



CUSTOMER STORY

Fort Wayne Cuts Financial Reporting Process by 75% with Workiva and F.H. Black & Company Incorporated



Automated data entry



Faster reporting



More time for analysis

Creating budget books for the city of Fort Wayne, Indiana, once took hundreds of hours, and changing one number could mean 30 minutes of extra work. Finance Manager Kathleen Smith knew the process wasn't sustainable when managers want updated information right away. So she set out to simplify the way they work.



Managers often can't wait until tomorrow for up-to-date information they need for budget decisions. They want it now.

Satisfying that demand hasn't always been possible for state and local budget teams that use traditional spreadsheet tools and processes. Kathleen Smith is Finance Manager for the city of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Before upgrading its financial reporting tools, the city had a very manual process for producing its [annual comprehensive financial report \(ACFR\) and budget books](#), which includes nearly 30 departmental budgets.

For budget books, Kathleen's team would input numbers into their enterprise resource planning (ERP) system and create a budget projection. For any change that a department head, the controller, or mayor would request, they'd adjust the numbers in the ERP tool and run reports for each affected fund, department, or sub-department.

"Every time we changed one little number, it caused at least another half an hour to 45 minutes worth of work," Kathleen said. "I was working a lot of evenings making sure the final PDF of our budget book looked presentable but also that everything ticked and tied.

"As accountants, we always have to figure out better, more efficient, more accurate ways of doing things. The world changes, and we have to keep up with that. We can't just keep doing what we're doing," she said.



A new way of working

A friend in corporate America who was using [Workiva for SEC reporting](#) told Kathleen she thought it'd be perfect for producing Fort Wayne's ACFR.

The Workiva cloud platform accommodates multiple people working on the same document at the same time, and everyone with the right permissions can see the same information at the same time. Teams also can [link data](#) across multiple pages of an ACFR or budget book. When a figure changes, it can be updated at the source and automatically applied across all linked instances, from schedules to footnotes.

"When I [evaluate new software](#), I never want to input any numbers," Kathleen said. "What I look for is: does it take away manual work so that we can actually do what we really want to do, which is to analyze. Accountants do so much manual data entry, copying, and pasting that we don't really have time to do the analysis."

After using the Workiva platform to produce the city's ACFR, Kathleen felt it made sense to use the platform for budget books too.

"I saw how the Workiva platform eliminated a lot of manual work with our ACFR," she said. "I knew the frustrations with getting a budget book out. I've lived through it. It was clunky. I thought, 'Workiva is such a powerful tool. There's got to be more. There has to be more uses for this.'"

Consultants from [F.H. Black & Company Incorporated](#), which serves public sector finance and budget departments, worked with Kathleen's team to set up a new way for handling expenses. F.H. Black's lead consultants are all CPAs who understand how to use the Workiva platform. They helped create a new budget process that eliminated steps the city didn't need to undertake anymore now that it was using Workiva's cloud solution.

"They could speak IT's language, but they could also talk to me on the accounting side," Kathleen said. F.H. Black helped Fort Wayne quickly set up budget books within the Workiva platform and explained what they were doing along the way to set up Kathleen for success in the future.



Everybody on my team, up to our deputy controller and controller, was so impressed by how easy it was to get real-time budget feedback.

Kathleen Smith
Finance Manager
City of Fort Wayne

"Finance doesn't get more staff, but every year, stakeholders want more from the finance department," F.H. Black President **Jamie Black** said. "They want more outputs with the same inputs. It forces agencies to become more efficient, or you're going to burn out your team."

Kathleen estimates city staff spent around 400 hours on the budget process before using the Workiva platform. She estimates they spend 100 hours now.

"I really felt we had more time to actually analyze," Kathleen said. "You're actually able to figure out why numbers are changing instead of just keying in numbers and hope everything looks OK at the end of the day."

If a department head wants to see how their budget would be affected by offering 4% raises instead of 3% raises, Kathleen can change a number at the source, watch it flow through all linked instances, and offer fast feedback.

"Everybody on my team, up through our deputy controller and controller, were so impressed by how easy it was to get real-time budget feedback," she said.

"There's no point that the controller should have to wait for information."

See what Workiva can do for you.
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IN BRIEF



Disconnected challenges

- Manual data entry
- Changing one number could mean 30 to 45 minutes of extra work
- Risk of human error



Connected results

- An estimated 75% reduction in time to produce a budget book, from roughly 400 hours to 100 hours
- Budget book completed one week earlier than usual
- Automated data pulls from the city's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, freeing more time for budget analysis



Connected solutions

[Workiva for government](#)



Why they chose Workiva

The benefits of producing the city's annual comprehensive financial report (ACFR) with the Workiva platform made it the natural choice for producing budget books too.

