



State of Utah
Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Digital Experience: Agency/Program Solutions

Modernizing International Document Authentication for the Digital Age

America's First Securely Delivered State-Issued Digital Apostille Under the Hague Convention

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Executive Summary

An Apostille is an official certificate issued by a government “Competent Authority” that authenticates the origin of a public document for use in another country. It verifies the legitimacy of the signature, the capacity in which the signer acted, and, where applicable, the identity of the seal or stamp on the document.

Rather than validating the document’s contents, an Apostille confirms its authenticity so it can be legally recognized by countries participating in the Hague Apostille Convention, eliminating the need for additional embassy or consular legalization.

For decades, Apostille processing relied on paper submissions, manual review, physical mailing, expensive international courier services, and limited visibility for recipients attempting to verify authenticity. Utah fundamentally changed that model.

Through a multi-state pilot that culminated in ApostilleXpress, the Utah Office of the Lieutenant Governor became the first Competent Authority in the United States to issue and securely deliver encrypted, digitally verifiable Apostilles alongside traditional paper Apostilles through a unified web-based platform. The platform modernizes intake, workflow management, issuance, delivery, constituent communication, and recipient-side verification through an online e-Register.

The results have been significant:

- **80% faster overall processing**
- **25% faster paper issuance**
- **60% reduction in constituent costs**
- **Instant digital delivery**
- **Zero rejected digital Apostilles by foreign recipients**
- **Zero implementation costs**
- **Zero maintenance costs**

These improvements were achieved without increasing costs to the state or compromising the legal safeguards that make Apostilles internationally trusted.

This model provides a scalable framework for other states seeking to modernize apostille processing while preserving full Competent Authority oversight. Utah’s participation in this first-of-its-kind U.S. pilot helped establish and refine both the operational and security framework, strengthening the platform and enabling future states to adopt it with confidence.

In addition to improving constituent services, ApostilleXpress strengthened business continuity and operational resilience. Its guided workflows, centralized visibility, and intuitive interface support faster staff onboarding, reduce reliance on institutional knowledge, and help maintain consistent processing during periods of disruption or transition.

Idea

What problem or opportunity does the project address?

Utah issues Apostilles for residents, businesses, students, adoptive and military families, retirees, and attorneys managing international matters. Until recently, every Apostille request relied on a fully paper-based process requiring physical document submission, manual review, hand-stamped issuance, and return delivery.

This created significant burdens for constituents, particularly those located far from the Competent Authority's office or operating under strict international deadlines. In a typical year, Utah processes approximately 40,000 Apostilles, with traditional turnaround times averaging 3-5-business days. In addition to state fees, constituents often incurred \$120–\$350 in international shipping costs to ensure timely delivery abroad.

The paper-based process also introduced risk. Delayed or lost shipments could disrupt international adoptions, education enrollment, visas, legal proceedings, and business transactions, while generating additional administrative workload through status inquiries, replacement requests, and customer support.

ApostilleXpress modernized both digital and paper Apostille processing by reducing constituent costs, accelerating delivery, improving visibility into request status, and enabling recipients to instantly verify authenticity online. The platform also strengthened operational efficiency, business continuity, and staff onboarding through centralized workflows and guided processing tools.

Why does it matter?

Apostilles are often required for time-sensitive life events and business activities, including international adoptions, education, employment, visas, legal proceedings, and cross-border transactions. Delays can create serious personal, legal, and financial consequences for constituents operating under strict international deadlines.

Under the previous paper-only model, these challenges were amplified by mailing delays, costly international shipping, and limited visibility into document status or authenticity verification. Rural residents, mobility-limited individuals, and constituents located far from the Competent Authority's office faced additional barriers in accessing Apostille services.

For the State, reliance on manual workflows required significant staff time for document handling, status inquiries, exception management, and reissuance requests tied to lost or delayed shipments. These administrative demands reduced operational efficiency and diverted resources away from higher-value review, quality assurance, and oversight activities.

By modernizing both digital and paper Apostille processing, Utah significantly reduced constituent burden while improving operational visibility, service continuity, security, and overall processing efficiency.

What makes it different?

Working through ApostilleXpress, Utah became the first U.S. Competent Authority to implement secure digital Apostille issuance and delivery under the Hague Convention framework. Developed through a six-year multi-state pilot involving Utah and peer states, the platform demonstrated 100% acceptance of digital Apostilles across more than 65 countries while maintaining full Competent Authority oversight.

