

A. Cover Page



State of Oklahoma

Office of Personnel Management

OKCAREERS Online Applicant Tracking and Testing Program

Digital Government: Government to Citizen (G to C) Nomination

B. Executive Summary

The mission statement for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is to serve the people of Oklahoma by delivering reliable and innovative human resource services to our partner agencies to achieve their missions. External applicants seek employment in the State of Oklahoma's classified service by submitting applications to OPM. During the application process many applicants take examinations developed and proctored by OPM.

In this current information and technology age, OPM was concerned about losing applicants to the private sector due to their antiquated paper application system. All applicant data and certification was housed within a legacy IMS data system that was originally implemented in 1981. With these concerns in mind OPM began looking into purchasing software that could keep up with private industry and attract highly qualified, quality applicants to state service. The software also needed accommodate the merit system laws and regulations pertaining to OPM's function and day-to-day processes.

At the beginning of FY 2008, OPM analysts were busy preparing for a major system conversion. Throughout the beginning of FY 2008 and portions of FY 2007, the Applicant Services and Personnel Assessment Divisions of OPM worked with the vendor, JobAps, to create an online system for applicants to not only apply but also have an active role in the hiring process. Analysts were looking for a system that would benefit hiring agencies as well; providing them with the ability to submit requisitions for jobs online. After lengthy training of staff and agency HR professionals the new system, OKCAREERS, was implemented on January 23, 2008.

There were many anticipated benefits to the new system and many of those were displayed in just a few short months. Postage costs dropped dramatically, by more than 65%. Applicants voiced how they were happier because they were more involved in the process and knew more about the positions they were interested in. The average number of calls and walk-ins dwindled after just a few short months. In the meantime online application numbers soared. The legacy system averaged approximately 80,000 applications each year. Through OKCAREERS, OPM received in excess of 120,000 applicants in the first year! In the legacy system OPM staff routinely dealt personally with 60-90 walk-in applicants each day. After conversion to OKCAREERS the daily walk-in average was reduced to fewer than ten. At the conclusion of FY 2008 there were 52 state agencies with direct online access to the OKCAREERS system. With almost all state agencies gaining access to the system, applicant and job family statistics continue to grow.

C. Concise Description of Business Problem

The mission statement for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is to serve the people of Oklahoma by delivering reliable and innovative human resources services to our partner agencies to achieve their missions. External applicants seek employment in the State of Oklahoma's classified service by submitting applications to OPM. During the application process many applicants take examinations developed and proctored by OPM.

In 1981 a new, cutting edge system was implemented to house all applicant data and certification. At the touch of a button this legacy data system provided users with applicant's contact information, current application data, test score data, correspondence letters, etc. In addition to applicant information the system also was the home of the certification system. When hiring agencies needed lists of eligible applicants the agency HR staff member had the ability to immediately certify such a list from the privacy of their own desk whether it be across the hall or across the state. These certificates would include the applicant's contact information and score, if a selection device was utilized.

While this system was technologically advanced in 1981, in this current information and technology age, OPM was concerned they were losing applicants to the private sector who expected more information and a faster hiring process. Therefore, beginning in FY 2007 OPM began looking at different online application software products that could keep up with private industry while attracting highly qualified, quality applicants to state service. Not only that, the software would have to be able to be modified to fit statutory and rule-driven requirements pertaining to merit system hiring practices. After evaluating vendor bids for the project JobAps, a software company specializing in public sector employment, was selected. JobAps offered an "off the shelf" software program that could easily be custom fit for application, applicant tracking, certification and civil service testing. The programming, maintenance and servers would be maintained by JobAps, but all the actual functions of processing requisitions, applications, certificates, test creation, etc. within the system would be performed by analysts within OPM.

While preparing for the conversion both the public and hiring agencies needed to be made aware of the upcoming changes. OPM conducted several focus group meetings with HR officials from various merit agencies to discuss changes in the application and testing process. OPM notified all applicants who had valid applications in the legacy system that the old lists would be abolished and that they must reapply through OKCAREERS if they still wished to pursue state employment. Signage was placed in the Applicant Services lobby. Numerous icons and blurbs were also displayed on the OPM website, including both the main and job announcement webpages. The

hiring agencies were provided with three different opportunities to complete 2½ hour training sessions on how to use the system. Within these training sessions all users were provided with a 20+ page manual that they were allowed to take with them for future reference. Once training was completed and applicants were adequately notified, OKCAREERS was launched on January 23, 2008.

