E&I Cooperative Services Streamlines Contract Sourcing Processes for 5,000 Members

Profile

E&I Cooperative Services is the only member-owned non-profit sourcing cooperative in the United States focused exclusively on serving the needs of education. With over 5,500 members in higher ed and K-12, E&I offers a broad portfolio of competitively solicited contracts. E&I acts as an extension of its members' procurement departments by providing them strategic sourcing solutions that maximize members' education dollars through economies of scale. The Cooperative has been in existence since 1934 and has recently entered a period of rapid growth.

"It's the efficiency created by leveraging 21st century digital technology, versus all the old methods that we were doing that were very labor intensive."

Ian Robbins,
Senior Vice President, Sourcing & Contracts
E&I Cooperative Services

The Challenge

Prior to 2018, E&I lacked integrated digital solutions, most notably in contract management and sourcing. Solicitation for RFPs was extremely labor intensive, with suppliers submitting bids manually, time stamping and shipping three-ring binders. The consideration process relied heavily on email and Excel spreadsheets, which were used for response comparisons and scoring matrixes. The process of digesting these massive, printed bids was arduous; the average RFP cycle at the time was roughly nine months.

On the contract management side, the organization's signature and storage system was self-contained and had limited functionality. The result was a disjointed contracts business process that often resulted in managers spending an inordinate amount of time processing documents and organizing files.

E&I is highly selective when taking on contracts, looking for quality over quantity to provide the best to their members. With approximately 150 contracts to manage, the team was stretched thin. The organization has limited resources

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managing a large volume of contracts, and as a non-profit, budget is always top of mind.

When Ian Robbins joined the team as Vice President, Strategic Sourcing & Contract Management in 2017, he was excited about the opportunity to help improve the process and create valuable efficiencies within E&I.

The Solution – Sourcing+

Ian had fully implemented JAGGAER previously as an E&I member, first at University of Montana and later at Florida State University. Additionally, E&I had already done some solution analysis prior to his arrival, which included JAGGAER as a potential partner.

Ultimately, the decision to implement JAGGAER came down to integration. One of the key criteria was a sourcing solution and contract management platform that worked collaboratively. "I didn't want to have to go to multiple platforms," Ian said, reiterating that the organization needed true integration. The team evaluated over a dozen solution providers before settling on JAGGAER Sourcing and Contracts+. "I wanted to provide more value internally," Ian said.

Sourcing was fully implemented by November of 2019. Since then, all RFPs have gone through the JAGGAER Sourcing+ platform. These include RFPs for categories such as technology, MRO and furniture. All supplier onboarding and registration also happens in the system using self-service supplier registration.

Ian reported that JAGGAER Sourcing+ has helped E&I reduce the sourcing cycle time from more than nine months to four to five months. "That leads to greater efficiency for E&I and greater value for our members," he said. E&I opted to adopt Sourcing+ initially because they saw it as a faster path to getting
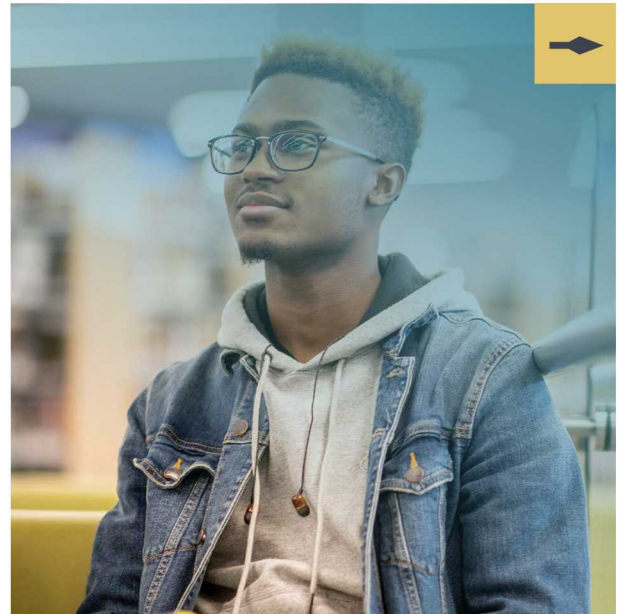
contract managers on board with the new system and their processes digitalized.

The benefits were immediately evident to the sourcing team. One major advantage was the ability to standardize RFP responses, eliminating unnecessary detail. According to Ian, this provided a considerable time savings when reviewing responses. The platform also provides suppliers with both time and cost efficiencies when submitting their response, since they can do so digitally.

Evaluation is also significantly easier. With all the information already digitized, there's no need to input or copy data manually. The evaluation team can view and compare responses and score various response factors directly in JAGGAER. This replaces the need to distill data, build reports, and digitize and upload full responses to a SharePoint site, saving dozens of hours.

The Next Solution – Contracts+

The Cooperative subsequently moved to implement Contracts+ for complete contract lifecycle management. The configuration, templates, and libraries have been built, and the solution went live in the fall of

2021, including full integration with existing systems. "It was a milestone we had been looking forward to for some time," Ian said.

Casey Laurienzo, Director of Contract Operations, joined E&I from Florida State University to move the project to completion. E&I also appointed a new Vice President for Technology, who has set out an exciting and ambitious technology roadmap.

Previously E&I had been using a home-grown solution for contracts, but this provided little support. They chose Contacts+ largely because they wanted everything in the same system. "Clearly, JAGGAER is the leader in this arena because no other vendor has an effective solution in both contracts and sourcing," Ian explained. He and Casey also point to having everything stored in a single contracts repository as a significant advantage, together with the templates in Contracts+, workflows, and the integration of DocuSign.

According to Casey the clause libraries in Contracts+ provide a powerful tool for building sophisticated templates. She is excited at the prospect of exploring and using the contract authoring software and believes it will be essential in pursuing the organization's aggressive growth targets over the coming years. Being able to automate the insertion of certain clauses, depending on the type of agreement, will provide a boost to productivity and help to ensure greater consistency. "JAGGAER allows us to be more proactive in managing the portfolio," Ian added.

"Contracts+ will do a lot of the heavy lifting for us." He is also looking forward to making greater use of the reporting functionality in JAGGAER software, for both contracts and sourcing events, to evaluate the quality of E&I's operations.

What's already certain is that the efficiencies achieved with JAGGAER software will continue to support E&I's growth. The Cooperative currently has approximately 150 contracts in its portfolio and Ian and Casey both believe the portfolio will continue to expand over the coming years. "The combination of JAGGAER and process improvements has reduced time-to-execution, which enables us to do more, and that's a huge benefit to the membership," Casey concluded.

Bottom Line Results

- Digitally transformed all RFP submissions for major efficiency gains
- Shifted 100% of supplier registration to the online self-service portal
- Shortened RFP cycle from more than nine months to 4-5 months
- Moved all contracts and associated documents to a single repository
- Accelerated contract generation and decreased execution time
- Ensured consistency in drawing up contracts
- Achieved the technology platform for E&I's rapid growth plans

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