



Canton of Aargau: Improving Services with a New E-Government Platform Based on SAP® Software

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Organization

Canton of Aargau

Industry

Public sector

Products and Services

Government services, cultural activities, and educational programs for citizens of Aargau

Web Sitewww.ag.ch**SAP® Solutions**

SAP NetWeaver® Process Orchestration software
 SAP NetWeaver Business Process Management component
 SAP NetWeaver Business Rules Management component
 SAP NetWeaver Process Integration technology

PartnerQ_PERIOR (www.q-perior.com/en.html)

Citizens in the Swiss canton of Aargau who want **quick access to governmental services**, postings, or regulations can gain it from the comfort of their own homes. How? They log on to an e-government platform based on the SAP NetWeaver® technology platform. Supported by SAP partner Q_PERIOR, the canton's IT services department digitized administrative tasks. Now communication among government, citizens, businesses, and institutions takes place efficiently on a central platform.



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A new generation of administration

The canton of Aargau lies in northern Switzerland at the heart of the Zürich-Basel-Bern triangle. With more than 620,000 people and 219 communes, Aargau is one of Switzerland's largest cantons. Its communes exchange information and data with local citizens, businesses, and institutions daily. Inquiries include queries about vacant apprenticeship posts, applications to hold a lottery or tombola, and requests for new contact information for social services.

Not long ago, inquiries had to be submitted on paper. Citizens often had to make several visits to local government offices, and clerks had to request missing information by post. This tedious process resulted in prolonged waiting times, piles of paper, and, inevitably, a lack of transparency on processing status.

Today, however, with a move to the "e-government platform," Aargau is running more-efficient processes. Citizens and businesses can submit inquiries through a standardized central platform that includes administration processes at both communal and cantonal levels. Permits are issued electronically.

As a result of its new e-government platform, Aargau acts as a role model for the rest of Switzerland. Masterminding the switch is Aargau's IT department, Informatik Aargau.

The key to the IT department's success? SAP NetWeaver Process Orchestration software, which IT used to quickly develop a flexible, comprehensive infrastructure for the e-government platform.



"We have simplified interaction with citizens and businesses and sped up our administrative processes."

Martin Matter, Head of IT, Canton of Aargau

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Around-the-clock service

Government ministries and communes in the canton of Aargau work with countless different IT applications. In the past, citizens and businesses had to apply for permits by post or arrange to visit local government offices during open hours. The result? Stacks of paper forms, huge quantities of inactive data records, and long waiting times. In contrast, an e-government platform helps ensure standardized processes, replace paper-based forms, and prevent data loss with complete digitized processes. Stated simply, it boosts efficiency.

The online desk on the canton's Web site www.ag.ch needed to make life easier in many ways for citizens, businesses, ministries, and internal administrative

departments. Fulfilling the IT department's vision for current needs, the new transaction platform had to link existing IT infrastructures at various departments and communes within Aargau – regardless of software used – and provide comprehensive, traceable processes. For the long term, the e-platform needed to offer sufficient scope for future expansion. To uphold the project vision from the beginning, IT experts involved government ministries and professional associations that represent administrative personnel in the transformation to e-government. After all, they are the people who have direct contact with citizens and who deal with their inquiries and applications on a daily basis.

“We wanted to improve our service and reduce the paperwork that our citizens and administrative clerks had to plow through every single day.”

Martin Matter, Head of IT, Canton of Aargau



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As reliable and precise as Swiss clockwork

For the new e-government platform, the IT department issued a call-for-projects selection process. The canton was already running SAP® solutions but not yet using them to full advantage, according to Martin Matter, head of IT. Business processes such as payroll and accounting were running on the SAP ERP application. Most administration systems were not based on SAP software, however, but on a vast array of disparate technologies.

The IT department decided on SAP partner Q_PERIOR, which convincingly won the selection process. Q_PERIOR's concept, based on SAP NetWeaver Process Orchestration, emerged as the most efficient and cost-effective solution.

The SAP software supports comprehensive processes, from application to billing, with existing applications linked to the new e-government platform solutions and data management. Now when new users register with the online desk on the canton Web site, their data is transferred directly to the new, central data pool in the SAP Customer Relationship Management (SAP CRM) application. Depending on their authorization level, clerks in user departments can access up-to-date information in any kind of transaction.

