



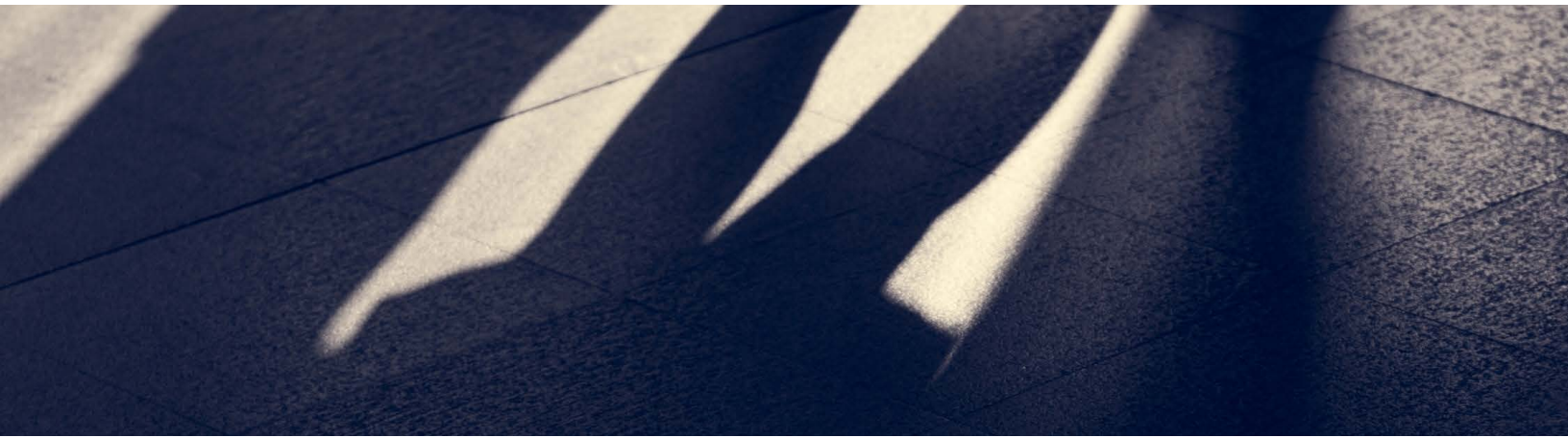
# BCCAR

BELIZE COMPANIES AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS REGISTRY

# A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY AT THE BELIZE COMPANIES AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS REGISTRY

Perspectives from:  
**Belize Companies and  
Corporate Affairs Registry**

May 25, 2021



## 1. PURPOSE OF OVERVIEW

Improving the starting a business process in Belize has been in progress for the past few years. Being able to register and manage a company easily and efficiently is the foundation of this process and key in a country's competitiveness. This brief overview is meant showcase the business transformation journey of the Belize Companies and Corporate Affairs Registry (BCCAR or the Registry) for the period July 2020- March 2021.

## 2. PARTNERS



The partners in this transformation journey include the following entities:

- Ministry of Finance, Government of Belize
- International Financial Services Commission
- Belize Companies and Corporate Affairs Registry
- Belize International Companies Affairs Registry
- Economic Development Council
- Central Information Technology Office
- Elevate Consulting Ltd.
- Compete Caribbean Partnership Facility



### 3. BACKGROUND

The Belize Companies and Corporate Affairs Registry is the Government of Belize’s domestic business registry providing services as authorized under the respective laws of Belize:

- Local company incorporation (with or without liability), Cap 250 Companies Act
- Overseas company registration, Cap 250 Companies Act
- Business Name registration, Cap 247 Business Names Act
- Limited Liability Partnership registration, Cap 258 Limited Liability Partnership Act

BCCAR has eight (8) staff members including the Deputy Registrar and a Registrar overseeing operations, policy, and enforcement. The other job roles include Registry Officers, Data Entry Clerks, and an Office Assistant. Over 50% of the staff members have been employed at the registry for ten (10) years or more. As of November 2020, the registry experienced three distinct reconfigurations in the Ministry providing oversight within the past five (5) years with corresponding changes in Registrar and Deputy Registrar leadership. Up to mid-2020, the Registry was heavily paper based, most of the processes and procedures were conducted manually and there was no online presence providing information on the requirements for the different services. Under these conditions, the registry processed an average of twenty-five transactions a day with a turnaround time of 7- 10 business days.

