The Vermont Business Portal

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A REPORT ON THE DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ENTERPRISE SOLUTION THAT SIMPLIFIES BUSINESS INTERACTIONS WITH THE STATE OF VERMONT

The Charge

Pursuant to § 85 of Act 196, *An act relating to simplifying government for small businesses*:

"A steering committee composed of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, and the Secretary of Digital Services shall review and consider the necessary procedural and substantive steps to enhance the Secretary of State's one-stop business portal for businesses, entrepreneurs, and citizens
to provide information about starting and operating a business in Vermont; and

Submit a design proposal that includes a project scope, timeline, roadmap, cost projections, and any statutory or regulatory changes needed to implement the proposal."

The Goal

To simplify the business registration process in Vermont by:
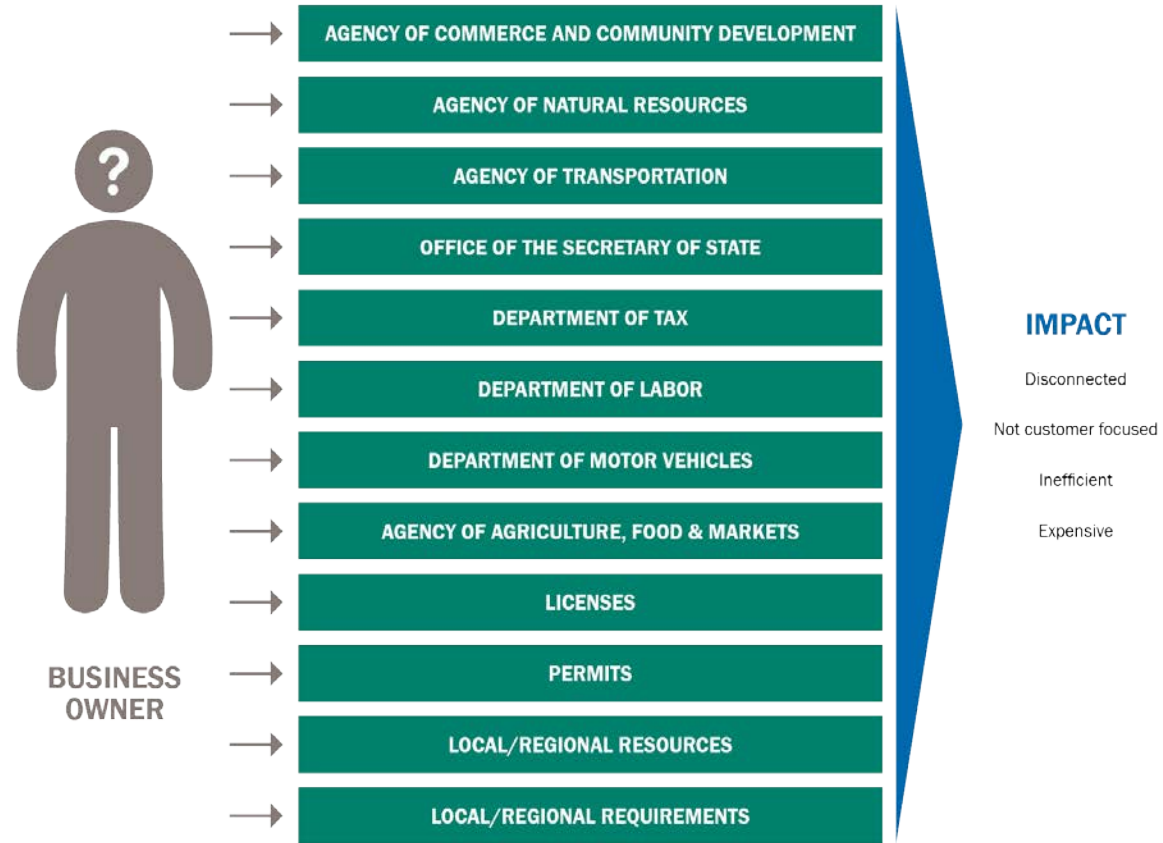
- Delivering a <u>single point of entry</u>
- Providing an easy-to-use, <u>customer-focused</u> interface that will unify gov't systems
- Enabling <u>one-time data entry</u> across agency forms
- Providing a <u>guided walk-through of requirements</u>
- Allowing <u>one payment</u> to be submitted to the state
- Accessing <u>support</u> where it's needed the most

The Problem

Registering and operating a business can be a long and cumbersome process.

