



## DBPR Continues to Make Efforts to Streamline Processes and Improve Customer Service

### *at a glance*

Consistent with our recommendations, the Department of Business and Professional Regulation has further streamlined its business processes by increasing the use of its online application system and eliminating secondary data systems. The department's Customer Contact Center has improved customer service and will conduct a customer satisfaction survey. The department is moving forward with a plan to provide for post-Accenture operations and management services. Finally, the department is reducing its reliance on paper driven systems by implementing an agency-wide electronic document management system.

### Scope

In accordance with state law, this progress report describes actions taken by the Legislature and Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) to address the findings and recommendations of a 2005 OPPAGA report.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Background

The Department of Business and Professional Regulation regulates nearly one million businesses and professionals in more than 200 license categories to protect the health, safety, and

welfare of citizens and visitors. State law authorizes the department to establish uniform application forms and certificates for licensure for use by its divisions.<sup>3</sup>

In February 2001, the department contracted with Accenture, LLP, to design, implement, and operate an online licensing system, internet portal, and call center. The initiative consolidated department computer systems, telephone systems, and business operations, with the goal of reducing costs and improving customer service by providing single points of entry through the internet and call center. The Accenture contract contained three major components: (1) create the LicenseEase statewide licensing system and internet portal; (2) provide application management services; and (3) develop a centralized call center that provides voice, e-mail, and interactive voice response systems.

Under the contract, Accenture provides operations and maintenance support services for the single licensing and call center systems. Accenture's other responsibilities include providing technical support and web hosting services and managing application systems.

The department used the project to reorganize its structure and create the Division of Service Operations, a shared service center that replaced some service units formerly operated by divisions.

<sup>1</sup> Section 11.51(6), *F.S.*

<sup>2</sup> *DBPR Re-Engineering Has Achieved Cost Savings, But More Can Be Done to Centralize Functions and Improve Services*, OPPAGA Report No. [05-60](#), December 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Section 20.165, *F.S.*

The Legislature appropriated the division \$15.5 million from various trust funds and 242.5 FTEs for Fiscal Year 2007-08. The division consists of three bureaus—Customer Contact Center, Education and Testing, and Central Intake.<sup>4</sup>

The Customer Contact Center handles initial customer interaction by telephone, e-mail, and the internet, providing the public with 24-hour access to regulatory information. The center also handles general inquiries and disseminates materials such as forms, information booklets, and brochures.

The Bureau of Education and Testing develops, administers, reviews and grades licensing examinations, and oversees continuing education providers and courses required for licensure.

The Bureau of Central Intake processes applications and renewals for many businesses and professions regulated by DBPR. The bureau also collects and processes licensing revenues.

Our 2005 review found that the call center and single licensing system successfully centralized many functions, enhanced customer access to department services, and achieved staff reductions. However, the project had not achieved all of its objectives. Specifically,

- application processing and other functions were not fully centralized;
- cost savings were realized but had been overstated; and
- performance standards were met, but one-third of customers who responded to our survey were not satisfied with Customer Contact Center services.

To address these concerns, we recommended that DBPR explore options to expand online application submission and eliminate secondary data systems. We also recommended that the department develop and report customer satisfaction measures to the Legislature. We suggested that the department periodically survey citizens that use its services and assess satisfaction with its customer service staff, website, and interactive voice system.

Our prior report also noted that certain components of the department’s contract with Accenture are due to expire December 31, 2008. These components include operations and maintenance support services for the single licensing system and Customer Contact Center system. To avoid service disruptions and customer dissatisfaction, we recommended that the department develop a business case for post-contract options and submit it to the Legislature for consideration.

## Current Status ---

Consistent with our recommendations, the department has streamlined its business processes. The department has taken steps to expand access to the online application system, eliminate secondary data systems, improve customer satisfaction, and develop a business case for post-Accenture contract options. It also has developed a document management system, which it expects will reduce application processing time and overall licensing costs.

### ***Additional efforts have been made to streamline department business processes***

While DBPR has not added any new professions to its licensing system, it has expanded on-line access by implementing electronic attestation and fingerprinting to facilitate online application submission. Electronic attestation eliminates the need for customers to download, print, notarize, and mail a variety of licensing documents.<sup>5</sup> After determining that existing law provided sufficient authority, the department implemented electronic attestation for all professions in June 2007.

Electronic fingerprinting is a faster and more efficient system for conducting criminal background checks than the older paper fingerprint card method that required applicants to manually complete a paper fingerprint card and submit it to a law enforcement agency. While the paper system required one to two weeks processing time, electronic fingerprinting provides results within 24 hours of submission, a

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<sup>4</sup> Fiscal Year 2007-08 appropriations for the bureaus were Customer Contact Center - \$4.7 million, 89 FTE; Central Intake - \$6.8 million, 107.5 FTE; and Testing and Continuing Education - \$4 million, 46 FTE.

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<sup>5</sup> Certain forms for license applications require the applicant’s signature attesting (swearing) that the information provided is correct. Criminal charges can result if the applicant attests to false information.

substantial time savings. Current state law requires criminal background checks only for some professions and requires electronic fingerprinting only for real estate and appraiser professions.<sup>6</sup> The department used its existing authority to expand electronic fingerprinting to include construction industry license applicants, which is expected to begin during fall 2007.<sup>7</sup> This timeframe allows the board and administrative offices opportunity to prepare licensees and other stakeholders for the procedural changes.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, DBPR is working to increase the number of applicants that use its on-line application system. It has established a work group to evaluate licensure statutory and rule requirements and identify application forms that could be eliminated or submitted electronically.

