

# Cyberbit and the State of Illinois

Ensuring \$52B of Illinois State assets are safe of cyberattacks, by maximizing the impact of their cyber defense team with a state-of-the-art cyber range.

## Overview

The Office of the Illinois State Treasurer is entrusted with investing on behalf of the State, units of government, and retirement and college savers. It prudently and expertly manages the State's multiple banking functions as well as provides financial services to individuals and government bodies in Illinois. Its mission is to promote economic growth, education, access, and opportunity for individuals and government bodies across the State of Illinois and it is committed to fulfilling this mission in a professional and ethical manner, while striving for transparency, efficiency, diversity and inclusion, sustainability, and preservation of public trust. The Office is responsible for \$52 billion in assets and the state's ePay program, a round-the-clock, full-service electronic program used by state agencies and state-affiliated organizations to receive funds quickly and securely.

## The Need

As the agency responsible for ensuring the protection of \$52 billion in assets as well as the state's ePay program, cybersecurity training for the Office's IT staff is more critical than ever, as cyber-attacks on the Treasurer's Office have increased by 800% since 2019. To effectively protect the assets under its care, the Treasurer's Office needed to know its IT teams were cyber ready; trained and prepared to defend in the real world.

The Office wanted a full-spectrum cybersecurity training platform that would allow its IT staff to practice using real-world attack simulations and gain the hands-on experience needed to defend in the real world. It was looking for a training platform that could provide the foundational knowledge in theory, tools, and attacker tactics, as well as the hands-on experience that would develop, strengthen, and maintain its team's cyber readiness. The Office also wanted to use a hands-on training method to spread cybersecurity awareness within its end-user community rather than the security awareness lectures that are typically used to increase awareness. Lastly, the ongoing cybersecurity skills shortage means competition for talent is fierce, leaving the Office struggling to compete with public institutions that typically have bigger budgets. It needed a unique incentive that would help level the playing field when competing with private institutions for new hires.

## The Solution

To resolve these challenges, the Illinois Treasurer's office chose Cyberbit's cloud-based, on-demand skills development platform. After an extensive review of cyber skilling platforms, the Treasurer's Office found that Cyberbit offered the best technology to prepare its cybersecurity team.

By running live-fire cyber range exercises on the Cyberbit platform, including reverse-engineered attack scenarios, the Office's IT staff significantly improved its incident response times and cyber readiness levels. In addition, Cyberbit's hyper-realistic environments use commercial security tools and real-world virtualized networks similar to the environments the staff uses on the job, enhancing their understanding of the environments they work in and helping them improve their threat detection, identification, and investigation capabilities.

The State Treasurer uses labs available on the Cyberbit platform to train entry level practitioners, which cover the basics to recognizing threats and performing the initial investigation with tools that are accessible to end users, such as file explorer and task scheduler. These labs are ideal for educating the various participants of the ePay program, giving them a unique and engaging opportunity to learn about cybersecurity and their critical role in protecting their state as the human element.

## Results

Implementing the Cyberbit skills development platform was highly successful on several fronts:

- The IT staff has significantly improved its cyber readiness level, identifying and closing skills gaps, and cutting incident response time from one week to one hour.
- The Office now has a unique incentive to offer cybersecurity professionals who are eager to learn and advance their skills via state-of-the-art skills development methods rather than traditional skill development methods such as on-the-job training and courses.
- Training has extended beyond just the IT staff at the Treasurer's office. The Office now helps train local units of government involved in ePay via twice-monthly sessions on Cyberbit's Cyber Labs where trainees develop and fortify foundational knowledge of cybersecurity theory.
- Training has been so successful, in fact, that the Office plans to create a center of excellence for cybersecurity around financial transactions and is aiming for January of 2022.

**“After 18 months of drills, security teams have cut response time from a week to an hour”**



**Joe Daniels**

CIO, Illinois State Treasurer

# Media Coverage

The success story was covered in detailed on GCN, in an interview with Illinois State CIO, Joe Daniels.

[Read the full article](#)

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## Live-fire cyber training slashes incident response time



By Stephanie Kanowitz

NOVEMBER 29, 2021

IT teams at the Illinois Office of the Treasurer have been training on a virtual enterprise-grade network defending against sophisticated attacks using their own tools.

CYBERSECURITY STATE AND LOCAL