



# Human Resources Shared Services

Progress, Lessons and Opportunities



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**Deloitte.**

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# The Partnership for Public Service and Deloitte collaborated on this study, which reinforces that using shared services can help consolidate separate, overlapping and duplicative processes and systems—from human resources and acquisitions to financial management and information technology—to improve how government operates.

Shared services offers agencies the ability to improve their stewardship of taxpayer funds, while enabling them to more effectively deliver their administrative and core mission services. As budgets shrink and many members of the federal workforce retire, shared services is one of the key ways the workforce and mission delivery issues can be better managed.

In 2014, the Obama administration's management agenda included many robust initiatives aimed at greater effectiveness and transparency across government, including shared services. The administration set an objective for government to "strategically expand high-quality, high value shared services to improve performance and efficiency throughout government" and to "aggressively reform the way government delivers services internally."<sup>1</sup> However, despite past efforts, agency leaders' aspirations and a place on presidential management agendas, the federal government's movement toward shared services has been an arduous and uneven process.

The intent of this study was to look specifically at human resources shared services across the government to assess the progress made since the consolidation of payroll and human resources technology under the initial human resources line of business initiative. The study also recommends ways intended

to help advance the use of human resources shared services, both within departments and through the use of federal and commercial third-party service providers.

To conduct the study, we reviewed literature, including past and current initiatives, regarding implementation of human resources shared services. We interviewed former and current officials from the Office of Personnel Management with knowledge of the human resources line of business and human resources officials from five agencies, along with representatives from the private sector. Additionally, we conducted a small survey of members of the Federal Human Capital Collaborative (18 respondents) and the Interior Business Center Customer Executive Advisory Board (18 respondents) to gauge their opinions of OPM's cur-

rent human resources shared services efforts.

Human resources was the first of the mission-enabling functions to make significant strides to consolidate and move to shared services when agencies were mandated to move to a provider for human resources technology and payroll. The result was the consolidation of human resources management systems and payroll to six federal providers, four of which offered both services. In addition, there were a handful of commercial providers, though no agencies migrated to these providers initially. The original intent of the human resources line of business was to expand so that agencies could purchase not only technology, but also services for both core and non-core processes. To date, there has been little movement in this direction; as a result, the government

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## DEFINITIONS

### Federal shared services

In a shared services approach, an agency or organization transfers common administrative or mission operations to a provider that performs those services for more than one federal department, agency or agency unit. The goal is to improve service delivery and reduce fragmentation, overlap, duplication and overall costs through standardization, economies of scale and continuous business-process improvements.

### Intra-agency versus interagency shared services

Human resources migration to shared services can include intra-agency shared services, which are those provided within the boundaries of a specific organization to that organization's internal units. Interagency shared services are those provided by one organization to other organizations that are outside the provider's organizational boundaries. The Department of Agriculture is an example of a department using intra-agency human resources services, while the Department of Housing and Urban Development recently migrated to an outside federal human resources shared services provider.

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1 Performance.gov, "Shared Services Cross-agency Priority Goal Overview." Retrieved from <http://1.usa.gov/1R5id1w>.

has not realized the full scope of savings and efficiencies available from the adoption of shared services. The time is right for this to change. Government can work to overcome a multitude of challenges—budget constraints, loss of skilled human resources workforce, lagging customer service and low customer satisfaction—in part by boldly moving forward to expand its use of a shared services delivery model for human resources.

Human resources shared services has become an increasingly attractive option to reduce costs and eliminate the duplication of information technology operations. Shared services for human resources has gained momentum as federal agencies have shown that these services can be consolidated effectively and efficiently with a service delivery model that has been tested over time.

