

Strategic Lean Project Report

Special Occasions License Application Process

Agency: Liquor and Cannabis Board

Partners and Customers: Non-profit organizations that apply for special occasion licenses for events where alcohol may be sold or served; Local government authorities that approve special occasion events; Licensing Division customer service employees that receive and process applications.

Project Impact

The Liquor and Cannabis Board improved the Special Occasions licensing process, resulting in an initial reduction of the applicant error rate from nearly 60% to under 50%

The LCB receives over 7,000 applications annually from non-profit organizations holding events across the state attended by thousands of Washington's residents. These include fundraising dinners, gala events, auctions, and wine tastings. Applications must be submitted at least 45 days prior to the scheduled event. Errors and/or incomplete information requires follow up from the Licensing Division staff and delays the overall process including time for local authorities to grant or deny approval of the event. As event dates near, there is significant pressure to constantly re-prioritize in order to assist applicants with their event while ensuring controlled sales and consumption of alcohol.

WSLCB Mission: Promote public safety and trust through fair administration and enforcement of liquor, cannabis, tobacco, and vapor laws.

[WSLCB Strategic Plan 2019-24](#)

Project Summary

The team focused on the special occasions application form and identified the following:

- The language on the application was confusing to the customer.
- The flow of information on the application was not logical.
- Some information on the application was outdated.
- Instructions for how to complete a site map was unclear.

Based on their analysis, the team decided to focus on revising the Special Occasions License application to reduce the number of applications received by the Customer Service Unit with errors that required follow-up. The revised application was released during the spring, 2018 and the improvement team decided to delay the target improvement date to 2019 to allow customers to adapt to the application form changes.

Currently, 57% of our Special Occasion License Applications have applicant errors compared to our target of 10%, which we wanted to reach by 11/1/2018. (**Note:** see above; delayed until 2019)

The redesigned application included the following improvements:

- Cleaner layout with clear, logical sections
- Removed several fields that were duplicative or unnecessary
- Clarified confusing questions
- Replaced questions asking about the use of event proceeds with an affirmation that proceeds will only be retained by the non-profit
- Added a checklist to the end of the application with all of the required documentation that needs to be attached.

Project Results

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Quality

The data indicates that the new application and resources decreased the number of applications with any errors from 57% to 49% in 2019. With the volume of applications received, this is a sizeable error reduction of approximately 600 applications.

In addition, the Customer Service Unit observed the following decreases in error rates with specific parts of the form:

- Errors in how applicants reported proposed donations of alcohol decreased **19.8%**.
- Errors in how applicants reported their proposed use of event proceeds decreased **11.4%**.
- Errors in how applicants reported participating wineries, breweries, and/or distilleries decreased **5.3%**
- Errors in obtaining a signature from an official or manager of a church, school property, military facility, or liquor-licensed premise in order for an event to be held there decreased by **3.9%**.
- Errors in receiving the appropriate fee accompanying the application decreased **3.3%**.

Members of the Customer Service Unit also reported that with the clearer application and additional resources, the volume of calls regarding special occasion events has dropped from nearly 70% to under 50%. The Unit typically receives 4,000 calls monthly.

Going forward, the Licensing Division employees will include the Special Occasions licensing process as a part of its broader Design Challenge process improvement activity on liquor licensing and continue work towards achieving the target of no greater than a 10% error rate. In addition, design thinking principles such as in-depth customer feedback interviews, will be conducted.

Project Details

Date improvement project was initiated: 11/17/2017

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