The solutions architecture of OKCAREERS included many different positives. Prior to OKCAREERS applicants had to fill out an application for each job title in which they were interested in and submit such application with an original signature. If an applicant was interested in applying for numerous positions they would photocopy the application in its entirety three, five or ten times depending upon the need or, even worse, complete a separate application each time they wished to apply. In OKCAREERS, an applicant fills out their first application. Then, when the applicant applies for their second, fourth and fifteenth applications they have the option to copy from their previous. If no updates are needed, they simply submit the next application with the click of a button on their mouse instead of multiple clicks of the button on the copier.

Another benefit to the architecture of the OKCAREERS software program was that it allowed applicants to complete “interest cards” for jobs not currently available. Previously, the Applicant Services Division would open obscure jobs for different agencies even when they did not have a vacancy. The reason for this was that the position was difficult to qualify for and therefore, there were not many applicants at any given point in time. So, rather than open the position when the vacancy occurred and wait six months for applicants, OPM would keep these positions open continuously. OKCAREERS has an “interest card” feature where an applicant can browse through all the job family descriptors within state classified service and submit their email address for when the position comes available. The system automatically generates these emails when such a position opens, notifying the applicant to apply. These subscriptions are good for 365 days and applicants may unsubscribe at any time. This makes applying easier for the applicant because the applicant knows when an actual vacancy occurs without having to check the website constantly. Also, OPM staff do not have to answer questions from understandably upset applicants about job announcements with no actual vacancies.

Conversely, OKCAREERS also gave better information about jobs in which there were frequent vacancies such as Administrative Technician, Secretary, Correctional Security Officer, Social Services Specialist, etc. Prior to OKCAREERS these positions were also open in a continuous announcement, however “various agencies” was listed as the hiring agency (if the position was not proprietary to one particular agency) and “various locations” was listed as the location. This initiated numerous phone calls from applicants wanting to know where these positions were located. However, the analysts

in the Applicant Services Division of OPM did not know the locations until the hiring agencies would request lists of names for their vacancies. At this point it was too late for those calling in because the hiring agencies already had their hiring lists. Upon implementation of OKCAREERS all agencies were required to announce all vacancies via the announcements on our website. This caused an influx of announcements in the first month or two after implementation, but it has since leveled out. At any given time there are a handful of each of these positions open on the job announcement webpage. The calls from frustrated applicants have all but disappeared and the hiring agencies are happy that they now have applicants that are truly interested in their positions. Since the legacy system put applicants on registers for six months (and allowed multiple six month renewals) it was not uncommon for a hiring agency to hire the 53rd person on the list because the first 52 failed to respond to the interview notice, another problem overcome with this change.

When an agency requested a position be open for recruitment prior to OKCAREERS they would complete a form outlining the details of their announcement. Then, that form would be sent to the appropriate liaison in the Applicant Services Division. At that time the liaison would process the announcement and every new announcement would open at 8:00am each Wednesday. The deadline for announcements was Monday, therefore if an agency requested an announcement at any time on Tuesday, they would have to wait until the following Wednesday to see it posted on OPM's website. Then, when the announcement closed the hiring agency would request their certificate. Agency HR staff would begin by making copies of the applications in the applicant file room, if necessary, and then mailing out interview notices. With OKCAREERS, announcements can be posted the minute the job announcement is completed. If an agency requests a job open at 8:15am on Monday it is not out of the question for the announcement to make it out on to the website by 8:30am that Monday. Also, when an agency receives their certificates within the OKCAREERS system, all applicant information including the application, transcripts, veterans documentation, resumes, etc. are attached with a simple link of their name on the electronic certificate. Additionally, there is a feature that allows state agencies to email all or even just a few applicants interview notices with just the click of a few buttons.

During the purchasing process OPM wanted to make sure that the software chosen would be accessible to any and all applicants that wished to gain employment with the State of Oklahoma. JobAps assured and demonstrated to staff that the program was compatible with multiple types of assistive technologies for persons with disabilities. This includes both the applicant and user sites. Also, although the system is designed for online applicants, each announcement provides a link where an applicant may print out a paper application to submit via fax, mail or hand delivery.