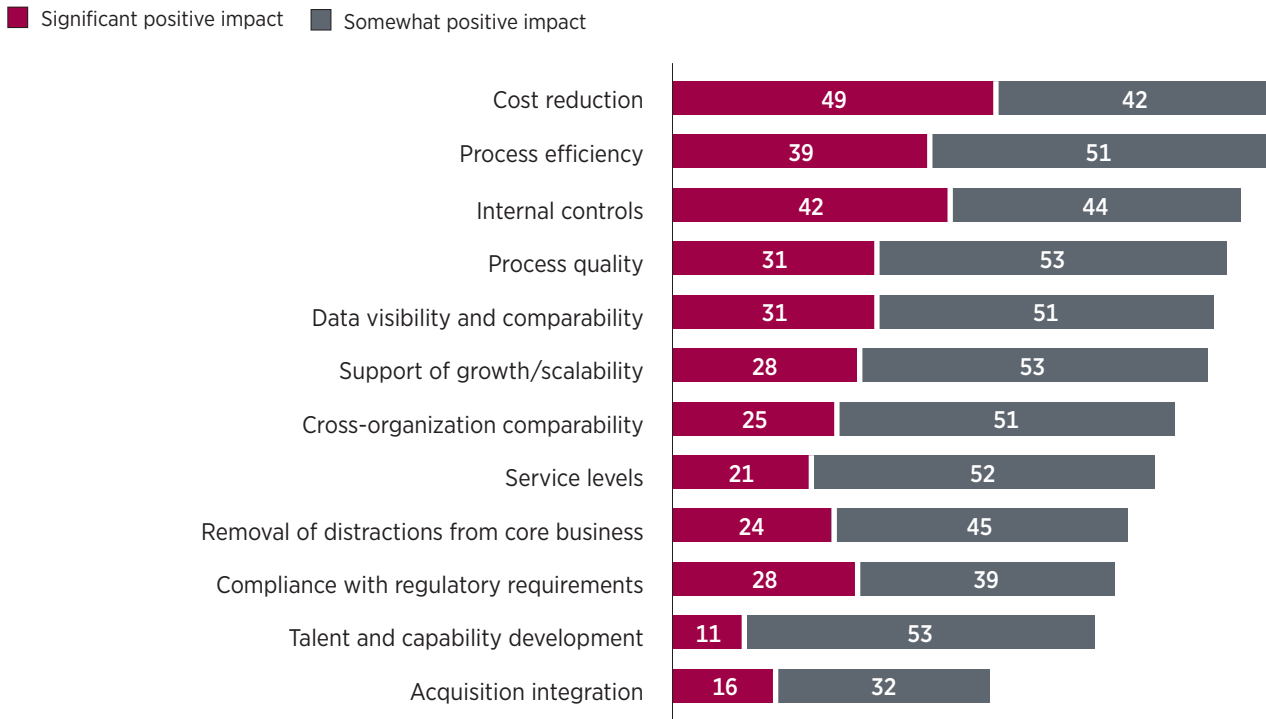
**To increase the effectiveness of the federal human resources service delivery model even more, future models should:**

- Provide human resources shared services providers with funding to enable them to upgrade their technology platforms, innovate new service offerings and increase customer satisfaction.
- Expand human resources shared services providers’ portfolios to include both technology and processing capabilities.

**This report:**

- Provides examples of how shared services offers advantages, while allowing human resources offices to focus more on strategic management.
- Provides an analysis of where federal efforts for human resources shared services stand.
- Offers insights into where future efforts should be directed to increase effectiveness.

**Percentage of positive impacts of shared services**



**Source:** Deloitte 2015 survey of 311 private and public sector organizations. The top three benefits have remained consistent since a 2011 survey, with cost reduction being the top benefit.

# Valuable lessons from federal agencies that transitioned to human resources shared services

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Federal agencies can learn important lessons from other agencies and organizations that have moved or are moving to human resources shared services. Many agencies have shown that human resources support services can be consolidated effectively. That knowledge can be translated into government-wide measures in an effort to transform the function of and to provide a way to systemically measure government-wide progress. Agencies often hold on to the perception that their business models, while not perfect, adequately address specific mission processes and day-to-day operations. However, those agencies that haven't yet improved their business models for delivering these services should consider doing so, with one of the most important reasons being that it can enable human resources offices to reallocate their resources toward becoming better strategic partners with their agencies as they expand into that role.

Moving to shared services invariably means change for the human resources community and its customers—new workflow processes to learn and understand; new training requirements; potential loss of autonomy or responsibility; and possible loss of jobs or assignment into new roles. The effect of those changes may require a significant shift in a federal agency's culture. Despite these challenges, agencies should consider a move to shared services; delivering these services inconsistently across the federal government inhibits the ability to

manage the federal workforce well and affects employee satisfaction. A 2014 Government Accountability Office report found that agencies have many human resources challenges in common, but tend to address these issues independently instead of seeking enterprise-wide solutions that could resolve them more effectively.<sup>2</sup> As we also noted in our prior report, "Helping Government Deliver II: The Obstacles and Opportunities Surrounding Shared Services," chief financial officers we interviewed perceived human resources to be one of the most problematic services for their agencies to carry out on their own and hoped for a move to shared services.

