

2021 IACA Merit Award Application

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eForms Online

On November 19, 2020, during the midst of the COVID Pandemic the California Secretary of State's office launched our eForms Online application for business entities. eForms Online is a new online business entity electronic envelope submission system that allows customers to upload and submit self-drafted documents and forms online that would normally be mailed in or brought to our public counter. This innovative online application is designed to help businesses easily navigate to the correct business form through the California Secretary of State's **bizfile** Online portal through an intuitive and customer-driven user interface.

The California Secretary of State's office is committed to modernizing and creating efficiencies when providing services to customers. eForms Online is part of the California Secretary of State's Digital Initiative to modernize and digitize the agency's divisions thus **making it easier to do business in California**. eForms Online is helping to transform how California business owners engage with their state government, improving processing times, allowing staff to telework during the pandemic and freeing up staff to address the more complex challenges of current and prospective business owners. As a result, eForms Online is enhancing the experiences of all business owners, entrepreneurs, professionals, the public and our staff.

Available 24/7, eForms Online affords greater accessibility for business owners and entrepreneurs to submit business filings online - anywhere, anytime, and on any device. eForms Online, conveniently located on our **bizfile** California portal, allows customers to file nearly 70 different business entity documents through a single online application, including formations, amendments, annual filings and terminations from the convenience of their home, office, or any other location.

2020 COVID-19 Pandemic

With the onset of the worldwide pandemic, the California Secretary of State was presented with a unique set of challenges that accelerated the need for the eForms Online application.

The first, and most important of these challenges, was to provide a way for our customers and our staff to remain safe, while providing important essential business services and allowing more of our staff to telework. In making eForms Online fully web-accessible for both our customers and our staff processing via telework, we were able to significantly reduce contact and potential exposure to this deadly virus.

Additionally, we were able to streamline our work processes in coordination with the eForms Online application's newfound efficiencies, which in turn allowed businesses supplying vital services such as personal protective equipment supplies, medical services and other pandemic-related business to quickly and easily register to conduct business in the state of California.

Lastly, the unknown complications of reduced productivity from telework layered over intermittent public counter closures due to health and safety concerns was a significant concern leading into our typical 4-5 months of peak volume processing at the end of the 2020 calendar year. The ability to provide our remote staff with a steady web-based workload while providing our customers with the ability to instantly submit business filings via eForms Online 24/7 allowed the California Secretary of State to increase productivity and teleworking opportunities despite the difficulties brought on by the pandemic.

Equipped with an experienced project team working largely remotely and consisting of business experts, business automation, IT professionals and a dedicated project management team, the eForms project went from conceptualization to public deployment in less than **six months**.