Utah played a leading role in shaping the platform based on real operational experience, helping create a solution aligned with Hague Convention requirements and modern security standards. The platform incorporates role-based access controls, multi-factor authentication, encrypted delivery, comprehensive audit logging, and real-time verification through an online e-Register to protect constituent data and strengthen trust in the issuance process.

Importantly, Utah retained full authority over review, approval, issuance, verification, exception handling, and post-issuance actions. Digital issuance does not replace established legal safeguards; it enhances them through greater transparency, security, and operational visibility.

As a fully web-based solution, ApostilleXpress also improves business continuity by enabling authorized staff to securely process Apostille requests remotely during disruptions or emergencies. In addition, the platform benefits from ongoing enhancements focused on fraud prevention, identity protection, security, and long-term operational resilience, ensuring the solution remains secure, resilient, and adaptable for both Utah and other adopting states.

What makes it universal?

Utah's direct involvement helped enhance ApostilleXpress to support all Competent Authorities, both domestic and foreign, while providing constituents with consistent access to robust services, modern technology, and advanced capabilities, including secure digital Apostille issuance.

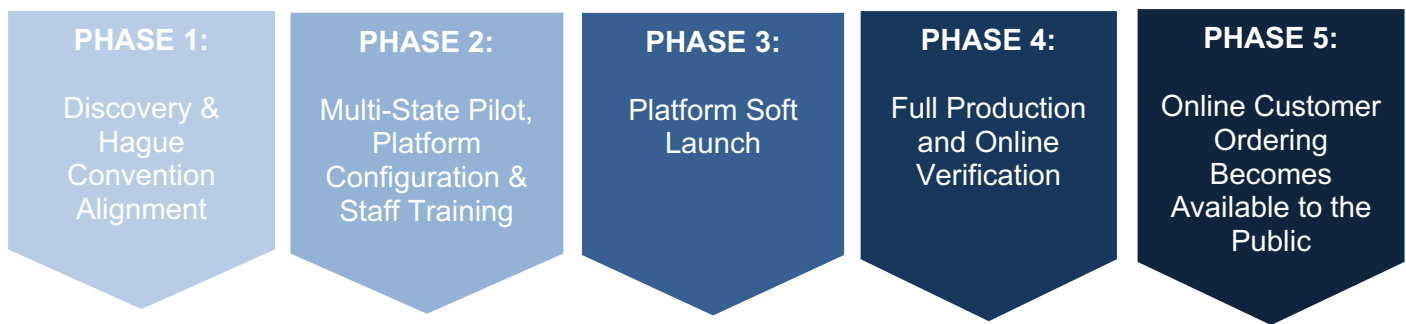
The platform has been carefully developed through direct engagement with key stakeholders, including Competent Authorities, constituents, notaries, organizations, and, critically, foreign recipients who must ultimately accept and rely on digital Apostilles. This collaborative, end-to-end approach ensures the solution is universal, practical, trusted, and aligned with real-world requirements across the entire Apostille ecosystem.

Implementation

What was the roadmap?

Utah aligned ApostilleXpress with the State's broader strategy to modernize citizen-facing government services through secure, accessible, and measurable digital workflows while preserving legal integrity and public trust.

The initiative was designed as a dual-track modernization effort, introducing secure digital Apostille issuance while simultaneously improving traditional paper processing for constituents who still require physical documents.



Project success was measured against four primary outcomes:

- **Reduced end-to-end processing time**
- **Reduced constituent costs**
- **Improved staff workflow visibility and exception handling**
- **Zero rejected digital Apostilles by foreign recipients**

The platform was implemented through a phased rollout that included discovery and Hague Convention alignment, multi-state pilot participation, platform configuration and staff training, soft launch deployment, and full production rollout with online verification capabilities for both digital and paper Apostilles.

Who was involved?

Project stakeholders included:

- Utah Office of the Lieutenant Governor project sponsor, Competent Authority, operational owner
- Utah State CIO Office
- Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) international policy framework alignment
- Technology partner platform delivery and ongoing support under state direction
- Office of the Lieutenant Governor operational staff workflow design, user acceptance testing, training, adoption
- Utah County Marriage Licensing
- Constituent stakeholders

Buy-in was achieved through multi-state collaboration, participation in the e-APP community, and direct engagement with operational staff and constituents throughout the pilot and rollout process. Constituent awareness grew organically, driven by the clear value of digital Apostilles and reinforced through word-of-mouth adoption.