- Business owners say this is <u>too complicated</u> and takes too much time
- Vermont business owners <u>want to be compliant</u>, but often <u>don't understand what is required</u> of them
- Too much time is spent filling out forms, <u>rather than operating or growing a business</u>
- There is often <u>no estimated time frame given</u> for decision on forms and applications
- Agencies don't talk to each other or have the ability to gain access to each other's information or data and <u>efforts are not coordinated</u>
- Resources and information for businesses are <u>scattered, inconsistent, and hard to find</u>

Current State

The General Store Example

Annual Licenses	Agency/Department	Food Retail W/O Gas	Food Retail W/ Gas
License to Operate Food Establishment	Agriculture, Food & Markets		
Small Commercial Bakery License	Agriculture, Food & Markets	$200	$200
Food Processor License	Agriculture Food & Markets	$275	$275
Seafood Vendor License	Agriculture, Food & Markets	$200	$200
Shellfish Shipper/Re-packer	Agriculture, Food & Markets	$375	$375
Retail Pricing Scanning Points Registration	Agriculture, Food & Markets	$10/Scale	$10/Scale
Class C Pesticides License (Flea Collars, Ant Cups, OFF)	Agriculture, Food & Markets	$75	$75
Frozen Desert (Ice Cream, Slushies, Etc.)	Agriculture, Food & Markets	$75	$75
Milk License	Agriculture, Food & Markets	$20	$20
Pre-packaged Meats	Agriculture, Food & Markets	$15	$15
Meat Processing – Small Store	Agriculture, Food & Markets	$50	$50
Meat Processing – Large Store	Agriculture, Food & Markets	$100	$100
1st Class Liquor License	Liquor Control		
2nd Class Liquor License	Liquor Control		
Motor Fuels License	Transportation		
Motor Fuels Inspection	Transportation	$25/Per Tank	
Small Scales Registration	Transportation	$10/Scale	$10/Scale

How Can We Help?

"I can't plan to start my business if the state doesn't get back to me – even if it's not the answer I wanted, I need an answer. I need certainty."

"There's so much to starting a business that I don't know where to start. It's overwhelming."

"I have multiple state staff calling and visiting me. They have no idea that another person visited me the prior week."

"With licenses and permits, I'm told to expect a certain outcome and then the next week the outcome is something different with no notice of any changes."

Responsible Business Owners

I don't know who I should be calling when I have a question or need guidance.

I need to remember multiple usernames and passwords for multiple state government systems.
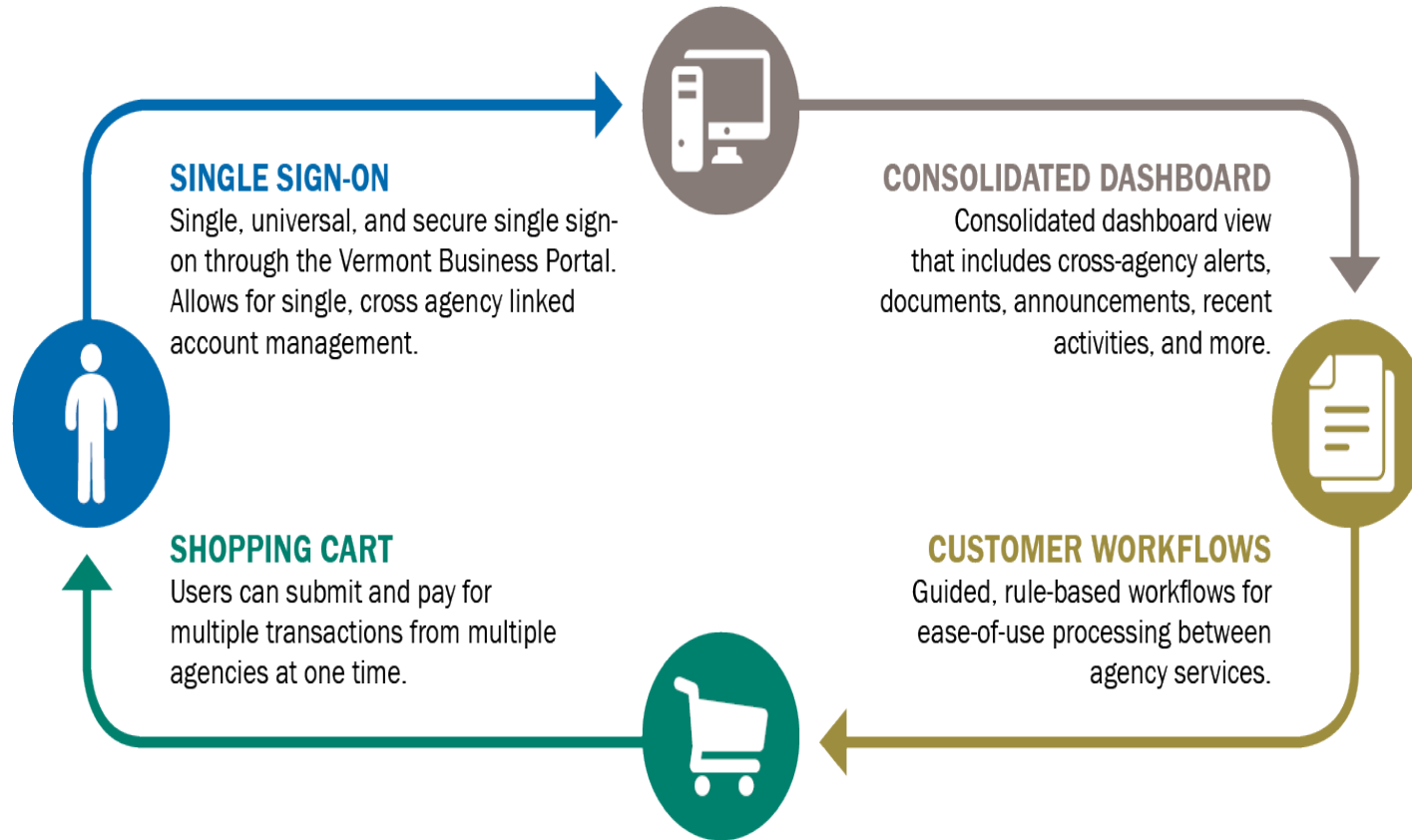
I don't know what is required of me. Just let me know and I'll do it.