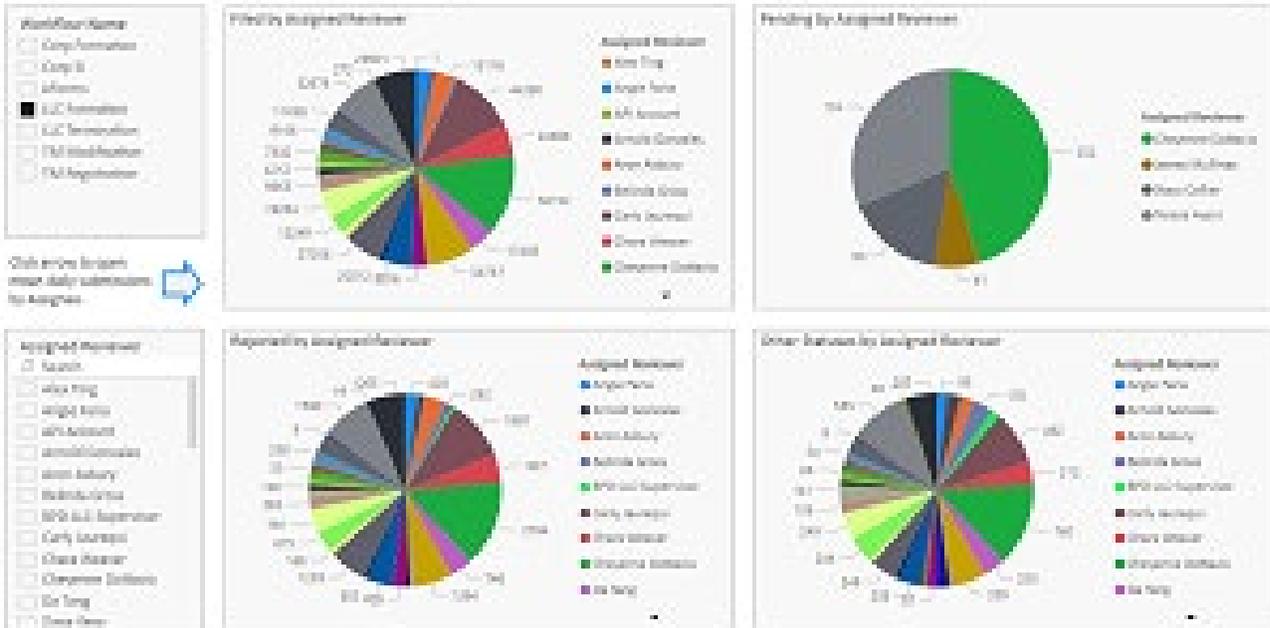
Modernizing Customer Service in California

In 2019, the State of California processed over 2.5 million business filings, with a significant portion of that total arriving to our offices via paper. Where once a business owner would have to mail filing documents or stand in line at our public counters during office hours, business owners can now submit the vast majority of our available business filings online via the eForms Online application. Since the launch of eForms Online, in just four months' time, eForms Online has received more than 50,000 submissions.

In order to take full advantage of the new efficiencies offered by eForms Online, the California Secretary of State developed, in conjunction with the application vendor, a business analytics dashboard powered by Microsoft PowerBI. With the ability to instantly view work in progress, key performance indicators and individual staff productivity metrics, our management team has been able to effectively distribute work, allocate resources and plan for staffing with important data that was previously unavailable.

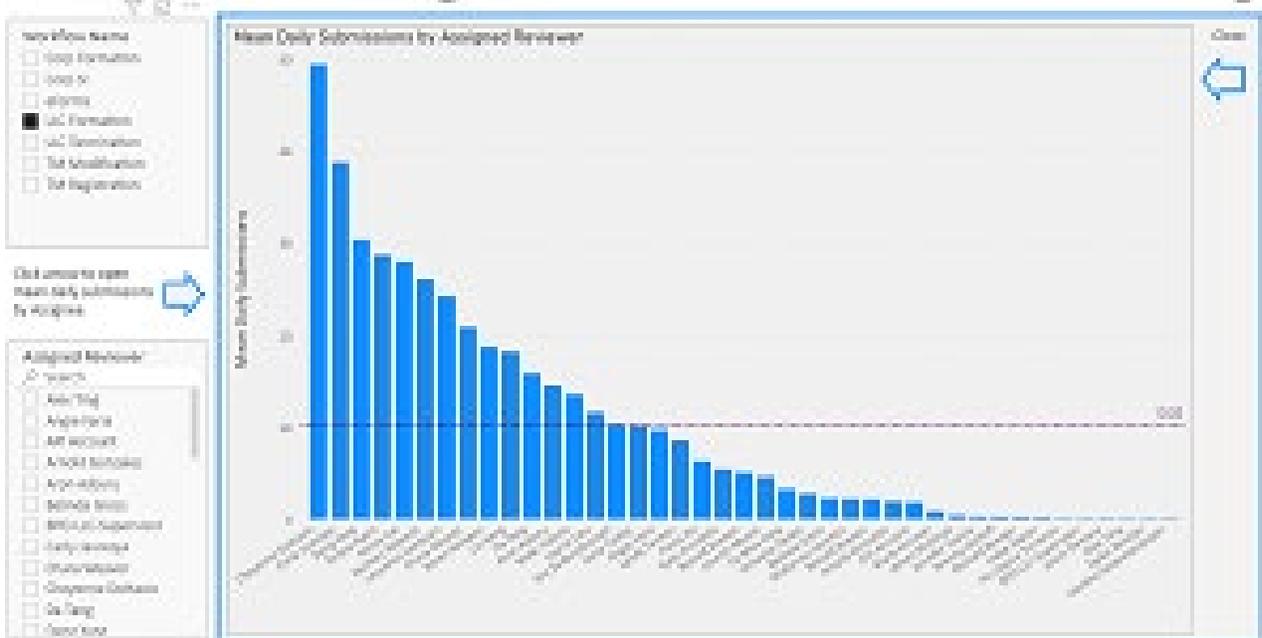
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The primary beneficiaries of eForms Online are millions of California businesses that are either registering or amending registered businesses with the California Secretary of State. They have access to needed eForms Online for business filings when they need it, in a user-friendly, efficient, effective and safe manner. State employees benefit from having more meaningful, fulfilling work that better utilizes their knowledge, experience, and expertise while teleworking. Finally, California taxpayers benefit from the reduced costs of quickly and efficiently delivering services in a digital, connected way.

