

NASCIO 2007 AWARD NOMINATION

Executive Summary

The Maine Bureau of Human Resources has created an online state job application service that provides convenience to applicants and creates efficiencies for the state. Processing time for applications has been reduced from weeks to as little as 24 hours, and the online service makes applying for state jobs easier, faster, and more accessible. Applicants can create and save a personal profile which can be re-used in subsequent applications. This service is free to applicants and was developed at no cost to the Agency.

A. Title

HireME - State of Maine Online Job Application

B. Concise description of the business problem and solution, including length of time in operation.

The Maine Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) uses a back-end database called ApTrack to track submitted State of Maine job applications from start to finish. Up until 2007, all job applications were submitted on paper, manually keyed into this database, scored and sent through imaging software to make them available for state agencies to review electronically. By 2005, the number of paper applications received daily by the Bureau of Human Resources had grown immensely, making it nearly impossible to keep up with the manual process of entering each application into this system and creating a paper backlog of approximately 3 weeks. In an effort to better serve applicants and alleviate the growing backlog of manual processing, BHR took steps to modernize their process by offering a free online State of Maine job application service called HireME (<http://www.maine.gov/online/hireme>). Now, job applicants can apply for a job with the State of Maine at any time, from their homes or offices at their convenience. Innovative technology has replaced the manual application processing method with an intelligent electronic application that serves users with much greater speed.

HireME, which launched on April 12, 2007, is one of very few electronic state job applications to interface directly with a complex agency database to dynamically generate application-specific questions. This dynamic generation allows BHR to receive not only basic personal contact information, but also to gather responses to skills and requirements that are specific to each job classification. Having the complete application electronically, including personal and job skill information, allows systematic scoring of each application without manual intervention. By creating this dynamic process, BHR has shortened the turn around time for application scoring from weeks to days, allowing applications to be reviewed by state agencies much sooner than before. This dramatically reduces the internal turnaround time and ultimately provides job applicants with feedback and/or interviews in a much timelier manner.

InforME and the Maine Bureau of Human Resources generated a service marketing plan to help spread the word about this convenient option for submitting state job applications. The marketing plan includes web links, promotion through the state Career Center and job fairs, press releases and public relations, and prominent placement of the URL in all job bulletins and paper forms. Implementation of the marketing plan is just beginning. However, even without marketing, over 180 user accounts have been established and over 300 applications have been submitted since the application launched on April 12, 2007. These numbers are impressive considering that the Bureau of Human Resources has only activated four job openings (job classes) for online applications as of May 24. It is the Bureau's intention to activate several job classifications for online applications each month until all job classes are available for online application submission.

The target adoption for each live job class was originally 20% in the first year. To date, the current job classes have exceeded this target and achieved adoption rates of 70% or higher. The Customer Service Rep Specialist job received a total of 88 applications, of which 65 were submitted through HireME, which translates to almost 74% adoption. The Office Associate II Supervisory job received 48 of 66 online applications for an adoption rate of nearly 73% and the Office Assistant II position, which is still receiving applications as of May 21st, has received 190 of 209 online applications for a stunning 91% adoption!

Moving forward, the Bureau of Human Resources intends to aggressively market the service using the marketing plan, which includes press releases, print materials and a public/press event to introduce the service. These efforts should increase usage of the service significantly.

C. Significance to the improvement of the operation of government.

The online service is already creating efficiencies for the Bureau. Applications submitted online do not require data entry or paper processing, which currently are overwhelming the limited staff at the Bureau. Currently there is a back-log of approximately 3 weeks for processing paper job applications. This efficiency and cost savings is especially important to the Bureau of Human Resources due to recent staff reductions.

In addition, the reduction in application processing time at BHR means that applications are available for consideration by hiring agencies in as little as 24 hours as opposed to 3-4 weeks. This speeds up the hiring process, ultimately benefiting both the applicants and the state.

The benefits of the online service are expected to grow dramatically as more job classifications become eligible for online application, and marketing is increased.

D. Benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency or state. Realized return on investment, short-term/long-term payback (include summary calculations).

The Maine Bureau of Human Resources has made applying for a state job much more user-friendly and convenient through the online HireME job application. The service saves the applicant's personal profile, including contact information, education, and training, to make applying for multiple jobs quick and easy. By contrast, on paper, applicants had to re-type this information for each application. User-friendly design and architecture were carefully implemented throughout the development of the service. Like all services developed by InforME (the Information Resource of Maine), the HireME service was developed in compliance with the State of Maine Web Accessibility Policy and the State of Maine Web Standards, and uses the standard Maine.gov online services design.

In addition to bringing convenience to applicants in general, the HireME service provides a huge benefit to citizens with disabilities, in two ways:

- 1) The ability to apply online allows individuals to apply for state jobs who cannot physically visit a state office to apply;
- 2) The online service interface is fully compliant with state and federal standards for accessibility, allowing disabled individuals to apply for state jobs independently.

The disabled community, particularly blind citizens, have specifically requested an online state job application service due to the difficulties in completing a paper application.

User feedback for the HireME application has been extremely positive. One user, relocating to Maine indicated, "It was very helpful considering the fact that I am moving soon. As soon as I have the chance for an interview I am planning to move to Maine right away. The online application is great, and good for people to use when moving and seeking employment with the state."

Initial cost savings have already been approximately \$1,000 in the first 45 days of the service's availability. This is expected to grow dramatically as more job classifications become eligible for online application, and marketing is increased. This efficiency and cost savings is especially important to the Bureau of Human Resources due to recent staff reductions.

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Furthermore, the electronic process enables the state to be more attractive to recent or pending college graduates. This is especially important as the State of Maine will be dealing with a retirement-based workforce reduction of more than 59% in the next eight

years. Making preferred tools and communications mechanisms available to Generation Y users will ensure the state is positioned to compete with other competitors in the market.

Development and maintenance of the HireME service is provided without the use of appropriated funds as the result of a partnership with InforME, the state's self-funded portal manager. The InforME Board of Directors determined that the HireME application was of such high citizen and agency benefit that the service would be developed and provided at no cost to the state or the end users.

The value of the development services provided by InforME was approximately \$72,000, though this cost was absorbed by InforME rather than charged to the Agency.

Agency commitment has been vital in creating the efficiencies provided by the Bureau of Human Resources online service. BHR is committed and enthusiastic about the new service and will be making the service available to a variety of job classifications over the next few months, as well as actively marketing the service to the public. The online service has already helped to alleviate some of the agency's workload burden as the automated systems carry out all of the data entry and application scoring process for those applications submitted online. Processing of a paper application at BHR takes approximately 10 minutes of staff time on average, with associated costs of approximately \$3 per application. This means that in just the 45 days that the service has been online, the state has already saved nearly \$1,000 in processing costs due to the online service. As more job classifications are allowed to apply online, this savings will increase dramatically. The state receives more than 2,000 job applications each month, translating to a processing cost of \$6,000 per month under the paper application system. With the online system, it may be possible to reduce that cost significantly.