

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Consumer and Regularity Affairs



Open Government Report 2014

To institutionalize a culture of transparent, open government and accountability and to expand opportunities for resident participation and collaboration, this Report describes how the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) has and will continue to develop and enhance transparency, public participation, and collaboration. In accordance with Mayor's Order 2014-170, this report addresses the following:

1) Transparency

The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs has taken the following steps to be more transparent:

- *Promotion of Green Building Program, including LEED accreditation and increased public outreach on the benefits of green construction*
- *Implementation of new vending regulations, resulting in a more predictable and transparent licensing and site-assignment process*
- *Simplification of trade name process, consolidating trade name registration under one agency for license application renewals*
- *Establishment of a new, streamlined Basic Business License process for one and two-family rentals with self-certification*
- *Online submission of plans through ProjectDox, an innovative web application streamlining the review process*
- *Creation of an online Permit Intake Validation System (PIVS), which provides the public a one-stop shop for key information on a particular address, including property ownership, zoning, building permit issued, business licenses, and property code citations*
- *Increase in online/mobile services such as Business License Verification, E-Corp, Business License Renewal, and Building Permit Applications*
- *Reduction in paper support of DCRA 'Paperless Permitting Initiative – today 100% of building permit applications are completed via the Online Construction Permit Application Intake System (OCPI)*

- Offer online access to searchable versions of the District's Construction Codes at http://www.ecodes.biz/ecodes_support/Free_Resources/2013DistrictofColumbia/13DistrictofColumbia_main.html.

▪ ***District's Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.***

DCRA has created an Open government and FOIA page on its website that consist of the following information about the agency that can be obtained by accessing the published links

- [Public Employee Salary Information](#) (Please note that this is the complete listing of District employees. Agency designation is located in column two.)
- [Administrative Staff Manuals](#)
- [Other Agency Determinations of the Rights of the Public](#)
- [DCRA's FY14 budget](#)
- [Minutes of Public Meetings](#)
- [Absentee Owners Addresses and Building Permits \(DCRA & Tax & Revenue\)](#)
- [Building Permit List \(Frequently Requested Public Records\)](#)
- [DCRA Statement of Policy and Regulations](#)
- [P Card Purchases](#) (Information dealing with the receipt or expenditure of public funds)
- [Awarded Contracts](#)
- [DCRA Organizational Chart](#)
- [DCRA Performance Plans](#)
- [Submit Feedback using Grade DC](#)
- [District-wide FOIA Reports](#)

DCRA also processes all Freedom of Information Act Requests through FOIAXPRESS, a District government web-based portal by which Freedom of Information Act requests can be processed and tracked.

▪ ***Steps your agency will take to increase public access to information.***

DCRA is currently working to create a One City Portal – which is an integrated licensing and information system that will allow other government agencies and the public to communicate with each other in real time.

▪ ***How your agency has taken or plans to take steps to make more of its data available to the public.***

DCRA is working closely with the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to identify a significant number of datasets that OCA and OCTO expect to publish online later this year. Currently, several sets of the agency's data are available at data.dc.gov.

2) **Public Engagement and Participation**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to enhance or expand opportunities for the public to participate in agency decision-making. Please include a description of:

- ***How does your agency provide online access to proposed rules and regulations and secures public input on them. Please list links to specific websites.***

The agency publishes any emergency, proposed, or final rules in the District of Columbia Register, which is available to the public online at dcregs.dc.gov. As part of the proposed rulemakings, members of the public are provided with at least 30 days to submit comments. The process for submitting comments is included at the end of all proposed rulemakings.

Links to some other regulations may be found at: <http://dcra.dc.gov/page/regulations-dcra>.

The Construction Codes Coordinating Board (CCCB) provides the opportunity for members of the public to submit code change proposals, and to participate in technical advisory groups (TAGs) that make recommendations to the CCCB on code changes. In the last code cycle, completed in March 2014, hundreds of people and organizations, representing industry, design professionals, residents, and other stakeholders, participated in the code development process.

More information about the CCCB and the TAGS is provided on the DCRA website at: <http://dcra.dc.gov/service/construction-codes-coordinating-board>

- ***How does your agency share information and resources to keep the public properly informed, e.g. community meetings, public hearings, FAQs, and ways the public can provide input such as Twitter, grade.dc.gov, email contacts.***

The public can access almost all permitting and licensing information twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week on DCRA's PIVS system.

The agency also responds to inquiries and concerns raised via Twitter, grade.dc.gov, and email.

The DCRA website offers a wealth of information for the public on how to get a business license or for background on permitting. For example, checklists are available on the DCRA website showing all the documentation that is required to a secure a business license, so that an applicant can quickly identify requirements.

DCRA also currently participates in Advisory Neighborhood Commission(ANC) meetings, community open houses, and permit stakeholder meetings.

DCRA uses ward based inboxes to share information with the public. The ward based inboxes are email accounts that were created for the sole purpose of accommodating the high demands of staff members from the Executive Mayors Office, Council offices, and the District's ANCs. These inboxes range from 1-8 (one for each ward of the city). With this system, constituents can expect excellent customer service, fast response times, and a personal agency liaison to address questions and concerns.

In addition, to the ward-based inboxes, DCRA uses the IQ system , which is a citywide database used to collect concerns, questions, and inquires from the residents of DC. All DCRA-related IQ inquires come in through resources such as "Ask the Director" on the DCRA website, the email address housinginspections@dc.gov, the email address dcra@dc.gov, or through the 311 call center.

