



# Cook County Board of Review

## Technology Strategic Plan – 2025



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## **Background**

The Cook County Board of Review (CCBOR) possesses quasi-judicial authority to adjudicate taxpayer complaints and recommend the exempt status of real properties, including residential, commercial, industrial, condominium properties, and vacant land. The CCBOR also defends property values at the Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board (PTAB) to mitigate the risk of tax revenue refunds for Cook County. Our mission is to provide efficient, equitable, transparent, and timely services to all property owners.

This strategic reliance on technology enables the CCBOR to fulfill its mission and serve property owners with the highest standards of service. The CCBOR IT team (“CCBOR IT”) is comprised of five employees who develop, implement, and maintain the agency's information technology infrastructure while providing crucial assistance to users, ensuring smooth operation and access to necessary resources. The CCBOR is actively recruiting for a SQL Server Data Engineer & Dashboard Developer and recently hired a Director of Information Technology, who will lead collaboration with elected offices.

In 2025 the CCBOR will prioritize the following key initiatives:

- **CCBOR and Cook County Assessor’s Office (CCAO) Process Optimization:** Continue to identify and streamline workflows, eliminating bottlenecks and reducing manual tasks.
- **Automation:** Use automation tools to automate repetitive tasks, freeing up staff for more strategic work.
- **Standardization:** Standardize tools, processes, and documentation to improve collaboration and efficiency.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Promote knowledge sharing within the team through training and collaboration tools.
- **Metrics and Monitoring:** Track key performance indicators (KPIs) to identify areas for improvement and measure the effectiveness of implemented changes.
- **Cross-training:** Train existing staff on new skills to increase flexibility and versatility.
- **Upskilling and Reskilling:** Invest in training programs to equip CCBOR IT with the latest skills and technologies.
- **Empowerment and Delegation:** Foster a culture of ownership and trust, empowering



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- team members to make decisions and manage their workload.
  - **Technology Investments:** Continuously evaluate and invest in relevant technologies that can improve productivity and efficiency.

### **Property Tax System Integration**

The CCBOR effectively completed its transition from the mainframe and finalized the integration project for OnBase and iasWorld in 2024. This initiative has notably enhanced the effectiveness of data exchange with the CCAO. In 2025, the CCBOR will focus on improving system accuracy and auditing procedures, which is crucial for the timely issuance of tax bills.

As a member of the Cook County PTAX Reform Group, the CCBOR is committed to working in partnership with the President's office and various agencies to execute the recommendations outlined in the recent Commercial Valuation Report. Historical data is crucial to the effectiveness of the CCBOR at PTAB, and we look forward to playing a significant role in the establishment of a centralized property tax database. We also seek more active engagement in the development and implementation of iasWorld, which is now the property tax system of record. Enhanced data exchange will yield benefits for all user agencies and taxpayers while also promoting transparency in valuation decisions.

### **Infrastructure and Software Enhancements**

#### **AZURE Cloud**

In 2025, the CCBOR will leverage the county's Azure tenant, collaborating to review and strategize on expanding the CCBOR's presence in the cloud. The goal is to capitalize on the benefits of cloud agility, ensuring quick deployment and robust long-term data retention. By expanding to the Azure cloud, the CCBOR aims to enhance operational efficiency, improve scalability, and ensure secure, compliant data management. This strategic move will position the CCBOR to take full advantage of the latest cloud technologies and innovations.

### ***Recent Milestones***

#### ▪ **Database Upgrade**

CCBOR and the Bureau of Technology (BOT) upgraded the current database from SQL version 2019 to SQL version 2022. This upgrade was completed effectively in 2024 and will offer support until 2029.

#### ▪ **Application Upgrade**

The CCBOR upgraded OnBase, from version 2020 (EP3) to the latest stable release 23.1. The upgrade provides a more intuitive interface, enhanced reporting, and analytics.

#### ▪ **Server Upgrade**

CCBOR, in partnership with DataBank IMX and BOT, successfully completed the migration and expansion of the Digital Appeals Portal (DAPS) to four web servers. This enhancement of both hardware and software environments marks a significant milestone, delivering key benefits to users, including:

**Enhanced User Experience:** The addition of servers increases the portal's ability to handle higher traffic volumes, providing a faster, smoother, and more reliable experience for users.

**Increased Capacity:** The expanded infrastructure supports a growing number of online appeals, ensuring seamless electronic submissions without service



interruptions or delays.

**Enhanced security:** Upgrading to the latest stable Windows Server OS helps to address potential security vulnerabilities, making the portal a more secure platform for users. By taking a proactive approach in modernizing its infrastructure, the CCBOR is taking steps to ensure that the DAPS public portal remains reliable, efficient, and secure.

### **Information Security**

The CCBOR underwent an extensive security risk assessment, conducted by the Cook County Information Security Office (ISO). This comprehensive evaluation spanned from March 22nd to July 26th, 2024, and covered CCBOR's entire IT infrastructure, including all systems.

