



Customer

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Products and Services

Exchange Online

Office 365

OneDrive for Business

Surface

Windows 10

Industry

Government

Organization Size

Corporate (10,000+ employees)

Country

United States

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts achieves breakthrough success shaping the future of work for state employees—eight years ahead of schedule

June 9, 2022



For decades, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' 125 separate executive departments and divisions operated as technology siloes. To remedy this while enabling its 40,000 employees to work securely from anywhere, as well as reducing the size of its facilities footprint, the commonwealth embarked on an ambitious modernization plan that few government entities had ever tried. Built around a cloud-based strategy, the state's bold Workforce 2030 initiative helped modernize and standardize state employees on Microsoft productivity and collaboration solutions and devices—accomplishing a 10-year plan in just 18 months—and created a foundation for the future of work.

When Curtis Wood took over as Chief Information Officer for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, one of his first major goals was to modernize the commonwealth's aging technology infrastructure by uniting its 125 agencies around a common platform. The criteria for success was as ambitious as it was challenging: provide modern technology tools and products that improved workforce efficiency and productivity to their constituencies and improve work-life balance for the commonwealth's 40,000 employees and contractors. Increasing cybersecurity and cost savings was also top of mind.

"Our organization, the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS), was created in 2017 with the mission to make sure that we had the most modern infrastructure and services focused on resiliency, availability, and accessibility," says Wood, "and that we could scale and provide continuity of service."

The commonwealth also wanted to find ways to reduce and repurpose its state-wide facilities footprint. By expanding an existing telework program and using cloud-based productivity and collaboration tools from Microsoft, Wood knew his team could help

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addition, they could help ease traffic congestion in the towns where government facilities were located by enabling employees to work remotely.

Creating a bold vision for 40,000 workers

"We were thinking, 'What can we get done over the next 10 years by taking a more strategic and standardized approach to technology?'," Wood recalls. "How can we look at our workforce in a different way and build a better working environment for the commonwealth's employees? That's how this program really got started." From Wood's perspective, the overarching challenge was how to achieve as many goals as possible using the same technologies.

The result of this planning process was an ambitious initiative called Workforce 2030, a 10-year program that mapped out how EOTSS would modernize and standardize technology infrastructure for the entire state government. Partnering with the commonwealth's Administration and Finance secretariat and two of their key agencies, the state's Human Resources Division (HRD) and the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), EOTSS began this journey just prior to the outbreak of COVID-19.

As the first step of this plan, EOTSS wanted to move every commonwealth employee onto a cloud-based email platform, [Microsoft Exchange Online](https://www.microsoft.com/microsoft-365/exchange/exchange-online) (<https://www.microsoft.com/microsoft-365/exchange/exchange-online>). This would be a major undertaking for any organization, but particularly for one as technologically and organizationally diverse as the Massachusetts state government. Over more than 40 years, each of the commonwealth's 125 different departments had latitude and opportunity to deploy the business technologies they felt would best suit their needs. This approach added significant technical debt and posed growing cybersecurity concerns as disparate systems built on incompatible platforms proliferated.

Because one of the objectives of Workforce 2030 was to standardize as many of the commonwealth's technologies as possible, Wood and his team had to influence and provide a path forward for agencies and their IT leadership, each with unique organizational missions, to adopt a new approach to buying, provisioning, and using technology —one they had no direct control over.

"These things aren't easy," says Wood. "You don't walk in, flip the switch, and everything works. When we started discussing where things were and where we needed to go, we had some very deep conversations because there was a philosophy and a strategy at each department about doing things one way."

Changing the status quo

When Wood took over his role in 2018, the working relationship between Massachusetts and Microsoft was focused on products, not outcomes. Because departments had their own budgets, Microsoft sold its products to each department separately, which generated regular software audits to ensure all licenses were accounted for. Wood was concerned this legacy might prove to be an obstacle in moving the Workforce 2030 initiative forward the way he envisioned.

After honest discussions about these concerns with Microsoft's executive leadership, an agreement was made to shift away from past emphasis on licensing compliance and instead focus on holistically helping the commonwealth achieve the technological future state that Workforce 2030 required. This became a pivotal moment in the commonwealth's transformation journey and was instrumental in convincing Wood it was the right time to migrate all commonwealth executive departments to Exchange Online.

