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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES NEXT ROUND OF SMALL BUSINESS CENTER IMPROVEMENTS

Launches new "Express Lane" and "Self-Service Station" to provide faster service; license and head tax reforms will save small businesses \$6 million in 2013

Today, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) announced the latest efforts to support Chicago's small business community, including new service improvements to enhance the customer experience and reduce wait times.

In March of 2013, Mayor Emanuel launched the Small Business Center (SBC) to provide small business owners and entrepreneurs a one stop shop resource to help launch and grow their business in Chicago. In this latest effort, the City will implement new expedited service options that will provide customers with an experience tailored to their needs: a new express lane and self-service area.

"From day one I have been focused on making sure that City Hall acts as a partner to Chicago's business owners, not an obstacle," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "Our reforms have already delivered millions in cost savings for small business owners. The latest service improvements are just one more step in the right direction to strengthen our small business community."

The newly launched Express Lane will service 25% of the SBC customers in 15 minutes or less. The express service enables customers to update account information, print a new license, renew a license, and apply for a peddler's license quickly and efficiently.

The new Self-Service Station helps business owners renew their licenses or prepare for their consultations while they wait, saving business owners time. SBC staff will be available to help customers navigate the station if they need help.

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Finally, to improve the overall customer experience, the employees of the SBC developed a set of professional standards ([HERE](#)) demonstrating their commitment to delivering world class customer service. Going forward, SBC staff will provide each customer with a copy of these standards.

“As the owner of two restaurants, I feel that all of the proactive measures taken by the Mayor and the City to streamline the business center experience are great,” said Vicki Kim, owner of Mott Street Restaurant. “I’ve really noticed a change myself.”

“I experienced a fast and attentive process with the small business center,” said Rodolfo Medina, owner of Infinity Glass and Mirrors. “I was able to receive my business license the same day and loved the fact that I could ask questions in Spanish.”

These service improvements build on Mayor Emanuel’s earlier efforts to cut red tape and costs for businesses by phasing out the head tax and initiating business license reform by reducing the number of business license categories by 60 percent.

Chicago’s head tax required businesses with more than 50 employees to pay a tax of \$4 dollars per employee. Phasing out this tax burden has already had an impact in the first stages, saving small businesses \$2.4 million in the first half of 2013, with full year savings expected to be \$4.8 million dollars. In 2014 when the head tax phase out is complete, small businesses will see a savings of over \$9.0 million dollars every year.

The license reform ordinance that reduced the number of required business licenses by 60% has already saved over \$700,000 dollars for nearly 4,000 small businesses and expects businesses to see an additional \$500,000 in savings over the remainder of the year.

The SBC staff worked with the Mayor’s Innovation Delivery Team to develop these reforms by analyzing customer traffic, interviewing dozens of small business owners, and reviewing best practices from governments and corporations across the country.

Chicago is one of five cities to have received an Innovation Delivery Team grant from the Bloomberg Philanthropies. Since launching in November 2011, the team has spearheaded a business license reform ordinance that reduced the number of license categories by 60 percent and helped design the Small Business Center to serve as a one-stop-shop for small businesses. Part of Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Mayors Project, Innovation Delivery Team grants were also awarded to four other cities: Atlanta, Louisville, Memphis, and New Orleans.

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