

ICommander Accounting Software for Charter Schools

CPA/CPA

ICommander Accounting Software and our support staff provide CPA/CPA to our customers (Computerization Professionally Applied by Certified Public Accountants). Experienced CPA's have designed and built the software and experienced CPA's and other accountants implement, train, and support our users. ICommander Corporation is not your typical software company.

ICommander developers and support staff include CPA's with over thirty years of experience in working with Michigan School Districts as auditors and as consultants.

Unique Capabilities for School Districts

The complex needs of school districts contributed much to the design of the ICommander Payroll and General Ledger systems, in particular. One of the first tests of a unique feature in ICommander General Ledger related to changes in the State Chart of Accounts several years ago and more recently to many pervasive changes to that chart. Schools using ICommander do not have to start over with their computer accounting history. We provide a rearrange function, which effectively takes the general ledger data files apart and puts the data and history back together with new account numbers. If you have been using ICommander for ten years when this happens again, you will appreciate the significance of retaining comparative history completely re-routed to a new chart.

School districts will also find ICommander Accounts Payable to be a refreshing change as it provides all of the capabilities for managing payables needed even by a complex business. Some A/P systems for school districts and other governmental units assume all you need is an expensive check-writing system.

The ICommander Purchase Order/Expense Entry system is extremely useful for controlling purchases of materials and services. Remaining budget amounts can be validated as purchase orders are entered and then updated immediately. In addition to the ability to track purchase commitments or encumbrances, facilities are provided which enable accurate expenditure coding by non-accountants. This, coupled with the multi-company capability of ICommander Systems, enables setting up buildings or departments to enter purchase orders with whatever level of control best fits.

Schools with a central stores setup may also find the ICommander Inventory Costing System very useful. This system also includes separate purchase order functions with extensive options for using the system to calculate how much to purchase from whom based on volumes of usage and comparative costs.

There are feature lists for each of the ICommander Accounting Software Systems available for download on our website as well as a reduced copy of all menu screens for each system. The comments below address how some of the features are applied for school districts.

General Ledger (G/L)

The ICommander G/L Chart of Accounts is extremely flexible with the ability to define each of up to 5 components to fit your needs and to group and classify the components. ICommander uses a unique approach of assigning background group and classification codes to components of the actual account numbers. This enables ICommander to understand the nature of each element and to provide very extensive reporting options without making the actual account numbers unduly long and complex.

This includes groupings by building, major functions, object account groups, Form B/CEPI classifications, CFDA number, grant number, etc., without needing to include every such grouping directly in the account number itself. A powerful reporting capability allows easy access to any and all of these coding structures.

This structure enables use of the State Chart of Accounts directly where it makes sense and indirectly via the background codes where it does not. Your chart of accounts can be specific to your needs but the ICommander structure enables creation of FID files using all state codes without any extra work by you.

ICommander G/L includes a complete budgeting function that provides facilities for working up multiple versions for an upcoming budget year. A complete budget amendment tracking function is available to track all changes approved once the original budget is adopted. Various options for comparing actual results to the budget are available. Separate grant budgets for fiscal years different than the school fiscal years can co-exist with the school-wide budget. There is also an option to activate real-time G/L files for live comparison to budget amounts (especially useful when the Purchase Order System is in use so commitments via PO's are also live).

There is a large number of options for printing financial statements and other reports using any combination of the account number components and the background grouping codes. Each report option includes consistent date and parameter selection screens to get at any pattern represented in the accounts and codes and all parameters may be saved for easy re-use. The unique accounting period design in ICommander allows access to any period in the current or prior fiscal year. Reporting can overlap fiscal years and up to 99 years of comparative monthly history may be stored and accessed.

All reports include an option to create tab-delimited files for easy import into spreadsheet software with some additional options to export a rolling 12 or 24 month report for spreadsheet and database import.

On Linux/Unix systems, there is an ICommander menu choice to convert any ICommander report into a PDF file, which can then be viewed using the Adobe Acrobat reader. Any report may also be viewed directly from an ICommander session using a powerful tool that allows exploring reports and searching for patterns more easily than with the Acrobat Reader and without the additional steps to create and access a PDF file.

Accounts Payable (A/P)

All of the features you need for tracking what is owed to vendors and your history with each of them. Unlimited history by vendor, check number, and general ledger account. A complete Job Cost System is incorporated into the A/P System. This may be used to track particular projects or can be configured to track capital expenditures including establishing an authorization and budgeting system.

There are extensive options for automating assignment of G/L account numbers including saving prior distributions for recall and assigning one or several pre-defined distributions of either dollar amounts or percentages.

Separate processing of A/P for Cafeteria, Athletics, and Student Activities Funds is accommodated easily by using the multi-company capability of ICommander to setup separate files tailored to each operation and to authorize only selected users for each.

Student Activities Funds may also want to use the A/P System to enter receipts as well as expenses. This may further be tied into use of a unique feature of ICommander G/L to setup Temporary Balance Sheet accounts, which enable tracking receipts, disbursements, and balances of each activity. This gives you the same functionality as if income statement accounts were setup but avoids confusing school-wide consolidated reporting by excluding the the trust accounts activity.

Payroll (P/R)

ICommander P/R is one of the most capable and flexible systems available. We have found schools to have some of the most unique compensation arrangements with certain employee groups. So far, ICommander has found a way to handle anything encountered and we will continue to add features, if we finally hit a barrier.

There is essentially unlimited number of pay types and deductions, which may be setup to deal with the myriad of complex arrangements unique to a particular school district.

