



Applying Updates

Applying updates and taking regular maintenance in Oracle Cloud HCM



Highlights from the Applying Updates webinar: part of the PeopleSoft and Cloud Applications series

A key benefit of cloud applications is the continuous innovation that comes with quarterly updates. With Oracle's methodical timetable of updates and pre-release documentation, your IT team and HR administrators can decide which enhancements to deploy in your Oracle Cloud Human Capital Management environment. Once a quarterly update is released, when you're ready to deploy new functionality, it's easy to turn on the enhancement so it's available to your users. With this regular schedule of cloud application updates, Oracle quite literally delivers innovation to you—which means update implementations are a thing of the past.

Types of Updates

Because of the innovative nature of cloud applications, Oracle regularly deploys updates according to a precise schedule. Our timetable allows you to plan for application updates so they aren't disruptive to your business. Here is an outline of the different kinds of application and infrastructure updates.

Quarterly updates

These releases include new application features and bug fixes. Each update is named according to the year and quarter using this naming convention—21A, 21B, 21C, and 21D—with update A indicating the first quarter of the year, and so on. The three months of the quarter are called “cohorts,” which are denoted by an A, B, or C. Upon implementation, you choose which month of the quarter you want to receive your update. However, Oracle Cloud HCM Payroll customers are automatically in cohort A because we release tax updates at the beginning of each quarter. Oracle deploys updates in customer staging environments on the first Friday of the month and into production on the third Friday of the month.

Two months prior to a quarterly update, Oracle releases a “What's New” document and an “Update Checklist” that describe each new feature and how it enhances the applications. We also include an impact analysis rating of an easy, medium, or high level of effort to deploy the functionality, any special configurations that may be required, as well as images to help you quickly understand what's changing. This information gives your IT team time to review and research enhancements so you can confer with your HR leadership team to decide what to release into your environment. These release readiness documents also detail any functionality that will be removed.

Maintenance packs

These are the weekly and monthly updates that roll-up to become quarterly updates. You can log a service request with Oracle Support to request a maintenance pack for a specific week or month if you want a particular bug fix or enhancement prior to a quarterly update. Once the next quarterly update is deployed, your Oracle Cloud HCM applications are automatically updated with the rest of the fixes and features in the update.

Payroll updates

These mandatory monthly tax updates only pertain to Oracle Cloud HCM Payroll customers, and they ensure payroll taxes are always up-to-date and compliant with country, state, and local tax codes. Payroll updates are seamlessly deployed every month on the 19th to staging environments and on the 25th into production - with no system outage. Although the updates won't disrupt your application, we recommend that your IT team run tests to confirm calculations are correct based on new tax rates, rate tables, and address information.

Example of Oracle Cloud HCM Quarterly Update Schedule

Months	Cohorts	Quarterly Update	Dates Staging	Dates Production	
February	A	21A	2/5/2021	2/19/2021	21A
March	B	21A	3/5/2021	3/19/2021	
April	C	21A	4/2/2021	4/16/2021	
May	A	21B	5/7/2021	5/21/2021	21B
June	B	21B	6/4/2021	6/18/2021	
July	C	21B	7/2/2021	7/16/2021	
August	A	21C	8/6/2021	8/20/2021	21C
September	B	21C	9/3/2021	9/17/2021	
October	C	21C	10/1/2021	10/15/2021	
November	A	21D	11/5/2021	11/19/2021	21D
December	B	21D	12/3/2021	12/17/2021	
January	C	21D	1/7/2022	1/21/2022	

Early adopters often ask for maintenance packs so they can test and deploy new features as soon as possible.

Legislative updates

These updates are deployed quarterly and at year end, and they include report templates as well as changes to tax and deduction limits. Oracle's analyst team, who monitor payroll and HR legislation around the world, works closely with our cloud application development team to create functionality and supporting documentation so Oracle Cloud HCM applications are always in compliance with appropriate laws. To ensure you are aware of legislative updates, you can sign up to receive emails announcing application changes.

Infrastructure updates

Because Oracle manages the underlying architecture for Oracle Cloud HCM applications, we update the infrastructure as needed so your applications always run at peak performance. Although these updates require minimal amounts of downtime, we perform them with as much transparency as possible so there are no surprises. Our communications include:

- **Prior notice of an outage** – days, and in most cases, weeks in advance.
- **Time frame** – start time, estimated duration, and expected completion time.
- **Progress reports** – throughout the update time frame.
- **Color-coded alerts** – on your cloud admin dashboard so you can easily see if your applications are in a downtime status.

While most of the Oracle infrastructure updates occur on weekends, occasionally we perform updates during the week. We minimize these updates as much as possible, with updates typically taking place only once a quarter. In the last few years, we've averaged about 10 hours of downtime annually.

Testing Strategies

Although Oracle thoroughly tests updates before release, we recommend you test your Oracle Cloud HCM applications after updates to ensure functionality works as expected.

Regression testing

Once an update is released in your staging environment, you should test the functionality and workflows that are crucial to running your business to make sure the update didn't cause an error. With documented test scripts, you can quickly examine this core functionality to validate there are no issues. If you do find an issue while the update is in staging, you can log an SR and get resolution before the update goes into production.

Automated testing

Ideally, you also want to run automated regression testing with a tool like Selenium that's more extensive than high-level manual testing. This additional testing step will give you confidence that your applications will work seamlessly after an update. With Oracle Cloud HCM's mobile responsive user interface, you can use static IDs for automated testing, which means you don't have to edit the IDs on tests scripts after each update.

User acceptance testing

Testing functionality with end-users is a critical element of your overall testing strategy to ensure your applications are as intuitive as possible. We recommend you assemble a small team of business users that represent all levels of your organization, including someone with a lot of knowledge about Oracle Cloud HCM applications, someone with little knowledge, and a C-suite executive. A diverse cross section of users will help you determine whether you need to disseminate communications and provide training to drive adoption of the new functionality.

Outsourced testing services

If your organization doesn't have the bandwidth to conduct thorough testing after every update, you can work with a 3rd-party testing service. You can find vetted vendors in the Oracle Cloud Marketplace that offer full-service testing as well as hybrid services to help you with any part of your testing strategy.

You can use the master run book from your implementation to develop your testing strategy and scripts.

Recommendations to Manage Updates



Review pre-release documentation

The “What’s New” and “Update Checklist” documents will help your IT and HR teams understand new functionality to decide which enhancements to release into your environment.



Attend pre-release online events

For high impact new features, Oracle hosts webinars so you can learn about the functionality. Led by HCM product experts, you can ask questions and understand the rationale, benefits, and use cases for the feature.



Be aware of opt-in expiration dates

Since new functionality is turned off by default and you can opt-in to the new functionality when it suits your organization, eventually, the opt-in expires. That means we turn on features, and they become standard functionality in the application.



Include IT and HR stakeholders in functionality decisions

Different perspectives are very important when making decisions about which new features to deploy into your environment. Be sure to include HR administrators in functionality discussions so your IT team isn’t making decisions in a vacuum.

[Customer Connect](#) is the resource center for Oracle Cloud HCM customers. You’ll find:

- Cloud application documentation
- Quarterly update information
- Product event details
- Customer forums
- Networking opportunities

To hear more from PeopleSoft and Cloud experts, watch the full [Applying Updates](#) webinar on demand.

Considering a Move to Cloud?

As technology becomes more and more of a competitive differentiator, companies are evaluating cloud applications to empower HR with the flexibility and innovation needed to rapidly adapt to change. [Learn more.](#)

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