

YMCA St Paul's Group Gains Visibility and Control of Cash-Flow Projections



Overview

The YMCA is the oldest and largest youth charity in the world, set up by Sir George Williams in England in 1844. Across England and Wales, it is run as a federation with 120 local YMCAs working independently to support young people to belong, contribute, and thrive in their communities.

Workforce and capital planning fuel nonprofit's critical decision-making

The YMCA is the oldest and largest youth charity in the world. Run as a federation, each YMCA Association is its own operation, focusing on four key areas of work: accommodation; children, youth and family; health and well-being; and training and education. Finance's role in YMCA St Paul's Group is to oversee the Association's finances, from cash management to banking, and run the budgets and forecasting for all of its activities.

"Our aim as a community charity is to meet people at their point of need, be that with temporary housing, working with children, or fitness courses. Finance makes sure the charity is properly run and accounted for, so those activities can reach as many people as possible," said Carrie Bowers, principal finance officer, YMCA St Paul's Group.

Before implementing Adaptive Insights, the branch struggled with using Excel spreadsheets to budget and fine-tune forecasts. With activities taking place across a number of sites, one discrepancy or broken link in its Excel-based planning system would alter the entire budget, making it a very fragile and error-prone process.

Flexible, accurate workforce planning, budgeting, and reporting

The YMCA St Paul's Group identified Adaptive Insights as a solution that could give the nonprofit a clearer view of its finances without requiring a complete overhaul of its accounting practices and financial model. The ability to import data from existing accounting and HR payroll packages has created a single version of the organization's budgeting data.

Changes are now reflected in real time and can be viewed and edited by personnel throughout the different sites. In addition, there are now no longer risks of glitches or version errors. This was especially valuable for the finance team in monitoring staffing, the YMCA's largest and most important expenditure. Tracking payroll had been notoriously difficult, with management split across different sites, projects, and business areas. With all the data now rolled into one system, the YMCA is able to create hiring strategies aligned with operational plans, while giving finance and HR instant visibility into current and future employee expenses allocated across programs and locations.

Long-term capital planning and scenario modelling help fund mission

With actuals data from accounting input each month aligned with planning data, the improved data integrity has increased forecasting accuracy and made it easier for the Association to implement long-term planning. Its five-year forecast factors in current long-term development projects involving hostels and starter accommodation housing developments to gain insights on the cash flow that will be available over the period. It has also allowed the finance department to run shorter-term cash-flow reporting more regularly, with new capabilities in slicing and dicing the data and in producing quality reports to the board.

“Adaptive Insights gives you complete control over the whole financial model and has helped us to be far quicker, more efficient, and more strategic in our planning and forecasting processes,” said Bowers. “You can configure the system yourself, easily adding a new staff member or cost center and also have control over who has access and when, which has assisted in deadlines being met.”

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