; enterprise integration; customer, partner, and employee portals; business process automation; communications and collaboration; and core IT operations including security, deployment, and systems management.

For more information about Windows Server System, go to: www.microsoft.com/windowsserversystem

Software and Services

■ Products

- Microsoft Office Excel 2003
- Microsoft Visual C# .NET
- Microsoft Visual Studio .NET 2003
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- Microsoft Windows 2000 Server

■ Technologies

- Microsoft .NET Framework
- Microsoft Internet Explorer

Hardware

- Dell PowerEdge servers

Partner

- Cizer Software

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