IOWAccess Project Concept Paper

Request for Funding Scope Analysis Phase

Date:
May 1, 2007

Project Name:
Web-Based Property Valuation Submission

Requesting Agency:
Iowa Department of Management

Project Point-of-Contact:
Mike Albers, 515 281-5598

Project Sponsor:
Iowa Department of Management, Mike Albers, 515 281-5598

Goal:
To establish a centralized database and application with Internet accessibility that would allow County Auditors to annually report property valuations for the coming budget year. The target is to provide functionality and features at least comparable to the existing desktop software. This architecture will eliminate the current process of duplicative reading and writing of valuation data that can introduce errors and dropped data.

To make valuation data, aggregated by local levying authority, available on-line as soon as the data is reported by the county.

Project Purpose:
This project will create a thin-client approach to this process, eliminating the need for the Department of Management to deliver and support custom desktop software on annual basis. This desktop software provides the vehicle for the 99 County Auditors to collect and perform field validation of the valuation data for their county.

By going to a centralized architecture, we will be able to eliminate duplicative reading and writing of the valuation data. Currently, the data is entered into the desktop valuation software. It is then modified as necessary and saved to a file. That file is then sent to the Department of Management. The Department of Management then takes that file and loads its data into a SQL database. The new system would allow the County Auditors to directly load valuation data into, and edit the data on, the existing or other central SQL database.

This system will be able to make preliminary valuation data available on-line, saving significant time and effort for parties looking for such data as well as for the Auditors. Currently someone wanting preliminary data for levying authorities must contact that county's Auditor. And if that levying authority should happen to span multiple counties, such as is the case for school districts and community colleges, they would have to separately contact the Auditor for each of the counties involved. The new system would eliminate that process and allow them to get the data quickly and efficiently, with a minimum of effort.

Background:
County Auditors are required to annually report property valuations to the Department of Management by January 1. The Department of Management provides a custom desktop software package, which is used by the 99 counties to create a file for reporting valuation data. Deploying and supporting the custom software is a very time-consuming and costly process for both the Department of Management and for the County Auditors. The Department has to make sure that the custom software will install, open files, save files, print reports and be capable of adding & deleting taxing districts over the wide range of Windows operating systems and office suites installed across those 99 environments. Even with extensive testing, there are always PCs in the field upon which the software will not properly install or operate.

The existing software includes functionality to:
- Add taxing districts using wizards which query the user to enable the software to build taxing district to levy authority relationships
- Delete taxing districts
- Add, change, or delete taxing district attributes
- Import datasets produced from the county's in-house computer system
- Manually enter data
- View taxing district and levy authority valuation data by class
- Print an extensive variety of reports
- Modify taxing district to levy authority relationships
- Check the correctness of state-ordered assessment limitations (rollbacks)
- Perform 40 different error checking routines looking for improperly entered data and/or improper taxing district associations
- Build Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Areas and associate TIF increment taxing districts
  - Compute the amount of TIF increment valuation needed in order to generate a specific amount of requested TIF tax revenue
  - Project TIF tax dollars after the county has entered consolidated tax rates

Expected Results in this Project:

The move to a thin-client approach will save both the Department of Management and the individual Auditor's offices the time and effort of having to distribute, install, troubleshoot and support the desktop software. Also, the effort involved in creating, transmitting and uploading the data files created by the desktop software will be eliminated.

By eliminating the need to manually research and respond to requests for preliminary valuation data, there will be significant time and cost savings for the County Auditors and the Department of Management.

The preliminary data will be instantly available on-line for use by interested parties. Individuals looking for that data will be able to do so on their schedule rather than based on the business hours of the Auditor's office.

Request:

This request is for $20,000 for the Scope Analysis phase.

Resources Being Contributed:

Department of Management staff person, Mike Albers, will be available to work with ITE staff in defining the scope of the project.

Interested Parties/Recipients of this Service:

Iowa County Auditors
Iowa Department of Management
Bond Counsel
Financial Community
General Citizenry