

*U.S. Department of Education Improves Physical Inventory Accuracy and Lowers Costs with Sunflower Assets® and Sunflower MobileTrak*

---

The U.S. Department of Education was able to account for 100% of its 32,000 assets across the United States with a team of ten people in only three months time. By the end of FY07, each of these assets had a complete inventory audit trail in the property management system with supporting documentation on file at headquarters. The 2007 physical inventory was completed more quickly, completely and inexpensively than any other prior inventory the Department had undertaken.

Prior to 2007, the Department had been unable to completely and accurately account for its assets. The cumbersome and expensive inventory methods used to conduct these inventories overlooked many missing assets and was unable to account for assets that were discovered during the inventory. As a result, the Property Management Office was missing out on a key opportunity to assess the health of its property management records and demonstrate good stewardship of the Department's property. In fact, the property management team was still trying to complete the FY2005 inventory as the FY2007 inventory was getting under way.

In 2007 the joint asset management team of DoED property managers and Sunflower Systems functional experts performed a wall-to-wall inventory using handheld barcode scanners equipped with Sunflower MobileTrak software. This asset management team was able to quickly send asset scans from the barcode scanners to the asset records in Sunflower Assets, the Department's property management system. This practice avoided the need for time-consuming manual entry of asset "finds" and provided real-time results to management on the status of the inventory. Moreover, the barcode scanners recorded who scanned each asset and where it was scanned, providing an audit trail and an opportunity to update the asset records in the database. The scanners also provided the ability to quickly add to the property system assets that were found on station. The result was not only a more effective inventory but cleaner, more accurate property records.

One of the critical factors that contributed to the success of the physical inventory was the teamwork of DoED property managers and Sunflower Systems functional experts working side by side. Sunflower personnel were able to provide a key advisory role in crafting an optimal strategy for planning the execution of the physical inventory. Sunflower helped the Department streamline its physical inventory processes to get the most out of the Sunflower software with the least amount of resources necessary. During the barcode scanning phase of the inventory, DoED property managers were able to work with Sunflower experts to immediately resolve business process or technology issues as they arose, saving time and frustration. Finally, Sunflower experts were on hand during the reconciliation and reporting phase of the inventory to help DoED process all of the resolutions that were captured in the field, quickly resolve reconciliation issues and get the most out of Sunflower physical inventory reports.



Sunflower Assets reports provided managers with valuable metrics against the inventory's benchmarks. The creation of an asset base, a set of assets against which the asset resolutions would be recorded, provided an auditable start to the inventory. Resolutions could then be recorded against that base by scanning an asset, recording a resolution directly through Sunflower, or declaring an asset unaccounted. Barcode scans and other resolutions were "positive" finds and unaccounted resolutions were "negative" finds. This distinction provided the opportunity to account in some way for every single asset, even if only to indicate that it had not been found. At the end of the inventory, assets that were not found were reviewed by management and retired from the property system to avoid the need to account for them again in subsequent years.

The Department of Education was able to positively account for over 29,000, or about 92%, of the 32,000 assets in the base for 2007. Over 2500 assets were found on station and over 3000 asset records were retired. As a result, the Department has been able to significantly improve the overall health of its property records as a natural outcome of performing the inventory. It is expected that the 2008 physical inventory will feature about a 98-99% positive resolution due to the cleanup effort in 2007. In less than one year, the Department of Education has gone from being largely unable to account for its assets to a model of fixed asset accountability.