The information I need is scattered and inconsistent. It would be great to organize it in one place.
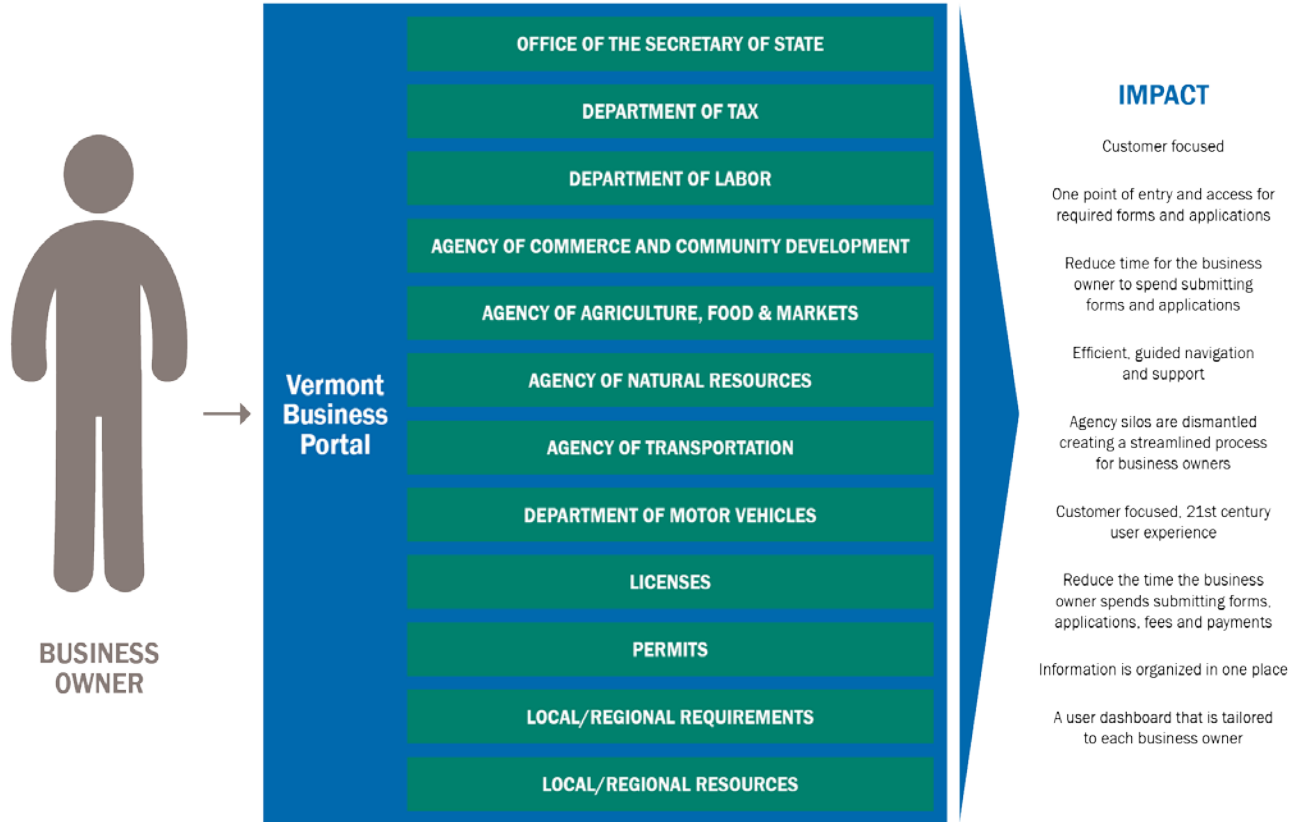
I'm constantly entering the same information repeatedly with different agencies and departments.

