

STCS PROJECT PROFILE

Homes and Communities Agency Project Control System



STCS

HOMES AND COMMUNITIES AGENCY

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the national housing and regeneration agency for England, with an annual investment budget of more than £5bn. The HCA was formed on 1 December 2008 through the transfer of the functions and assets of English Partnerships, the investment functions of the Housing Corporation, a number of delivery programmes from Communities and Local Government, and the transfer of the Academy for Sustainable Communities.

The Homes and Communities Agency is a non-departmental public body and their sponsor government department is Communities and Local Government (CLG).

The statutory objects of the HCA, as listed in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 are to:

- improve the supply and quality of housing in England
- secure the regeneration or development of land or infrastructure in England
- support in other ways the creation, regeneration or development of communities in England or their continued well-being
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and good design in England, with a view to meeting the needs of people living in England.

PROJECT REQUIREMENT AND SCOPE

STCS's initial involvement with English Partnerships was the provision of training courses. In December 1999, we were asked to provide some Oracle Forms and Report training for a few members of the IT department, to show them how to update an existing bespoke application called PCS (Project Control System). We then undertook a 4-month 10-person joint development project to streamline the system and better meet the needs of the business. Following successful delivery of the project we were awarded a system support contract in June 2000. This support contract is still ongoing and is continually supplemented by more change requests and ad-hoc consultancy work. The project currently takes between 300 and 400 days a year, the majority of which is due to Change Requests and additional consultancy work.

The PCS System allows HCA staff to monitor the progress of their projects, including the following:

- Expenditure and Income
- Milestones
- Financial Approvals
- Outputs
- Assessment of Risks
- Quality Standards
- Interfaces to other systems, e.g. Finance System



“We are very committed to our relationship with STCS and appreciative of our long track record of successful partnership – the results speak for themselves.

We are looking forward to taking this forward into HCA in a way that is highly effective for both parties.”

**David Wilson, Applications Manager
Homes and Communities Agency**



STCS provide the following services for this:

- Second-line support, and occasional first-line support
- Training and support of HCA Applications Development staff
- Business Analysis and System Design
- Impact Analysis
- Application development (on-line applications and interfaces)
- Peer Reviews
- Testing
- Database installation and administration
- Application Server software installation and administration
- Performance-tuning

We provide a mixture of on-site and remote support, and have build up a close working relationship with the client, allowing us to react very quickly to any urgent Change Requests or support issues.

TECHNICAL APPROACH

This project is on-going development and support of an existing system. The requirements for changes to the system are investigated and specifications consisting of screen designs and a narrative description of the processing are agreed with the client. Impact analysis is completed to assess impact upon other areas of the system, or other systems. Any database changes are then designed, and application changes developed. These are then peer reviewed before going to System testing, and then on to User Acceptance Testing. Changes may be batched with other changes before being scheduled to go live.

KEY TECHNOLOGIES USED

The system has been built using the following technologies:

- Oracle Designer (versions 4.5 –10g)
- Oracle Forms and Reports Developer (versions 4.5 – 10g)
- Oracle Database (7.3 – 10gR2)
- Oracle SQL and PL/SQL (7.3 – 10gR2)
- Business Objects v6.5

HP L2000 HP-UX10 server, migrated to Windows Server 2003 R2