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Utah Licensee Lookup and Verification

1. Executive Summary

The online Licensee Lookup and Verification system (LLV) provides online access to occupational and professional license information twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The information available consists of 60 professions and 130 distinct license types. The application enables citizens, businesses, and government agencies to search for a specific professional by name or license number and verify that they are in good standing. Aside from a simple verification, the application can also provide an official licensure verification document that is considered official nationwide. It is the first system of its kind to offer official licensure verification.

By streamlining the procedures of government, citizens, and businesses several improvements to the operation of government have been realized. Citizens and businesses now have more convenient, faster, and less expensive options for obtaining license verification. Along with the efficiencies noticed by citizens, the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) has also seen a significant reduction in the manual labor involved in the process.

Citizens and state agencies realize benefits when information is centralized, money and personnel resources are used efficiently, and when verifying licensure is a quick and easy process. The government agency (DOPL) saves money and personnel resources. Citizens and businesses save money and time.

Implementation of this program has actually provided an immediate cost savings to the agency. Since the implementation of this online system, DOPL has been able to reallocate the efforts of two full time employee equivalents that had previously answered telephone calls.

2. Description of project, including length of time in operation.

The online Licensee Lookup and Verification system (LLV) was launched on July 11, 2001. Prior to the LLV system, citizens were required to call the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) in order to verify licensure of contractor or employee. DOPL received and processed verification requests between the hours of 8am and 5pm (MST) Monday through Friday, meaning that citizens could only make verification requests during those times. Citizens calling in faced an average wait time of 3-5 minutes, and each phone call was limited to 3 verification requests. Each official license verification letter would, in turn, take a maximum of 10 days to process, excluding mail time. This offline process requires agency personnel to spend approximately 8 to 10 minutes per official verification request, with 50 to 60 requests per week; all of which translates into 511 hours per year spent processing official verification requests by mail alone. The combination of DOPL's limited operating hours, tedious wait times for citizens, and inefficient workflow necessitated the development of an online licensee verification system.

LLV now provides online access to occupational and professional license information. This information, available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, encompasses 60 professions and 130 distinct license types. The application enables users to search for a specific professional by name or license number.

The user groups served by this online system fall into the following three categories:

Citizens – Citizens are able to verify that a professional is licensed and in good standing with DOPL. For example, if a citizen is working with several contractors on a home remodel, s/he may want to verify that the contractors have a license to do business in the state and have not had any disciplinary actions filed against them. By using LLV, the citizen can easily verify that the contractors are, in fact, licensed and in good standing. Additionally, the licensees themselves are able to obtain instant, official verification of their licensure with the state of Utah.

Businesses – Employers who employ licensed professionals (such as hospitals) must verify that their employees (such as doctors and nurses) are licensed and in good standing with the state of Utah. By using LLV, employers can easily verify the licensure and standing of their employees. Additionally, credentialing agencies frequently use the system to verify licensee information.

Government – City, State and Federal Government agencies often need to verify the status of a professional license. For example, cities use the site to verify contractor licenses before issuing building permits. Federal and State government agencies use the site to verify licensure for prospective employee checks or before issuing a building contract.

The system averages 540,000 accesses per month from the aforementioned user groups. Furthermore, this site has been the number one accessed application on the Utah.gov portal since its launch.

Based on our research, Utah is currently the only state in the nation verifying professional licensure online. However, the development of this program initially posed a critical problem: how to create a way for an official licensure verification document to be generated by an end-user that would also be accepted by other state licensing agencies as proof of licensure? The solution proved simple: the agency directly notified sister State Licensing Boards of the change and detailed the new process. To further reduce fraud, verifications are created in portable document format (.pdf). Finally, a control number assigned to each verification enables the agency to authenticate whether or not the verification is valid. This web-based service is completely changing the future of licensure verifications.

To view the online application, please go to <https://secure.e-utah.org/llv>.

3. Significance to the improvement of the operation of government.

LLV integrates the activities of the government (DOPL), local business, and Utah citizens. This level of streamlined integration creates several improvements to the operation of government. Effectiveness and efficiency are measured in two primary ways: first, the savings to citizens and businesses (in term of both time and money) and second, the savings to the agency.

- Citizens now have additional options for obtaining licensee verification. Rather than obtaining this information over the phone or by mail, it can now be obtained online.
- Citizens now have access to this information 24 hours a day 7 days a week. As a result of centralizing this information online, it is available at any time.
- Using the online rather than mail option drastically reduces the amount of time a citizen must wait for verification from 10 days plus to 3 or 4 minutes.
- DOPL has seen a significant decrease in the number of phone calls and requests via mail.

4. Benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency, or state.

Citizens and state agencies realize benefits when information is centralized, money and personnel resources are used efficiently, and when verifying licensure is a quick and easy process. To this end, LLV benefits its constituents in the following ways:

The government agency saves money and personnel resources. Since the implementation of LLV, the agency has experienced approximately a 60% decrease in phone calls and fewer official verification letter requests. As a result of this drop in offline requests, the licensing staff has spent less time answering telephone inquires, reviewing and/or processing official verification letters and more time performing other necessary tasks. The agency estimates an average cost savings of \$10,000.00 annually due to the workflow efficiency resulting from this program.

Citizens save money. Online verification requests cost citizens \$5.00, whereas an offline, manual, paper request costs \$20.00. Using LLV saves citizens 75%.

Citizens also save time. LLV has dramatically reduced the amount of time it takes to receive the official verification letter. Offline, an official license verification letter takes a maximum of 10 processing days, plus mail time. The online system (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, even on Government holidays) requires a maximum of 3-4 *minutes* per inquiry.

These benefits are due, in part, to the centralized information available in LLV. By providing a central location in which information is readily accessible, LLV facilitates the saving of money and time for both government and constituents.

5. Return on investment, short-term/ long-term payback (including summary calculations). Projects must exhibit measurable operational benefit.

The LLV application was developed under a unique public/private partnership between the State of Utah and Utah Interactive Inc. (UII). This partnership provides for interactive applications without the appropriation of tax dollars because it is based on a self-funding enterprise model.

UII offers the following services at no cost in conjunction with the development of the Licensee Lookup Verification System:

- 24 X 7 Customer support
- Hosting and support

Because there are no annual operational costs paid by the Department of Commerce, implementation of this program has actually provided an immediate cost savings to the agency. Since the implementation of this online system, DOPL has been able to reallocate the efforts of two full time employee equivalents that had previously answered telephone calls. Again, the Department of Commerce conservatively estimates an average cost savings of \$10,000.00 annually due to the workflow efficiency resulting from this program. It is anticipated that as adoption rates increase this cost savings will continue to increase proportionately.