**At the end of 2020, BCCAR held the following records by company type:**

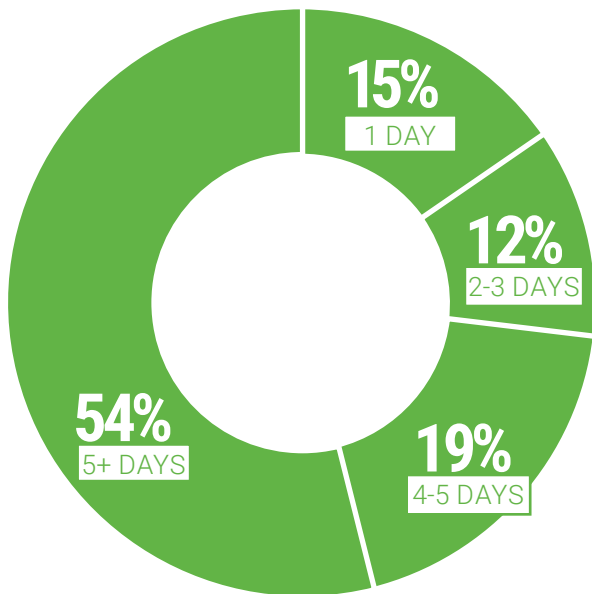
COMPANY TYPE	
Companies	18,720
Business Names	37,000
Overseas Companies	3,000
Limited Liability Partnerships	31

# 4. CASE OVERVIEW

## 4.1 Problem

Incorporating a company is the first step in the starting a business process, accounting for approximately seven (7) days to successfully do so according to the World Bank's methodology. Over the past five (5) years, Belize's starting a business process ranking declined 7 positions from 159 to 166 out of 190 countries, putting Belize at an interminably uncompetitive position<sup>1</sup>. A recent survey conducted by Elevate Consulting Ltd. to a sample of 30 BCCAR users revealed that 54% of the users experienced receiving their documents in more than 5 days while 19% experienced receiving theirs in 4-5 days, 12% in 2-3 days and 15% in 1 day. See figure 1.

The varying waiting period indicates that the processing time within BCCAR is inconsistent. This is largely due to inefficiencies in processes, procedures, resource limitation, low capacity, and the absence of a strategic plan with which to realize meaningful improvements in service quality and to guide growth. An in-depth review of BCCAR's processes and procedures revealed that close to 90% of BCCAR processes were conducted manually with non-digital tools such as the dependency on voluminous hard-copy files, physical logbooks and paper forms requiring physical signatures. While other countries in the Caribbean region have transitioned to



## NO OF DAYS TO PROCESS DOCUMENTS AT BCCAR, NOVEMBER 2020

Figure 1: Timeframe to process documents at BCCAR

1 Ease of Doing Business Report (World Bank)



a fully automated E-registry system, Belize remains one of the last remaining countries in the Caribbean to do so. The Covid-19 pandemic was a crucial point for the Registry as they struggled to serve the public via manual processes and tools. This led BCCAR turning to the Belize International Companies Affairs Registry (BICAR) for guidance in transforming and digitizing the Registry. BICAR successfully digitized 100% of their files in 2007 and have been serving their clients via e-mail services since 2014.

Another partner that has been working with BCCAR is the Economic Development Council (EDC) in the Office of the Prime Minister whose mandate is to provide advice and technical support to line ministries for improving the business climate in Belize. Under a Technical Cooperation project ***BL-T1110 Leveraging Digital Technology for Improving the Business Climate in Belize*** which is being funded by the Compete Caribbean II Facility and executed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), support for the digitization of BCCAR has been underway since 2019. The scope of this IDB project was originally to provide digital solutions for improving operations at BCCAR, strengthening the legal structure to allow and secure e-services in Belize and providing technical support in managing and monitoring the execution of the project.

This project was key in activating the Registry on its journey to business transformation.

Business transformation includes digital transformation, changes to procedures and processes, changes to roles and responsibilities and the support and resources to realize the intended results of the changes. The road to transformation and automation is a journey that is ideally undertaken in phases for ease of adaptation, implementation, and affordability. There are foundational elements that must be in place before an automated system is implemented as without them, the probability of failure is high. These foundational elements include upskilling, digitized files, and process reengineering to simplify and improve how an organization operates. Lastly, a phased approach, with these foundational elements taken into consideration, gives the staff the opportunity to learn a new way of working which can be the hardest step in transformation, but one of the most important steps to secure broad buy-in and streamlined, sustainable innovation. The staff at BCCAR was accustomed to working with paper files and recording information in physical logbooks which made it challenging to efficiently track applications, understand the workload of each staff member and have timely and accurate data on the operations of the Registry.



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#### 4.2 Solution to address foundational element deficiencies

In July 2020, Elevate Consulting Ltd. was contracted to digitize over 18,000 company files under the consultancy **BL-T1110-P003 Digitization of the Belize Companies and Corporate Affairs Registry** with the Inter-American Bank and Compete Caribbean Facility. The duration of the project was 9 months and the outputs included:

- 18,000 digitized and validated files
- Capacity building in the registry to work with digitized files and manage the document management system, DocuWare
- Recommendations on changes in processes and procedures to enable digital files in workflows.

