

POSTER SESSION 2 ABSTRACTS
12th Annual HMO Research Network Conference

May 1-3, 2006 Boston, MA

Research Administration
PS2-7

**Grant Management Software Integrated with an Enterprise Financial System:
The Pre-Deployment Implementation Experience**

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Background: At the beginning of 2006, Group Health Cooperative (GHC) rolled out several Lawson Software modules for grant management at the Center for Health Studies (CHS,) a department within GHC. These modules integrate with the Lawson Financials Suite, in place at GHC since 2004, as part of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project. Success in any enterprise-wide project requires substantial planning and implementation effort. At CHS, an interdisciplinary team began working in the fall of 2004 to prepare for the January 1, 2006 deployment.

Methods: The ERP team included four individuals from CHS with expertise in grants management and current business processes, four individuals from GHC with corporate finance, technical, and project management experience, and one consultant from a Lawson Implementation Partner. The implementation process was divided into seven sequential but overlapping phases: plan, analyze, design, build, test, train, and migrate/deploy.

Results: The membership of the team stayed remarkably constant. As the project progressed, CHS members began devoting more of their time to this project. In addition, many people outside the core group were tapped for specific areas of expertise. The phases proceeded more or less as planned, with the exception being expansion of testing. During the planning phase, the team was formed and trained. Analysis of current state process and gaps followed. During the design phase, the team made decisions about how to use the Lawson system to meet the business needs. The build phase, when these decisions were implemented, provided the framework for testing. The final phases were training and migration/deployment, which continue well after the go-live date.

Conclusions: The broad-based skill set of the ERP team, along with the dedication of the members and the fact that they were allotted time specifically for the project, contributed greatly to its successes to date. One important area with room for improvement was communication between the team and departmental leadership. The effort needed to implement an integrated system is almost always underestimated, and we recommend more investment in several of the phases, and especially in the documentation embedded in each phase.