



Business and Commerce Quarterly Update
April, 2014

TEXAS BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

The Texas Board of Professional Engineers (TBPE) is a Self-Directed, Semi-Independent (SDSI) agency whose primary mission is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the people in Texas by implementing the Texas Engineering Practice Act through licensure of qualified individuals and enforcement of the laws and rules. The TBPE has implemented statutory requirements passed during the 83rd Legislative Session. The Agency continues to make progress on its continuous improvement initiative, the Journey Toward Excellence, using the Quality Texas and Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence as the framework for optimizing agency operations and efficiency. The following summary outlines the agency's legislative implementation, ongoing activities, and process improvements efforts for the period of December 1, 2013 through February 28, 2014.

Leadership

Legislature

The 83rd Texas Legislature passed two bills related to the TBPE that the agency has implemented. Senate Bill 204 was the agency Sunset bill and House Bill 1685 was the Sunset bill for the Self-Directed, Semi-Independent (SDSI) program. SB 204 required, among other things, a fingerprint-based Criminal History Record Check (CHRC) for all new licensees and all current licensees. Implementation of the new CHRC requirement has required innovative solutions to accommodate the existing systems of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and their selected vendor MorphoTrust and still allow timely renewals of licenses and issuance of licenses.

- Rules to implement the process were posted for comments and approved by the Board in November, 2013.
- TBPE webpage including, FAQ, forms and detailed instructions were created for both in-state and out-of-state licensees and applicants.
- Information technology and automation changes were created and implemented for importing data and targeting communication with customers.

Texas has roughly 59,000 licensed professional engineers, about 80% of whom keep their licenses in Active status. Texas PE licenses renew in quarterly batches and approximately 14,000 licensees have active license renewals due at the end of March. TBPE staff communicated with all licensees regarding the new CHRC requirements, but focused communication on those with March renewals. Communication efforts included targeted emails and mailing descriptions of the requirement as well as specific instructions and

forms. Outreach presentations given by the Board and staff also include information for all affected customers.

One of the significant challenges in implementation of this requirement is the selected vendor that is responsible for collecting the fingerprints for DPS. MorphoTrust processes fingerprints for CHRC applicants for DPS for a variety of Texas licenses, but seems to struggle with the process for out-of-state licensees. Customer issues related to the MorphoTrust website, phone support and timeliness of processing have all been reported. TBPE staff continues to work with DPS and its selected vendor to improve customer service.

Operations

Enforcement

One of the additional new processes associated with the implementation of the new CHRC requirement is the review of records received from DPS. Under the policy created by TBPE staff, each record containing a criminal incident is reviewed by Compliance & Enforcement staff. During this quarter, there were more than 870 records reviewed.

The Compliance & Enforcement division has implemented the first phase of the electronic case management process improvement project. This project is being developed in-house utilizing the internal IT staff programming and project management resources. The planned system will include increased automation and allow online submissions of complaints and evidence by the public. The division staff continues to actively work all existing enforcement cases and participate in outreach efforts to licensees and the public.

Licensing

The number of licensed engineers and examination candidates stayed fairly consistent from the first quarter. The licensing department continues to see a steady flow of new applications to process. Licensing is also responsible for the implementation of the new CHRC required by SB 204. Licensing and IT staff are working with the Texas Department of Public Safety and its vendor, MorphoTrust, to develop and implement the requirements. Licensing staff has answered numerous customer emails and phone calls regarding the new requirement and the potential effect on licenses.

Strategic Planning

As part of our ongoing Journey Toward Excellence continuous improvement program, recommendations for changes to the agency Strategic Plan, which were developed in the summer by Board staff, were used to identify projects and goals for this year. Project teams

were assigned and charges for each team were developed to help the teams stay focused. Projects cover most areas of the Agency operations grouped into Organizational Resource Development, Customer Communication, and Process and Product Improvements. During this quarter, TBPE staff prepared an application for the Quality Texas Award, Progress level. The feedback received from this application later this year will help TBPE in its continuous improvement efforts.

Customers

TBPE continues to use its website, email, electronic newsletters, and social media as effective methods of communication to licensees, applicants, and the public. During this quarter communications were primarily focused on informing licensees and applicants about the changes that were passed by the legislature, specifically the CHRC requirements. Scheduled outreach presentations and quarterly webinars were also effective methods for reaching a wide group of customers. The agency also produces the quarterly eNewsletter to announce the Board information and statute and rule changes.

During this quarter, TBPE staff made presentations to more than 2800 individuals through live events and two webinars that were presented in early December. The presentations offered by the Board allows licensees to fulfill the mandatory ethics training requirement and the webinar is the same content as provided in person by TBPE staff members. The new webinar program continues to receive strong positive feedback and high attendance and traditional face-to-face outreach is still offered to groups or organizations by request.

Workforce

The agency continues to keep the TBPE workforce involved in agency improvement projects and provide a voice and opportunity for individual participation in the development of agency processes and programs. In addition to the strategic planning described above, staff is involved with all aspects of Agency improvement initiatives and projects. During this quarter, the TBPE received results of the latest Survey of Employee Engagement which was administered last quarter for TBPE staff by the Institute for Organizational Excellence at the University of Texas at Austin. This comprehensive survey measures employee satisfaction and gets effective input from staff at all levels. The results of the survey showed improvements in all areas, providing validation of efforts and the Journey Toward Excellence continuous improvement process. The results will feed into the upcoming strategic planning processes for the Agency.

Measurement and Results

HB 1685 created Chapter 472 of the Occupations Code which mandated changes to the official reporting required for the SDSI program including additional measures added to annual and biennial reports and five year trend data for most indicators. The first annual report was completed and sent to the appropriate legislative and Governor's Office contacts in November, 2013. Staff has been updating data collection systems, reviewing and revising performance measure definitions, and developing reporting mechanisms for all Agency measures. The first biennial report will be due the first day of the 84th legislative session in January, 2015.

Finance

Revenue for the second quarter of fiscal year 2014 is relatively on track for the budgeted amount with revenue for licenses, fees, and permits below target amounts at the end of the quarter. Expenses are offsetting it by being under budgeted amounts due to some staff vacancies which will be filled in the next quarter. New legislative licensing requirements may be having an impact on the timing of payments in the first half of this fiscal year. Activity will be continuously analyzed throughout the year. The fiscal year 2014 budget approved by the Board in August 2013 is expected to further reduce the ending fund balance next year.