

Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Regulatory Management (ORM)
Category: Cross-boundary collaboration
Virginia Permit Transparency (VPT)

Bridging Silos: **Virginia's Unified Permit Tracking Platform**

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Project description

In 2022, Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin signed Executive Order #19, which established the Office of Regulatory Management (ORM) within the Office of the Governor. The goals of ORM include a mandate to provide transparency and efficiency to Virginia's citizens.

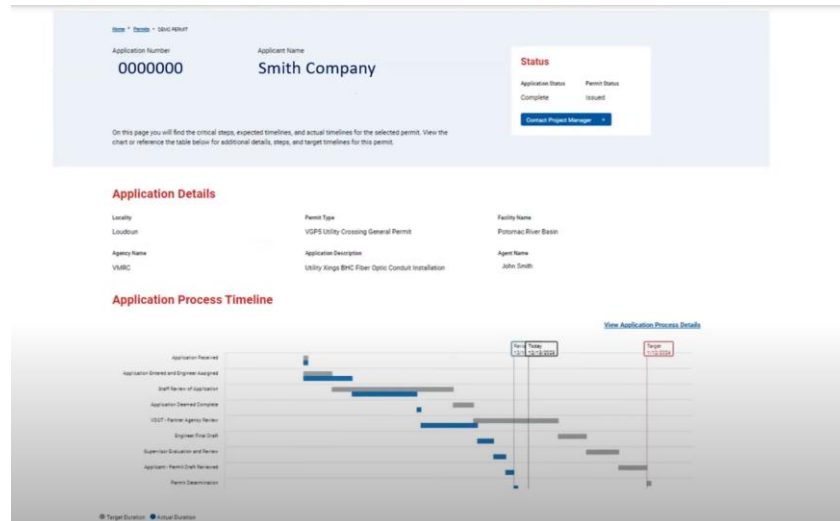
One area that especially called out for enhanced transparency was the permitting process. Applicants including businesses, individuals, and local governments would apply for a permit, but then would find themselves in the dark regarding the status of their applications.

To address this problem, ORM looked to the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Permitting Enhancement and Evaluation Platform (PEEP). DEQ's PEEP solution displayed the live status of DEQ permits as they moved through the permit process. ORM decided to expand this functionality to other Commonwealth of Virginia permitting agencies to address the problems of permit transparency and efficiency.

ORM teamed up with the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) and private partner CapTech to expand DEQ's PEEP platform to create a new solution known as [Virginia Permit Transparency \(VPT\)](#). VPT is a centralized, web-based platform that brings openness and transparency to every step of permitting processes across multiple agencies. This tool allows applicants and the public to track the daily status and timeline of critical steps as the application progresses, as well as who owns each step (e.g., state agency, permit applicant, etc.).

VPT shows the target timeline and actual timeline for each step to be completed using a series of Gantt charts. Depending on the permit, this data often spans multiple agencies. The VPT seamlessly pulls this boundary-crossing data together to be viewed in a single glance. In the same manner that you can track the status of your Amazon package or pizza delivery, you can track the status of a permit application with VPT.

Citizens can now access nearly all permits of public interest, which includes 200 different permit types, across 10 state agencies. ORM continues to expand the agency permits that can be accessed through the VPT.



Idea: *What problem or opportunity does the project address?*

Issuing permit approvals is a critical function undertaken by state government. These approvals implement important safeguards to protect public health, safety and welfare. However, the customer experience when submitting approvals was previously opaque and lengthy. Applicants including businesses, individuals and local governments would apply for a permit, but then had no insight into where their permit was in the process, or when they would hear a decision. This lack of visibility was exacerbated when permits required involvement from multiple agencies. Without visibility into permit progress, applicants endure uncertainty, planning difficulties and reduced trust in state processes.

With VPT, applicants can track their application status at any time and plan confidently.

Why does it matter?

Virginia processes over 100,000 permit applications across multiple agencies every year. These permits are essential to public health, infrastructure, commerce and environmental protection. Without centralized transparency, delays or inefficiencies can create compounding costs to applicants and the Commonwealth. Lack of insight can also cost applicants time and money, stifle business development, and discourage investment in the Commonwealth.

