Information Builders

Information Builders helps organizations transform data into business value. Our business intelligence, integration, and data integrity solutions enable smarter decision-making, strengthen customer relationships, and drive growth.

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

Snapshot

Organization
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center is a world leader in research to prevent, detect, and treat cancer and other life-threatening diseases.

The Challenge
Manage multiple projects with easy access to quality, up-to-date data. Monitor organizational performance and manage costs. Find a scalable platform to interact with data in a visually appealing manner.

The Strategy
A user-friendly analytics environment uses InfoApps™ to streamline access to current operational and financial information, and extends self-service reporting throughout the enterprise.

The Results
Users have a data visualization experience for reporting. Key financial measures are presented through a web-based portal. Filtered and analyzed current data is easily viewed in graphs, charts, and reports without assistance from IT.

Information Builders Solution
WebFOCUS, Portal, iWay DataMigrator, Professional Services, and partner RDC Business Solutions.

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center Chooses WebFOCUS Platform

Rehabilitates Financial Reporting With New Self-Service Analytics Portal

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (Fred Hutch) successfully replaced its aging reporting system with Information Builders' cutting-edge WebFOCUS business intelligence (BI) analytics and InfoApps™.

Headquartered in Seattle, Washington, Fred Hutch is a world leader in research to prevent, detect, and treat cancer and other life-threatening diseases. The center's pioneering research, ranging from addressing fundamental biological questions to developing breakthrough treatments, has helped save countless lives worldwide. More than 3,000 faculty, staff, and affiliates support this vital effort, which has recently expanded into international sites in Africa.

The center's $400 million-plus annual operating budget is 80 percent grant-funded. As at any non-profit organization, Fred Hutch's executives must pay close attention
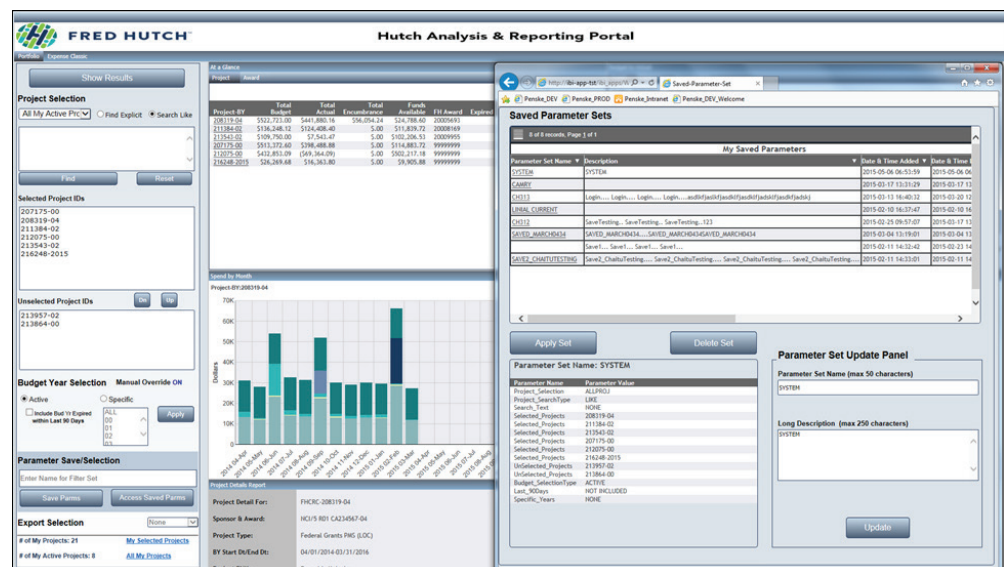
to the bottom line while upholding their mission to conduct research of the highest standards. Meeting organizational goals in the face of declining grant money from the federal government and other sources only adds to the challenge.

Until recently, personnel were stymied by an aging reporting system. In some cases, financial officers were hard-pressed to obtain the day-to-day insights that they needed to move the business forward. "It was taking much too long to deliver the critical numbers we needed," says Stephanie Dennon, BI program lead in Financial Management Information Systems. Response time was as long as 10 minutes for many reports, and in some cases the reports did not complete at all. "We often had to manually key data into Excel for additional analysis," she adds. "If the information changed after the reports were run, we would have to repeat the process. We knew there had to be a better way."

Dennon and her team began an extensive review of business analytics tools. They sought a self-service reporting environment that would give the Fred Hutch business community independence from the IT department. The BI system needed to be flexible, robust, intuitive, and capable of managing a wide range of financial data.

Their search led them to Information Builders. After a thorough evaluation, they determined WebFOCUS could replace their existing Crystal Reports system with a more versatile analytics platform. WebFOCUS would easily support Fred Hutch's financial reporting requirements and deliver much-needed efficiencies throughout the finance organization. They especially liked WebFOCUS Portal technology and its ability to combine reports and graphs into a flexible and user-friendly interface.

"Fred Hutch is an organization that values genuine partnerships," says Dennon. "There was a personal touch to Information Builders' presentations and to the relationship that we built early on. By addressing our specific needs, we knew they were listening. It was clear we had found a vendor that would take care of us for the long-term."

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> **Stephanie Dennon**
> **BI Program Lead in Financial Management Information Systems**
> **Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center**

Creating a Portal-Based Analytics Solution

Money for Fred Hutch research flows into the organization from a variety of government, corporate, and private funding sources. These funds are allocated to areas of research known internally as "Awards," and then further apportioned across a series of "Projects," which often span multiple years. How and where the money is spent is tracked in precise detail.

