

Ivins, Utah Saves Time and Funds New Positions Using OpenGov Budget Builder



AGENCY TYPE
City Government

POPULATION
8,000

ANNUAL BUDGET
\$16 Million

The City of Ivins, Utah is located in the southwestern part of the state, where vibrant sandstone cliffs and the peaks of Zion National Park mark the desert landscape. Ivins is a relatively small bedroom community comprised of long-time residents. While the City has experienced steady revenues and three percent growth annually, its fiscal policy focused on containing expenditures and preserving low property taxes. Amid population growth, Ivins's leaders looked to maintain future fiscal health, increase operational capacity, and enhance the City's budget planning process. These improvements would help them remain prudent in their spending while continuing to provide a growing community with the services it needed.

In this case study, you will learn how the City of Ivins, Utah saved time, identified available resources, and made their budgeting process

more collaborative by adopting the OpenGov Smart Government Cloud™. Using OpenGov, the Ivins team achieved the following:

- **Cut Finance Director's Time in Half.** OpenGov's cloud-based Budget Builder reduced duplicated efforts, including time spent inputting and revising changes in static spreadsheets.
- **Identified Available Resources for Two FTE.** By using OpenGov to plan for future expenses, Ivins identified existing resources for its first additional staff members since before the Great Recession.
- **Strengthened Department Buy-In.** The ability to make changes and view budget details in the cloud during the budget process and throughout the year increased department heads' ownership of their budgets.



As a bedroom community, Ivins, UT uses OpenGov Budget Builder to strategically plan how the city will allocate resources to deliver quality services over time. (Image: Bobak Ha'Eri / CC)

Static Spreadsheets Limited Collaboration and Efficiency

Ivins Finance Director Wally Ritchie explained that the City's previously static budget planning process revolved around spreadsheets, making it onerous. "Our business challenge was that I had five other department heads working with me on the budget, and I used very large spreadsheets for the process," he said. "The department heads would input original numbers into their spreadsheets, and I'd end up making the changes to my master version. There was no good way for information to flow back and forth."

Furthermore, once Ritchie started making those updates in his master spreadsheet, the process allowed for little ongoing budget collaboration with his department heads. "Other than inputting the original numbers, the department heads were not

overly-involved in the budget process," he said. "I made necessary changes along the way, which took a significant amount of my work time. No one else had a way to provide input, and as they were busy running their departments, they never really went back to the spreadsheets or looked at them again."

Ritchie sought a solution that would involve non-finance departments in planning and provide them with greater awareness of the financial landscape – both throughout the year and into the future.

Implemented OpenGov Budget Builder to Streamline Process

To introduce his team to OpenGov Budget Builder, OpenGov's Customer Success team facilitated a kickoff meeting with the entire team. "OpenGov provided the best introduction



Ivins, UT's department heads can now provide greater input throughout the budgeting process and have greater access to their department financials throughout the year. *(Image: iStock)*

for our staff by illustrating what we were trying to accomplish with Budget Builder and how it would allow them greater access to our finances throughout the year and beyond,” he said. He noted the department heads immediately noticed how easy it would be to adjust their numbers. For example, if they knew benefits were increasing by seven percent, the ability to quickly update the percentage accordingly in the software was exciting. For them, he said simplicity was key.

In practice, using Budget Builder proved successful. “As we went through the first budget process after implementation, department heads created their own expenditure proposals, and as things came up during the process, they could go back in, input a change, and resubmit it without looking back and forth,” Ritchie explained. “It was really smooth, and everyone loved that they could make adjustments on the fly.”

OpenGov Cuts Finance Director’s Time in Half

Ritchie said that compared to Ivins’s previous budget process, using OpenGov Budget Builder reduced his time inputting information and making changes by 50 percent. “It was a time savings for everyone because department heads could update their own numbers without my involvement as we went along,” he said. “As we prepare them, our budgets are really fluid. Budget Builder streamlined our process because we could make changes faster and everyone was on the same page earlier than in the past.”

The team also became more efficient because they stopped duplicating their efforts by working in the cloud. Whereas department heads previously input budget changes into various static spreadsheets and relied on Ritchie to

import data into a master sheet, when using Budget Builder, each person input and updated figures directly the centralized budget system. Those changes were immediately available online.

Ivins Discovers Available Funds for New Hires

In line with the City’s cost-containment strategy, when the Ivins team needed to identify available funds to support two additional FTE positions, Ritchie and his department heads used OpenGov to find possible expense areas where they could reallocate resources rather than adding additional expenditures.

“Though our population has grown 16 percent since 2010,” Ritchie noted, “we’d maintained our staffing levels with no new hires since before the Recession. We realized that, at some point, we had to increase staffing to maintain service levels, and we determined we needed new public works and parks employees just to stay on top of everything.”

By using Budget Builder to examine current and future line items in greater detail, Ritchie



Ivins’s finance director cut his time spent budgeting in half and the team identified available resources for two additional FTE. *(Image: City of Ivins, UT)*

and his department heads were able to identify opportunities for cost savings. “Budget Builder showed us where there were opportunities to move money around or save some money, and that enabled us to fund these necessary new positions. With the ability to use the software to estimate or make changes to future expenses, our staff was really able to see what they could and should do with their budgets and how it would affect the bottom line.”

RESULTS

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