### 4.3 Results to date

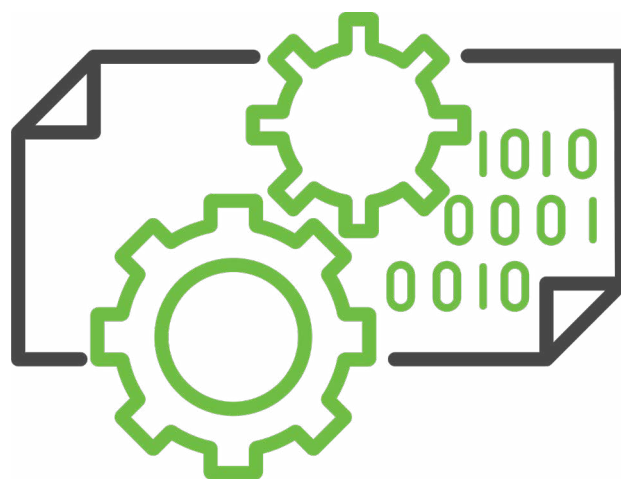
The project to digitize BCCAR's company files was completed at the end of March 2021 and a total of 18,720 files were digitized. The success of this project is due to several factors:

1. A strong Project Management lead to train, monitor and provide weekly on the ground guidance throughout the project.
2. Participation of staff members from both the Belize International and Companies Affairs Registry who have experience in digitizing files and staff members from the Belize Companies and Corporate Affairs Registry who are the experts on domestic companies files.
3. The team working after working hours or on weekends to digitize the files for which they were given a stipend for their efforts.
4. An operations manual that was created to guide the digitization process and ensure standards were set in place.
5. Providing regular training sessions on digitizing files and using the document management system.
6. Cross training with all other staff members not on the project team.
7. The full support of the Registrar and Deputy Registrar.

As of April 2021, the staff at BCCAR digitizes files daily and is working on storing the physical files properly and securely. There were challenges along the way on both the staff front and public front (users) in implementing working with digital files. On the staff front, there was resistance to work with digital files due to several factors: (1) not trusting that all the files that were in the physical file were provided digitally (2) breaking the routine of working with the physical files (3) understanding how to incorporate digital files in their processes and procedures.

On the public front (users), the challenges included retooling and learning how to access the Registry services differently such as, using a kiosk to conduct digital company searches as opposed to doing it with the physical file and, shifting to using the Registry e-mail services which includes providing documents electronically and making payment via online banking as opposed to over-the-counter payment.

**Providing reliable e-mail services was an easy to implement and impacting service improvement for the public.** This reduced both travel costs and the cost of providing physical files for users. Improving walk-in service is also important for those with no access to internet or e-mail services but must be encouraged and taught how to access services digitally via the Registry kiosks. This will ease the public's adaptation to digital services once the Registry is fully automated. Addressing the challenges on both fronts takes continuous and open communications, capacity building, reassessing plans, and procedures to continuously improve and demonstrate the value of the changes. Having supportive leadership and the right resources such as reliable computers, scanners and applications was also key to success of the project.



## 4.4 Conservative budget, BIG IMPACT

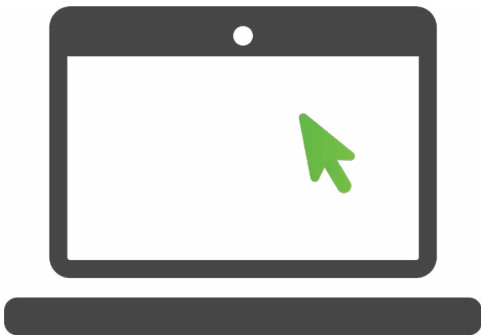
The total project investment was \$74,000 USD, a conservative and well invested budget broken by the following line items.

DIGITIZATION OF BCCAR FILES BUDGET	BZD	USD
Project Management and Training Services	\$48,000.00	\$24,000.00
Project Team Stipend (11 Members)	\$75,030.80	\$37,515.40
Business Tax	\$8,808.00	\$4,404.00
Contract Tax	\$4,789.20	\$2,394.60
Computers and Applications	\$11,265.50	\$5,632.75
Other Fees	\$106.50	\$53.25
	\$148,000.00	\$74,000.00

