



Office of Information Technology Services

Innovation That Matters... For All New Yorkers



New York Business Express Continues to Improve Operations for Small Business Owners

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Complete Business Formation: December 5, 2018

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Executive Summary

New York Business Express (<https://www.busessexpress.ny.gov/>) is a single portal that is revolutionizing the way that new businesses interact with New York State government. Designed to aid businesses in navigating New York State required licenses, permits, and forms across multiple agencies, New York Business Express streamlines all state information needed to open and grow a business, helps users navigate regulations and opportunities, and provides personalized up-to-date information.

The inception of New York Business Express came in 2015 as part of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's "New York State of Opportunity" agenda, which laid out a vision to help small businesses get started and grow. Governor Cuomo envisioned a program that would offer a game-changing approach to small business growth and an innovative way of cutting red tape by making the process of opening and running a business clear and unambiguous, further demonstrating that New York State is open for business.

Prior to the launch of New York Business Express, business owners in New York were required to navigate a complicated maze of information and requirements of multiple agencies, often seeking out information across multiple websites and interacting with employees from different agencies. Prospective business owners had to provide some identical information on multiple forms, seek guidance on regulations, and often interact with different agencies for updates on each individual status of their separate submissions. In sum, the old process was not straightforward or easy to navigate and often resulted in citizens hiring outside assistance to complete business applications. Such major hurdles had the potential to cause great frustration or even stop a business from starting altogether. The idea behind New York Business Express is to create a central space that is easy to navigate and contains a vast array of information for more than 33 executive NYS agencies people may need to interact with when starting a business in New York State.

FEATURES LAUNCHED IN 2018

In 2018, the NYS Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) added the capability to complete transactions and submit them using the portal. Now, using New York Business Express, users can build a **Business Profile** unique to their business and reuse that information to complete critical transactions needed to establish a business in New York State. Transactions for complete business formation within the New York Business Express portal feed into the backend systems at four different agencies: the Department of State (DOS); the Department of Labor (DOL); the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB); and the Department of Taxation and Finance (DTF). For the state, four agencies receive information, but the user only needs to interact with the single portal.

In addition, New York Business Express further expanded offerings to state agencies to improve information consistency by creating and launching the **Business Profile Web Service**. This service provides APIs that state agencies can call to confirm the accuracy of the information they have on a business. The Business Profile Web Service utilizes key business identifiers, such as a legal name, to verify information and make corrections where necessary, thereby perpetuating accurate and consistent information on a business across state agencies.

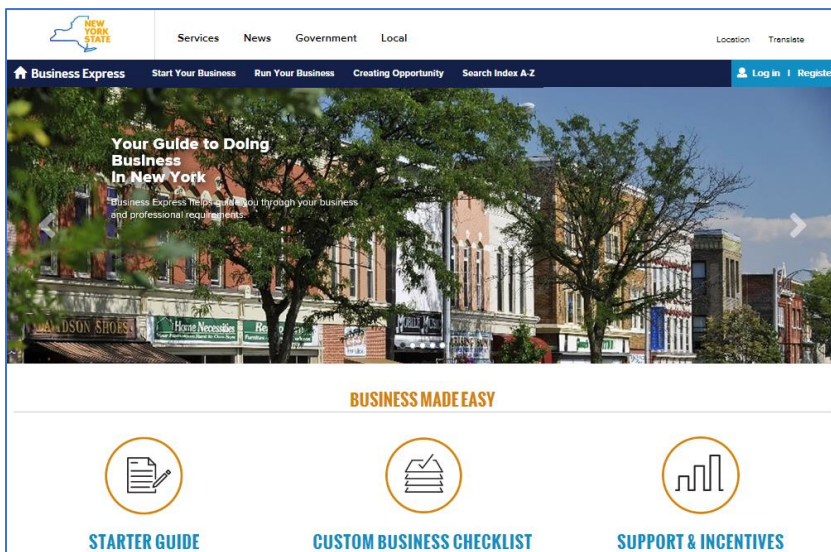
Exemplar

ONE ACCESS POINT FOR MULTIPLE AGENCIES

At its core, New York Business Express is the presentation of “One New York State” to business owners. In the past, business owners had to courier their own information between various agencies and the agencies did not share information with one another. There was no way to consistently advise business owners of all the procedures and potential regulations that exist across the state when opening a business.