Most financial managers manage multiple projects or grants, potentially 200 at a time. Running individual reports for each project is time-consuming and inefficient. With the majority of the center's revenue coming from federal grants, tightly managing funds is imperative. Mismanaged budget or failure to deliver current information on the status of each grant can lead to potential research dollars left on the table and, ultimately, a financial loss for the organization.

"Because our old system was static in nature and delivered only one view of the data, some of the key information for managing awards was either difficult to tease out or missing entirely," Dennon says. That put pressure on the financial manager to hunt for answers to basic questions about spending, and introduced risk when questions couldn't be answered in a timely fashion. "The advances we've made with WebFOCUS save countless hours of manual effort, increase accuracy in answering common business questions, and help maintain a healthier bottom line overall," she adds.

WebFOCUS brought this financial data to life for more than 300 staffers through the Hutch Analysis and Reporting Portal (HARP), a self-service reporting environment. HARP users easily access graphs that reveal expenses by resource type, category, and other attributes, as well as drill into the numbers behind the graphs. WebFOCUS features rich integration with Excel so staffers no longer have to rekey the data.

The interface is efficient and simple, allowing users to become self-sufficient quickly. "The move to HARP has significantly improved the speed with which I can access my data," notes Laima Abele, division administrator for Basic Sciences. "Having the visuals and drill-down capabilities at my fingertips means a lot less time needs to be spent gathering the information I need to manage my budgets."

Building Self Sufficiency With InfoApps™

Information Builders brought in its partner, RDC Business Solutions (RDC Biz), to assist with the requirements definition, design, and development of HARP. The team used Information Builders' iWay DataMigrator to extract data from a PeopleSoft Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system and load it into an operational data store. Where possible, measures were pre-aggregated in the data mart rather than in the BI layer to ensure fast, accurate reporting.

"Financial managers and administrators need to access current information to monitor organizational performance and manage costs," says Roger Panfil, RDC's project engagement leader. "WebFOCUS empowers people to interact with the data through InfoApps™ so they can focus on exceptions. Empowering users to visualize the data was key to the success of the project."

InfoApps™ are highly targeted, purpose-built analytic apps that allow people to ask basic questions and receive direct answers. Intuitive, visually compelling, and interactive, they provide

"Because each award is a separate budget, the financial management component of our science can be complex. Fred Hutch's new BI portal delivers on our goal to make more information accessible to research programs and administrative managers. We've gained efficiencies, so more money goes to research, impacting not only savings today but into the future."

Chris Bundesmann
Corporate Controller
Fred Hutchinson Cancer
Research Center

Find Out More

To find out how we can help your company succeed, talk to your local Information Builders representative today. Visit us at **informationbuilders.com**, or in the U.S. and Canada, call **(800) 969-4636**. To improve your skills with our solutions, visit **education.ibi.com**.

the Fred Hutch business community with instant insight into a complex data set. Key performance indicators (KPIs) and statistical measures are pre-aggregated each night and loaded into the database, which speeds up performance. "Since we know that the users want the total spend by month for each expense category, the data is summarized during the nightly ETL cycle, so WebFOCUS can do a simple 'fetch and plot,'" Panfil says.

"WebFOCUS generates active HTML so people can now sort the data, filter it, and play with it right there in the portal," Dennon said. "With a single keystroke, users can export expense detail for their projects and awards directly into Excel and eliminate manual re-keying of data. These self-contained InfoApps™ are very powerful."

Fred Hutch's user community is happy with the new financial analysis environment. "HARP has made it easier and faster to see the big picture, which allows time to review and analyze the details behind the numbers," explains Pam Lindberg, a research coordinator in the Human Biology Division, who uses HARP to manage several research budgets. Lindberg also handles financials for seven Fred Hutch scientists (known as principal investigators). "The Excel reports eliminated my need for tracking monthly details in shadow spreadsheets, since the information is now so simple to view and drill into," she adds. "The charts clearly demonstrate the status of budgets, which makes it effortless to assess spending trends and provide a forecast for our investigators – something we never had before."

Users access the WebFOCUS Portal from the center's secure intranet site, running the Web-based application from a variety of browsers on their laptop and desktop computers. A mobile rollout is planned for a future phase. According to Panfil, Information Builders' broad support for mobile platforms was a key factor in selecting WebFOCUS for the HARP application.

Putting More Dollars to Work for Medical Research

The world-class scientific staff at Fred Hutch includes three Nobel Laureates. As users leverage their new BI platform, every dollar saved on administrative reporting is a dollar gained for lifesaving research. Even small breakthroughs that lead to reduced pain and suffering represent significant milestones for the center's dedicated members.

The Fred Hutch business community has greater insight into the financial status of important projects. The organization has evolved from time-consuming, antiquated, paper-driven reports to an interactive BI experience, in which timely information is presented quickly in a customizable portal. Fred Hutch is well positioned for other forward-looking initiatives.

According to Dennon, the center is looking at things that are truly new. "With cohesiveness and self-sufficiency throughout the finance organization, and tighter control of costs, we have the ability to track the success of any new program," she said. "Information Builders is playing an important role in helping us provide financial management tools to support ongoing, cutting-edge research, now and in the future."