The majority of chief financial officers from large agencies we interviewed for the previous study said they think it is especially difficult for larger agencies to consolidate internally or move to a shared services provider, even with executive-level support. With a dispersed workforce, program office officials often are unwilling to give up the ability to manage services directly, they said. Sometimes, rather than making an explicit decision to avoid using shared services, larger departments lack an overall plan, due to the complexity of standardizing and consolidating. However, many CFOs said they no longer believe it is a vi-

able option to continue with the stratified service structures that exist in many large agencies, and we are seeing a migration of larger agencies to human resources shared services.

Use of shared services by large agencies could offer the greatest potential for economies of scale and contribute substantially to changing how government does business. As the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's standardization of their human resources systems illustrates, large agencies can overcome challenges when there is executive-level support and proper change-management practices in place. The Department of Commerce also has an initiative underway on a new service delivery model for mission-enabling functions, including human resources, to enable the department to focus more on strategic challenges and opportunities by reducing the time and energy spent on processing and transactional work.

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<sup>2</sup> Government Accountability Office, "Human Capital: Strategies to Help Agencies Meet Their Missions in an Era of Highly Constrained Resources," GAO-14-168, May 2014. Retrieved from <http://1.usa.gov/1jKsnQp>

# The Department of Agriculture

The Department of Agriculture centralized and simplified its multiple human resources systems by employing a solution called “One USDA.” USDA’s director of human resources enterprise solutions said the information technology framework the department recently developed focused on defining the current and future human resources business objectives of USDA. The solution aims to integrate and streamline human resources data and transactions across the life cycle of an employee and across USDA agencies. This framework is transferrable and scalable to other departments, according to the director, adding that it is a common misconception that departments and agencies have unique needs that cannot be met by a single, standardized human resources program.

The initial motivation for moving to shared services was the realization that USDA could not continue to conduct its human resources business as it had been. USDA human resources data had discrepancies because the different systems were using different data entry definitions and had different policies, the director said. In addition, USDA needed its human resources staff to focus more on achieving its mission. The strategy for the consolidation was introduced in late 2009 when the department had 30 different staff offices and agencies with human resources offices that used more than 200 information technology systems. The department has since consolidated many human resources technology systems and is looking to reduce many more. The goal is to reduce its technology footprint while increasing the functionality and capabilities of the human resources function.

One USDA’s vision is to improve mission delivery by streamlining

human resources transactions, which facilitates strategic and advisory human resources service delivery, according to the director. USDA was struggling without a unified and cohesive human resources strategy, leading to delayed and cost-prohibitive services. The various agencies and staff officers within the department came together to create a single view of the “hire to retire” human resources functions. One of the biggest achievements was to create a single set of human resources business requirements for the department, the director said. Over the course of 10 weeks in 2010, the department gathered 150 subject matter experts who focused on functional areas of the Office of Personnel Management’s Business Reference Model, which provided an end-to-end depiction of the human resources business processes taking place in government agencies. These experts agreed that there was no reason for USDA offices to have different human resources processes and systems.

To explain more fully how this process succeeded, the “willing” were convinced to help others understand and adopt One USDA’s vision, the director said. The “helpless” could be empowered to see the value of One USDA. They may not fully understand it, but they believed that if they trusted you, they would get benefits. She added that the “resisters”

probably needed to move on. When asked what she would do differently to accomplish the effort, the director said that she would take a more agile, incremental approach to developing individual pieces of the solution. She also would have allocated more resources to change management. Getting employees to learn new ways of doing business was more difficult than she anticipated.

Although there were initial costs to the consolidation, cost-benefit models now show cost savings of approximately \$3 million a year. Not only is USDA getting cost savings, but it is benefiting from the increased functionality of its human resources system, the director said. For example, USDA’s hiring process has been significantly enhanced. The centralized human resources system provides data that allow for improving hiring capabilities, reducing hiring times and filling skills gaps. Overall, One USDA promotes cross-agency collaboration and servicing, while providing economies of scale. Everyone sees the benefits of One USDA, the director said.

