

**HireME- State of Maine Online Job Application Service**

**Maine Bureau of Human Resources**

Digital Government: Government to Citizen Category  
State of Maine

## **Executive Summary**

Applying for over 85 different Maine State Government job classifications has never been easier! The HireME online service allows any person seeking employment with the State of Maine to apply electronically for jobs through the Bureau of Human Resources online service. This convenient application stores the user's personal profile (personal information, work preferences, work history, and education history) and application history so that completing multiple job applications is quick and easy.

The online service provides a convenient (and free) method for job applicants and is partially intended to attract a more tech-savvy and younger applicant pool to state job opportunities. This becomes an important issue as the state's employee population ages and begins to retire in large numbers. In addition, the online service complies with state and federal requirements for accessibility to the disabled, so that disabled individuals who use assistive technologies or who cannot easily complete a paper form may now apply for state jobs independently.

The online service also saves significant time and money for the state, a critical benefit at a time of serious budget shortfalls and staffing reductions. Most job applications submitted online require no manual intervention. The service ensures a better quality of data on job applications through built-in validations, and allows applications to be available for agency review within days rather than weeks, speeding up the entire hiring process for state jobs.

The state has made a commitment to the online job application service and continues to expand the number of job classifications eligible for online application. Those classifications that are eligible are 100% online – no paper applications are accepted without special permission. Since this service was developed at no cost to the state through a partnership with InforME, the state of Maine's eGovernment portal, the ROI and efficiencies realized by this initiative are enormous.

## **Description**

Since 2000, the Maine Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) has been using a back-end database called ApTrack to track submitted State of Maine job applications from start to finish. Up until 2007, job applications were only offered and submitted on paper. Submitted applications were manually keyed into the ApTrack system, which scores the responses and then creates an electronic image of the application using special imaging software that makes the applications available for state agencies to review electronically. By 2005, the number of paper applications being 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, which created a paper backlog of approximately 3 weeks. In an effort to better serve applicants and alleviate the growing backlog of manual processing, BHR made the decision to modernize their process by offering a free online State of Maine job application service called HireME (<http://www.maine.gov/online/hireme>). This online service was built through a partnership with the state of Maine's eGovernment portal, InforME. 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.

Interfacing with the backend ApTrack system proved to be a difficult task due the complex design and logic of the database. However, InforME and BHR were able to generate the Perl scripts necessary for the HireME application to interface directly with the ApTrack database. HireME, which was made available to the public on April 12, 2007, is one of very few electronic state job applications to interface directly with a complex agency database and dynamically generate application-specific questions. This dynamic generation allows BHR to receive not only basic personal contact information, but also to gather responses to skill and requirement questions that are specific to each job classification. Having the complete application available 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 more timely manner.

Development and maintenance of the HireME service was provided without the use of appropriated funds. 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 services provided by InforME was approximately \$72,000 for the initial service development, and approximately \$15,000 annually for hosting and maintenance services. These costs have been absorbed by InforME, with no cost to BHR or to the end users, the job applicants.

InforME is managed by Maine Information Network, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of NIC. InforME was created by Maine state legislation to be the Internet gateway to government services and information under a self-funded, no appropriations model.

## **Significance**

The online service has already helped to alleviate BHR'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, with associated costs of approximately \$3 per application. This means that during the first year of operation the online service saved the Bureau of Human Resources nearly \$38,000 in processing costs. As more and more job classifications are made available through the online service, these savings will continue to increase. 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. The online system has made it possible to reduce that cost significantly. This efficiency and cost savings is especially important to the Bureau of Human Resources due to staff reductions and state budget shortfalls.

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 entire hiring process, ultimately benefiting both the applicants and the State of Maine, as open jobs can be filled much faster.

Furthermore, the electronic process enables the state to be more attractive to a younger generation, new college graduates, and to tech-savvy workers, which are needed within state government. 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 employers in Maine and to attract high quality employees.

For citizens, the HireME service provides a convenient and more user-friendly method for applying for jobs with the State of Maine, and significant time savings as well. The service allows applicants to enter their personal information the first time they use the service and re-use the stored profile information with future applications. The online service is free to applicants, so they are also saving the cost of postage or driving to the state BHR office or local Career Center.

## **Benefits**

Agency commitment has been vital in creating the efficiencies provided by the HireME service. BHR is committed and enthusiastic about the new service. The agency has already made over 85 of their 240 job classifications available through the online service. The target adoption for each live job class was originally 20% in the first year. However, within the first two months of operation, the available job classes exceeded the target and achieved adoption rates of 70% or higher. For example, 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. An

Office Assistant II position received 190 of 209 applications online for a stunning 91% adoption! Realizing the overwhelming adoption of the online service and the efficiencies it could create, the agency decided to stop accepting paper applications for all job classes available through HireME. This decision coupled with the agency's marketing efforts has catapulted the service to 100% adoption for all online job classifications. It is expected that more job classifications will be eligible for online applications over the next year.

In addition to the incredible cost/time savings already described, the service will attract a new applicant pool and initial information suggests that it may be increasing the overall number of job applications received by the state.

The Bureau of Human Resources has worked with InforME to develop a marketing plan for the service, including press releases and a public/press event in combination with a state job fair. These efforts should increase awareness of the service further.