SAP NetWeaver Process Orchestration is the ideal software solution for the canton, according to Christoph Hahn, manager at Q_PERIOR: "It can be used to model and execute administrative processes. The administrative clerks have direct access to ongoing processes and business rules."



"It's a prime example of forward-looking cooperation. This really was a case of everyone pulling together."

Martin Matter, Head of IT, Canton of Aargau

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Flexible, one-stop processes

The Aargau IT department needed to resolve these and other challenges: how to digitize an entire administrative organization of a regional government, integrate citizen information, and ensure data security. Expert solutions resolving these and additional IT issues were addressed during the project implementation. Although the canton IT department had no previous experience with e-government, it was clear on two points that project implementation had to address successfully: All processes must run on a single platform. Also, as many ministries as possible had to be involved from the start. So the project incorporated nine projects simultaneously – in just 15 months with input from canton IT and administrative departments and with guidance from SAP partner Q_PERIOR.

Thanks to the SAP NetWeaver Business Process Management component, Aargau's various administrative departments now actively design automated approval processes. IT personnel and administrative clerks work together to define and change processes using an intuitive-to-use, graphical modeling tool. The departments feed necessary rules and authorizations directly into the approval processes using the SAP NetWeaver Business Rules Management component so that each inquiry reaches the correct ministry. All data and invoices are then processed internally through SAP ERP, SAP CRM, and the corresponding specialist software.

“The administrative clerks worked on the e-government platform with project leads from [the IT department]. This was completely new territory for many of them, but it proved to be a highly successful approach.”

Martin Matter, Head of IT, Canton of Aargau



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Flexible, efficient handling of administrative tasks

The e-government platform provides a flexible, efficient approach to dealing with everyday tasks. SAP NetWeaver Process Integration technology links SAP software with third-party applications so that all communes and ministries within Aargau can work together smoothly. Administrative processes can be adapted to meet future requirements.

For example, in the past, event organizers had to fill out several forms to obtain permits for prize drawings and lotteries. Now, with the help of the SAP NetWeaver Business Process Management component, digital workflows have replaced paper forms.

Applicants simply log on to the new Web page and enter relevant details and additional documents, which the SAP CRM application data pool saves. Then all departments will access the same data.

SAP NetWeaver Business Process Management generates an electronic PDF form using SAP Interactive Forms software by Adobe. An administrative clerk checks the form and either approves the application or sends corrections to the applicant by e-mail. Web-based forms have not yet replaced paper transactions completely, however. For legal reasons, many processes still require a physical signature.

“Processes are more efficient. Our directory of institutions was previously updated every five years – a laborious task of gathering data via various channels. Today institutions maintain their own data.”

Martin Matter, Head of IT, Canton of Aargau



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Accessible to citizens, flexible as a Swiss army knife

Piles of paper forms, tedious visits to local government offices, and long waiting times – former hallmarks of communication between citizens and the public sector in Aargau – have given way to efficient e-government administration. Comprehensive processes now provide the basis for traceable and efficient systems and structures.

“Before the switch to e-government, approval processes took far too long,” explains Matter. “If application forms were incomplete, the responsible processing clerk had to call the applicant or request missing information by post [which took up to eight weeks]. Today the whole process takes place via e-mail and is complete in just one to two weeks.”

Thanks to SAP NetWeaver Process Integration, the canton’s existing heterogeneous IT landscape has been efficiently integrated into standardized processes. This integration saved a great deal of expense and removed the “silo” mentality in various communes and ministries. IT and business-area personnel in the canton collaborated closely from the start of the e-government project.

“It’s a prime example of forward-looking cooperation,” says Matter. “This really was a case of everyone pulling together.” SAP NetWeaver Business Process Management and SAP NetWeaver Business Rules Management collectively provide a sound foundation for digitizing processes comprehensively. If specific procedures or rules change, the digital workflows can be flexibly adapted to fit new requirements.



75%
Reduction in time
for approval process
(8 to 2 weeks)



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Ready for the future

“This was a model project,” says Matter. “We achieved all of our objectives. The canton ministries and communes are now linked up on a single platform.”

The online desk is also proving very popular: well over 3,000 citizens and businesses registered on it in just six months.

Matter and his colleagues in the IT department now plan to switch other and larger administration areas flexibly to the e-government platform. “We know that this project was just the beginning,” says Matter, “but all the ministries were involved from the start, and they all value the flexible infrastructure we were able to create. In short, everyone in the cantonal administration organization is ready for more.”



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