



Thinking about online timesheets, leave, or scheduling for your council?

Implementing online timesheets and leave in council is so much more than just replacing paper with an online timesheet.

This is a quick guide on things to consider before embarking on an implementation project at your council.

Over the last few years, we have been fortunate enough to have implemented elementTIME across many Australian councils. These experiences have helped us to identify some key things that help councils to have a smooth, efficient onboarding experience and ultimately achieve their objectives faster.

Done right, an implementation should result in an organisation-wide uplift in understanding and appreciation of employee time, entitlements, awards, and payroll processes.

Below are some of the steps you should take before embarking on an online time and attendance implementation. These activities will result in a faster, more effective implementation with:

- ✓ Reduced noise and misalignment between payroll and the business
- ✓ Faster and smoother user adoption
- ✓ Better stakeholder support throughout the implementation
- ✓ Faster realisation of higher-level benefits

Our biggest piece of advice is this: There will always be an excuse for not getting on with implementing online timesheets, leave and workforce reporting JUST YET. Maybe because of other projects, staff changes, or even just fear of change. The longer things are delayed, the longer things will stay the same.

If you are worried about capacity or impact, then talk to your vendor; most will have options to assist.

"The elementTIME team are awesome and were extremely helpful before, during, and after implementation. [They] are prompt in their response time which gives our staff confidence in the system."

Michelle

Payroll officer at Norfolk Island Regional Council

Define your measures of success (long and short term)

You may have already identified these in your business case or business process analysis. If you haven't yet done so, taking the time to document your measures of success is important. This makes it easier to validate the achievement of your goals and communicate it to the wider stakeholders.

If you are unsure of your measures of success, take time to do it now with the following questions:

1. What are your reasons for implementing an online timesheet, leave, workforce reporting solution?
2. What value are you wanting the organisation to get out of the implementation?

Why councils say this is important

- ✓ Provides you with a clear reference point for the project moving forward.
- ✓ Allows you to ensure the project doesn't get side tracked by noise.
- ✓ Allows you to consistently ground the project back against key deliverables.
- ✓ Ensures decisions and communications reference and address the strategic project goals rather than the individual humps or distractions along the way.



Identify and quantify your pain points

It's important to clearly define what challenges and pain points you expect to resolve. These can then be prioritised so that the implementation first focuses on nailing the issues that are most important to your council.

Consider the full end-to-end timesheet and leave process as experienced by your staff, managers and payroll team. This starts with how your staff know what they should be doing and when – i.e., when do I need a medical certificate, how do I know what work order to code time against.

It helps to carefully document who does what at each stage including the flow of data, validation and checking at each stage right through to processing the pay files.

Identify the current pain points in your payroll, workforce reporting business now. You can use questions like:

1. What parts of the process cause the most issues?
2. What parts of the process frequently have or create errors?
3. What parts of the process create the most noise?
4. What parts of the process require the most manual intervention, calculation, or rework?
5. What information is currently managed through ad hoc systems (spreadsheets etc) or other informal processes (like paper)?

Why councils say this is important

- ✓ You can use this information to measure your success and communicate it to the wider stakeholders. It may be in the form of tangible metrics (e.g., we used to spend 14 hours keying in timesheets every payrun and now we spend 2 hours data checking) or statements (e.g., we have removed 14 paper forms from the process and no longer manually collate 4 reports for the executive, or we used to average 28 incorrect leave requests per week now our staff all know what is required when submitting leave requests and all leave requests are correct).

- ✓ This ensures the organisation considers the full value of the solution, not just something owned by payroll.
- ✓ It provides the opportunity to examine the huge number of touch points payroll have that are often not considered, like how work orders are requested and then created for costing.
- ✓ It allows the organisation to reset the large number of grey areas that creep into payroll processes without wider council or HR, etc. being fully aware.

Plan the implementation

No matter how great your vendor is (and some are really great!!), they simply cannot deliver a successful implementation without involvement, engagement and leadership support from your key staff.

Often, we find that councils overestimate the capacity and availability of key staff, particularly the payroll team. This can result in a stretched project team that doesn't have enough time to effectively engage in the project. Ultimately this affects the quality of the decision making, creates rework and delay the realisation of project benefits.

Here are some steps to ensure you are prepared to execute a successful implementation:

1. Your vendor should provide a clear project plan up front that defines which resources will be required at different stages of the project.
2. Ensure you have capacity for change. Payroll officers are always busy, so the project needs to allow for their payrun days. They either need to be fully committed to the project and driving it, or they need be supported by someone who is.
3. Acknowledge there will be the need for business support beyond payroll, e.g. help with reviewing business decisions and the existing "how it has always been done". Ensure HR or the executive are aware and ready.
4. Ensure that someone internally is designated as the project manager, even if that's not their day job.

Councils suggest the following:

- ✓ Remember not everything is about the system. Be prepared to talk about the processes and business and maybe even changes to policies. Don't put bad process / business on a new system.
- ✓ Utilise the additional value opportunities (like workforce reporting or workflow), even if it takes some energy to get the change happening.
- ✓ Define / document the important things. We use templates to establish everything from how RDOs are managed through to how managers are expected to record unpaid work.
- ✓ Identify existing issues / opportunities for improvement that are important to ensure they are addressed. This helps with reporting and also reminding people of the value of the improvements overall (not just the little area they can see of the process).
- ✓ If you have a project manager or dedicated staff, make sure they stick to the project rather than become a gap between progress and payroll.

Manage the change

Council staff are a varied workforce, with many different backgrounds, roles, and level of comfort with technology. Effective change management and communication is critical to getting adoption across all levels of the organisation and ultimately achieving the objectives of the implementation.

Key steps you can take to ensure effective change management:

1. Engage with the executive team early and have them provide a clear endorsement for the project to include in your initial communications to the organisation.
2. Communicate early and frequently. Set expectations early and keep people in the loop.
3. Provide extra support. For some of your staff, this change can be scary. Make sure you provide them extra support when they need it. This could be a basic technology course prior to onboarding or simply having a user champion on hand to help with questions.

Councils also suggest the following advice:

- ✓ Clearly communicate the onboarding plan. Identify your groups of workers and then stick to it. Get it done. There will always be push back from some players but focusing on the "don't want to" will mean nothing gets done.
- ✓ When you identify your groups of staff to be onboarded, work out what level of support and help they will need. Use the elementTIME resource to help structure the discussions especially with tricky groups (like outdoor staff).
- ✓ Once you start onboarding, keep your momentum going. Don't get distracted, or staff won't put the effort in.
- ✓ List all the expectations up front so staff know how they should be completing timesheets and managers know what they are responsible for (and why it is important).
- ✓ Ensure you clearly communicate what you are trying to achieve – the key drivers for the project.