New York Business Express addresses the need for business interactions with New York State in a single location with complete information regarding all transactions required to start a business, along with the capability to submit transactions using the portal and track progress. Opening a business is complex and many prospective business owners do not inherently know what applications they must complete for which agencies in order to comply with regulations when opening their businesses. However, using New York Business Express, business owners can obtain personalized step-by-step guidance using the Business Wizard, submit transactions for multiple agencies using the one New York Business Express portal, contact the NYS Business Information Center to ask questions about opening a business in New York State, and have 24/7 access to a live dashboard with the current status of application submissions.

ITERATIVE GROWTH LEADING TO EPIC SUCCESS



New York Business Express began with Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's “New York State of Opportunity” agenda in 2015 to help small businesses get started and grow. The Governor called for a program that would offer a game-changing approach to small business growth and an innovative way of cutting red tape, further demonstrating that New York is open for business. The New York Business Express portal project began in 2015 and has since grown in phases to make opening and running a business in the State of New York easier and more streamlined.

In early 2017, New York Business Express launched the initial phase of the public-facing portal with a redesigned user-friendly Business Wizard to help users find out exactly what licenses and permits were required for their specific kind of businesses, an Incentive Wizard to help businesses identify opportunities for state aid and programs to help their business grow, an optimized searchable index of all licenses, and a single New York Business Information Center to contact for support.

2018 was a momentous year for New York Business Express with the launch of the **Business Profile** feature and the enhanced ability to select **license transactions within the portal**. The Business Profile allows users to create a profile for a business and use the information entered for their businesses across transactions within the portal, decreasing the time required to complete applications and increasing information consistency and reducing the potential for user error.

Regarding the license transactions within the portal, as a part of the initial launch in 2017, users could

find the personalized license information they needed, but they still had to go out to individual agency sites to complete and submit applications. Now, using the portal, users can complete and submit applications necessary for basic business formation across four major New York State agencies, including the DOS, DOL, WCB, and DTF. Users can also view their own personalized dashboards showing up-to-date information regarding the status of their applications.

Concept

BUSINESS PROFILE TO STREAMLINE INTERACTIONS

On March 27, 2018, New York Business Express launched the **Business Profile** feature, which allows users to have a reusable profile that is protected with a username and password. The profile can then be populated with essential business information that can be used to input license transactions within the portal. Users can use the information in their Business Profile to populate repetitive information across forms, which increases information reliability and reduces the possibility of human error.

24/7 DASHBOARD FOR STATUS INFORMATION

Once logged into a Business Profile, users can access their personal **Business Dashboard** which shows the status of their New York Business Express license transactions, 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Before New York Business Express, users were required to contact each individual agency by phone to obtain status information on their outstanding application submissions.

The personal business dashboard feature is both helpful for the user who has constant access to information and to the New York Business Information Center which receives fewer calls checking on the status of applications. Users who maintain a custom business profile are also able to log in at any time to view the status of pending applications submitted using the New York Business Express portal.

EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND INSTRUCTIONS

New York Business Express contains a wealth of information that previously only appeared on individual state agency websites. Leveraging the New York Business Express portal, information is consolidated into a single location. In addition, the portal directs key attention to the content and readability of information across the site. Each individual license information page contains an Overview of the license, any prerequisite documents required, additional requirements, instructions on how to apply, the forms and fees associated, the typical duration and processing times, and other essential information.

AGENCIES LEVERAGING INFORMATION

Another exciting release in 2018 is the establishment of the New York Business Express Business Profile Web Services, which leverages key information and resources required by agencies. Using APIs, New York State agencies can now check to see if information they have is accurate and consistent with that in New York Business Express.

Significance

IMPROVING BUSINESS INTERACTIONS WITH GOVERNMENT

Prior to New York Business Express, businesses requiring multiple licenses and permits to operate in New York were required to navigate a labyrinth of policies, regulations, and forms belonging to numerous state agencies. A large percentage of the information requested was duplicative between agencies and businesses had to interact with each agency independent of one another, creating a confusing and uncoordinated process. This process also impacted state agencies that were required to perform duplicative work and maintain duplicate records.

During the development process of New York Business Express, the ITS business team visited with business groups across New York to gain insight and feedback. ITS met with 12 small business development and support groups, local chambers of commerce, entrepreneurial assistance programs, small business development centers, and business owners; from these important meetings, the ITS team learned that New York's businesses required a central location in which businesses could interact with state government to obtain clear and easy-to-understand information.

