

Sun River Health

Brighter Days Ahead: How Coupa Helped Sun River Health Reduce Payment Complexity

For Sun River Health, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), recent acquisitions led to the creation of parallel financial processes that were complex, cumbersome, and less-than-ideal. Here's a look at how Sun River Health improved its procure-to-pay process prognosis.

The sun always rises

Sun River Health has a simple mission statement: "The care you need. The respect you deserve." For Sun River Health, comprehensive healthcare is a human right — no matter if patients can pay — and respect is an inalienable part of the complete care experience.

Therefore, it's no surprise, given the financial and functional frustrations of current pandemic conditions, that Sun River Health has seen marked success. As noted by Neil Latman, Senior Vice President of Financial Reporting and Reimbursement, "we went from under 100 million in 2014 to over 350 million in 2020. Now, it's about maintaining the control and visibility that we became accustomed to when we were smaller at our larger scale. We needed to give people access to what want they need when they need it."

The challenge: Addressing the root cause of complexity

Along with a growing patient base and increased operating budget, Sun River Health recently acquired another health center and its subsidiaries, expanding its patient base and geographic footprint. And while this provides a massive opportunity for market expansion, it also comes with a challenge: complexity.

As noted by Latman, Sun River Health acquired another health center that served all five boroughs of New York City. Sun River Health served patients outside New York City, and their new health centers were within the city itself. "Under the agreement we had," he says, "we were running parallel systems, post-merger, for a year." The result? Increased complexity when it came to payment processing, automation, and management.

In practice, however, this complexity was the symptom of a larger root cause: "What some called an old-school accounting system," says Latman. "It is tailored to our industry and continues to provide the financial reporting necessary for a complex FQHC. But we needed something to bring our financial operations into the 21st century. In preparation for the merger, we opted to overlay our exiting accounting system with Coupa — in essence, combining the best of both worlds."



The solution: Streamlining payment processes with Coupa

To help find their best fit, Sun River Health turned to trusted business consulting firm Acquis. With both Sun River Health and its new acquisition running their own instances of the Coupa Business Spend Management (BSM) platform, Latman realized they needed an independent expert to evaluate which instance would host the combined process entity. "We relied on Acquis to transparently assess both Coupa instances and make a recommendation to ensure neither side felt slighted by our final decision," he says. "They did a detailed evaluation and made a decision to go with our instance. And in January of 2020, we transitioned onto the single instance."

For Latman, the combined results speak for themselves. "The automation increased our efficiency, added greater controls over spend, and improved our reporting capabilities. With invoices, expense reports, and requisitions routed and approved electronically, the entire procure-to-pay process was sped up despite the onset of the pandemic. Previously, the matching process was terrible. The triple match on a PO was a tough process, and it's really made that smoother."

The results: Unifying operational outcomes

When it comes to merging healthcare agencies, collaboration and compromise are key to ensuring operational processes are uniform across regions and complexity doesn't overwhelm financial teams. According to Latman, opting for a Coupa deployment that leveraged the strengths of Sun River Health's legacy accounting system "was the perfect compromise. We were able to keep the structure we built in our accounting system and deploy this modern procure-to-pay system that worked so well."

As a result, he notes that "we were really able to tighten up. Now we're going to look at budgeting and all the bells and whistles that we couldn't implement during the first iteration." Latman also highlights Sun River Health's relationship with Acquis as a key driver in substantive and sustainable results. "I personally have a great relationship with Ryan (from Acquis). He understands my thinking, and he makes the staff feel very comfortable. Ryan was willing to do the research necessary for us to make key implementation decisions."

What's next? Accelerating adoption efforts

At Sun River Health, the procure-to-pay journey will continue. When it comes to efforts in improving efficiency and reducing paper processes, Latman puts it simply: "More Coupa Pay." He also highlights accelerated use of electronic expense reports and Coupa Supplier Portal functionality to help enable supplier connections and address potential challenges with remote workers.

As Sun River Health strives to increase access to care in underserved communities, it simultaneously recognizes the need for a back-office that can scale to support its mission. The automation, controls, and reporting capabilities provided by Coupa have been integral to the finance department's ability to meet those challenges.

Latman credits Acquis' ability to structure Coupa in a manner that exceeded previous paper-based controls and training methodologies, engaged even the most skeptical staff for the success of the initial Coupa implementation, and empowered migration to a single, operational instance.

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