What makes it different?

Virginia is the first to provide a statewide permit tracking service for its citizens. This first-of-its-kind platform brings together data from multiple state agencies and creates a seamless user experience for permit customers and stakeholders. VPT is unique

compared to other existing permit tracking systems, which are limited to individual agencies.

Inspired by the DEQ's internal PEEP system, VPT expanded this functionality statewide, integrating with 10 total agencies and enabling a status tracking system for government services—a novel concept in the public sector. VPT's cross-agency collaboration has resulted in a centralized, web-based platform which provides real-time, Gantt-style visualizations of permit progress across agencies. VPT's low-code, web-based design can be scaled and integrated across multiple agencies and is positioned to easily welcome other government entities to the platform.

What makes it universal?

Permit transparency is a nationwide challenge. Every state oversees environmental, construction, health and transportation permits. State permits often suffer from lengthy wait times, and many states rely on outdated, paper-based or siloed systems that lack transparency. Many states also have obsolete permits that are rarely accessed or unnecessary.

There is significant opportunity across the country to streamline and digitize permit processes to create increased transparency, efficiency and cross-agency collaboration. This effort aligns with NASCIO's 2025 State CIO Top 10 Priority: digital government/digital services.

Implementation: *What was the roadmap?*

Since Day 1 of Gov. Youngkin's administration, a major focus has been achieving a "streamlining of the regulatory/permitting approval processes of all agencies to achieve a substantial shortening of the time required for an approval (or rejection)." The VPT supports this enterprise goal directly, along with the goals of Executive Orders #19 and #39, which call for increased transparency, efficiency and accountability in state government.

Following its establishment in 2022 by Executive Order #19, ORM created a roadmap to identify which six agencies should be onboarded to the VPT platform first, based on the volume and visibility of their permits. The first three agencies joined in Jan. 2024, with three more in June 2024. The project team made enhancements to the functionality of the platform in Q4 2024 after analyzing the performance of the six agencies.

In October 2024, Executive Order #39 tasked agencies with evaluating their existing permit processes, looking for opportunities to enhance efficiency and joining the VPT platform if their permit data met certain criteria. Agencies worked to remove obsolete and unnecessary approvals, improve processing times, standardize the front-end customer experience, and produce a report. ORM and VITA analyzed this report and identified additional agencies that were a good fit to join the platform. VITA worked with

these agencies to incorporate their permits, completing most of the development and testing by replicating the process used by CapTech, who had managed this process for previous agencies. This has resulted in a total of 10 participating agencies currently hosted on VPT.

Successful implementation of VPT will create simplified approval processes across the enterprise, and an improved and standardized front-end customer experience by digitizing the application process to facilitate faster processing and higher transparency. Key metrics for success include:

- Number of participating agencies (currently 10),
- Number of permits featured (currently 200),
- Percentage of qualifying permit types available (now nearly 100%),
- Reductions in average processing time (DEQ reduced by 65%),
- Percentage of permits processed on or before target time (month-to-month, agencies process more than 80% of permits within or ahead of target),
- User satisfaction (described in user feedback).

Who was involved?

VPT is a cross-agency collaboration initiated at the direction of Gov. Youngkin. It is based on PEEP, the innovative and award-winning pilot system developed by DEQ to track permits. ORM and VITA worked with DEQ and private vendor, CapTech, to build on the success of PEEP and develop this new solution.

The project team also worked extensively with the Office of Data Governance and Analytics (ODGA) to create custom data models that feed over 17 Power BI visualizations. These visualizations help agencies manage their permitting process more efficiently by showing progress in reducing permit processing time as well as tools to help internally manage a team's work.

The 10 agencies that are currently hosted on VPT are the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Health, Department of Transportation, Department of Social Services, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, and the Virginia State Police.

How did you do it?