**Table 1:** Digitization budget

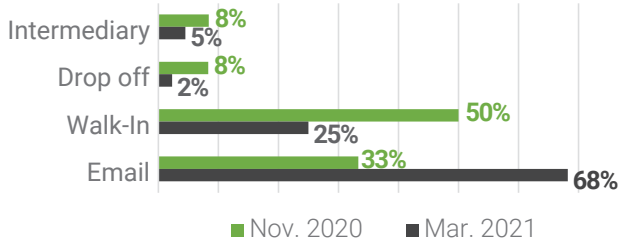
BCCAR has made major improvements in its service delivery and continues to work on doing so. This is a continuous process and one that must be guided by data and performance. Since the start of the transformation, BCCAR has made the following improvements and advancements to their services:

- Launched a website which provides the public with all the requirements and information to access a service including filling forms online.
- Implemented e-mail services including online payment. Demand for this service has gone from 33% in November 2020 to 68% in March 2021 as seen in figure 2.
- Installed public use computer Kiosks in Belmopan and Belize City that allow for digital company searches.



**Demand for email services (including online payment)  
INCREASED 68% IN MARCH 2021**

## HOW USERS ACCESS SERVICES AT BCCAR



**Figure 2:** Breakdown of how users access services at BCCAR

These small yet impactful changes have improved accessibility, service delivery and capacity at BCCAR as highlighted in the table below:

### BEFORE THE PROJECT

90% manual procedures

7- 10 days turnaround time

All hard copy files (slow process, errors, and misplaced files)

Process an average of 30 transactions per day.

### AFTER PROJECT

50% Manual Procedures  
50% Digital procedures (E-mail-services, document management system, digital logs, digital documents)

3-5 days turnaround time. Working towards 24 hours

Digitized files (quick access, easy reviewed and files secured)  
Kiosks-Digital Searches

Process an average of 50 transactions per day

**Table 2:** Highlights other achievements to date

The current turn-around time to process documents still varies, but the team at BCCAR and BICAR are working on getting it consistent and down to a 24-hour turnaround period for certain services.

**MANUAL PROCEDURES  
HAVE DECREASED FROM  
90% TO 50%**



## 5. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE DIGITIZATION PROJECT



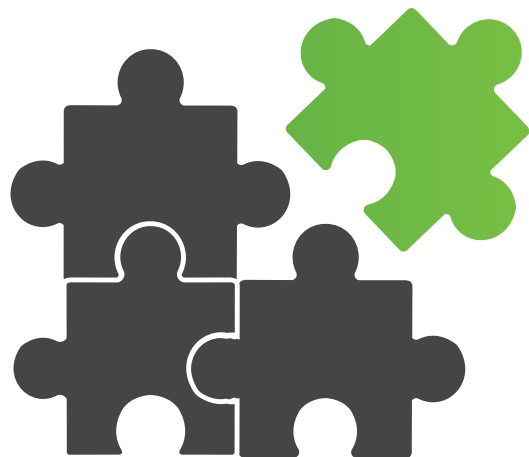
With every project there are challenges, risks, and lessons learned that should be shared for better insight as the Registry moves forward. The lessons learnt for this phase included:

1. It is important that clients, users, and beneficiaries understand the long-term benefits of digitizing files and the value creation. Files contain valuable data that can be used for better monitoring, decision making when seeking to improve services and improve data security.
2. The best capacity building strategy was to have the Registry staff understand how to work with digital files early in the project, this allowed for a better understanding of the value created with digital files. It also laid the foundation for them to start working differently and be able to offer digital services to the public such as digital company searches.
3. From the onset create awareness of the project impact, output and outcomes with the entire unit and key stakeholders. This is important for future collaboration and early adaptation and acceptance.
4. Training is an ongoing process during the entire life cycle of the project and beyond.
5. Change leaders are key and must be identified and empowered.
6. Keep project teams motivated with small milestones.

## 5.1 Critical Success factors

The critical success factors of the project included:

1. Strong and dedicated team leads.
2. Open and frequent discussions such as weekly meetings.
3. Implementation of an operations manual to guide the digitization.
4. Using a shared digital log to track progress and input data for validation.
5. Using digitized files as soon as possible in the workflows at BCCAR. This allowed for early adaptation and buy-in from the staff.
6. Small monetary awards to the staff involved in the project was an incentive/motivator.



## 5.2 Recommendations for Sustainability

The recommendations for sustainability of transformation path include:

1. Creating a plan to digitize all the other company types of files remaining, Business Names, Overseas Companies and Limited Liability Partnerships.
2. Re-engineer all working procedures to embed using digital files.
3. Draft contingency procedures in the event something goes wrong such as losing power, internet, or any other potential issues.
4. Reach out to other starting a business entities and share the successes of digitizing files and using a document management system such as DocuWare to help with efficiencies at the Registry. There are opportunities to collaborate and teach others to digitize their files.
5. Invest in an e-registry system to further improve internal operations and service to the public.
6. Create an annual training plan to keep building digital skills and keep improving procedures.



# BCCAR

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