

1. Clearly Identify a Champion

A project champion is the glue between internal stakeholders and the external technology partner. This person is passionate about the proposed innovation and can speak the language of both internal and external parties in order to communicate questions and concerns in a way that the other will understand. They will be a reliable and consistent touchpoint throughout the project until it goes live.

2. Develop a Color-Coding System For Project Management

Any implementation is going to have a variety of associated owners, tasks, and deadlines. Managing all of these elements can become overwhelming without a system of prioritization. The easiest way to do this? Create a color-coding system that helps you visually identify and prioritize the items that need to get done today, tomorrow, this week, next month, and beyond. One method is to use red to connote a sense of urgency, green to connote a sense of accomplishment, and yellow to show actions in progress.

3. Use This Opportunity to Create a Culture of Innovation

With so many team members involved in implementation, and now a new system of tracking, you'll have more visibility into your team member's individual contributions than ever before, all in pursuit of a singular, collective goal. This is a powerful opportunity to encourage colleagues' contributions towards modernization efforts. Think of implementation as an opportunity to shift the internal culture towards one of innovation—an added benefit is this keeps everyone motivated to stay on task.

4. Time is Money—Prepare Accordingly

For most software projects, implementation support is a paid service, akin to training or consulting sessions. If that's the case, prepare accordingly. Remember that taxpayers are paying for these services so that you can maximize the value of your new investment.

5. Set Realistic Goals and a Variety of Flexible and Fixed Deadlines

Leading up to the day you want to go live with the software, teams should consider 1) the amount of historical data they need to bring over to a new platform, 2) the size of their municipality (more people means more data), 3) the number of departments going online (more departments mean more initial system configurations), and 4) how many data migrations have previously been completed before this one. All of these variables will change the length of time it takes to go live using the software, so be realistic in setting fixed checkpoints and flexible deadlines accordingly to accomplish tasks.

6. Involve Decision-Makers in Data Migration

The most successful municipalities approach implementation in an organized fashion, and have decision-makers involved throughout the process. Whether or not the champion has direct knowledge or access to the data, they have to have the resources or internal will to ensure the right stakeholders are brought in to answer questions around migrating data.

7. Field-to-Field Mapping

Of everything on this list, correctly mapping data fields from the old system to the new is the most critical element of ensuring quick ROI and usability shortly after launching software. Teams need to decide ahead of time what data they need to bring over, what form it previously existed in, whether or not that form needs to change in the new software, and build workarounds as needed to account for any discrepancies in the datasets. It can be challenging to strike the right balance between accounting for all possible use cases and setting up an overly complicated system. Rely on your implementation support manager for advice along the way as needed.