



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES THE SMALL BUSINESS CENTER WILL GO PAPERLESS BY 2016**

*All licenses and permits will be online by 2016; online "wizard" to launch in 2014*

In an ongoing effort to continue to provide efficient and effective government services to the people of Chicago, today Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced the City will invest in making the Small Business Center paperless by 2016. With \$690,000 in the 2014 budget towards this initiative, the City will move all licenses and permits online by 2016 in an effort to cut down on time spent handling paperwork and to continue to advance the quality of customer service.

"As more and more residents pay bills, apply for services, and file their taxes online, City government needs to keep up," said Mayor Emanuel. "With this investment we will bring small business services into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by moving licenses and permits to the web, helping businesses and residents save time and money."

This initiative will include business licensing, building permits, public way use permits, and special event permits, all of which will be on a single online portal that will provide convenient access to services and customer support to business owners, contractors, and residents. The portal will include the online application, navigational tools to effectively utilize the website, a personal dashboard, and a convenient online payment system.

This effort will result in 120,000 pages of paper out of the system a year; improve case management and lower costs because workers will no longer be spending valuable time scanning and filing. In addition, 6,000 business owners will benefit each year, by spending less time at City Hall and more time with customers. Owners will also be able to handle their permitting work online, so they can focus more on growing their business.

"As a small business owner myself, I know firsthand how difficult it can be to spend valuable time working on paperwork and other matters that are not related to growing a business," said Ald. Mary O'Connor. "I am so pleased to work with Mayor Emanuel to bring forward these reforms, so Chicago stays the most friendly city in the world for small business, and continues to grow jobs in our neighborhoods."

The transformation is expected to begin in 2014 with the launch of a single online "wizard" that will provide businesses with the assistance and guidance needed for the licensing and permitting process, help determine eligibility for existing incentives and tax credits, and provide a connection

to additional resources. The website will include a user-friendly, automated, question-based inquiry system that will produce a customized guide to help people navigate the process of opening a business, beginning major commercial construction projects, or completing business or home renovations in compliance with applicable law.

The website will automatically create a personal dashboard for users enabling them to track multiple applications, receive real-time status updates during the application process, and allow previous users to start a license or permit application. The application system will offer multi-language support and translated information and documents to ensure quality access.

This project was developed by the Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team in partnership with the Departments of Buildings, Transportation, Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Business Affairs and Consumer Protection, and Innovation and Technology. The online portal will be fully implemented by 2016 and will enable the Small Business Center to function more efficiently and to deliver great service to its customers continuing the City's efforts for effective government services.

Chicago is one of five cities to receive an Innovation Delivery Team grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies. Since launching in November 2011, the Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team has spearheaded a business license reform ordinance that reduced the number of license categories by 60 percent, launched the Retrofit Chicago Residential Partnership to help home and apartment building owners save thousands of dollars on their energy bills, 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 Atlanta, Louisville, Memphis, and New Orleans.

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