Use of secondary data systems reduced. As recommended in our prior report, the department has eliminated a secondary system that it had used to track arbitration information for the Division of Land Sales, Condominiums and Mobile Homes. The information is now captured in the department's single licensing system.

The Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco continues to use a secondary system outside of the single licensing system to track audit information from regulated businesses. Division employees conduct these audits to verify the flow of alcohol and tobacco products from manufacturers to distributors to vendors and validate the correct tax payment. Historically, DBPR has collected alcoholic beverage and tobacco revenues in addition to its tax audit and compliance functions. Policymakers have raised questions on whether responsibility for collecting

and tracking these revenues should be transferred to the Department of Revenue or remain with DBPR. A 2005 assessment of the alternatives for the tax auditing and compliance management system determined that the function should stay with DBPR and be incorporated into the single licensing system. However, the department has not pursued this project.

### ***Several steps have been taken to improve customer satisfaction***

Since the release of our 2005 report, the department has developed a customer satisfaction survey that it plans to fully implement by November 2007.<sup>9</sup> The survey will evaluate the level of service received during contact with the Customer Contact Center and will assess customers' experience using the interactive voice system and the department website. The department will use survey results to help identify and develop training plans and improve the quality of information provided to the Legislature. The department also will use survey results to develop estimates of average processing times for license applications, which will allow call center staff to tell customers approximately how long it might take them to receive their license.

The Customer Contact Center has improved customer service by increasing staff and providing additional training, which has reduced hold time averages from 20 minutes to 1.5 minutes. During Fiscal Year 2006-07, the center filled 29 vacant positions and developed call agent schedules based on call volumes. In addition, some call agents received training for specific professions and can therefore provide better information to customers.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Chapter 475, F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Applicants for construction licensing must submit to a criminal background check and provide a complete set of fingerprints in a form and manner required by the department.

<sup>8</sup> Applicants for yacht and ship sales licensees are required to submit fingerprints but not required to submit electronic fingerprints. In February 2007, the department began onsite electronic scanning of traditional fingerprint cards to improve application processing. Department officials indicate that the new process has produced cost and time savings and improved customer service.

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<sup>9</sup> The department's Office of Inspector General conducted a customer satisfaction survey in January and February 2006. Survey results, although generally positive, indicated that services could be improved and will be used as a quality assurance baseline. The department's goal is that 80% of respondents express average or above average satisfaction and 80% of customers resolve their issues during their first contact with the center.

<sup>10</sup> During license renewal cycles, licensing board staff also supplements the call center staff to provide additional expertise.

**Post-Accenture contract options have been explored via a business case**

To address our recommendation, DBPR contracted with a consultant to evaluate four options for supporting the single licensing system after the Accenture contract expires in December 2008—bring support and maintenance services in-house; contract with a new primary vendor; bring support of some services in-house, but contract for some services externally; and negotiate a new contract with Accenture.

Based on cost, the consultant recommended that the department bring operational support for the single licensing system in-house, which it estimated would save Florida’s professionals and businesses \$6.3 million over five years. Most of these savings (\$1.6 million per year beginning in 2010) results from having in-house staff provide on-going support of the data system rather than paying a vendor for those services.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the consultant’s report suggested that the in-house option provided other advantages, including cost transparency, accountability, improvements in customer satisfaction, responsiveness to statutory and rule changes, and flexibility to respond to technological innovations.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The consultant study reported that the Accenture contract did not take into account frequent statutory and rule changes affecting the department’s licensing processes; these changes and associated fees increased department costs.

<sup>12</sup> The consultant report indicates that some services under the current Accenture contract are not readily transparent, specifically, the fixed and variable costs underlying the per license charge paid to Accenture.

**Agency-wide document management system may improve customer service**

To replace paper business processes, the department is implementing a document management system that will capture, manage, store, deliver, and preserve documents electronically. By reducing paper and managing license applications and processes electronically, the department hopes to reduce the time it takes for license approvals, license changes, and compliance activities.<sup>13</sup>

After a funding a Fiscal Year 2005-06 study, the Legislature appropriated \$2.4 million in Fiscal Year 2006-07 to design, develop and implement the electronic document management system. An additional \$2.4 million was appropriated in Fiscal Year 2007-08. Phase 1 of the initiative began in October 2007 as a pilot project for two professions—barbers and community association managers. When complete, phase I will allow the department to process electronic license applications and other documents. Electronic documents can be processed more efficiently because they allow different employees to verify license information simultaneously. The department anticipates that the new system will allow the division to route applications and supporting documents to application processors within the Division of Service Operations in approximately four days, compared to 14 to 21 days under the old system. The second and third phases of the project will expand electronic document management to other divisions and include all the professions and businesses regulated by the department.

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<sup>13</sup> The department reports that it currently meets its statutory requirement to process original applications within 90 days. However, department officials indicated that the time required to process applications reduces time that could be spent on other licensing and compliance tasks.

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