The department was fortunate in that One USDA got very strong executive sponsorship. It is a commonsense approach that should remain even when the administration changes, the director said, adding that USDA needs to continue to put safeguards in place to keep the solution going.

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## CASE STUDY

# The Department of Housing and Urban Development

The Department of Housing and Urban Development recently transitioned to a human resources shared services provider—Treasury’s Administrative Resource Center. The goal of the transition was to improve the management of human resources functions, so staff could make informed and better decisions and help HUD accomplish its mission. ARC now performs much of HUD’s human resources transactional work, which has allowed the department to focus resources on important strategic and compliance requirements, according to the chief human capital officer. Realigning the department’s in-house human resources staff will help transform the organizational focus from transactional data processing to the strategic management of human resources, she added, saying that the transition has also improved operational effectiveness, allowing the human resources office to spend more time examining data and human resources operations.

Since it was such a large endeavor, HUD decided to migrate selected functions of its organization incrementally to the shared services provider to ensure a smoother and more manageable transition. The initial pilot began in fiscal year 2013 and serviced approximately 3,000 employees within HUD. The incremental transition was a way of testing ARC’s volume, and it also helped establish roles and define how ARC would interact with HUD employees. The pilot was determined to be successful, so HUD implemented the second phase of

the transition in fiscal year 2014 to include 49 percent of department employees. In fiscal year 2015, the remaining HUD employees migrated to the shared services provider. Initially, employee relations transitioned to the shared services provider, but HUD discovered that was not a good fit. These functions were pulled back for phase two of the implementation, partially because it was more expensive for ARC to do the work than for HUD to retain the function in-house. HUD also reassumed responsibility for human resources reporting.

HUD’s chief human capital officer stressed a number of factors that contributed to the successful migration. One was high-quality service level agreements. Everyone needs to know who is responsible for specific tasks and everything needs to be captured in the agreements, she said. Although the agencies want to keep their unique processes and the shared service providers would like to have identical solutions that fit every agency, there has to be give and take on both sides. While ARC has certainly provided HUD with a valuable service, HUD also helped ARC become a better shared services provider, she added. The human resources transition team had to understand project management, budget and human resources issues, and the team needed to know how to collaborate and communicate. OPM’s human resources line of business Multi-agency Executive Strategy Committee meetings also helped HUD through the transition to a shared

**There is no doubt that the migration has freed human resources staff’s time to focus on more strategic issues.**

services provider by offering advice and lessons learned, the HUD official said. The committee was formed to promote strategies for human resources management improvement across government; review and coordinate agencies’ activities; and act as a catalyst and clearinghouse for sharing and disseminating information about good human resources management practices.

Moving to a shared services provider helped HUD identify all the components of its human resources functions, the chief human capital officer said, adding that this process is often taken for granted and, therefore, not well understood. HUD used OPM’s Business Reference Model for breaking down tasks into discrete pieces. In the past, HUD did not have time for this and focused primarily on burning issues, she said, noting that there is no doubt that the migration has freed human resources staff’s time to focus on more strategic issues.

# OPM's human resources line of business has made progress in promoting the use of shared services

In 2004, the Office of Management and Budget formed several functional lines of business to build on the success of e-government initiatives such as e-payroll, and one of these was the human resources line of business. Between 2005 and 2015, the human resources line of business, with the Office of Personnel Management as its managing partner, led the consolidation of transactional human resources functions including payroll, agency personnel action processing and benefits management into federal shared services centers, which, according to OPM officials, saved the government more than \$1 billion. For example, in 2009, OPM accomplished a major shared services milestone with federal payroll consolidation—reducing 26 government payroll operations down to four agency shared services providers.

The human resources line of business program management office assesses the maturity of human resources shared services by the number of agencies and the percentage of federal employees who receive services from a federal shared services provider. OPM officials estimate that 99 percent of federal employees, or more than 2 million employees, are with a federal shared services provider for payroll, while over 70 percent, or almost 1.5 million employees, are with one of six shared services centers for personnel action processing and benefits management. Most remaining agencies are in the process of migrating these functions.