VPT is a result of unique cross-agency collaboration that was set into motion by executive order and overseen by ORM. The project leveraged existing infrastructure and internal expertise from VITA and DEQ, and was modeled after the successful PEEP pilot program. VPT's low-code, web-based architecture was designed for maximum transparency, seamless cross-agency data integration, ease of use and scalability—

delivered at a total cost of under \$3 million with minimal operating and maintenance expenses.

In the interest of transparency, it was critical that the solution allowed applicants to easily view the daily status of their permit, including the timeline and who it was with. This enables applicants to see application progress, identify potential issues, and determine if their action is needed. Achieving this meant bringing together data to display intra-agency permit processes in a manner that could be viewed easily, even if the process spanned multiple governing bodies. The team chose Gantt charts to fit this need as they are simple and widely understood and the relevant information can be viewed at one time. Costs were minimized by leveraging state talent and resources rather than relying only on outsourcing. For example, development of just a portion of ODGA's total 17 visualizations resulted in a cost-avoidance of \$200,000.

VPT was designed so additional agencies and government partners could easily join the effort. It uses a cost-effective, web-based architecture to enable scalability and integration with existing permit systems. This keeps the door open for further agency collaboration and increased visibility into the permitting process across the enterprise.

Impact: *What did the project make better?*

VPT replaced opaque permit systems with a transparent, user-friendly, 24/7 platform, boosting applicant satisfaction, internal efficiency, and inter-agency communication. For the first time, applicants across 10 agencies can see exactly where their application stands, who owns each step, and when to expect action.

The VPT solution accomplished the goal of providing transparency for permit applicants and citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Permit applicants are no longer unsure of the status of their permits, and citizens can check to see what permits are being processed in their locality.

Processing permits through previous methods such as paper processes were inefficient and did not provide transparency. They left applicants unaware of how much time they could expect to receive a decision. This obscurity had the potential to stifle business development and result in lower rates of compliance. With permit applicants now able to track the status of their application, they can make informed plans and feel more encouraged to continue investing in the Commonwealth.

As agencies use the wealth of data that VPT now makes available, they should achieve significant reductions in processing times. With reduced processing times, applicants will be able to use their licenses for their intended purpose sooner, whether that be getting to work earlier with their professional licenses, completing housing development, or making progress on critical infrastructure projects.

VPT has benefitted Commonwealth agencies, businesses and Virginians.

How do you know?

Using VPT, Virginia end-users can apply for over 200 types of permits across 10 participating agencies. The public can view the documentation of more than 100,000 applications.

Using both VPT and the predecessor PEEP dashboard, DEQ managed to reduce average permit processing time by 65%. DEQ estimates that the improved processing times saves Virginia citizens up to \$40 million per year. Agencies are currently processing more than 80% of their permits within or ahead of targeted timelines each month, and are looking for ways to expedite their processes further. The team anticipates that participating agencies will be able to achieve significant reductions in permit processing times now that VPT is live and as the platform scope continues to grow.

Since the official launch, the team has received very positive feedback. Citizens, professionals and businesses have greatly appreciated the consolidated and easy access to this level of data. Permit applicants are no longer unsure of the status of their permits, and citizens can check to see what permits are being processed in their locality.

What now?

VPT is designed for expansion. The platform has a modular structure, allowing new agencies to onboard without disrupting existing services. The team will continue its work to onboard agencies and continue expanding the amount and type of permits that can be tracked using VPT.

For future steps, options are being explored to bring VPT-like transparency to other government processes, like licensing, and to expand VPT to local government entities, such as city or county permitting departments. Virginia agencies can also use VPT to identify opportunities for improving processing speed.

By transforming how permit tracking is done in Virginia, VPT demonstrates how smart technology investments can improve public trust, support regulatory efficiency, and streamline state operations. Its scalable architecture, strong cross-agency collaboration and measurable impact position it as a leading example of enterprise digital government. Everyone benefits from a more open and transparent system: Virginia residents and businesses have a detailed understanding of where permit applications stand, and Virginia agencies have a valuable management tool to improve permitting. Now, other governments can benefit from Virginia's trailblazing work by following this roadmap to emulate this innovative, efficient and cost-effective solution.