"We always had issues with licensing," says Wood. "So, this was an opportunity to change the game. Microsoft made a commitment to

me to focus on success, on solutions. That's where they sold me, and I went all in."

After moving forward with the Exchange Online migration, which also supported expansion of the commonwealth's existing telework program, Wood and his EOTSS team began expanding the standardization aspects of Workforce 2030. They called in [Microsoft Consulting Services](https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/managed-desktop/get-ready/apps-MCS) (<https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/managed-desktop/get-ready/apps-MCS>) for help with moving government agencies from on-premises systems to cloud-based productivity and security solutions, including [Microsoft 365](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/) (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/>), [Windows 10](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/) (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/>), [Defender for Office 365](https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/security/office-365-security/overview?view=o365-worldwide) (<https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/security/office-365-security/overview?view=o365-worldwide>), and [Surface](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/surface) (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/surface>) tablets for part of the workforce. This was a major step towards moving the commonwealth's systems and devices onto a standard platform of Microsoft technologies.

Bringing a business mindset to government innovation

While Wood knew it was relatively common for large enterprises to move to the cloud, there were few state governments that had attempted such a large-scale transformation. He also knew that, when it comes to major IT infrastructure decisions, it can be risky to be a leader. But with both his team and Microsoft aligned on what success should look like, Wood felt comfortable with EOTSS leading the way in showing what government IT organizations can accomplish.

This approach to technology proved beneficial when thousands of commonwealth employees began working from home in 2020. With cloud applications and telework infrastructure already up and running, EOTSS was ready. In just six weeks, it deployed over 5,000

 new laptops and enrolled 25,000 new users onto the commonwealth's virtual private network (VPN) using [Microsoft Azure](https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/managed-desktop/get-ready/apps-MCS)

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[Active Directory](https://azure.microsoft.com/services/active-directory/) (Azure AD). EOTSS also moved state employees onto [Microsoft OneDrive](https://www.microsoft.com/microsoft-365/onedrive/online-cloud-storage) (<https://www.microsoft.com/microsoft-365/onedrive/online-cloud-storage>) at the same time.

After this successful effort, Wood and his team realized they might be able to accelerate the timetable for the technology component of the original Workforce 2030 program. By adopting Microsoft 365 and other cloud-based technologies, EOTSS successfully transitioned the state's employees and contractors in just a matter of weeks.

What Wood and his team thought would take 10 years when Workforce 2030 was first launched, they were able to accomplish in just 18 months. If they could do that, then what else was possible?

Building on the benefits of modernization

With its progress to date, it's no surprise the commonwealth is benefiting in a variety of ways from its transformation. Agencies no longer have to manage technology stacks on their own or negotiate separate contracts for productivity and collaboration apps. They only pay for the technology they use, scaling up and down as needed, and licensing audits are a thing of the past.

For IT staff, onboarding new employees doesn't take much more than the click of a button and removing user profiles and data for former employees is just as easy. From a cybersecurity perspective, adopting Azure AD and [Microsoft Intune](https://partner.microsoft.com/en-us/solutions/microsoft-intune) (<https://partner.microsoft.com/en-us/solutions/microsoft-intune>) for mobile device management provides enhanced visibility into app and device usage and better control over critical security activities such as patching, identity and access management, and ensuring Microsoft Defender is turned on by default. Even software license management is easier.

Setting new goals for 2030

By working with Microsoft and collaborating alongside their state agency counterparts, Wood and his team were able to achieve in months what they expected would take years to accomplish, says Sean Hughes, EOTSS Assistant Secretary for Technology Security and Operations. "I've been in the public sector 22 years and have not seen collaboration like I've seen on this project," he says. "What we're doing is making state employees' jobs easier. That's the key takeaway for me."

The success of these efforts has been marked by Massachusetts achieving multiple goals simultaneously. It has lowered its facilities footprint, improved work-life balance for its workforce, strengthened its cybersecurity posture, and reduced its technical debt—all by standardizing on Microsoft technologies. Based on these results, Wood is looking forward to expanding on this foundation and reaching even more ambitious goals by 2030 that he never imagined possible a few years ago.

"This was really a transformational project, and we're not done," adds Wood. "This transition to Microsoft has been a tremendous success. It's really been a strategic initiative with underlying benefits that will carry us into the future."

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