



Online Dog Kennel License Modernization



Pennsylvania
Office of Administration

State: Pennsylvania

Agency: Office of Administration

Award Category: Digital Experience - Agency/Program Solutions

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Contact: Ryan Morgan, Chief Information Officer for the Conservation and Environment Delivery Center
rymorgan@pa.gov



Executive Summary

In November 2024, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's (PDA) Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement (BDLE) and the Pennsylvania Office of Administration's Conservation and Environment IT Service Delivery Center (CEDC) implemented a new service for dog kennel owners to renew a kennel license online and pay the associated fees with a credit card. This project aligns to a broader initiative by PDA and CEDC to streamline its technology footprint through the adoption of a common (Core) platform for licensing, permitting, inspections, and supporting functionality. The dog law bureau was the first to utilize the licensing module technology within this new platform.

The online Kennel License Renewal project digitized licensing services to make this process more efficient. As a result, BDLE staff can process an application and issue a license up to 75% faster, allowing the Kennel License Renewal period to be shortened by two months. Kennel owners report being able to complete a renewal application 60% faster. Within the first year of implementation, 50% of kennels were using the new system.

Idea

What problem does the project address & why does it matter?

Pennsylvania is home to over 2,800 licensed kennels, including over 100 large commercial operations, making it one of the largest producers of dogs in the nation. A Kennel License Renewal by paper takes around four weeks to be received and reviewed. Applications are sent directly to a third-party vendor for digital storage and distribution to BDLE for review. Once reviewed, administrative staff approve, deny, or contact the kennel to remediate any errors or provide additional information. This process was problematic due to the prolonged timeline from start to finish, issues with incorrect or incomplete applications, slow communication between kennels and the bureau, waiting for checks to clear and bounced checks, and the use and cost of a third-party to scan documents to be stored and reviewed electronically. Many times, paperwork would get lost once it reached the vendor, causing the process to start over. The annual Kennel License Renewal season begins in November and can last into the following summer due to the timeliness of when kennels submit their paperwork to the processing of applications.

In 2020 and 2021, the PDA and CEDC performed a business process analysis to identify practices and applications that performed duplicative or similar functions. They discovered that each bureau had developed its own solution for licensing, permitting, inspections, and supporting functionality. This resulted in repetitive and increasingly costly maintenance for multiple siloed systems that had been developed and supported over the years. To mitigate these issues, PDA and CEDC established a strategic goal to consolidate all bureaus to one standardized solution for licensing, permitting, and inspections. The proposed solution would include a core set of IT components that can be configured for use by multiple bureaus to replace applications that are end of life, built on old technology, and/or have security issues that are difficult, time-consuming, and expensive to fix.

What makes it different?

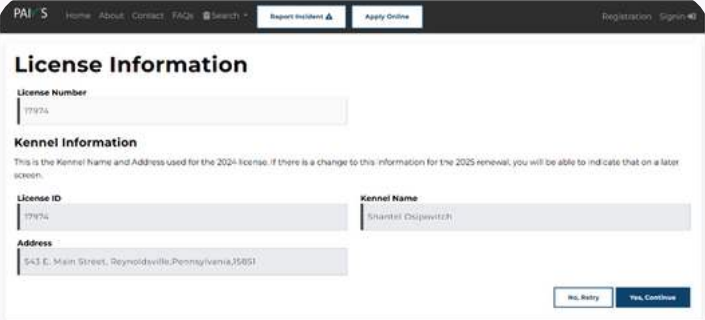
Modernizing processes through digital services has been a priority within the PDA to improve public safety and animal welfare.

The BDLE is funded by licensing and inspections fees and fines set by statute. Prior to 2024, kennel fees had not increased in nearly 60 years and individual license prices were flat for 30 years, severely straining funds to support enforcement of Pennsylvania's Dog Law.

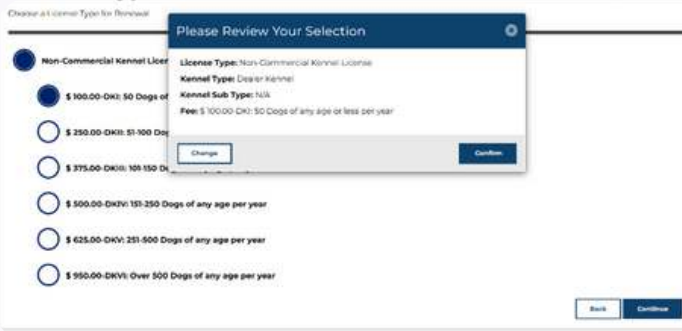
Legislation signed by Governor Josh Shapiro in 2023 increased licensing fees and fines for certain violations, strengthened requirements for kennels, and added new consumer protections, adding urgency to the need to modernize and streamline BDLE's operations. For example, the legislation requires kennels to include their license number in any advertisement offering dogs for sale. This information can allow BDLE to

quickly determine whether a kennel is operating illegally and allow potential customers to look up the kennel's inspection history to make informed decisions.