All bargaining units and the classifications and wage levels within may be established for automated salary and wage rate assignment and automated update of union-related deductions. This includes cross-referencing to Job Classifications to simplify tracking positions and to facilitate Workers Compensation reporting.

Options for assigning salary and wage account numbers are very extensive and include the ability to setup percentage distributions when needed. Payroll taxes and workers compensation expense are automatically allocated.

A complete leave-time tracking system is included with many options relating to how and when hours are accrued. There is also an option to use the P/R system to allocate health and other insurance plan expenses automatically and, as a byproduct, track the participants in each plan.

Retirement and other tax reporting is fully supported. This includes automatic creation of the ORS File for Web Reporting for retirement and TDP with no user entries required even for name and status change reporting. Tax rates are in maintainable files which are easily updated whenever changes occur.

Direct deposit is available for any bank using the standard ACH file layout and other formats are added as needed.

The start of a new calendar or fiscal year is largely a non-event for ICommander Payroll (and the other systems). You can start processing payrolls in a new calendar year as soon as needed and then return to a prior year or quarter at any time.

History is available in about any way you can imagine. Many personnel functions are also built into ICommander P/R so that it can be used to track almost anything about your employees.

The various ICommander "Free-Form Data Extraction" menu options become especially valuable in payroll due to the extensive coding structures involved. The FFDE programs let you pick and choose fields from various employee files, specify selection criteria, sorts, and column order to automatically create a file which can be imported into Excel and other spreadsheet software and turned into a formatted spreadsheet with just a few mouse clicks. Totals will already be there courtesy of ICommander. Various history reports also include an option to simultaneously or separately convert report output into a tab-delimited file for import into a spreadsheet. This allows simple access to the complex payroll history files more simply than a pick and choose function could enable.

We could go on about the Payroll System features. Think of what you wish you could do with your computerized payroll processing and ask us about whether ICommander can do it. We will be very surprised if you need something we do not already provide. If it's beneficial to all users, we will likely add it.

Purchase Order System

The Purchase Order System is driven by Product Codes, which are established to enable reliable and consistent coding of expenses by non-accountants.

It can be used to handle a policy of always using purchase orders for all expenses, including printing and tracking open purchase orders. Alternatively or selectively, expenses that are allowed to bypass the purchase order process, may be entered. Manual purchase orders and system-printed purchase orders can both be accommodated.

Expenses incurred but for which an invoice has not yet been received and entered may be automatically accrued at the end of a month to provide an accurate accounting of the actual expense per period.

When the real-time G/L option for actual and budget accounting is activated, the system functions as a complete encumbrance accounting system. This is implemented in a way that does not interfere with normal G/L financial accounting. This avoids the complexity and confusion normally inherent in encumbrance accounting.

An optional review and approval process enables each building or department to enter their own purchase orders while still enabling control by the business department. Paper handling is greatly reduced with this approach while accountability is increased.

Expense history is available within the Purchase Order System using the codes and details unique to it and by account number and vendor in the A/P subset system to which the expenses are also posted.

The Purchase Order System is designed to facilitate use by physically separate buildings or departments with consolidated update to the school-wide files. This enables pushing the expenditure coding out to those involved while at the same time providing centralized control over actual expenditures. If this approach would work for you, the ICommander Remote Site Export and Import systems would need to be installed to enable controlled updates to school-wide A/P files. The separate or remote processing described may involve installing ICommander on multiple computers but can also be accommodated on a network server where each user works only with the files applicable to them.

Adaptable to Management Company plus Other Business Systems

ICommander is also in use by a wide variety of business organizations. The adaptability of our systems enable its use for a charter school management company as well as for the charter schools it manages. Other systems such as Accounts Receivable and Billing may be added to further add to these capabilities. A management company may also setup its own ICommander server to provide accounting software to its schools over secure Internet connections.

ICommander Menu Control, Security, and System-Wide Utilities

All ICommander applications run under the control of the very sophisticated core ICommander System. This provides common functionality across all application systems plus extensive but easy to use tools for daily processing. Security features are extensive and enable you to control access in many ways and at various levels. A quick review of the feature list for the core system will give you some idea of the power available but a face-to-face demonstration will amaze you. We encourage you to review the ICommander Core Features on our website (www.icmdr.com) for a full summary of the powerful system-wide features.

ICommander Over the Internet

Smaller schools may find the cost of ICommander systems to be more than they are willing to spend, although a review of the capabilities available will show the obvious benefits in comparison to a less capable accounting system. We offer an option for you to get the benefits of ICommander at a low cost by paying a monthly fee for access to servers at our office to use the software. Inexpensive software that allows this access and provides the necessary security and the ability to print reports back to your location is all that is needed on your computer. There is also an option to pay a higher monthly fee, which will be credited towards later acquisition for in-house use.

Prices

You will find ICommander Software prices to be very reasonable for the extensive capabilities provided and the long-term usability of the software. We will provide a price quote upon request. We will also forward our complete price lists in hardcopy or PDF form upon request. You will find the prices on the Linux platform to be especially favorable for multiple users. See our FAQ if you have concerns about what using Linux means to your existing network (basically no impact).

Services

ICommander Corporation also provides installation, implementation, and training services from a staff of experienced accountants and IT personnel. We also offer conversion programming and assistance. Estimate of costs for these services will be provided upon request but require input from you regarding the level and extent of the services needed.

Cost Effective

Spending money on new software when budgets are tight may not seem logical but an evaluation of the productivity gains and annual costs for ICommander will show ongoing savings that make it illogical NOT to change as soon as possible.

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