



Rhode Island Commerce
CORPORATION

Municipality Initiative:
**Simplifying the Small Business
Registration Process**

Application form
(Rolling)

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Municipality Initiative Application (Round 1) Submission Instructions

Applications can be submitted in person, email or by mail to the following address:

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
Attn: Client Services/Liz Tanner
315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101
Providence, RI 02908

Questions on the application process may be submitted to Elizabeth.tanner@commerceri.com

The Municipality Initiative seeks to eliminate the complex burdens on the smallest of businesses when registering with their local municipality. The end goal is to have a single application, a streamlined registration process to open a small business in a municipality and a review of your existing licenses and permits. *Please note that this does not include businesses that are seeking zoning variances or change of use that would require additional permitting or licensing.* The initiative offers the following:

- 1) Lean process coaching, addressing the process of opening a small business
- 2) Customer Service training for those employees interacting with businesses
- 3) A sample brochure and web page on how to open a business in your municipality
- 4) Regulatory reform guidance to further streamline outdated or burdensome regulations, if applicable
- 5) Technology suggestions- for those ready to offer online capabilities. *Not required to receive the funds.*

1. Conditions to Funding

In order to receive funds toward this initiative, the following guidelines must be met:

- a. The initiative must result in the use of a single application, similar, but not identical to the municipalities that have completed this initiative. Each municipality makes its own application.
- b. The resulting process must be simple and efficient from the business owners perspective. At least two employees must be versed in the proper filing of the application and the application must be disseminated from a central location to applicable departments.
- c. Each municipality must review their existing licenses and permits to make them accurately reflect the current needs of the municipality and be supportive of simplified business processes.
- d. The funds received may only be used to pay the invoices of the lean consultant and the customer service training.

2. Costs and Invoicing

The cost of this initiative as proposed is estimated to be approximately \$3,000. The Lean consultant cost is approximately \$2,500 for 12 hours of consultation and Customer Service training is \$500, referrals for providers will be given. With the financial support of the Rhode Island Foundation, the RI Commerce Corporation will contribute a total of \$2,000 to the municipality for this initiative. The municipality is responsible for hiring the Lean consultant and the Customer Service trainer and paying them directly. The municipality may choose to utilize the services of the Lean consultant and the Customer Service trainer beyond the scope of this initiative at an additional cost to the municipality.

3. Applicant Information

Municipality Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____

Business Phone _____ Website _____

Primary Contact for Application:

Full Name _____

Job Title _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Secondary Contact for Application:

Full Name _____

Job Title _____

Phone _____ Email _____

APPLICATION CERTIFICATION FORM

The undersigned is the Mayor/Town Manager/Town Administrator/Council President or equivalent officer of the applicant with the authority to bind the municipality for the proposed initiative.

I certify that:

- ☐ All statements made in this application in its entirety including all attachments, appendices, etc. are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.
- ☐ The Applicant, in their representative capacity, agrees to complete the LEAN training within 45 days and implement the suggested changes within 6 months of receipt of funds from Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.

Name of Municipality Representative: _____

Title: _____

Signature of Municipality Representative: _____

Date Signed: _____

Municipality Initiative – Early Feedback

What is the initiative: Customer Service and Lean Process consultants work with a municipality to focus on the small business registration process. There are 3 main guidelines: a) it must result in a single form for application b) the process must be the most efficient it can be and c) there is a review of all permits and licenses.

Cost= \$3K: \$1K paid by RI Commerce, \$1K paid by RI Foundation, \$1K paid by municipality

Municipalities completed: North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Woonsocket, West Warwick

Next up: North Providence, East Providence, Warwick

RESULTS:

Pawtucket:

- 1) Opening a restaurant in Pawtucket before and after:
 - a. 45+ days = 25 or less
 - b. 10 forms = 4 forms
 - c. 11 visits to City Hall = Zero (it can all be done online or via email)
- 2) Reduced cost of advertising for a business from \$500 to \$280
- 3) Updated computer system to utilize internal electronic approvals across city departments
- 4) Consolidated renewal dates so business owners receive minimal renewal notices

From Mayor Donald R. Grebien: "In addition to developing a simple, standard form for business licensing, the city successfully designed a new process that will greatly improve the experience for any business coming to Pawtucket and aid in creating an environment that is centered on being business friendly."

North Smithfield:

- Will now collect licensing fees at time of application and time of renewal to eliminate the need for continual follow-up with business to come to clerk's office to pick up license once approved
- Post this new form on the town website
- Eliminate \$2 business registration fee for licensed businesses
- Require business registrations only when new – eliminate the need for renewals
- Eliminate Council Approval for business licenses that do not require advertising/public hearing and instead provide monthly listing to Town Council for information only

From Town Administrator Paulette Hamilton: "I can honestly say that some of my employees who were adamant about 'this is the way we've always done it' were the ones who benefitted the most by seeing how improvement can make life easier for everyone!"

West Warwick:

- Modified business registration process to better collect information for tangible tax collection on new businesses
 - Reviewing new collection practices/agencies to improve
 - Reduced business registration fee from \$100 to \$25
 - Relieved the burden on fire and building inspection to perform inspections on registration only businesses
- Consolidated renewal dates so business owners receive minimal renewal notices

From Town Manager Fred Presley: "The program was unique in that it involved participation from front line staff that, guided by the consultant, reviewed the town's licensing and registration practices and established new processes and procedures from the ground up rather than from the top down."

Woonsocket:

- Implement standard business license and registration process into E-Permitting system
- Update signage at City Hall to make it easier for business owners to find the City Clerk's office
- Add acceptance of credit cards to the City Clerk's office so businesses can renew online or over the phone
- Reduced the number of visits required to City Hall by a business owner down to 1 or none

From Mayor Lisa Baldelli-Hunt: "One of the most important initiatives of this administration is to create a business-friendly city and the LEAN municipal program has greatly assisted the City with this goal."

East Providence:

- Collecting email addresses to improve communication with business whenever possible and do public relations outreach to new businesses
- Reduced the amount of time required by City Clerk to process business licenses and renewals from 8 hours/week to 1 hour/week
- Reduced the time to issue a license from 6 weeks to 2-3 weeks
- Reduced the amount of paper used in City Clerk's office from 8 reams/month to 1 ream/month

Warwick:

- Reduced the number of different license forms from 40 to 1
- Reduced the Business owner's required City department visits from 5 to 0
- Reduced the amount of time required by City Clerk to process business licenses and renewals from 12-14 hours/week to 6 hours/week
- By consolidating license renewals, reduced the number of required fire department visits to business and improved ability for Fire and Building to forward plan scheduling of inspection