

Portage County, Ohio

Bringing its Systems into the 21st Century

Winner of 2008 Munis Public Sector Excellence Award

Industry: County Government

Location: Ravenna, OH

Employees: 1,300

Tyler products used: Munis Financials—Payroll

Budget: \$201 Million

Years as Tyler client: 4.5

The Facts: With a population exceeding 152,000, Portage County encompasses a land area of approximately 500 square miles. From its gently rolling pastures to its industrial parks and city centers, Portage County is conveniently located in the midst of northeastern Ohio's urban centers including Greater Cleveland, Akron/Canton, and Warren/Youngstown metropolitan areas—and boasts some of the finest educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities available anywhere.

Contact:

Brian Kelley, CIO, bkelly@portageco.com

www.co.portage.oh.us

Key Challenges

- Replace an obsolete Financial and Payroll system
- Transform a highly centralized, cumbersome process into a streamlined, decentralized system
- Implement a solution that enabled Portage County to meet Ohio reporting requirements
- Revise current processes and procedures to be more effective

Portage County's Best Practices

- Created detailed specifications for a successful selection of company and product, and implementation of the solution
- Identified and dedicated resources to ensure collaboration and effective communication
- Employed change management practices to advise and inform end users throughout the process
- Posted project communications to keep employees informed and up to date on progress

Benefits: Financial and Beyond

- Processing times have been reduced from days to minutes and seconds, and electronic processing has overtaken outdated paper processing—translating to both hard and soft costs for the County
- Immediate online information available
- County now able to meet statemandated reporting requirements

Why Tyler?

- Tyler provides all consulting, product enhancement, implementation, training, and support services
- The Munis Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) suite is a fullyintegrated software solution
- Tyler is the largest sole provider of software and services for the public sector, covering all solutions for Financial, Education, Document, and Pension Management; Land and Vital Records; Appraisal and Tax; Courts & Justice; Public Safety; and Citizen Services

In Their Own Words:

"Portage County's investment in Tyler, and Tyler's investment in Portage County, led to an extremely successful implementation. As a result, we have a highly efficient system which continues to meet the ongoing needs of the County."

—Brian Kelley, Portage County CIO

Legacy System Kept Portage County Stagnant

Portage County had long struggled with an obsolete financial and payroll software system. It was labor intensive, cumbersome, and required nightly batch processing and focused IT administration. For instance, the centralized processing system required end-user departments to send hardcopy interoffice mail, extending the process by a week or longer. The system was text based, non user-friendly, and inherent deficiencies abounded—including the inability to drill-down on records in the system, poor payroll processing and reporting capabilities, lack of user and transaction audit trails, and the inability to record Ohio Certification of Resources or meet Ohio PERS reporting compliance. To compound the problem, the system had no workflow capability and couldn't offer up-to-date online information.

As a result, end-users were forced to use a second system requiring double entry and reconciliation—and to create spreadsheets, databases, and other records outside of the system. The County's departments were fragmented, and many processes in their legacy system required multiple paper submission requests on forms, letters, and memos to applicable offices. Portage County knew its solution needed updating—and fast.

Building Bridges: Coordination, Cooperation, Communication, Consolidation, and Integration

Portage County began the painstaking process of ERP software remediation by creating detailed specifications from scratch. Every process in their old system was scrutinized, and new processes were developed to increase efficiency and productivity. Once complete, the

County's next step was to determine which company and system would best meet their needs. At the end of this lengthy process, the County selected Tyler's Munis Financial Management Solution as the best fit.

According to Brian Kelley, Portage County CIO, Tyler worked hand-in-hand with the County to ensure a successful implementation. "Working closely as a team, Tyler and Portage County successfully implemented Munis by engineering and building bridges of coordination, cooperation, communication, consolidation, and integration between all County offices and elected officials. Munis (the system) and Tyler (the company) were instrumental in assisting us with this monumental endeavor."

Portage County's implementation was enterprisewide involving eighteen elected officials, over 40 departments, and more than 200 users. With the implementation of Munis, the County migrated from a centralized to a decentralized system with enduser electronic transaction entry and processing for all transactions. Since then most transaction processing times have decreased thousands-fold, from days down to minutes—and even seconds. End users have immediate online electronic information on transactions. With the reporting and drill-down capabilities in Munis, the County no longer has to print volumes of paper reports. Furthermore, Munis now addresses all of the County's Ohio-specific reporting and accounting requirements and processes.

Tyler's Munis Consulting Group and the County also created detailed policies and procedures, which were non-existent in the prior system. Additionally, Tyler and the County Auditor's Office met with each department to provide training and ongoing workshops. This unique

relationship between the County and Tyler's employees helped to mitigate the major common problems experienced today in many public sector information system implementations—and ensured that the County could realize a significant return on its investment with Tyler's Munis product.

Moving Forward, Looking Ahead

In summary, Kelley reflects on the County's positive experience and ongoing relationship with Tyler's Munis software. "All of the aforementioned could have never been achieved with our prior system," he explains. "Other Tyler solution users can benefit by re-engineering their work processes to take advantage of the inherent functionality in Tyler solutions—functionality which can provide increased efficiency and productivity in today's public sector organizations and educational institutions. In implementing Munis, the County has achieved many direct and indirect returns on their investment in Munis, and was able to address all of the deficiencies inherent in our old system."