- ***How does your agency identify stakeholders and invite their participation.***

DCRA identifies stakeholders as being residents, business owners, district and federal government agencies and visitors seeking to do business in the District. Agency management (including the director), readily make themselves available for meetings with stakeholders.

- ***Steps your agency will take to improve public engagement and participation including any new feedback tools or mechanisms the agency is considering.***

DCRA has one of the District governments most popular Twitter accounts with more than 7,000 followers. The agency will continue to use feedback from Twitter in addition to feedback received through more traditional means.

The agency is implementing an online permitting submission and review system that gives permit applicants easier access to feedback on discipline reviews. DCRA is also looking at expanding personalized service programs like the Small Business Resource Center, so that customers are assigned a single point of contact, which should allow feedback to reach its desired source more quickly and effectively.

3) **Collaboration**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to enhance or expand cooperation among departments, other governmental agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities in fulfilling its obligations. Please include a description of:

- ***How your agency currently collaborates with the above parties. Please list links to specific websites if appropriate.***

Currently, DCRA collaborates with the above parties by way of the Small Business Resource Center (SBRC). The Small Business Resource Center is designed to provide one-on-one technical assistance, educational assistance, and group workshops to future and current business owners seeking to navigate through the District’s regulatory environment. Through the SBRC, DCRA has established partnerships with both the private sector and District and federal government agencies. Partnerships play a critical role in providing small business education assistance to SBRC customers. The SBRC is a key initiative among the efforts of the District to become a more business-friendly jurisdiction.

DCRA’s SBRC continues to build partnerships which contribute to increasing agency and communication transparency through its outreach efforts. The SBRC demonstrates the collective efforts by District agencies and private sector partners to provide a platform for entrepreneurs to receive one-on-one consultations and group workshops. The goal is that entrepreneurs will be educated to start their businesses efficiently and in compliance with all of the District’s regulatory requirements. The SBRC is a prime example of DCRA moving aggressively towards streamlining business regulatory processes, enhancing transparency and communication, and providing good customer service to the small business community.

SBRC FY2014 Top Five Events – To Date:

1. Vending Regulation Training Symposium – 10/18/13 (Approximately 69 Attendance)
2. DC Bar Pro Bono Clinic – 10/22/13 (Approximately 65 Attendance)
3. Vending Regulation Training Symposium – 10/26/13 (Approximately 49 Attendance)
4. DC Bar Pro Bono Clinic – 01/15/14 (Approximately 49 Attendance)
5. ProjectDox Training for District of Columbia Building Industry Association (DCBIA) – 01/29/14 (Approximately 50 Attendance)

Table 1

DCRA’s Small Business Resource Center (SBRC) Fiscal Year 2014				
QUARTER	EVENT TYPE	TOPIC	DATE	APPROXIMATELY ATTENDED
Q1	Workshops	DC Bar Pro Bono Clinic	Tuesday, October 22, 2013	65
Q1	Training	Vending Regulations Training Symposium	Saturday, October 26, 2013	49
Q1	Training	Vending Regulations Training Symposium	Monday, October 28, 2013	69

Q1	Workshops	Office of Asian & Pacific Islanders / Connect - Engage & Build Launch Event	Thursday, November 14, 2013	40
Q1	Workshops	Affordable Care Act for Small Biz	Thursday, November 14, 2013	13
Q1	Workshops	Octane and Fuel Pump for Merchants	Wednesday, November 20, 2013	5
Q1	Workshops	Affordable Care Act for Small Biz	Saturday, December 07, 2013	9
Q2	Workshops	How to Open a Small Business in DC	Wednesday, December 11, 2013	38
Q2	Workshops	DC Bar Pro Bono Clinic	Wednesday, January 15, 2014	49
Q2	Workshop	Permits ProjectDox Training (District of Columbia Building Industry Association - DCBIA)	Wednesday, January 29, 2014	50
Q2	Workshop	Money Smart for Small Businesses	Thursday, January 30, 2014	16

On Monday, August 25, 2014, the SBRC held its 2nd Entrée DC Food and Drink Forum, which took place at the Washington, DC Convention Center. The forum focused on providing breakout sessions on the following topics:

- 1) D.C. Government Regulatory Processes
- 2) Do's and Don'ts of Opening a Food Industry Business in D.C.
- 3) Financial Management
- 4) How to Get Financing to Open a Business
- 5) Entering into a Building Lease Agreement
- 6) Ins and Outs of Food Trucks, Public Markets, and Vending

490 registered 300+ attended

Internal District Government Partners Include:

- DCRA's Corporations, Permit Operations Division, Business Licensing, and Office of the Zoning Administrator
- Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR)
- Department of Health (DOH)
- Alcohol and Beverage (ABRA)
- Office of the Deputy Mayor's Office for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED)
- Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD)

External Collaborators who offer small business development support include:

- DC Women Business Center (DCWBC)
- DC Bar Pro Bono
- DC Small Business Development Center (DC SBDC)
- Washington Area Community Investment Fund (WICIF)
- Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)

DCRA constantly reaches out to sister agencies through Projectdox as well as encourages customers to discuss experiences through grade.dc.gov. The agency also participates in Tenant Housing Advocates meetings and conferences, American Institute of Architects meetings, and the District of Columbia Building Industry Association meetings.

DCRA's Occupational and Professional Business Licensing Department collaborates with the Department of Health and a host of boards and commissions as well.

- ***Steps your agency will take to improve collaboration with the above parties including any new feedback tools or mechanisms the agency is considering, e.g. prizes, competitions, and other innovative methods.***

The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs Small Business Resource Center will house a six-month pilot project in the fall of 2014 to accelerate the permitting, inspection, zoning, and business licensing approval process for new, small businesses in the District.