

NASPE Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award

Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

e-OPF - Electronic Official Personnel File

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Contact:

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Summary: The Electronic Official Personnel File (e-OPF) is an innovative and cost-effective solution that streamlines and automates an extremely manual, paper-intensive process common to all employers. One of the most overlooked, but critical, elements in an organization is the maintenance of employee files. Prior to the e-OPF, the contents within paper files were often inconsistent and frequently overloaded with irrelevant information. The electronic creation of the files ensures uniformity across all agencies and provides for a unified personnel system.

The commonwealth processes about 14,000 employee transfers and separations in a typical year. Files that were physically shipped from HR office to HR office over the course of an employee's career are now stored and accessed via the touch of a button within our HR/Payroll system. Since the program's inception in January 2013, the commonwealth has transitioned close to 2 million paper personnel file records for 75,000 employees into our e-OPF solution. This solution, tightly integrated with our HR/Payroll system, was designed and built in-house using existing technologies and at minimal cost. In addition, thousands of square feet of storage can now be repurposed as the need for paper filing solutions for personnel records has been eliminated. Staff time spent searching for, purging, preparing and mailing paper files at the State Records Center can now be focused on other operational activities. The initial start-up costs for the e-OPF were less than \$30,000, and were offset within the first year by savings in staff time previously used to process paper files for transfers and separations.

At a time when most public-sector organizations are being faced with budget shortfalls and the related cost-cutting, and there are limited funds available for robust and costly IT solutions, the commonwealth's e-OPF solution demonstrates how examining your existing software landscape and talent can result in low-cost, high ROI solutions.

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

The e-OPF is the commonwealth's solution for electronically storing personnel files and integrating them with individual employee records in our HR/Payroll System, enabling convenient access for HR professionals, supervisors and hiring managers as well as standardization of the documents contained within the files. Each e-OPF is defined with individual security settings, permitting access only by authorized individuals. Newly hired employees complete an online orientation during which several of the standard new hire forms are completed electronically. These forms are automatically transferred in the new hire's e-OPF, eliminating the need for HR staff to manually gather and file them. Supervisors and HR professionals are able to access the files electronically, eliminating the need to physically pull the file and mail to other offices throughout our 67 counties.

2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

Transitions to the e-OPF began in January 2013. All employees hired or rehired since this time have e-OPF's. Fifteen agencies have fully transitioned their personnel files and 13 agencies are in the process of transitioning. This equates to over 50 percent of the employee records.

3. Why was this program created?

The maintenance of paper official personnel files was a manual, time-consuming and inconsistent process across state agencies. Paper files also occupied significant physical storage space. This initiative resulted in improved employee customer service and decreased administrative costs. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, like many other large/geographically dispersed organizations, had significant overhead associated with the management of over 100,000 paper personnel files for active and separated employees. The Office of Administration

recognized the potential cost savings and efficiencies that would be gained through the development of an electronic solution to replace the paper official personnel file.

In the past when an employee separated or transferred to another agency, a paper OPF was pulled from the files, manually purged and prepared for shipment. This process took about 5 minutes per file and was generally performed by staff at the Clerk Typist 3 level (median rate \$28.26/hr. including benefits). Based on 14,000 employee transfers/separations per year, the elimination of these manual processes resulted in annual savings of \$33,000 per /year in staff time.

The estimated 2 million individual paper documents converted so far equates to the availability of roughly 813 square feet of office space. In addition, the 75,000 employees already converted will not have paper records moved to the State Records Center (SRC) for storage. Over time, space dedicated to personnel files at the SRC will decrease as existing paper personnel files reach their retention period (currently 75 years following the employee's separation). This will also result in a savings of \$53,000 in staff handling time. As more employees are converted, future savings will grow.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

The concept of electronic records management is not new or creative. What makes our solution unique is how we made the best use of available internal software and technical talent, including expertise within the Department of Revenue, Bureau of Imaging and Document Management.

5. What was the program's startup costs?

Startup costs were associated with initial setup of the document imaging process at the Department of Revenue and the configuration and purchase of the document indexing solution.

These costs were less than \$30,000, which were offset within the first year through reduced staff time associated with processing paper personnel files for transfers and separations.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

The only ongoing costs associated with this program are annual license costs for the document indexing solution. There is a one-time purchase fee of \$300.75 and an annual maintenance fee of \$60.15 per license. A total of 273 licenses have been procured at a cost of \$16,420. These are paid by the agency using the license.

7. How is this program funded?

Funding of the initial startup costs were covered by the Office of Administration. Agencies were responsible for the initial purchase and ongoing maintenance of licenses for the document indexing solution. Solution costs were internal and absorbed by this organization and included in the annual agency billing for IT support services.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

We are not aware of any other state that developed this type of integrated solution, utilizing internal resources, resulting in the efficient and low cost implementation of the program.

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? How does this program differ?

It is very likely that other states have electronic records management solutions for personnel records. We are not aware of any other state that developed this type of integrated solution in-house for such a low cost by leveraging existing software and internal technical expertise.

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

Program success is measured by the number of paper files converted, improved service to our customers and cost savings. Since the program's inception, over 2 million documents for over

75,000 employees have been fully converted. We expect the full transition to be complete by December 31, 2015. We transformed a labor intensive, manual process to an efficient, electronic method. In addition to providing secure, easy and timely access personnel information for current and former employees; managers and HR professionals across all agencies are able access required information to meet a wide variety of needs, including performance reviews, transfer consideration and time-sensitive inquiries such as criminal investigations or litigation-related requests. Ongoing savings are realized by eliminating thousands of paper records that would have been transitioned to the State Records Center for storage.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

e-OPF functionality continues to be enhanced via a solution roadmap. Since go-live in 2013, additional security levels have been added and a process to let “interviewing agencies” temporarily review a candidate e-OPF has been developed. In the near future, employees will be able to review their e-OPF via Employee Self Service and automated document purging will be enabled.