I do not know if there are licenses and permits I must obtain when I'm starting my business. Is there a checklist somewhere?

Planned Features

SINGLE SIGN-ON
Single, universal, and secure single sign-on through the Vermont Business Portal. Allows for single, cross agency linked account management.

CONSOLIDATED DASHBOARD
Consolidated dashboard view that includes cross-agency alerts, documents, announcements, recent activities, and more.

SHOPPING CART
Users can submit and pay for multiple transactions from multiple agencies at one time.

CUSTOMER WORKFLOWS
Guided, rule-based workflows for ease-of-use processing between agency services.

Future State

Other State/City Implementations

CONNECTICUT
portal.ct.gov/services/business

INDIANA
inbiz.in.gov/BOS/Home/Index

MARYLAND
egov.maryland.gov/businessexpress

NEVADA
nvsilverflume.gov/home

SAN FRANCISCO
businessportal.sfgov.org/

During each presentation, the most important lesson learned was the need for **a strong governance structure** and **leadership from the top level** of government. Other lessons:

- A **phased, agile approach** was most effective, with quick wins garnering buy-in

- Robust, **shared governance is key**

- The project **must be fully supported and resourced**

- Focus on the **business/customer needs**, not the agency/state needs

- Pay close attention to **data governance**: sensitivity vs. transparency

- **Allow agencies to drive the scope and come at their pace** – the goal isn't replacing systems – just the way they gather data, share information, and present themselves

Other Wins

A new and improved portal could align with the efforts of other visionary teams and state initiatives. Some of that work includes:

- Improved Agency Coordination and Data/Information Sharing amongst state staff;

- Permit process improvement with the Permit Performance Improvement (PIVOT) team;

- Understanding how a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution could work for the entire state and for individuals beyond just businesses so each agency may access information that is relevant to their specific work;

- A Data Portal to harness the power of information;

- A unified and thoughtful web presence for the State of Vermont;

- Agency efficiency: Improving and coordinating processes, reducing data entry efforts, improving accuracy, greater revenue capture and regulatory compliance, and eliminating duplication of efforts; and