Guided by the Chief Human Capital Officers Council future-state vision for human resources information technology, the OPM director tasked the human resources line of business staff with designing and implementing a strategic framework. It created interoperable human resources systems and data, which would provide a common-user experience across the federal employee life cycle. As a result, the framework is decidedly information technology-focused rather than on all human resources functions that could benefit from service sharing opportunities, with initial attention placed on payroll and personnel processing. Recent updates to the framework identified five new human resources information system sharing opportunities, including learning manage-

ment, performance management, time and attendance, single sign-on and retirement annuity estimators.

When fully implemented, OPM anticipates the updated framework will modernize human resources information technology delivery systems, improve human resources data management and standardization, and help agencies to use strategic sourcing effectively. OPM officials also expect this effort will drive an additional \$1 billion in savings over the next 10 years. However, according to a survey we administered for the purposes of this study to a federal shared services provider's customers (25 respondents) and another to individuals active in the federal human resources community (18 respondents), the majority of respondents thought the work in these five

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## FEDERAL AGENCY HUMAN RESOURCES SHARED SERVICES PROVIDERS

### **Department of Agriculture**

National Finance Center

### **Department of Defense**

Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Services

### **Department of Health and Human Services**

Program Support Center

### **Department of the Interior**

Interior Business Center

### **Department of Treasury**

Administrative Resource Center and Shared Services Programs

### **General Services Administration**

Business Management Office



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new opportunity areas was not happening quickly enough. One respondent commented that shared services providers lacked the funding to accelerate development in these areas and were overly concerned about risk and change management.

Greater support from OMB is needed to offer incentives to agencies to use federal shared services providers, especially those agencies that are undergoing difficult migrations, according to OPM line of business officials. OMB could take a similar approach in human resources as it did for payroll—requiring an immediate move to shared services providers rather than the current mandate for human resources transactional services. This mandate tells agencies that they cannot invest in their information technology systems, but does allow agencies to wait until those systems end their life cycle.

The key to moving beyond shared services' limited focus on information technology, however, is in the line of business's enterprise architecture, OPM officials said. They recognized that today's human resources shared services are focused on information technology, and they would like to move beyond that focus. The Business Reference Model, for example, is a key component of the line of business enterprise architecture and is not limited to the information technology functions. The Business Reference Model can and should be used to

identify ways to streamline human resources processes. OPM officials said agencies should use the Business Reference Model as a starting point for improving their human resources processes even before moving to a shared services provider. Both USDA and HUD found using the model helpful in their migrations to human resources shared services.

OPM officials noted that there are additional ways to realize the framework's goals to improve human resources outcomes, enhance human resources information technology sustainability and increase cost savings. They include an increase in human resources functions, both technology and processing, delivered through a shared services model; more consistency in human resources data; and greater funding flexibility for innovation and human resources investment.

# The look forward for federal agencies' use of human resources shared services

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Creating the right environment for shared services entails committing to the goal, changing agency expectations and incentives for spending, and rethinking how government funds long-term investments in the systems and infrastructure that support customer service delivery. It also means establishing a clear direction that federal agencies need to take the shared services path. Some of these conditions were addressed recently when the acting deputy director of management at the Office of Management and Budget announced a central governance board that will manage shared services for the federal enterprise and steer agencies toward a greater use of shared services. The board will consist of representatives from federal agency shared services providers, shared services customers, policy agencies such as GSA and OPM, and members from

the chief officer councils. A sub-organization called the Unified Shared Services Management Office will be accountable for carrying out the governance board's strategy. Making the General Services Administration the host agency for this effort signals that GSA, as the government's administrative services agency, has embraced shared services as part of its mission.

In addition to the general shared services environment, the future direction of human resources shared services efforts calls for the human resources leadership agencies to work with the shared services providers to scale up to meet the needs of human resources operations at large agencies. That includes recognizing that federal agencies will likely take different pathways to achieving human resources shared services, as the USDA and HUD examples illustrate. It also means

acknowledging that agencies helping other agencies could be a strong enabler of change, and that information technology shared services are only one step in achieving the potential for expanding human resources shared services. All human resources functions can benefit from service sharing opportunities, and more attention needs to be paid to new opportunities.

