

Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

State of New Jersey ePAR (Electronic Performance Assessment Review) Program

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Summary: State of New Jersey ePAR (Electronic Performance Assessment Review) Program

Governor Chris Christie made it clear upon taking office that streamlining the delivery of essential State services was a priority. The New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC) responded immediately by bringing the traditional paper-based examination application system into the 21st century with the creation of the Online Application System. The successful implementation of the initial phases of this project by late 2013 was only half the story, however. Concurrent with automation of the process for new hires was a revamp of an essential system for employees already in place – the regularly scheduled employee performance assessment review.

The State of New Jersey's legacy Performance Assessment Review (PAR) system was unwieldy and time-consuming, producing reams of paper reports that were inconvenient to share, access and update. We saw the need to move the entire process online. While off-the-shelf solutions existed, the CSC believed that the ideal answer would be one that combined a standard foundation for performance review with a degree of customization and flexibility to make it relevant to the needs of the myriad State agencies and departments that would use it.

The CSC sought out a collaborator to bring technical expertise to the project. The agreement with Microsoft Consulting Services to build the new ePAR system on the SharePoint platform allows the State of New Jersey to maintain the well-established performance appraisal format while taking advantage of the state-of-the-art services offered by Microsoft Corporation, and to tailor the program to the needs of its audiences.

1. The e-PAR system is a key initiative to provide innovative, efficient and responsive service delivery to state government by replacing traditional, paper-based performance appraisal methods with an automated process. e-PAR will simplify and automate the employee appraisal process, eliminating the need for paper-based forms and the associated time-consuming tasks of tracking, copying and circulating appraisal forms. It will encourage staff involvement and motivation, and increased participation in the planning and delivery of work.

2. The program became operational on July 1, 2014, with its implementation in the New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC).

3. The former performance evaluation process was a paper-based, manual system that was labor-intensive, time-consuming and burdensome. e-PAR is designed to automate the process, but also to improve and encourage supervisor/employee engagement and collaboration. With access to evaluation information available online at all times, e-PAR treats performance management as an ongoing process, instead of a semi-annual event. Goal setting becomes a two-way communication that provides direction and valuable input for success. Supervisors and employees can easily enter notes about performance, both positive and negative, as events happen, instead of relying on memories of what was achieved over a rating period. Supervisors can provide continuous feedback to employees about professional growth and development.

Overall, it provides for a more effective way to achieve agency goals and objectives.

4. While electronic performance reviews are not new, the CSC chose to develop a proprietary system rather than purchasing one “off the shelf.” The CSC engaged an outside consultant, Microsoft Consulting Services, to assist in the development. The ePAR is built on the SharePoint platform, and licensing of that platform is the only requirement for maintenance. The collaboration allows the State of New Jersey to maintain the well-established performance

appraisal format while taking advantage of the state-of-the-art services offered by Microsoft Corporation, and to tailor the program to the needs of its audiences. ePAR system has a standardized format with customizable options for all forms. Departments and agencies may select up to fourteen performance factors from a menu of thirty-two to review their employees, supervisors and managers.

5. Initial cost for the project was approximately \$2.18 million in the first year. This included system design and architecture, development, testing, and implementation.

6. The operational cost for the system is part of the Microsoft Premier licensing packages, which is spread across numerous CSC programs.

7. The system is funded through the agency's regular operating budget.

8. & 9. See number 4.

10. The e-PAR system will be successful if it provides Appointing Authorities with a more effective way to manage the administration of the employee appraisal process. It has achieved its goals if it:

- 1) dramatically reduces paperwork;
- 2) is user-friendly;
- 3) ties individual performance to organizational performance indicators and core mission;
- 4) provides access to the system 24-7-365 from any Internet-linked PC;
- 5) promotes supervisor-employee engagement;
- 6) allows easy retrieval of appraisal forms (current and previous years');
- 7) includes a comprehensive management tracking and reporting tool;
- 8) allows identification of individual and organizational competency strengths and weaknesses;

- 9) allows attachment of supporting documentation such as e-mails, word documents, spreadsheets, etc.;
- 10) provides a tool that can be used for employee career development goals;
- 11) provides easy monitoring of the status of employee evaluations;
- 12) allows user to enter employee performance notes at any time during the course of a rating period;
- 13) improves overall quality of appraisals;
- 14) links with PMIS (the State employment data system);
- 15) eliminates the need for dual data entry into PARS system.

11. e-PAR was introduced on July 1, 2014 for 243 employees of the Civil Service Commission, followed by the Office of Information Technology (745 employees) and the Departments of Children and Families (6,536), Education (188), and Treasury and affiliated offices (3,326) on September 1, 2014; the Motor Vehicle Commission, Office of the Public Defender (1,179), and the Departments of Environmental Protection (2,731), Health (1,146), Labor and Workforce Development (2,857), and additional offices in Education (600) on October 1, 2014; Law and Public Safety and its affiliated agencies (7,611), Community Affairs (889) and additional offices in Treasury (90) on November 1, 2014; Banking and Insurance (476) and the Election Law Enforcement Commission on January 1, 2015; and Agriculture (204) on March 1, 2015. We expect to introduce it for nearly 30,000 employees in the Departments of State, Transportation, Corrections, Military and Veterans Affairs, and Human Services; the Board of Public Utilities; the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education; the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority; and ten State colleges over the course of the 2015 and 2016 fiscal years. By the end of

FY 2016, we expect to have incorporated nearly 60,000 State employees into the e-PAR program.