How to Implement a Local Government Human Resource Software Solution
Introduction

You hear the word “implementation” and you immediately feel overwhelmed. Implementations mean deadlines, data extracts, training, communication plans, and errors. You start to wonder if it would just be easier to continue following the processes you have in place today. Then you remember that you are tracking every applicant manually, copying cover letters in triplicate, and sending resumes to hiring managers via inter-office envelope. You can no longer deal with the amount of paper stacking up in your office, or continue risking a breach in confidential applicant data.

It’s time to implement a local government human resource (HR) software, but where do you begin? If you’re worried the implementation process will become a time-consuming, data-entry disaster, know that it doesn’t have to be. This white paper will offer you actionable advice for how to implement a local government human resource software. You’ll learn:

- How to choose a strategic partner
- What questions to ask before implementation
- What data management concerns you’ll need to address
- How and when to optimize training
- What items must be complete before you can go live

By following the advice in this white paper, you’ll be able to ensure a smooth transition that will allow you to optimize your hiring process and keep your citizens’ data secure moving forward.

How to Choose a Strategic Local Government HR Software Partner

A significant factor in the success of your HR software implementation process will be dependent upon the solution provider you choose. A valuable partner will not simply sell you software and leave you to implement it by yourself. Whether you will be replacing your existing HR software, or implementing your first digital solution, make sure any partner you choose has a proven implementation strategy in place. They should partner with you to:

- Outline an implementation timeline so that you know exactly what steps will need to be taken, and when.
- Customize your software with data fields unique to your administration.
- Back-up any existing data, and/or help you to import data that currently exists only in Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheets.
- Test all software functionality before your official go-live date.
- Complete post-implementation training for all staff who will utilize the software solution.
Questions to Ask Before Implementation

When researching potential local government human resource solution partners, be sure to ask all potential partners the following questions:

- What is your implementation process?
- Will I have a dedicated implementation project manager or account manager who will serve as my primary contact throughout the implementation process and long term?
- What customer support resources are available? Are they domestic? Are they available 24/7 so that when I call, I will be guaranteed to speak with a live representative?
- Will your team help with the data entry?
- What initial and ongoing training resources will be available to me, my team, and any future new hires?

Addressing Data Management Concerns

No matter what process you follow, a key concern for all human resource departments is to ensure applicant data is kept secure. If you’re not using a human resource software solution today, you’re already facing significant challenges ensuring data remains secure. Public sector human resource departments are expected to comply with record retention and security requirements established by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP). You’ll need to ensure that any conversion that occurs between systems, or from a manual record keeping process to a cloud-based solution, follows strict data security parameters.

Any human resource software partner you choose that offers a cloud-based solution should be able to verify the security of their hosting capabilities. Before you begin the implementation process, ensure the following protections are in place:

- The solution you’ve chosen is monitored 24/7/365 and protected against cyber attacks.
- Your solution partner can guarantee 99% up-time.
- Your software solution regularly passes third-party data security audits.
- All applicant data stored in the cloud will be encrypted to ensure additional data protections.

Data Validation

Make sure your implementation plan includes a process to test the validation of all imported applicant data. This is an important step that should not be overlooked. Don’t be tempted to skip the step of importing historical applicant data entirely either, especially if you’ve chosen a human resource software system that will allow you to search past applicants for key qualifications needed for open positions. You’ll want data associated with past, qualified candidates to continue to be accessible, but it won’t do you any good if the data import isn’t validated to ensure accuracy and completeness. Your human resource software partner should assist with this step, and/or offer you a proven process for managing the data validation on your own.
Optimizing Training

Once your system is implemented, you still won’t want to officially go live until you, every member of your extended human resource team, and every department hiring manager, has been successfully trained on utilizing the new system. Your software solution partner should lead the training efforts. No matter how much you feel you have learned about the system’s functionality during the implementation process, the software provider should be prepared to train all users on best practices, time-saving tips, and how to troubleshoot common hurdles. Following these training guidelines:

• **TIMING** – Training needs to occur at least two weeks before your official go-live date. Depending on the size of your administrative team, and the complexity of the implemented solution, you may want your solution provider to facilitate on-site training to ensure a properly immersive, and focused experience.

• **CUSTOMIZATION** – Any training you receive should also be customized to the solution as it was implemented for your administration. A standard demonstration led by your solution provider won’t be as efficient as possible if it doesn’t address any customizations that were set-up during the implementation process.

• **CHECK-INS AND ONGOING SUPPORT** – A valuable solution partner will check-in with you and your team post go-live to ensure you’re not experiencing any issues. Be wary of any vendors who want to implement your system and walk away to focus on the next customer. Ensure you have an ongoing support system in place in case the unexpected occurs.

• **ONGOING LEARNING** – The ideal software solution will be continually updated to evolve as technologies change. That means you and your staff will continually need ongoing training on new features and functionality, as well as refresher training on features that you may not use as frequently. You’ll want to ensure you not only have access to a dedicated point of contact and a 24/7 customer support team, but access to self-guided tutorials, videos, training guides, and other troubleshooting documentation.

• **CITIZEN TRAINING** – Even when your internal staff has been trained on your new human resource software solution, your work is still not complete. Especially if you are converting from a paper-based application system, a new cloud-based, digital application process will be a big change for members of your community who frequently check for job openings with your administration. Make sure you have training materials for end-users of the software (your citizens), and consider allowing non-tech-savvy citizens to complete their applications using computers available in your office so you can help them learn to navigate the system.
Your Go-Live Checklist

Before you are officially ready to go live with your new human resource software solution, make sure the following steps are complete:

- The system has been tested to ensure it is working properly and that all application submissions will be received in their entirety.
- You and all administrative users have been trained on the software and feel confident in utilizing the primary functionality.
- All your department hiring managers have been trained on the new system and know what steps to take when candidate resumes or interview requests are routed to them moving forward.
- You have training documentation and resources in place for citizen end users.
- You have been given the name and contact information for your dedicated point of contact at the solution company for questions and concerns moving forward.
- You have contact information for the dedicated support team you can reach after hours for urgent assistance.

Conclusion

The most successful software implementations establish a roadmap, stick to a schedule, test frequently, and ensure proper training is complete. While these keys to success are important for you when implementing a system, an experienced solution provider should be the one to manage them. Don’t feel like it’s your responsibility to become a software implementation expert. Your most important step will be in choosing a solution provider that will lead you through the implementation process with confidence and assured success.
About the Author

As the General Manager for CivicHR, Jonathan understands the challenges that human resource professionals in local government face when looking to recruit, identify, and hire the best talent in their community, for their community. Jonathan’s primary focus at CivicPlus is on following the trends in the local government human resource landscape, and leading product enhancements for CivicHR to ensure the solution evolves as the needs of local government evolve. Jonathan holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration. He has over fifteen years of experience in software research and development, client service, product implementations, sales, and marketing.