

# Expanding childcare by licensing four times faster



## *For every three kids there's only one childcare slot*

A 2022 report revealed that Boise had over 14,000 children under age six with working parents, yet only about 5,000 licensed childcare slots were available -- a shortfall of over 9,000 childcare spaces.



I didn't understand why I needed to go to Planning. Even Planning staff were confused about who could help me.

– Childcare Provider

Childcare providers faced a time-consuming and challenging process, particularly smaller ones who might be recent immigrants or non-English speakers.

The process to obtain a license could take over three months, and could easily be twice as long if a neighbor raised a protest.

Even while the City was facing a critical childcare shortage, they unintentionally put up a lot of barriers to becoming a childcare provider:

- Providers were required to notify all their neighbors, in writing, and submit proof of doing so. Many neighbor could pause the project with an appeal.
- Neighbor appeals were basically never upheld on the merits, but they did sometimes manage to drag out the process long enough to discourage the provider and halt the project.
- The City website communicated that the licensure fee was \$105, but in reality providers had to pay for multiple permits, inspections, and background checks, with the actual cost 7x that
- Providers must interact with at least 4 different agencies that don't talk to each other.

Boise was faced with the question: **How can we open up licensing as much as possible, while ensuring children's safety and quality of care?**



I stopped applying for the funding offered to providers because it was a lot of paperwork and too bureaucratic.

– Childcare Provider

## Bottlenecks



Multiple checklists and applications



Zoning approval alone takes over two months



Fees are scattered throughout the process and not clearly communicated



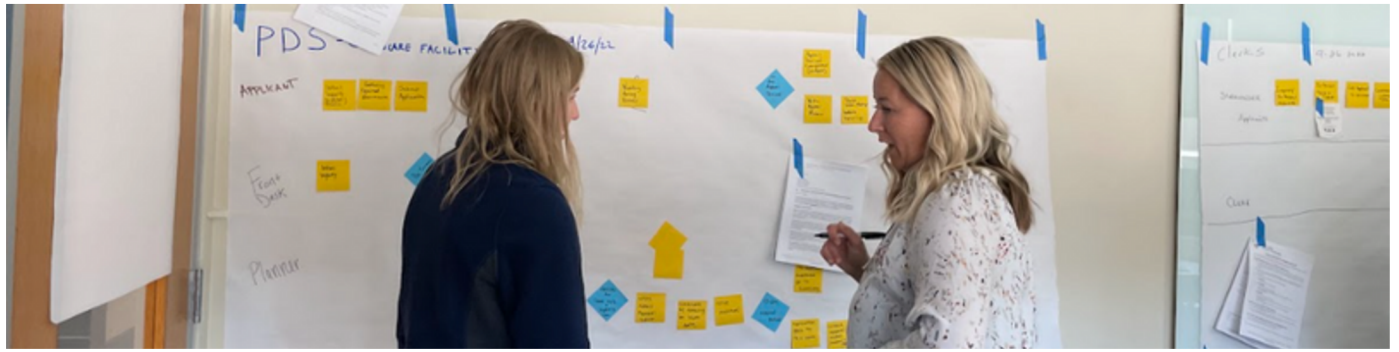
Applicants unaware that their household needs to be fingerprinted



Duplicative inspections



An appeal creates months of delays but almost never result in a changed decision



## What They Did

Boise convened the five City departments and outside agencies responsible for licensing to map the current state process of in-home childcare licensing, and identified pain points and bottlenecks in the existing process. The City sought to streamline permitting, and improve the experience for staff and applicants. Over 6 months, they identified process improvements that could be made immediately, and mapped an implementation timeline for ongoing improvements.

## Innovation Highlights

The improvement team found solutions that could be implemented immediately to create significant time and costs savings across the in-home childcare licensing process:



### 1. Everything you need to apply in one place

Childcare providers seeking a permit were given multiple checklists by four different departments. This caused confusion around how and where to even start the permitting process. The team developed one consolidated checklist and requirements. By stacking steps and removing parts of the process that were not required by code, Boise **reduced effort and time for staff by 78% and providers by 62%.**

### 2. Updated zoning cuts wait times and costs

Neighbor notifications were arduous for providers and gave anyone the chance to delay the process with baseless complaints. The appeals rarely held up but often stalled permitting issuance by months, sometimes causing providers to abandon the process entirely. Recognizing the harm to small providers, Boise eliminated this requirement for all but the largest facilities. **The change not only eliminated a major source of delay, but the reduced work also allowed for a reduction in planning fees.**



### 3. Fingerprinting delays reduced by 2 months

The last step before getting your license is fingerprinting and background checks for your whole household. Fingerprint results can take a week or two – or sometimes months, if checks are needed across state lines. By moving this step to the start of the process in parallel with inspections, the City was able to **cut weeks from licensure time.**

### 4. Translating Important Written Documents

Immigrant communities were among those most impacted by the shortage, and English is often the second language for providers in these communities. Bureaucracy is hard enough when you speak the language! Language and links on the City of Boise website and Accela were updated and **key documents were translated into Spanish, French, and Swahili.**

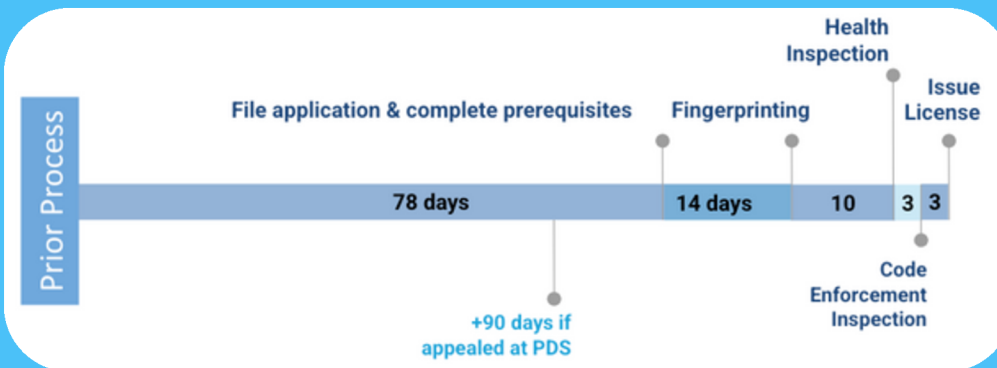




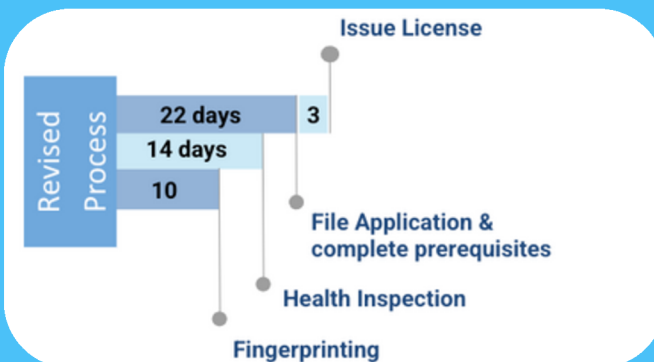
## Results

The new process was over twice as fast, eliminated duplicative inspections and checklists, freed up staff time, and significantly reduced providers' risk of losing state funding.

### Old Process = 94 days



### Revised Process = 25 days



Boise staff continued to make process improvement even after the end of the pilot period. Staff eventually were successful in **eliminating fees entirely for the first year** for providers lowering barriers to entry to the field.

## Outcomes



**Provider fees reduced by 33%**



**12 hours saved for applicants, and 7 hours saved for staff**



**Permits issued in 25 days instead of 94 days**



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