How did you do it?

Resources:

- Financial: Zero cost to the state
- Human: 4 full time employees
- Time: 3 Months

Architecture, at a glance: ApostilleXpress centralizes intake (online order portal), review and approval (role-based staff workflows), issuance (digital and paper), delivery (secure digital delivery and traditional mail), and verification (public-facing e-Register tied to each issued Apostille's unique identifier). Security is embedded throughout multi-

factor authentication for staff, encrypted transmission and storage and delivery, comprehensive audit logging, recipient-level access controls, and defined retention windows for sensitive documents.

Impact

What did the project make better?

Before ApostilleXpress, obtaining an Apostille required physical document delivery, manual review and issuance, and international shipping, often resulting in multi-day delays, high courier costs, and limited visibility for recipients attempting to verify authenticity.

After ApostilleXpress, constituents can submit documents online, track request status in real time, and receive secure digital Apostilles within minutes of issuance. Foreign recipients can instantly verify authenticity and most importantly securely retrieve through the online e-Register, while constituents who still require paper documents benefit from a 25% faster traditional processing workflow.

The impact has been especially meaningful for constituents managing time-sensitive international matters such as adoptions, education, business transactions, visas, and legal proceedings. In one case, a family completing an international adoption was able to receive digital Apostilles within 24 hours, avoiding delays that could have jeopardized the adoption process.

The platform also improved internal operations by replacing fragmented paper, email, and manual tracking systems with centralized workflows and real-time visibility into processing status, exceptions, and next actions. Online submissions reduced manual data entry requirements, significantly reducing manual processing requirements and improving staff workflow visibility.

How do you know? *Results at a glance*

80% faster overall processing	25% faster paper issuance	60% reduction in constituent cost	0 rejected digital Apostilles
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Processing time

Utah reduced traditional 3–5-day apostille turnaround times to same-day service for many requests through ApostilleXpress. Paper apostilles are now produced 25% faster than under the previous manual workflow, while digital apostilles can be securely delivered within seconds of issuance. A planned platform enhancement scheduled for this Summer is expected to further accelerate paper apostille processing by up to 300%.

Constituent cost savings

Constituents who choose digital delivery avoid international courier and certified mail costs entirely, reducing average out-of-pocket costs by approximately 60%. During the pilot, constituents saved an average of more than \$50 per request across 1,200 digital Apostilles.

Office efficiency

Centralized workflows replaced fragmented paper, email, and manual tracking systems, giving staff real-time visibility into order status, exceptions, and next actions. Online submissions also reduced manual data entry requirements by allowing constituents to enter requests directly, streamlining operations and improving workflow management across the Apostille process.

International acceptance

To date, zero digital Apostilles issued through ApostilleXpress have been rejected by foreign recipients. More than 1,200 digital Apostilles spanning 25 document types have been accepted across 65+ foreign Competent Authorities, demonstrating both broad international acceptance and platform versatility.

Testimonies

1. A couple seeking to adopt three children from India faced a critical deadline: if their combined age exceeded 85, they would become ineligible. After weeks of preparing documents, they learned of the rule just days before the father's birthday.

With a paper process, international delivery would have taken 4–5 days, too late to proceed. Using ApostilleXpress, their digital Apostilles were issued and delivered within 24 hours, allowing them to complete the adoption in time. They now have 3 children!

Digital Apostille Constituent Story

2. ApostilleXpress is ... "A most advanced development of e-Apostille and e-Register solutions, designed in accordance with HCCH Key Principles and Best Practices."

Christophe Bernasconi

Secretary General of the Hague Conference

What now?

Utah has fully implemented ApostilleXpress as the standard platform for apostille intake and issuance within the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. Ongoing investment supports continued innovation, security monitoring, platform maintenance, e-Register operations, and constituent support.

The State's investment of time and resources has delivered sustained operational efficiencies, measurable cost savings for constituents, enhanced security and auditability, and strategic value through Utah's position as a national leader in modern international document authentication.

Why this matters for state government

Utah demonstrated that a legally sensitive, internationally recognized government function can be successfully modernized without compromising security, oversight, or public trust. Through ApostilleXpress, Utah preserved full Competent Authority while accelerating service delivery, reducing constituent burden, strengthening verification capabilities, enhancing data protection, and improving operational visibility and auditability.

The platform also provides Utah with a secure and resilient digital service model that supports business continuity, improves operational flexibility, and positions the State to meet the evolving demands of international document authentication.