

Supporting Rapid Growth Through ERP Transformation

How Georgetown, Texas, modernized HR, finance and payroll



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Facing a skyrocketing population, Georgetown, Texas, replaced a patchwork of legacy financial and human resources (HR) software with a cloud-based enterprise resource planning (ERP) suite. The modernization project positioned the city for the future by providing advanced process automation and sophisticated reporting capabilities to help leaders create new efficiencies and make data-informed decisions.

Georgetown's experience serves as a real-world example for other cities considering ERP modernization. It also demonstrates that implementing an advanced, cloud-based ERP solution is within reach of small and mid-size jurisdictions.

Project Overview

Georgetown has grown dramatically as nearby Austin transformed into a major technology hub. The city's population surpassed 100,000 in 2024 — up 50% from the 2020 Census¹ — creating new management challenges for city leaders. Leigh Wallace, Georgetown's chief financial officer, needed to make sure the city had the systems and personnel to support its rapid expansion.

Unfortunately, Georgetown's legacy HR and financial systems weren't up to the task. Wallace and her staff needed a modern cloud ERP platform to unify the management of a broad spectrum of critical functions, including employee recruiting and performance, employee benefits, payroll, procurement and accounting. The new solution had to include robust cybersecurity and data protection from a proven cloud vendor. Wallace also wanted sophisticated data management and analytics capabilities that Georgetown's legacy systems lacked.

"We wanted to reduce our risk, so we were looking to get into a cloud system that was scalable and more secure, with more updated business processes," Wallace says. The city chose Workday's ERP platform

to consolidate HR, finance and payroll. The new technology provides a host of improvements, including far better data visualizations and accelerated business processes that directly improve resident service and boost back-office efficiency.

Georgetown's ERP Journey

Georgetown's ERP transformation impacted people and processes across the city. Wallace identified a range of best practices that helped ease the city's transition to the cloud platform, optimize new technological capabilities and speed up time to value.

Secure leadership support. Even with the right technology in place, true transformation would not have been possible without organizationwide engagement. Wallace worked closely with Georgetown's elected and executive leaders to build support for the project. "Our leadership was really committed. Once we made the selection, they were behind that selection all the way, and we were going to see the project through," she says. "Our city manager was very supportive of the project and did a great job of enlisting our city council, making sure that they supported it as well."

Devote appropriate resources. "It was really important to think about what was right for us upfront," Wallace says. For starters, she wanted minimal disruption to city services during the project. To keep everyday processes running smoothly, the city hired temporary employees for critical back-office tasks



while city staff focused on the modernization project. A third-party project manager was brought in to oversee the initiative.

Communicate benefits and project status. Wallace made sure city employees understood the benefits of the new technology. Although the solution required staff to learn new processes, it would also dramatically streamlined a range of tasks. In addition, Wallace kept city leaders apprised of the project's status, which helped win support for additional resources when needed.

Prepare to navigate change. Each city department appointed "ambassadors" to monitor the project's progress, prepare users for training programs and explain how their work would change. These ambassadors also supported their colleagues during the implementation, answered questions and helped ensure a smooth transition.

Deploy incrementally. Georgetown implemented the system in a phased approach, starting with HR and payroll, moving to core financials, and then adding a budget system. Working in stages was pivotal because the ERP transformation would impact all the city's 650 employees in some way.

Georgetown prioritized the deployment of core functions and saved other features for later. Once the city had mastered the ERP fundamentals, it added modules for learning management and warehouse inventory operations.

Identify your guiding principles. A change management partner encouraged the city to draft a concise list of essential principles that would help leaders resolve problems when difficult decisions threatened to stall progress. "We posted those guiding principles in all the conference rooms we used," Wallace says. They came in handy time and again.

Strive for standardization. Individual business units may want to customize new software to fit existing

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work processes. But customization tends to undermine the effectiveness of cloud systems. Uniformity encourages efficiency that frees up more time for overworked staff. "We did a really good job of moving to standard processes for the vast majority of the functionality we adopted," Wallace says.

Confront the risk of burnout. Modernization projects can be stressful for staff. Wallace's team eased those pressures with activities like games and social outings. "We had our animal shelter bring kittens to the office," Wallace says, which lightened the mood.

Gain more insight. Modern ERP solutions let cities quantify the financial implications of municipal functions. Wallace says the Workday platform enabled Georgetown to track an array of activities. "We can easily set up a tag and apply it to any type of revenue or expense and then pull reporting," Wallace says. "That was really helpful when we had to do applications to FEMA for reimbursement for extreme weather events."

Putting Modernization Within Reach

As Georgetown's experience shows, modernizing with sophisticated cloud-based ERP can be a reality for small and mid-size local governments. Equipped with the right approach, resources and partners, Georgetown successfully replaced legacy systems and gained advanced ERP capabilities that position the city for success now and in the future.

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/georgetowncitytexas/PST045223>

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