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# BUSINESS ENTITY SEARCH

Government to Business

State of Utah

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Utah continually strives to make it easier for citizens and businesses to interact with the government by offering services online. In an effort to streamline business-to-government communications, the Utah Department of Commerce, Division of Corporations, launched Business Entity Search (BES) several years ago. BES makes it possible for individuals and businesses to retrieve information on Utah businesses. The system allows users to perform a free simple search, which returns the business entity information. Previously, the only way to retrieve this information was in person at the Division of Corporations. The system also allows users to purchase the Certificate of Existence and access principal agent information.

Businesses and individuals can also build a customized business entity list. While this tool was thought to be highly innovative at the time of its launch several years ago, it became apparent that it was also necessary to retrieve BES images. In 2007 that the Department of Commerce also added the ability search, retrieve, and print official copies of BES images. Now citizens and members of the business community can instantly view images for scanned paper filings, as well as images of electronic files online. Until March of 2007, the only way to view business filings was in person at the Division of Corporations.

BES helps local businesses operate more effectively and efficiently by allowing them to skip the time and money associated with an in person visit.

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE BUSINESS PROBLEM

The Business Entity Search application allows businesses and individuals to access business registration information quickly and easily, saving businesses time and money. Previously, the only way to retrieve this information was in person at the Division of Corporations.

Working with the Utah Bar Association and the Utah legal community, the Utah Department of Commerce mapped out a plan to make business registration information more accessible to the people that access it most. Prior to the launch of BES, attorneys and legal aids spent hundreds of hours a year making trips to the Utah Division of Corporations to retrieve business registration information. They saw the need to make this information available online, and out of this need BES was born.

### Solution Description

Instead of dedicating time and resources to searching files in person, now an individual can complete a simple one step online search, similar to a Google search, and instantly have access to business information. Once a business is found, the principal agent information can be accessed.

Another added feature of BES is the ability to print a legal copy of the Certificate of Existence. Were this not available, the legal community would still be required to go to the Division of Corporations in person to compile the necessary paper work.

BES Imaging is an upgrade to the Division of Corporations' online business entity search launched in 2007. Individuals can search all registered business entities in Utah and view relevant information images associated with the business. A user can view a PDF of filings associated with that business, including applications, mergers, annual reports, amendments, and other miscellaneous files. The majority of filings are available as images online, with the exception of Doing Business As (DBA) and trademark filings.

BES Imaging is similar to Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) Imaging, which the Division of Corporations launched at the end of February 2007, adding to the suite of services the Division of Corporation offers businesses. Images obtained through BES can be paid for with either credit card or a subscriber account, and are charged per viewed document regardless of the number of pages or file size. (A simple BES search is free, only the printing of images requires a fee.)

In addition, users can build a list of businesses. Users simply choose from a list of options that are presented to them on the List Builder, then hit Submit. Business Entity Search will then search the Department of Corporations and Commercial Code's database to start building their list. The List Builder adds the additional features of narrowing the search by building a list based on Zip Code and/or Industrial Code (NAICS). Once users enter the specifications for the list and click "Submit Order" they are presented with the details of their order. As with other BES services, they may purchase their list by charging the amount to their Utah.gov subscriber account or to a credit card.

By integrating these services with existing Utah.gov subscriber accounts, individuals and corporations in Utah save time and are not required to enter personal information multiple times.

Last year, BES had over 269,000 search hits. Had all of those searches been performed by employees at the Division of Corporation, the burden would have been immense. Likewise, had business been required to perform all searches in person, they would have spent hours at the Division of Corporation office.

Due to an aggressive marketing plan and increased awareness of the program, the number of hits on BES continues to grow. In January 2007, 17,091 searches were performed; in January 2008, 35,682 searches were processed; nearly a 48 percent increase.

#### Length of Time in Operation

The application has been in production since January of 2007.

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### SIGNIFICANCE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE OPERATION OF GOVERNMENT

The Division of Corporations is pleased with BES's strong success. Transactions were expected to peak at 15,000 per month; however, as noted above, the number of hits has already exceeded 35,000 per month. This program makes it possible for the Division of Corporation to keep line wait times manageable. In addition, the Division of Corporation did not have to hire more staff to meet the increasing demand for business information.

The adoption rates of these services are evidence of the success of the program and the amount of work saved by the Department of Commerce:

- Certificate of Existence has a 96 percent adoption rate.
  - Principal Search has a 100 percent adoption rate.
  - Registered Principal Search has a 100 percent adoption rate.
  - Image Search has a 96 percent adoption rate.
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### BENEFIT OF THE PROJECT

Utah businesses are extremely happy with the service, and the Division of Corporation has had an overwhelmingly enthusiastic response. In 2007 the Utah Bar Association felt the program was so important to the legal community that they solicited an article for their publication and invited Utah.gov employees to provide information to their constituents at the annual Bar Association meeting.

When asked if this system was easy, 100 percent of the respondents answered "Very Easy". When asked, "Did this system offer all of the services you needed?" Nearly 90 percent of respondents answered "Yes". Users are happy with the system; for example, one local attorney left the following feedback, "Very affordable and easy to use. Appreciate it being available!" This statement is a testament to the success of the program. The Division of Corporations is pleased to assist local businesses.

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By allowing people to perform these transactions online rather than in person, private businesses were able to increase their revenues, alleviate some of the pressure on the Division of Corporation, and offer citizens a fast and easy new service. In addition, when factoring in labor cost, BES and BES imaging is the least expensive option for citizens. The statistics indicate that BES is achieving productivity with little administrative burden and businesses are gladly utilizing the system.