- Connecting businesses to resources.
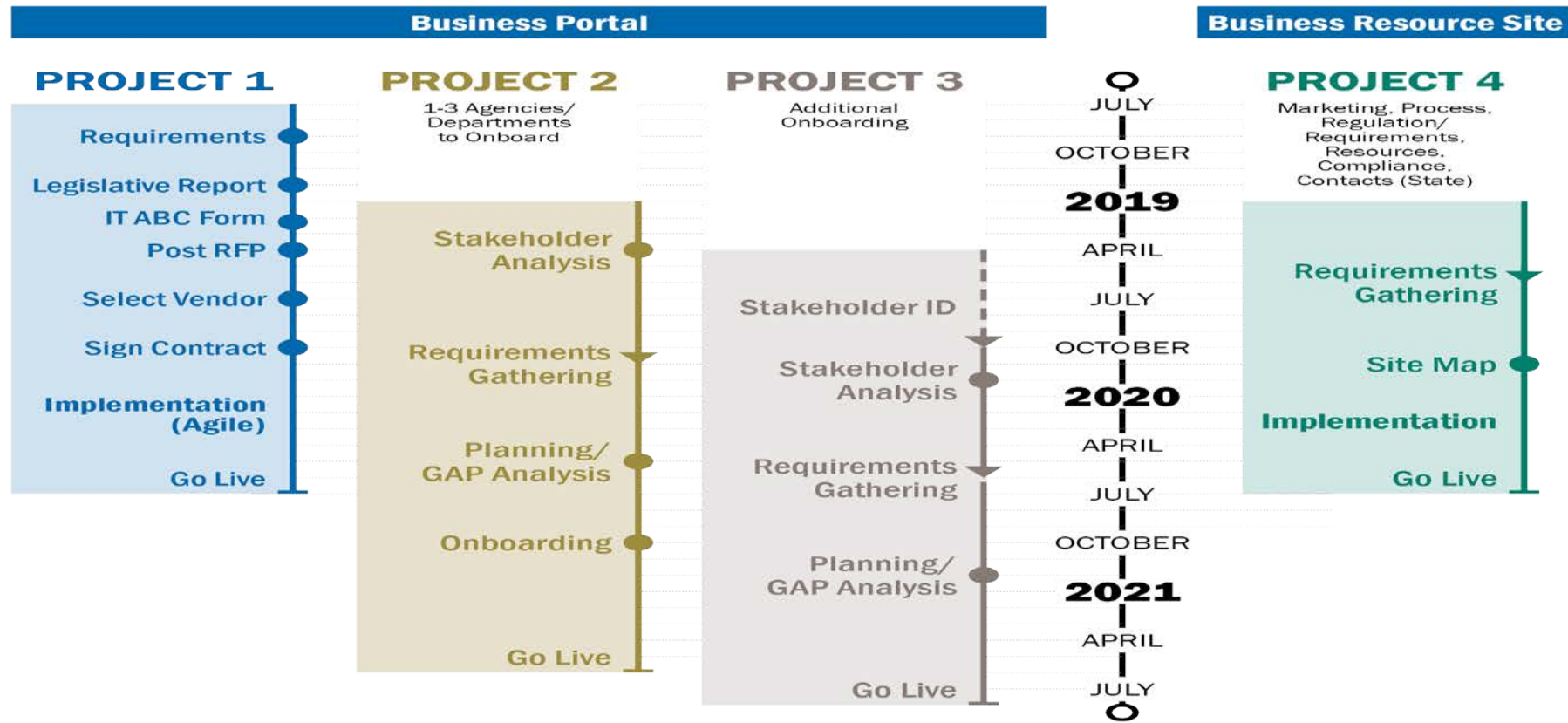
Projects and Phasing

The Future Vermont Business Portal will be broken up into multiple projects.

Project 1 will include the procurement and implementation of the technology solution – The Foundation – for Tax, Labor, SoS and ACCD

Project 4 will include a Business Resources Working Group (can be concurrent to Project 1)

Projects 3 - ? Includes repeatable onboarding of agencies and services, as determined by the Governance Team

Roadmap

Personnel Cost – FY20

FY'20 Vermont Business Portal Estimated Costs			
Position	**Hourly Rate of Pay**	**Average # of Hours Per Month**	**State Estimates**
Project Manager	$88.00	120	$124,960.00
Business Analyst	$100.00	120	$144,000.00
Enterprise Architect	$84.00	40	$37,800.00
Chief Data Officer	$84.00	16	$16,380.00
Agency/Dept. Staff (Combined)	$84.00	80	$80,640.00
Total			**$403,780.00**

- Completed detailed requirements for the following agencies/departments:
  - SoS
  - ACCD
  - Labor
  - Tax
- Completed data governance structure for the business portal
- Completed system architecture documentation
- Completed Request for Proposal (RFP) documentation

Personnel Cost – FY20

FY'20 Vermont Business Resource Website Estimated Costs			
Position	**Hourly Rate of Pay**	**Average # of Hours Per Month**	**State Estimates**
Project Manager	$88.00	30	$31,680.00
Business Analyst	$100.00	30	$36,000.00
Enterprise Architect	$84.00	20	$20,160.00
Chief Marketing Office	$84.00	10	$10,080.00
Agency/Dept. Staff (Combined)	$84.00	50	$50,400.00
Total			**$148,320.00**

- Completed plan for the business resource website
  - Architecture
  - Design
  - Content
  - Governance structure

The business resource website will be a separate project with a dedicated team of subject matter experts from each respective agency/department that provide support and resources to the business community.

System Cost – RFI & Other States

General Requirements Description	Cost
System Development	$1,200,000–$7,000,000
Project Management Services	$600,000–$800,000
Hosting	$10,000–$15,000 / Month
Licensing	$250,000–$750,000 / Annually
Maintenance (includes SLA's)	$250,000–$500,000 Annually
Summary	$2,310,000–$9,065,000

Biz Portal Committee Recommendation

The State of Vermont needs to invest in streamlining agency programs and business processes to enable a smooth experience for the small business owner. **The Steering Committee recommends funding a new Business Portal immediately and to begin soliciting bids for solution implementation in fiscal year 2020.**

For the Business Portal to be successful, Vermont should take steps forward by:

- Showing strong leadership from the top levels of government, mandating agency participation
- Agreeing upon a robust governance structure
- Setting forth a solid project management plan
- Committing to a funding allocation