

City of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Implementing Eden's Electronic Personnel Action Approval Processes Significantly Shortens Turnaround Time

Winner of 2010 Tyler Public Sector Excellence Award

Industry: Local government

Location: Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Employees: 560

Years as a Tyler Client: 7

Budget: \$78 million

Tyler Products Used: Eden

The Facts: Incorporated in 1959, the City of Palm Beach Gardens comprises the largest land area in Palm Beach County at 55.7 square miles. Settled by insurance magnate John D. MacArthur who sought to develop 4,000 acres and provide homes for 55,000, 50% of the city's land mass is either forested with native Banyan Trees or landscaped green space. Today, the city is home to more than 50,000 citizens and many national businesses, including the headquarters of the Professional Golfers' Association of America (PGA).

Contact:

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Key Challenges:

- Shorten turnaround time associated with approval processes
- Use existing resources to replace manual approval process of personnel actions
- Eliminate errors, decrease paper, supplies and storage costs, and reduce retroactive payments

Benefits: Financial and Beyond

- Actions can now be submitted to multiple departments and signatures can be obtained electronically
- Turnaround time for approvals has been shortened to minutes instead of days or weeks, reducing personnel costs
- Onboarding of new employees and rehires is more efficient due to faster approval turnaround, reducing the time it takes to set up employees in the time clock system and in computer accounts
- Costs associated with errors; paper, supplies and storage; and retroactive payments have been drastically reduced

City of Palm Beach Gardens Best Practices

- Utilized existing resources to find a solution to time-consuming personnel action approval processes
- Worked with Eden staff to create a custom report of all transaction information that can be saved in employees' personnel files
- Provided a manual to guide users through processes using the new system

In Their Own Words:

"The turnaround time [for approval processes] has gone from days or weeks to minutes, saving the city countless hours of personnel costs."

— Niki Spencer, Special Projects Coordinator
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Manual Approval Process No Longer Sufficient

With more than 500 employees, the City of Palm Beach Gardens in Florida must process hundreds of personnel actions every year. In fact, in 2009 the city processed approximately 600 personnel actions—all with manual approval and workflow processes. Until recently the city lacked the use of an approval queue system that could electronically process different types of personnel actions. Each action was manually typed on paper and coupled with necessary attachments, routed through the queue by inter-office mail or by foot, and finally entered into Eden Human Resources and filed in the associated employee personnel file. “If an action was not misplaced or stalled, the process took an average of three days to complete as the city government is split among multiple locations,” explained Niki Spencer, special projects coordinator.

Errors in salary, position numbers, dates and more were commonplace and an excessive amount of duplication by departments was required as papers were copied and recopied as approvals were signed. Retroactive payments were a common nuisance for the Payroll/Finance Department as approval time took days—sometimes even weeks—to complete and often overlapped with payroll processing periods. And confidentiality was an ongoing concern as many personnel actions contain private personnel information.

Tired of such a tedious process, city management sought a solution for electronically submitting actions to multiple departments and for obtaining electronic signatures—one that would utilize existing resources. The answer was found in the software system the city was already using: Eden.

Electronic Approval Processing with Eden

Once they realized they had an opportunity to use their existing software to make an important change, city personnel took a step-by-step approach to setting up and using Eden for approvals. “We first took a look at the security features,” explained Matthew Doherty, software systems manager. “We needed to restrict access to the approval forms and restrict users from seeing information outside of their department. Eden’s security features allowed us to do that.” Next, they took a close look at the types of transactions the city performed—including certification pay, incentive pay, cell phone stipends, longevity, account distribution changes and leaves of absence—and customized Eden to create needed forms. By restricting the “new values” section of the Transfer/Reclass/Promotion function in Eden the city was able to create “comments-only” actions and use the approval queue for electronic signatures.

Integration with their document management system helps the city manage attachments, and a custom report created by Tyler provides a comprehensive document of all transaction information that can be placed in an employee’s personnel file.

Countless Hours of Personnel Costs Saved

The result: the city now has one centralized Electronic Personnel Action form that takes care of all city personnel action needs. The form pulls live data directly from the employee record and users scan or create any necessary attachments before electronically submitting into an approval queue. Users can track where the action is in process and receive a document with all details and required signatures once completed. In addition, departments can recall each employee’s personnel action history. “The turnaround time [for approval processes] has gone from days or weeks to minutes, saving the city countless hours of personnel costs,” emphasized Spencer. Errors are nearly nonexistent; paper, supplies and storage costs have decreased; and retroactive payments have been drastically reduced.

Benefits Extend to Employees and Beyond

Training city departments on how to use the new form has been a simple process according to Spencer. Because data is pulled directly from the employee record stored in Eden, a user only has to add or edit a small amount of information to submit an action. What’s more, each user has received a manual with screen shots to guide them through each process, eliminating the use of spreadsheets or other documents to track the salary and position information necessary to complete an action.

Spencer believes other public sector organizations can benefit from using the approval and workflow processes in Eden. “By using Eden as we have, other users can do more with less.”