

# RBP Methods Helps Portland Classical Chinese Garden Find Serenity

## SUCCESS STORY

### The Challenge

Portland Classical Chinese Garden was a heavily grant funded business with a real problem tracking and reporting the grant allocation. They were running spreadsheets to keep up, redundantly entering data and greatly increasing the risk of accounting errors.

### The Solution

RBP Methods installed Sage MIP Fund Accounting—a perfect fit for the Garden’s particular situation.

### The Result

The Garden now saves over a month of time every year that was formerly spent organizing reports. They now have the tracking and reporting they need and it has given them a degree of self reliance that they have never had before.

As far as destinations go, the northwest United States is fairly straightforward. Lush greenery, a few waterfalls, and rocky beaches come to mind. One specific gem of the area, however, likely escapes most stereotypical thought—after all, Portland, Oregon is not the first place one would look to find a small slice of Chinese culture. The idea was born in 1988, when Portland and Suzhou, China became sister cities, and the result was a garden which now exists in the heart of the Pacific Northwest and embodies a “richly authentic Chinese culture.” It seeks to “cultivate an oasis of tranquil beauty and harmony to inspire, engage, and educate.”



### **Tranquility Turns to Headache for the Chinese Garden**

An important social and cultural destination, the Portland Classical Chinese Garden runs primarily on grant money. A project of this caliber requires a certain flow—a growth in artistic and cultural vision that cannot be accomplished without the aid of grants. However, with grant-heavy accounting, a certain degree of tracking and reporting capabilities are required, especially when dealing with restricted funds. Portland’s Garden simply did not have the resources to keep up with those demands.

The Garden was running an off-the-shelf accounting program that did not perform well under the rigors of grant-based accounting. Also, they had very little technical capability to manage any fundraising—a crucial aspect to obtaining those grants. “We were trying to manage and track all the different funds—we were working outside the system using spreadsheets to try and stay on top of it all,” says Nina Thompson, Business Manager for the Garden. That sort of stop-gap accounting leads to redundant data entry, and any additional manual data entry increases the chance for error. What the Garden really needed, remembers Nina, was “a system to save us time and allow us to make better decisions.”

### **RBP Methods Brings Back Harmony to Portland’s Garden**

Realizing that new processes were needed, Portland Classical Chinese Garden began the search for an accounting product that would meet their needs. They soon found Sage MIP Fund Accounting and realized that “it was designed to do exactly what we needed,” says Nina. “It was a great fit.” They contacted Sage and were referred to RBP Methods. They soon recognized RBP’s vast system and



**“We gave them simple and straightforward results – we gave them something they could rely on.”**



## Company Profile

### Type of Business

Nonprofit Organization  
Tourist & Historical  
Attraction

### Headquarters

Portland, Oregon

## System Profile

### Sage MIP Fund

#### Accounting

General Ledger  
Accounts Payable  
Accounts Receivable  
Budget  
Bank Reconciliation  
Forms Designer  
Data Import/Export

### Sage Fundraising 50

accounting knowledge—exactly the sort of combination to get the Garden on track.

“They were looking for basics: stability and coherence.” remembers Kent Arnold of RBP. “We gave them simple and straightforward results—we gave them something they could rely on.” RBP was able to bring about a smooth implementation that solved both problems. The new system did all the tracking they required and they also included fundraising software to keep the Garden ahead of its business. “We worked hard to see their vision,” says Kent, “and then we worked to fulfill that vision.”

### **Portland’s Chinese Garden Blossoms with Better Business**

With Sage MIP Fund Accounting organizing the finances, the Garden now runs better than ever. They are able to carefully track funds from grants all the way to the projects they are earmarked for. In addition, specialized reporting, set up by Kent and RBP, allows the Garden to present the information on grant usage according to the specifications required. That new capability has been especially nice for Nina, who, as Kent remembers it, “was continually frustrated by not being able to supply the Executive Director’s reporting requirements.”



Along with meeting their formal requirements, the Portland Classical Chinese Garden has begun to save time formerly spent tracking grant money. In fact, the estimate of time saved is near 3-4 days a month that used to be spent working reports—which boils down to over a month of time saved every year. Not to mention the fact that “better tracking allows better investment management,” says Nina.

However, there is one particular benefit of RBP’s involvement with the Garden that has proved more valuable than the time and money saved—they’ve seen a new degree of self-reliance as they are better empowered to manage their business. As Kent puts it, “it’s not only a system they can get information out of; they got a system they can control.” The ability to mold one’s business is a valuable thing indeed, as it bestows a sense of tranquility—which, in this case, is perfect.

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