Analysis determined that staff could be more productive if the public could access certain functionality on their own via digital services without assistance from bureau staff. Digitizing services like Kennel License Renewal enhances transparency and increases safety and animal welfare.



Example of License Information User Interface



Example of License Renewal Selection Confirmation User Interface

Implementation

What was the roadmap?

Kennel License Renewal was the first process to leverage the licensing module in the Core platform since the bureau needed to be onboarded and its current paper process was a good starting point to extend the platform's abilities for digitization efforts.

CEDC developed functionality with the latest technology provided by Microsoft and using current security and accessibility standards, which allows for continuous upgrades to keep pace with the ever-changing security and technical landscape.

CEDC utilized a hybrid agile framework and leveraged DevOps work items in the form of Epics, Features, Stories, Tasks, an end-to-end sprint plan, and a Sprint/Agile methodology to execute and support customer interaction throughout the process. Time-boxed Sprints were

Implementation (cont.)

scheduled with the product owner to review work that was completed and reassessed if needed. The Agile project manager, business analyst, developer(s), and product owner met every Sprint to review deliverables that were assigned for that Sprint. Once approved by the product owner, deliverables were released in accordance with Commonwealth policy. Support from IT and business management was also essential.

Who was involved?

The Kennel License Renewal project team used the existing Core platform team of five developers, one QA, one BA, and one PM. Additional key groups included an enterprise content management system supplier team, enterprise payment gateway team, cloud team, and the Dog Law Advisory Board. The project took six months to complete and finished \$83,000 under budget at \$525,000.

How did you do it?

The Kennel License Renewal project implemented new functionalities that:

- Adhered to the CEDC design, security, and accessibility standards, including development, scanning, and testing using an accessibility management platform and commonly used assistive technologies and team member training.
- Were tested fully end-to-end prior to implementation.
- Included a responsive design.
- Included user guides for implemented functionalities based on needs identified by the product owner.

The primary critical success factors outlined below were met successfully through the completion and implementation of the project in time for the annual kennel license renewal timeframe beginning in November 2024:



50% user adoption rate in the first year.



Fewer incomplete renewals submitted by kennels.



Reduction in time to process an application for BDLE staff.

A newsletter was included in the annual Kennel License Renewal paper packet informing users of the option to submit their application digitally. In addition, field staff were trained to assist kennel owners in renewing online and bureau staff were available to answer any questions from kennels or field staff regarding online submission. By the next renewal season, BDLE is hoping to have an adoption rate of 70%. A 100% adoption rate is unlikely due to the lack of digital usage in some communities that own kennels, such as the Amish.

BDLE Kennel Renewal License online application announcement included in renewal packet

PA ONLINE KENNEL LICENSE

Faster Renewals | Save on Postage | Online Digital Payment

Renew your license online:

Starting November 1, 2024, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement will offer Kennel License renewal online. Licensees will now be able to complete all information for renewal, make payments, and sign electronically.

This will be the quickest, most convenient way to renew kennel licenses. Online renewal will greatly reduce turn-around time for renewals, save postage costs, and allow secure, online payments.

To renew online, please scan the QR code to the left or go to <https://paics.pa.gov/paics/doglaw>. Be sure to have the information below on hand to complete your renewal application and initiate the signature process. The application must be completed in a single session, or your renewal application must be restarted.

- Kennel License Number
- Current Business Name
- Current Kennel Type and Class
- Dog counts for current year

Once you have completed your renewal application and initiated the signature request process, your designated signers should be on the lookout for an email containing information necessary to complete their electronic signatures. All electronic signatures must be completed within 7 days of initiating a request, or your renewal application will have to be restarted. Payment will not be collected until all required signatures are complete.

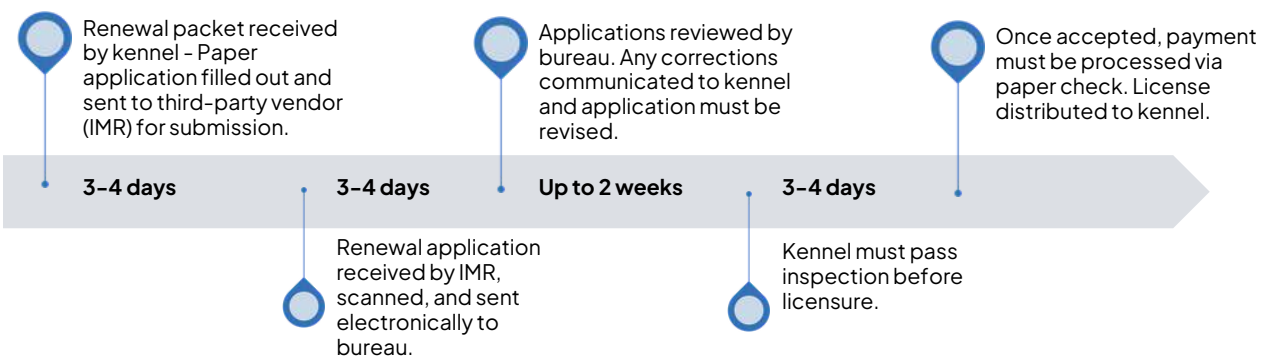
Questions? Contact us at:
BA.AG@PA.gov or [\(717\) 787-3062](tel:7177873062)

What did the project make better?

