The City of Oakland, Calif., uses the Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS) to run nearly every aspect of the city’s functions—from human resources and financials to procurement, payables and reporting. In 2015, the city began searching for a partner that could help them upgrade from EBS 11i to EBS R12.

According to Katano Kasaine, Oakland’s treasurer and interim CIO, the city was up against a firm deadline. If the upgrade wasn’t completed on time, the city might no longer be able to receive technical support from Oracle.

With so much on the line, city leaders were thorough and meticulous in their search for the right partner. In December 2015, they chose BIAS Corporation, an Oracle Platinum Partner specializing in designing and delivering high-performance IT solutions that leverage Oracle technologies to public sector agencies and businesses worldwide.

“The stakes were tremendously high for the City of Oakland,” says Brian Gage, BIAS senior director of customer success and project director. “Kasaine literally put her career on the line when she chose us for this project. We absolutely could not afford to fail.”

The City of Oakland tasked BIAS Corporation with completely re-implementing its Oracle EBS. In addition, BIAS was responsible for designing and implementing Oracle Business Intelligence Enterprise Edition (OBIEE) 11i, Oracle Business Intelligence Applications (OBIA), Oracle WebCenter 12.2 and Oracle Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) 12.2.

First, BIAS assessed the city’s infrastructure performance, security, stability and scalability for Oracle environments hosted on Oracle Engineered Systems at the city’s data center. This analysis included a review of the following:

- Exadata
- Exalytics
- Exalogic
- Network (1G, 10G and InfiniBand)
- Security

Longer-term scope analysis performed by BIAS included the following:

- Analysis of disaster recovery procedures
- Recommended standard operating procedures
- Recommended service level agreements for ongoing systems support
- Remediation tasks to deploy recommended changes from immediate term analysis

After rehabilitating the city’s Exadata, Exalogic and Exalytics infrastructure, BIAS upgraded Oakland to Oracle Database 12c and designed and implemented the suite of applications. On December 20, 2016, the city went live — on time and on budget. Because of this, BIAS was selected as Oakland’s long-term managed services partner supporting the Oracle infrastructure, database and applications suite.

In addition, BIAS migrated the entire Oracle infrastructure from two non-professional data centers to the city’s third-party hosted private cloud. This included designing and building the supporting network within the new data center. “This enabled the city to house its multimillion-dollar system in a better environment,” says Gage. “It’s a way for us to take a small step toward the public cloud by testing the waters,” adds Kasaine.

According to John Ezzell, BIAS Corporation co-founder and executive vice president, one of the keys to success was BIAS’s view of the project as a system re-implementation as opposed to a system upgrade. “We couldn’t just fix or upgrade what they had — we knew that success would require a complete re-implementation,” he says. “Since we adopted this mindset going in, we didn’t inherit a lot of the old problems from the previous efforts because we were basically starting over from scratch.”

Kasaine concurs. “I asked the other vendors we spoke with about re-implementation versus upgrade and they gave pros and cons for each option and said we could go either way. BIAS is the only one that strongly recommended re-implementation. I understood what the decision meant for us and how important it was.”

Another critical key was BIAS’s “three-in-the-box” approach, aptly named by Kasaine. This refers to the presence of a BIAS technical resource, a functional resource or subject...
matter expert, and a City of Oakland user at every stage of the project’s implementation. “This enabled us to work with the city as a true partner, not just an implementer,” says Gage.

“There was an understanding from the very beginning that everybody needed to get on the same page and hear the same thing,” says Kasaine. “We needed to create an environment where everybody was comfortable talking to each other. Adopting this three-in-the-box philosophy helped resolve a lot of issues before they even came up, which was critical to success.”

The City of Oakland has realized numerous benefits since going live in December 2016 with the Oracle suite of applications, including the following:

- The time required to process city payroll was reduced from 11 to 12 hours every other week to just 12 minutes.
- System stability and reliability increased from 70 percent uptime to 99.99 percent uptime.
- Oracle Application bandwidth increased 10-fold — from 1 GB to 10 GB, and application tier to database tier communication increased 40-fold.
- The time required for Exalogic virtualization was reduced from days or even weeks to just 4 hours.
- More than 100 Exachk errors have been cleared on the Exadata machines and machine functionality has improved.

Also, the city can take full advantage of the millions of dollars it has spent on its Exadata, Exalogic and Exalytics infrastructure architecture. For example, this capability has resulted in a 10-times improvement in database transmission speeds.

Kasaine is thrilled to have successfully re-implemented the City of Oakland’s Oracle E-Business Suite, but she doesn’t pretend the process was always easy.

“What gave me confidence was that John Ezzell told me from the very beginning that BIAS was going to do whatever it took to make sure it got done,” she says. “He was committed to this personally, and everybody at BIAS who was involved in the project understood that it had to be done successfully this time.”

Oracle was also 100 percent committed to a successful re-implementation, Kasaine adds. “If there was anything we or BIAS couldn’t get, Oracle showed up and filled the gap,” she says. “On more than one occasion, Oracle came in and saved the day.”

“I haven’t seen this kind of commitment before from a technology vendor and provider, and it meant a lot to me,” Kasaine adds. “It set the tone early on that everyone was going to do whatever it took — period.”

BIAS Corporation’s successful re-implementation of Oracle EBS R12 for the City of Oakland included the following:

- Remediation of two, quarter-rack Exadata to clear all Exachk errors
- A complete rebuild of two, quarter-rack Exalytics devices and update of the devices with the latest security patches
- A complete rebuild of two, eighth-rack Exalogic devices and update of the devices with the latest security patches
- A reconfiguration of the Cisco and Enterasys network
- A reconfiguration of the InfiniBand network
- On-call support for all maintenance and management of Oracle Engineered & Storage systems (Exadata, Exalytics, Exalogic and ZFS), along with Cisco switches, F5 Load balancers, etc.
- EBS R12 and upgrade from 11i, including over a dozen modules supporting financials, HR/payroll, advanced benefits, expenses, iSupplier, procurement, collections, taxation, supplier lifecycle management, and projects and grants
- Business Intelligence 11g, upgrade from 10g, including development of over 200 custom reports
- WebCenter supporting interfaces between EBS and several third-party systems supporting rent control, point of sales systems, citizen relationship management and content management