GovOS

'Easy to Do Business With': Why Simplifying Business Licensing & Registration Is a Best Practice
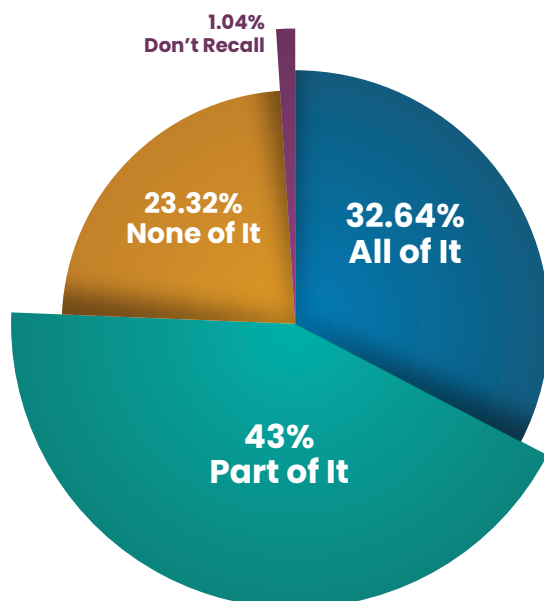
Introducing New Innovations into Your Business Licensing Processes

More than two thirds of business licenses could not be completed online, according to a recent survey of business owners across the US*
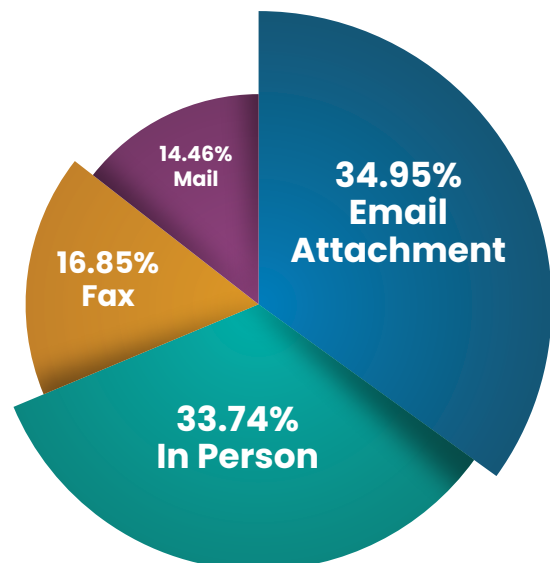
Like so many other things that require multiple steps, a printer, a stamp, or waiting in line, an excess of tedious tasks can add up to a lot of non-compliance when it comes to licensing requirements. When businesses have everything they need to apply for, renew, and pay licensing fees all in one place, it makes it that much easier to stay in compliance with government regulations. **Yet, the reality is that most cities and counties do not currently offer business owners a complete, end-to-end digital option for licensing and registration (see our survey data below).**

With the right business licensing software in place, local governments can modernize operations, reduce administrative burdens, and foster a more business-friendly environment that serves a growing number of entrepreneurs. From a simplified application and renewal process to real-time updates on licensing statuses, establishing an efficient and effective online licensing system can attract new businesses and spur economic growth in a community.

How much of the business license application process was completed online?

1.04%
Don't Recall

23.32%
None of It

32.64%
All of It

43%
Part of It

While 43% could fill out the application online, the method for how they submitted it to their local government varied:

14.46%
Mail

16.85%
Fax

34.95%
Email Attachment

33.74%
In Person

Access the complete GovOS Report to explore more survey results which provide a close look at the business owner perspective.

Setting Up an Online Business Licensing System

Step 1: Evaluate Your Current Process and Identify Pain Points

It can be helpful to begin by evaluating the current business licensing process to identify any pain points or inefficiencies in the current system. This will give staff a better understanding of where improvements can be made.

Gather Feedback

As part of your evaluation, gather feedback from any internal staff involved in the business licensing process. If your agency has received community feedback from those who went through the license application process, note any improvements that could be made in the experience or if the applicant encountered any challenges or roadblocks along the way.

Brainstorm Solutions

Once you identify areas for improvement, brainstorm potential solutions. For example, does the application process take a long time to complete? If so, streamlining the steps by automatically routing an application to multiple approvers instead of one person or accepting online payments so applicants don't have to mail checks might help speed up the process.

Step 2: Choose the Right Software for Your Needs

Now that you know what you need from a business licensing solution, it's time to research and choose one that's right for your community. There are several factors to consider as you begin your research.

Evaluate Solutions

As you explore the online licensing systems that are available, ensure they meet your specific requirements regarding:

- Ease of use
- System security
- Training
- Technical support
- Integration capabilities
- Payment gateways

Evaluate Providers

In addition to determining system capabilities, it is also important to select a software provider that has experience implementing online licensing systems and a proven track record of delivering high-quality results. Careful evaluation will help you identify a reputable provider and ensure your organization's online licensing system operates smoothly and effectively.

Still not sure exactly where to start? Check out this list of 35 business licensing software questions to ask around topics like security, reporting, support, and payment processing.

Step 3: Prepare to Launch

After evaluating systems and selecting a business licensing solution, your agency, in partnership with the provider, will likely begin to plan the next steps. This can include:

Implementation Tasks

Depending on your current business licensing process and the software provider's requirements, the implementation stage can involve tasks such as migrating data from legacy systems to the new platform, conducting user testing, and making any necessary adjustments to processes.