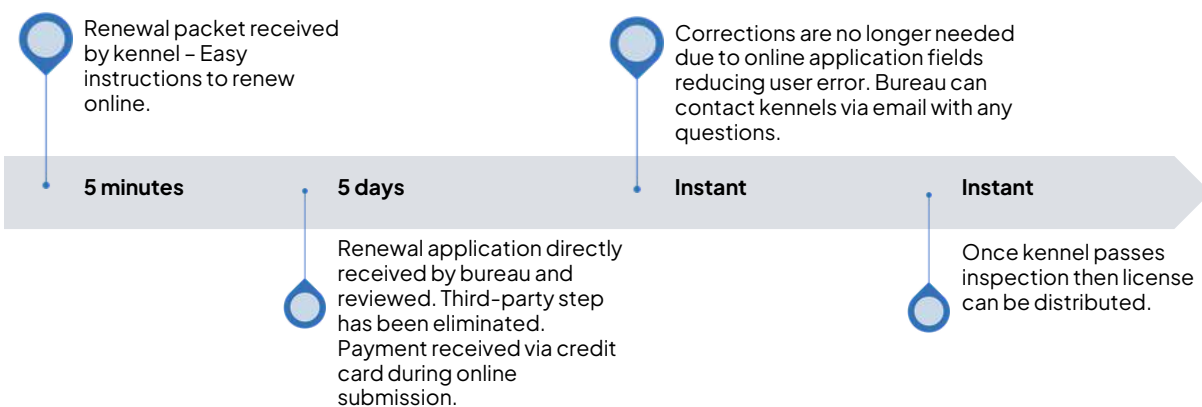
Digitization of Kennel License Renewals drastically reduces the administrative burden on both the bureau staff and kennel owners and eliminates the timely step of submitting the application to a third-party vendor. The renewal season was reduced by two months since the rollout of the online service and now runs from November to the following April. This timeline is expected to be reduced even further for the next renewal season, allowing bureau staff to work more efficiently.

Email distribution lists were created to help reduce the amount of paper distributed to kennels and increase efficiency in communications between the bureau and users. This leads to greater compliance and represents to kennel owners the department's commitment to modernizing its processes.

Paper Renewal Application Timeline – up to four weeks to complete



Online Renewal Application Timeline – one week or less to complete



How do you know?

Benefits to the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement

- Increased efficiency as staff process renewal applications and issue kennel licenses up to 75% faster.
- Decreased burden on administrative staff because of fewer paper checks.
- Eliminated errors in submitted applications due to validations in the digital application that flag clerical errors such as uncompleted fields and incorrect information.
- Decreased costs associated with using a 3rd party scanning vendor due to fewer paper applications being submitted. In 2024, the bureau saved \$6,000 in expenses used for scanning paper applications.
- The process captures kennel owner email addresses allowing for faster and more convenient communications from the bureau.
- Field staff can renew a kennel license onsite in real-time while performing an inspection.
- There were minimal changes to workflow for field and clerical staff, so no complicated implementation plan and training was necessary.

Benefits to the Kennel Owners

- Kennel owners can apply for Kennel License Renewals, pay online, and print their license. They no longer need to wait for their license to arrive in the mail.
- Kennel owners report time savings of 60% by renewing online. The application process takes up to five minutes.
- External kennel owners receive immediate confirmation that their application and payment have been received.
- Within the first year of implementation, the online renewal was well received with 50% of kennels completing their license applications and license payments by the end of 2024.

Dog wardens have expressed that the renewal process is now so easy and fast that they can respond to compliance issues in real-time. For example, if a kennel is out of compliance, they can renew their license on the spot and be up to date. Kennel feedback has been very positive with owners affirming the online application is much easier and the digital trail with emails and online receipts provides instant validation that the process was completed.

What now?

The application was built with multiple user groups in mind – the licensing module consists of a configurable license plan builder. With the development of the Kennel License Renewal licensing module, bureau staff can create new online forms for additional processes to drive even greater efficiency. Consolidating all the various inspection, licensing, and permitting functions into a single platform that is directly maintained by the department represents a significant costs savings over maintaining several separate tools. Maintaining the application in-house also provides security and guaranteed continuity of service.

Since Kennel License Renewals was deployed, additional licenses are in the process of being onboarded and maintained by the PDA Core platform and team, including licenses for the Bureaus of Consumer Fireworks, Weights and Measures, and Dog Law for new kennel applications.