

# Critical ERP implementation success factors for state and local government

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Today's state and local government organizations face a need for greater transparency, as communities seek more information from their government. Citizens are placing higher demands on government systems, including increased self-service capabilities, and all the features commonly available from the commercial sector. Implementing a modern enterprise resource planning (ERP) system can accomplish these goals, making it easier for citizens to access information, while more efficiently managing data and controlling costs.

Implementing ERP systems within state and local government entities is vastly different than in a commercial business; the goals and success factors differ, and a distinctive culture is firmly in place. Taking budget and regulatory constraints into

consideration, organizations must be very cautious about setting priorities and determining how funds are spent.

Government entities often have a unique combination of citizens who demand the latest technology with experienced employees that may not have exposure to those platforms. Implementing an ERP system requires discipline to choose the right platform for your organization, educate your users and stay within your budget. However, the right system can make your organization more efficient, allowing you to track contracts, grants and expenditures, and managing your budget more wisely, while increasing information availability for outside users.

When choosing an ERP platform, your organization must develop well-defined success factors, approaching the project knowing the desired outcome. Developing new processes is important without being tied to the way things have always been done. Some examples of techniques used by our successful clients include:

**Develop a sound requirements document and implementation strategy** – If done properly, it will give the project focus and reduce the number of future changes and scope adjustments.

**Insist on vendor demonstrations targeted to your organization and environment** – ERP systems can be customized to fit a wide variety of industries and needs. You must know that the products you evaluate can accomplish your unique goals.

**Include the right people in the process** – Frequently, organizations include too many, or too few, people on a selection team. Select a core design team of policymakers to determine the vision of the final solution. Designate a project manager and a committee of key departmental leads that understand the need for the system, can stay on top of progress and communicate changes to internal users.

**Communicate early and often** – Change in government is difficult for users, and routine communication sessions are important. Initiate an internal communications campaign to ensure employees are on board, goals and expectations are defined and progress is updated.

**Ensure a support system is in place after implementation** – Designate power users or champions so internal users have someone they rely on if issues or concerns arise.

**Develop and conduct meaningful user training** – Conduct refresher and follow-up training as needed, including processes, as well as systems. Make sure that training materials are geared to your specific processes, instead of generic documentation.

Above all else, choosing a strong leader to drive the initiative is the most important success factor.

Change happens quickly in government, as budgets and the political structure can change rapidly and affect your ERP project implementation. A focused leader can move quickly, stay on schedule, develop effective documentation and processes and ensure people are in place even if the atmosphere changes.

Within a government environment, issues are magnified and the success of a project relies on many factors that are not always present in commercial organizations. For a successful implementation, you must be cognizant of your culture, prove benefits to internal users and include the proper people throughout the process. Selecting the right ERP implementation partner that understands your unique requirements helps to ensure your project stays within your budget and timeline with effective project management, discipline and documentation.

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