The specific stakeholder groups and actions defined on the next page can help drive the necessary change. Success will be dependent in part on the engagement of all stakeholders and a commitment to providing the vision and resources needed to move forward aggressively.

Stakeholder group	Potential actions and changes
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Oversight/ governance group</b></p>	<p><b>Move the focus from a technology-centric approach to a human resources services-centric approach.</b> Technology is an enabler of human resources shared services and not the only answer. Currently, many human resources providers are focused on technology services and should look to expand their portfolios to include processing services and additional human resources processes. The processing services can be based on a common set of requirements that draw their foundation from the existing OPM framework.</p>
	<p><b>Develop a sense of urgency for shared services at the department and agency levels.</b> As there has been limited use of comprehensive human resources shared services in the federal market to date, the positive results and benefits have generally not been demonstrated. As such, departments may not understand the need for or value of shared services. Their implementation at the department or agency level should be reinforced through budget guidance and policy changes by oversight groups, such as OMB and the Unified Shared Services Management Office.</p>
	<p><b>Provide investment opportunities for the human resources providers that currently have limited ability or incentive to innovate or create better solutions.</b> Without the right investments, providers may be challenged to mature to the point of developing market-leading solutions. Existing federal providers are typically constrained by their funding models and budgets from upgrading current offerings, upgrading to cloud-based technology solutions or developing additional services. Commercial providers are hesitant to invest when the market is unclear.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Providers</b></p>	<p><b>Develop “true” end-to-end human resources technology solutions.</b> Human resources life cycle technology solutions that integrate seamlessly from a process and customer perspective, including customer engagement and case management technologies, can be useful here. To successfully expand the use of shared services, providers should consider adding services, enabled by technology solutions, to their portfolios.</p>
	<p><b>Become more customer centric and partner focused.</b> Many providers have “two bosses”—their customer base and their home agency, under whose authority they operate and to which they also provide services. Providers should be customer focused and see their home agency as another customer to serve.</p>
	<p><b>Look for opportunities for innovation.</b> Providers should explore opportunities to expand their offerings and grow customer bases. These can include developing public and private partnerships, upgrading to more flexible cloud-based human resources technologies, focusing on customer needs with new solutions, providing consultative support to clients to help define their needs and develop options to improve internally.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Customers</b></p>	<p><b>Move toward creating a case for change internal to the department or agency.</b> Many departments and agencies may look at shared services as a money saver, but shared services is a means to better services at the right cost point. This case for change needs to be rooted in a solid financial business case, but the “voice of the customer” is as, if not more, critical than the financial benefits of shared services.</p>
	<p><b>Use an established framework as a basis for human resources functional services.</b> For customers to realize the benefits of shared services, they should recognize the opportunities to standardize processes that are based on an established framework.</p>
	<p><b>Invest in the human resources workforce.</b> Shared services is one component of a successful human resources service delivery model. By moving duplicative transactional services to a shared services organization, departments and agencies can support the development of human capital management functions within their retained organizations. As such, investing in human resources career paths can bolster these mission-critical functions.</p>

Source: Deloitte Federal Shared Services, November 2015

# Conclusion

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By giving renewed consideration to human resources shared services, federal agencies could potentially free capacity within the organization to focus on strategic issues while improving costs, efficiency and services. But shared services should be just be an enabler to improving the delivery of the human resources function in federal agencies. The federal human resources function has an opportunity to take on a more strategic role, helping organizations grapple with changing workforce demographics, new work styles and recruiting and hiring skilled talent. To do this, agencies must consider a “new way of doing business.” This new way includes using shared services to change the way human resources services are delivered to the agencies’ mission areas. The depiction on the next page shows a leading practice model many departments and independent agencies are moving toward.

