

Local Government Permitting Best Practices

The Washington State Governor's Office for Regulatory Innovation and Assistance (ORIA) conducted a series of six outreach sessions to collect best practices for local government permitting. Attendees shared success stories and techniques used by local government to improve quality, increase efficiency, and reduce processing time. Participants included local government and construction industry experts.

Six Best Practices emerged as common themes. A commitment to customer service underlies these themes:

1. Build Mutual Understanding

Bring agencies, industry, elected officials, and the public together to build mutual understanding of the "how" and "why" of the permit process. Work together and educate all participants about how to be effective during permit review.

2. Engage Reviewers & Stakeholders Early

Connect with stakeholders early, before application submittal, so critical design requirements and constraints can be identified and resolved without surprise and rework late in the process. Stakeholders may include local community groups as well as state and federal agencies.

3. Ensure Complete Applications

Define what constitutes a complete application, make this list clear to applicants, and require these items to be present at submittal. Educate applicants so they understand the requirements and consider their input when setting the requirements.

4. Analyze Process, Performance, and Costs

Analyze the process, its performance, and costs of service so applicants and reviewers know how to execute the steps. Mapping the full permit process can reveal opportunities for improvement and serve as part of the basis for determining permit fees.

5. Use Information Technology

Use technology such as electronic permit tracking systems, geographic information systems (GIS), and the inter-connection of these systems online to improve communication, reduce paperwork, and build easily accessible project records.

6. Implement Systems for Staffing Flexibility

Put provisions in place to maintain performance during high volume periods or quickly add specialty skills when needed. Approaches may include temporary hiring, on-call consultants, contracting out, and interlocal agreements.

To view the complete report, visit our web site at <http://www.oria.wa.gov>.

The report was completed in accordance with RCW 43.42.010 and Engrossed Senate Bill 5508 to help local governments further their efforts for faster and more predictable permitting procedures and compliance with reporting requirements of RCW 36.70B.080.

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