Customer/Public Benefits

- Provides faster processing of business filings, with less wait time for customers. Our staff can process eForms Online submissions, on average, 6 business days faster than paper submissions.
- Allows customers to electronically submit self-drafted documents.
- Allows payment to be collected using a secure third-party payment processing vendor.
- Provides automated question and answer-based user guidance to help prevent the selection and submission of an incorrect form.
- Scales the California Secretary of State's ability to serve the most populous U.S. state by making nearly 70 different business filings available to submit, pay for and process end to end online.
- Avoids time and costs for businesses to correct errors.
- Eliminates the need for submitting business filings via mail or standing in line at the public counter - *Go Online rather than Standing in Line*.
- Returns approved filings via email immediately after processing.

Government Agency Benefits

- Improves throughput of document processing team by eliminating processes required for intake and output of paper documents.
- Enhances productivity of document processing team, freeing staff to focus on more complex inquiries.
- Avoids cost for state enforcement by providing fewer business registration and compliance errors.
- More meaningful, satisfying work for document processing team.
- Flexibility in remote access to work with full web accessibility to the internal processing portion of the eForms Online application.
- Provides an easily managed transition roadmap to the future of telework and the changing landscape of staffing through automation.

Future of eForms Online

The California Secretary of State continues to improve eForms Online and plans to add the following features to further enhance eForms Online and the customer experience over time:

- Providing additional targeted customer instructions, including the use of videos.
- Adding more business filings to the currently allowed types.
- Expanding the business analytics functionality with increased data granularity.
- Using data-driven analysis to further reduce rejections of customers' documents, while increasing ease of use within the interface.

eForms was developed in partnership with SimpliGov and multiple internal resources from the California Secretary of State's Business Programs Division and Information Technology Division. The development time was six months and during that time, valuable experience was gained and lessons were learned. Because the project team was selected based on prior online business application development experience, no major issues resulted over the duration of the project and time to delivery was among the fastest of all our online projects. Additionally, the

concept of leveraging existing application platforms in new and innovative ways to provide significantly quicker time-to-market development are being applied to current and future business application development.

The most significant challenge, which we have shared with other State agencies, is related to time and resources. With the pandemic, the time to delivery target was substantially shortened and the project resources were teleworking. Given the ambitious scope of the eForms Online project, these impediments would typically be difficult to overcome. However, use of the Agile development methodology, as well as collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams and SharePoint, allowed the project to progress at a rapid pace during challenging times.



Making it easier to do business in California.