Though this is offered, it is not utilized often as less than half a percent (.41%) of applications are submitted in paper.

With recent concerns regarding identity theft state government, like many companies and institutions, is moving away from utilizing social security numbers as personal identification. While the prior legacy system used social security numbers for applicant identification, OKCAREERS does not provide this as an option. When an applicant submits a profile they are asked three questions: the first three letters of their last name at birth, their birth month and date as well as the last four of their social. They are then provided with an applicant ID that is made up in three parts. The ID is composed of the first three letters of their last name at birth, then the first digit from their month of birth and the last digit of their date of birth, then the last four digits of their social security number.

D. Significance of the Project to the Improvement of the Operation of Government

From application to hire, our analysts frequently told applicants that it took approximately two to three months of “application process” for a hire to occur. Agencies would post an announcement somewhere between two to four weeks (if it was not a hard-to-fill position). Then, they would request a list of names and mail interview notices that gave applicants five business days to schedule an interview within the following week. After all interviews took place the interview panel would then make a decision and offer the position to an applicant. If the selected applicant needed to give their two weeks notice, the filling of the position would be delayed further. Thanks to OKCAREERS this process has been condensed dramatically. Some of the State of Oklahoma’s largest agencies have cut their hiring time almost in half. Most hiring agencies now email interview notices. Instead of waiting five business days for responses agencies can now wait a mere 72 hours, then proceed with interviews and hiring.

Oklahoma was not the first public sector employer to implement a web-based application process. However, Oklahoma was only the second (and the largest) state to implement an applicant tracking and certification system and the first to implement web-based testing. The legacy system averaged approximately 80,000 applications each year. Through OKCAREERS, OPM received in excess of 120,000 applications in the first year! In the legacy system OPM staff routinely dealt personally with 60-90 walk-in applicants each day. After conversion to OKCAREERS the daily walk-in average was reduced to fewer than ten. At the conclusion of FY 2008 there were 52 state agencies with direct online access to the OKCAREERS system. With almost all state agencies gaining access to the system, applicant and job family statistics continue to grow.

Applicants benefit greatly, as they are now more active in the process and have a more detailed idea of what type of position they are applying for. Not only that, the correspondence they have with OPM and the hiring agencies is faster, clearer and more cost efficient. Agency HR staff members also benefit from the system by receiving their hiring lists sooner. They're also able to send out interview notices more efficiently and can post hires faster as a result. OPM staff members are also a beneficiary as the ability to process job announcements and applications is much faster with a more user-friendly system. Also, the time it takes responding to applicant inquiries is reduced as all the information needed is at the touch of a button rather than a file room down the hall and around the corner.

E. Benefit of the Project

Implementation of OKCAREERS more than paid for itself by substantially reducing postage and paper and freeing up four positions in our office to be diverted to other agency programs. OPM's postage cost has dropped from \$25,200.12 in FY 2007 to \$8,207.65 in FY 2008. This is a 67% drop and again, OKCAREERS was only up and running for six months of FY 2008.

Postage costs within agency budgets has dropped as well since all interview notices are now emailed. Agencies also report that the numbers for interview response is greater. This is due to all announcements having specific vacancies and applicants applying only for specific positions they are interested in; agencies are receiving applicants truly interested in that particular position.

Applicants also realize cost savings through OKCAREERS. No longer do applicants have to pay for a stamp to mail an application. Previously they might have had to pay even more for postage if they were including a resume, transcript, certifications, veterans' documents, etc. The applicant need not burn gasoline to drive to our office and turn in their application, then return later to take a test. If a position requires an examination, now the applicant only drives to one of the 20 statewide testing locations once. If no examination is required, then the applicant need not take the time, money nor effort to enter a state office.

OPM has been extremely pleased with the initial outcomes from implementing OKCAREERS and is looking forward to further successes do to this online applicant tracking and testing system as it further helps OPM in serving the people of Oklahoma by delivering reliable and innovative human resource services to our partner agencies to achieve their missions. OPM wants working for Oklahoma to be a positive experience from the beginning!