The Security Control Assessment (SCA) team from Deloitte & Touche collaborated with CCBOR stakeholders to evaluate DAPS. CCBOR IT will review and develop a strategic plan to implement ISO's recommendations.

### **CrowdStrike – AV Implementation**

CCBOR will partner with the ISO team to implement CrowdStrike, a new and enhanced antivirus solution recommended by ISO. The implementation timeline for is as follows:

- **FY 2025 Q1:** CCBOR IT will identify devices for test deployment.
- **FY 2025 Q2:** Testing and additional deployments will be expanded to CCBOR desktops, laptops, and servers.
- **FY 2025 Q3:** Admin training will be conducted and protect mode will be enabled.
- **FY 2025 Q4:** All CCBOR devices will be in production with full protect mode and an automation agent.

This structured approach ensures a robust security posture for CCBOR, aligning with the latest industry standards.

### **Data Transparency**

The CCBOR publishes data on the Cook County Open Data Portal. The CCBOR will focus on the collection, management, and sharing of data that inform our decisions and provide transparency to taxpayers. The continuous publication of certified datasets offers numerous key benefits:

- **Increased transparency and accountability:** By making data public, the open data portal helps ensure that government agencies are operating in a transparent and accountable manner. This also reduces FOIA requests for BOR certified-data.
- **Improved decision-making:** Open data allows for more accurate and consistent decision-making at all levels of government. Data published on the open data site provides the partner agencies and the public with the tools to view current and historical property tax appeals filed at the CCBOR.
- **Promote innovation:** Publishing data on the open data portal allows for the public and researchers to develop new products and services. For example, data on assessment patterns can be used to develop matrices to understand assessment trends or track historical appeal information.



### **PTAB Workflow Automation**

PTAB is a quasi-judicial body providing taxpayers and taxing districts with a forum to contest a property's assessment at the state level. For each PTAB case, the CCBOR must review, analyze, and gather evidence to support its position in the PTAB hearing. The increasing number of PTAB cases annually has strained the CCBOR's ability to collect comparable data for evidentiary use.

To enhance the CCBOR's arguments at PTAB and allocate the limited staff resources strategically, the CCBOR is exploring the automation of several processes to develop a more efficient workflow for PTAB. Automating the process of preparing relevant comparables and sales data will allow analysts to focus more deliberately on complex cases and save considerable time by eliminating the need for analysts to gather evidence manually.

Other processes that CCBOR is exploring automating are tracking the progress of all PTAB files, allowing for dual "notes on appeal," i.e., comparable properties and comparable sales, and the use of DocuSign to facilitate the efficient execution of PTAB stipulations.

### **Compliance and Workflow Automation**

The CCBOR implemented the DocuSign workflow in 2024 to manage the delivery and receipt of human resources and ethical compliance forms. We plan to further expand our DocuSign usage in 2025 to fully digitize our compliance program.

### **FOIA Management**

The CCBOR successfully implemented GovQA, a comprehensive software management system for public records, leveraging the county's enterprise agreement. This milestone enhances the CCBOR's operations by:

- **Minimizing Redundancies and Errors:** Streamlining processes to reduce repeated work and improve accuracy.
- **Enhancing Transparency and Collaboration:** Facilitating better communication and information sharing with relevant stakeholders.
- **Improving Data Security:** Preventing data exposure, limiting risks, and ensuring compliance with best practices.
- **Customizing to Meet CCBOR Needs:** Tailoring the system to align with CCBOR's specific business requirements for optimal efficiency.

### **Human Resources Management System**

The CCBOR anticipates completing the implementation of TALEO, a cloud-based ATS (Applicant Tracking System), the first quarter of 2025. TALEO will administer the CCBOR recruitment process and provide a cohesive hiring experience from start to finish, significantly improving CCBOR's recruitment efficiency and hiring compliance. With built-in data analytics, the CCBOR will ensure we develop and retain people with the required skills and aptitude to meet current and future organizational needs. This advanced tool will streamline multiple steps, including:



- Job Requisition Creation
- Application Submission and Screening
- Interview Evaluation and Candidate Selection
- Offer Generation/Acceptance
- Onboarding

### **IT Capital Objectives**

BOT developed the CCBOR Comparable System more than fifteen years ago. The CCBOR received funds for FY2025 to streamline its comparable processing tool, aiming to enhance productivity and efficiency. By leveraging automation to process and view multiple comparable properties, this software enhancement will reduce the appeals processing time. This enhancement will be compatible with all current and future software applications.

The CCBOR must replace 30% of end-of-life IT equipment in FY 2026. In preparation for this task, the CCBOR will work with the Department of Budget and Management Services (DBMS) during the Capital Budget process and will present comprehensive business cases to support requests for essential investments to meet our information technology strategies and objectives.