Staff Training

Before launching the new system, impacted employees will need to know how to use it effectively. This will help ensure they perform duties more efficiently and enhance customer satisfaction. The software company should provide resources and live or virtual training events for government staff.

Educating the Community

It is essential to communicate any changes to the business licensing process with your community. Proactively sending notifications will help alleviate potential confusion or frustration that they may experience during the transition period. Prepare community resources, such as FAQs, and check with the software provider to ensure they provide support directly to your business community.

> "
> GovOS has always been committed to working with businesses and jurisdictions to make tax and licensing as easy as possible. We are fortunate to have them as a partner to continue simplifying business compliance in Colorado communities.
>
> **Paul Archer**
> *President of the business group*
> *Simplify Colorado Sales Tax Coalition*

Supporting Your Local Business Community

Local governments play an important role in supporting their community's business owners. Yet standard processes, like obtaining a business license, are often unnecessarily complex, and not all prospective business owners have the right amount of support to get up and running quickly.

When it's difficult for business owners to navigate government processes and complete required tasks, it can extend the amount of time it takes them to come into compliance or even discourage them from starting a business in the first place.

Fortunately, there are several ways local governments can support their business communities to make these processes easier and more efficient for everyone involved. In the following pages, we cover four strategies to consider when working with your local business owners.

How Gilbert, AZ Prepares for the Future While Protecting What Makes It Great

$85K+ revenue generated through increased registrations

$150 saved on every short-term rental registration

10X increase in compliance for short-term rental registrations

Click or scan to learn how the Town simplified the short-term rental registration process and improved compliance while ensuring full-time residents' needs are met.

1. Create a More User-Friendly Website

The most effective government websites are easy to navigate and provide clear and concise information. When it comes to businesses, determine whether your website has all the information citizens need about licenses, permits, and tax requirements.

A checklist of steps will help them quickly understand what actions they need to take. Proactively providing information that business owners need will mean fewer phone calls and emails about basic requirements, giving staff more time to address other inquiries.

2. Find Ways to Streamline

Licensing software can enable business owners to apply for and renew licenses from anywhere, at any time—on their schedule. Local governments that use business licensing software to create a one-stop shop for licensing and tax filing, can make processes easier from start to finish.

This includes allowing business owners to pay taxes and fees online via credit card or other online payment methods. Exploring ways to simplify licensing and tax filing, such as reducing the complexity or number of forms required, can also help streamline processes for businesses.

3. Ensure Ongoing Technical Support is Available

Not all business owners are tech-savvy, which is why it's important to provide access to an easy-to-use portal that includes ongoing technical support. This will help deliver a better experience to citizens in the event they need assistance completing any required tasks.

When business user support is included with your licensing software, it means communities won't have to dedicate internal staff resources to fielding questions from the business community about how to use the system.

> " With GovOS, it is a much more streamlined process and very user-friendly. The system we had before GovOS was not user-friendly. We had a lot of customer complaints about the number of clicks it required to process a transaction.
>
> **Joshua Allen**
> *Board Services Director, Okaloosa County, FL, 2023*

4. Prioritize Outreach and Education

Another important step in providing support to your business community is proactively reaching out to explain requirements and provide answers to common questions business owners might have.

Ensure the business licensing software you choose allows staff to create custom notifications with:

- Detailed instructions on how to apply for and renew licenses or pay taxes online

- Hyperlinks to any supporting documents, such as forms or notices

- Upcoming due dates, payment reminders, or changes to local or state regulations that impact them or the industry in which they work

- Reminders about registration, renewal, and delinquency status, as well as any relevant account-specific information, such as past-due amounts

- Upcoming and outstanding tasks regarding license renewal applications and tax forms

Whether it's via email or snail mail, consistent communication will let your business community know they can rely on you to give them the information they need in a timely fashion.

How Okaloosa County, FL Simplified Business Licensing & Tax Collection with GovOS

98% of transactions are now paid online

14%+ increase in registrations by taxpayers

$76,500+ collected in annual penalties & interest

Click or scan to watch a short video of Okaloosa County staff and their experience using GovOS.

Key Takeaways

Business licensing, with all its complexity and moving parts, might seem like an ongoing challenge—but it doesn't have to be. By moving away from traditional paper-based systems and towards a modern business licensing solution, local governments can facilitate a more efficient, user-friendly licensing experience. This can lead to improved compliance, a reduction in errors, and a more comprehensive understanding of the local business landscape with the help of data and reporting.

✓ Evaluate your current licensing process and identify areas for improvement

✓ Research software vendors to determine which one is the right fit for your agency

✓ Support your business community by creating a user-friendly website

✓ Provide ongoing technical support to field business user questions

✓ Prioritize ongoing outreach and education to keep the community up to date

With a proven track record of serving local governments of all sizes, GovOS offers a modern software solution that is seamless, simple, and secure. Contact us to learn how we can help your agency streamline and automate the business licensing process.

> " We have been using GovOS Business Licensing for several years now. We've had several staff member changes, but I never have to worry about sales taxes and licensing—even with staff turnover. With GovOS Business Licensing, this revenue collection just 'goes' without me worrying about a thing.
>
> **Renae Gustine**
> *Finance Director, Town of Carbondale, CO, 2020*

Who We Are

GovOS is a leading provider of transaction and compliance software for state and local governments to streamline property, licensing, and tax interactions with businesses and citizens. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, GovOS serves more than 800 government agencies across the United States. With the company's secure suite of cloud-based solutions, governments can maximize revenue, increase compliance, reduce costs, and meet constituent demand for modern, self-service transaction and payment services.

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