The final product available to the public is driven by a simple user interface, easy custom business checklists, incentive finders, and online applications. The current version of New York Business Express contains the ability to establish a business profile, which businesses can use to enter their basic business information one time and can use that information across transactions completed within the portal.

In addition, the single phone number to call for help connects users to the **New York State Business Information Center**, which provides users a single place to ask knowledgeable staff all of their business-related questions. The call center staff also can assist callers using co-browse features, further allowing businesses to access the help and information they need without confusion or delay.

By improving the way businesses gather information from, and interact with, state government, New York State is paving the way to business growth and development. By placing key information and tools into one central location, New York State is further proving the state is "Open for Business."

Impact

AGENCIES WORKING TOGETHER

The success of New York Business Express would not have been possible without the dedication and support of multiple state agencies. Following the call of Governor Cuomo, the NYS Executive Chamber, ITS, DOS, DTF, DOL, and WCB began working closely together to establish clear project governance and scope, with the focus of improving the process of forming a business in NYS. By having the commitment of and contributions from multiple agencies that are central to business development, project sponsors ensured that the program would have the necessary “buy-in” to ensure initial project completion and overall program longevity.

In many ways, New York Business Express represents a paradigm shift. New York State is moving away from multiple agency-specific processes to a single, standardized process that focuses on customer experience. To accomplish this task, agencies embraced a new way of interacting with businesses. The multi-agency Processing Team for the project worked to develop common acceptable standards and the ITS Application Development Team worked to architect and design a flexible framework to communicate with each individual legacy agency system. This important foundational work was essential to improve the experience of interaction between businesses and the state and continues to be central to each additional and modification of the system.

ONE NEW YORK STATE

The greatest impact of New York Business Express is the presentation of “One New York State” to the business community, instead of 33 disparate executive state agencies. By giving businesses one place to locate and store information, and receive technical and tactical support, New York makes it faster and easier to open a business.

Currently, New York Business Express provides a variety of tools and resources for businesses in New York, including:

- a comprehensive index of business searchable information and forms;
- quick and easy-to-use custom business checklists, as well as an incentive and resource finder driven by an intuitive question-based program similar to Turbo Tax;
- the ability to create an account with a New York State Business Profile that contains business information that can be reused across multiple applications for various agencies;
- the capability to submit license and permit applications using the New York Business Express portal;
- 24/7 access to a user dashboard with up-to-date application statuses and documents; and
- the ability to contact the New York Business Information Center with agents who can utilize chat and co-browse features to assist callers.

Analysis of the performance of the current system is ongoing and continues to reveal positive trends. During the past year as ITS has rolled-out newer functionality, weekly volume has increased from an average of 12,000 users a week to now some 20,000 per week. Other indicators of a positive online experience are the percent of returning users has increased to 30 percent, the bounce rate has dropped into the 20 percent range from 40 percent early on, and average session times have increased to 7.5 minutes.

During the past 12 months, the system has seen the daily transaction number grow from just over 500 a day to now almost 600. The popularity and value added to businesses by New York Business Express is expected to continue increase as ITS adds additional agencies and transactions to the portal.

ITS worked primarily with the NYS Executive Chamber, DOS, DTF, DOL, and WCB to lay the groundwork for New York Business Express. Through the commitment and cooperation of all agencies involved, the portal currently contains information for all business formation and houses the five essential business formation transactions for four agencies.

In 2019 and beyond, ITS will add transactions to the system to eventually eliminate the need for businesses to use any other method of filing paperwork or individual agency interactions. The overall potential scope of the system includes all 33 license-granting executive agencies and over 1,500 transactions, including both business and occupational license transactions. The long-term vision is to provide NY businesses and entrepreneurs with a single, tightly integrated, online portal through which they can obtain all necessary information and file all necessary transactions eliminating the need for businesses to interact separately with different New York agencies to obtain business licenses.

In addition to tracking portal metrics and planning for additional transactions, the ITS business team continues to meet with small businesses and business development organizations to evaluate the value of the system and to learn what business owners need and want as the system continues to evolve and improve. New York Business Express is feeding the entrepreneurial spirit in New York; business owners and small business support agents tell us that they use the site often to create custom business checklists and explore what would be involved in growing or starting their newest business ideas. The future of business in New York is bright with New York Business Express!