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– Jim McRoberts, IT Manager
Housing Authority of Alameda County

Housing authority cuts re-exam cycle times, speeds audits, protects tenant information

The Customer
Housing authorities are accustomed to balancing the needs of two very different groups. First, these agencies must meet the needs of the citizens they serve. Second, they must also satisfy the demands of funding agencies that require more reporting and transparency. The Housing Authority of Alameda County (HACA) is no different.

The Challenges
Paper was drowning HACA’s Bay Area offices. In fact, the agency had so much paper they didn’t have room to put it all away. At least 20 percent of documents were stored on staff members’ desks. With so much paper, it was difficult to efficiently conduct re-examinations to determine tenant eligibility. Even preparing for annual HUD and accounting audits was frustrating, as they took staff away from regular responsibilities. And, to top it all off, it was nearly impossible to keep confidential documents secure.

The Journey
When HUD further tightened tenant confidentiality requirements, HACA leaders knew they couldn’t wait any longer to tackle their paper problems. Leaders knew they wanted more than just document imaging; the agency needed a workflow solution, too, to help automate processes. An RFP process led HACA to NEKO Industries, an Authorized OnBase Solution Provider.

The Solution
“We chose OnBase because it was the best product for the best price,” says Jim McRoberts, IT Manager. “Plus, we knew Hyland Software had made an effort to learn the housing authority industry and that was important to us.”

First, HACA set out to develop an indexing scheme that would meet HUD requirements and internal business rules. Then, to free up office space, HACA scanned two years of documents before taking on its first enterprise content management (ECM) project.

Yearly eligibility re-exams take less time with OnBase
At least once a year, each of HACA’s 7,253 tenant families must go through a re-examination process to ensure they are still eligible for Section 8 housing and at what subsidy level. For HACA, this means sending out more than 600 custom re-examination packets each month.
Before OnBase, this required a minimum of two mailings. First, a generic packet of forms was mailed. When the packets were returned, staff reviewed them to see if additional forms were needed. Then, a second set of forms was prepared, mailed and returned before HACA could process them and determine eligibility.

“We needed to find a way to shorten the cycle of mailing the packets back and forth,” says McRoberts. Now, HACA uses information from the tenant’s previous re-examination to automatically create a custom packet. At the same time, an e-form is created in OnBase to track all documents sent to and returned from the tenant. When forms are returned and complete, OnBase automatically completes the received date and inserts them in the appropriate case worker’s workflow queue. All forms and documents are instantly available.

“The re-exam solution from OnBase has made us more productive,” says McRoberts. “It used to take two or three people working for a week every month to just prepare the packets. Now we have it finished in a few hours.”

Audits made easy
Like most government agencies, housing authorities must take part in mandatory audits from regulators like HUD and accounting firms. With OnBase, audits take less time to prepare for and auditors spend less time in HACA’s office. “Now we don’t spend time physically digging up documents and taking them to the auditor,” says Jennifer Cado, Senior Administrative Analyst. “We just give them access to OnBase with a five-minute demonstration and they’re in and out.”

Protect confidential tenant information
HUD also mandates that housing authorities keep sensitive tenant information secure. If HACA was ever found out of compliance, the agency could be at risk for fines and lawsuits. “When HUD tightened their privacy regulations, we knew we had to find a way to keep documents more secure,” says McRoberts. “This was the solution we had been looking for for a long time. Finally, circumstances came together for a solution.”

Why OnBase?
More than just an electronic filing cabinet, OnBase improves your most business critical processes. Although document management is a critical component of the solution, workflow, records management and business process management also plays a part.

- Reduces re-examination cycle times and helps automate eligibility processing
- Cuts legwork and time for HUD and accounting audits
- Secures sensitive tenant information to stay in compliance with HUD regulations

time to make a difference.

Get more information out of existing business applications. Reduce, even eliminate, wasteful, redundant tasks. Now you can spend your time on the things that really matter. That’s effective document and process management.

That’s the OnBase difference.

Learn more at Hyland.com/Government

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