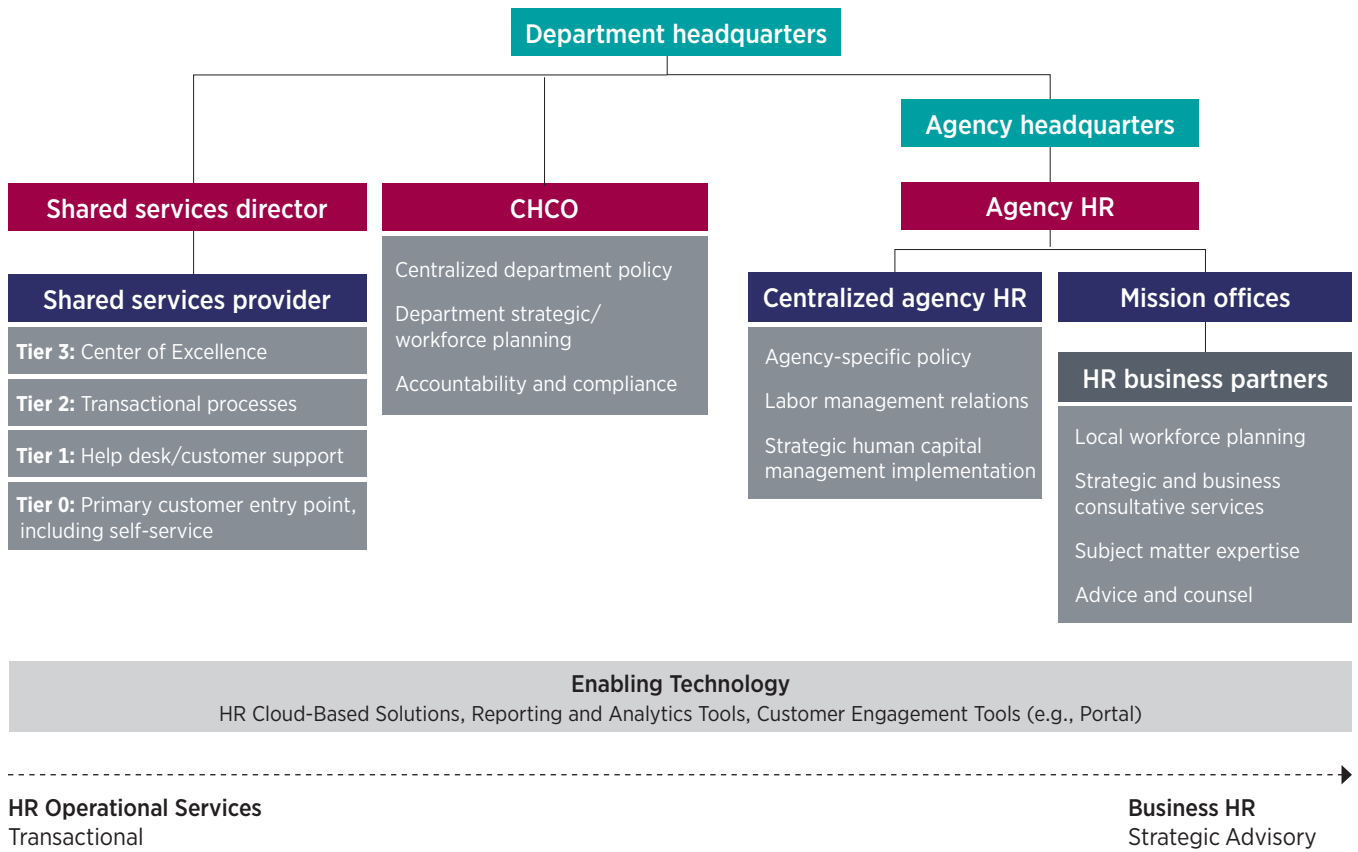
The shared services efforts by USDA and HUD are valuable examples that can help other large departments in their transitions toward shared services. However, the government needs to have the proper environment to nourish shared services, an established environment secure enough to withstand changes in administration and the vision to improve the delivery of human resources services. OMB’s recently announced changes to implement enterprise-wide shared services with a strong governance structure should put shared services on a more even path toward implementation across functions and agencies.

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## **SUGGESTIONS FROM A LEADING PRACTICE SHARED SERVICES MODEL**

- A shared services center focusing on transactional and common activities to improve customer service to employees, managers and applicants, while driving down the cost of delivering human resources services
- A Chief Human Capital Office that can focus on agency-wide strategy, policy and accountability
- A focused, centralized agency human resources group that works specifically on unique sub-agency mission human resources strategies and needs
- A local human resources business partner who possesses strong human capital advising capabilities and who works closely with mission leaders and managers to think through and execute strategic human resources issues

**A leading practice shared services model**



Source: Deloitte Federal Shared Services, November 2015

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