

## *Service Alberta*

**Contact:** Barbara Ireland  
Project Director  
Service Alberta  
**Tel:** (780) 415-9772  
**Email:** [Barbara.Ireland@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Barbara.Ireland@gov.ab.ca)  
**Web site** <http://www.servicealberta.ca>

### **Vision**

Service Alberta enables Albertans to access government information and services in a manner of their choice.

### **Overview**

Service Alberta is a service improvement initiative focused on improving service quality across the government of Alberta. Its focus is providing citizen-centred services that are:

- Trusted – services and transactions are conducted in a secure environment that protects Albertans' privacy and respects their confidentiality;
- Quality – citizen service needs and expectations are addressed, and
- Integrated – seamless services across all delivery channels.

The Service Alberta vision is supported by ministries and has, for the third consecutive year, been approved by Deputy Ministers' Committee as a key administrative initiative for 2003/04. The Service Alberta initiative is led by a Deputy Minister Steering Committee (DMSC) and every ministry is represented on the Service Alberta Advisory Committee.

The Service Alberta DMSC recommends goals and targets each year and reports on its performance to the full Deputy Minister Committee. One of the performance measures for 2003-03 was that every ministry must make a tangible contribution to Service Alberta. This has assisted in maintaining the development process for Service Alberta.

The Service Alberta Advisory Committee actively supports achievement of the Service Alberta vision and goals. It provides input, advice and feedback to the Service Alberta Program office; and the Service Alberta DMSC and its members are responsible for championing Service Alberta within their respective ministries.

For a more comprehensive description and accountability framework for Service Alberta DMSC and the Service Alberta Advisory Committee please refer to the Enablers section of this document.

One key focus for Service Alberta has been developing an integrated web site that provides Albertans with access to government information and services. The development of the web site was, and continues to be, a collaborative effort between Service Alberta, Innovation and Science and the Public Affairs Bureau, as well as all ministries.

Innovation and Science provided the funding for the development of the website. The Public Affairs Bureau co-ordinated initial usability tests as part of the web site development. Feedback was used to design a web site where information is grouped by topic areas, customer groups such as seniors, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, etc. and life events such as finding a job, getting married, having a child, etc. Once the site was developed Service Alberta co-ordinated further usability tests to ensure citizens were able to find the information they needed.

To ensure that the website contained the necessary information for citizens/businesses, the collaboration of all provincial ministries was needed. The co-operation for this project was fostered through the Service Alberta DMSC and the Service Alberta Advisory Committee. Ministries were consulted on the development of the site. An automated content management system allows ministries to maintain their own content on the site, including decisions about categories to which their information is linked. This flexibility enhanced co-operation with the ministries. Ministries are responsible for keeping their web links/pages current.

Service Alberta has engaged in several other service integration initiatives over the past 2 years. Brief descriptions of some of these initiatives are included in the Achievements section in this

case study. For more in-depth information regarding these initiatives, please contact Service Alberta.

### **Partners**

- Innovation and Science
- Public Affairs Bureau
- All Alberta ministries

### **Project Catalysts/Drivers**

- To increase citizen satisfaction with government services by making it easier for Albertans to access and obtain information and services.

### **ISD Achievements to Date**

- *Service Alberta Web Site* – located at following address <http://www.servicealberta.ca/>. It provides access to over 1000 web pages, has an automated content management system that ministries use to keep their material updated, and provides 34 on-line services including transactions, ordering of publications and customising responses to requests for information. Federal government information has also been linked to the site. The most recent enhancements to the site occurred in February 2003, based on usability testing. These included improved site navigation and new features such as “Where do I go for...” (providing location information) and “Featured Links”.
- *Service Alberta Contact Centre* – Toll free number that Albertans can call to obtain answers to general questions or referrals to appropriate ministries and contacts for expert program information and services. This service uses the Service Alberta Web site as a key information resource for answering the customer’s questions on the first call.
- *Accountability Framework* – Framework outlines accountabilities of partners and key stakeholders including ministries, the Service Alberta DMSC and Advisory Committee. For more information regarding the framework, please refer to the Enablers section of this document.
- *Service Excellence Policy* – Service Alberta has developed a cross-ministry service excellence policy that lays out the government’s service commitment to Albertans. Over 1000

staff received an orientation to Service Alberta and the service excellence policy prior to “going live” in June 2002.

- *Authentication and Authorisation Project* – Service Alberta is partnering with Innovation and Science to develop a common authentication and authorisation application that will be available to all ministries on the Service Alberta Web site.
- *e-Payment Project* – The ministry of Government Services is developing a common e-payment module that will be available to all ministries on the Service Alberta Web site.

## **Challenges**

### *Funding*

In 2001 Service Alberta presented its strategic framework to Treasury Board for moving to a one-window environment and requested funding in the amount of \$20 million over five years. This cost estimate covered all components of Service Alberta – the Web site with full capability for online transactions, and a fully integrated call centre capability. Treasury Board recognised the value of the project and supported the concept of one-window service delivery, but without having a clear understanding of potential achievables and concerns regarding the amount of spending on information and communications technology, it did not provide new funding for the project.

A lack of funding forced Service Alberta to rethink their development strategy and break it down into smaller, more achievable segments. At this point, Service Alberta realised that unless they could achieve quick tangible wins in the near future, it would be difficult to demonstrate the value of the initiative and that it could lose momentum in the future.

In retrospect, Service Alberta sees this experience as the catalyst for its future success. It is achieving its vision through an incremental implementation approach. For more information on this, please refer to the critical success factors further in this case study.

With minimal funding beyond base salaries, Service Alberta relied on funding from Innovation and Science to develop the Service Alberta web site.

Service Alberta still does not have extensive funding. In 2002, based on its demonstrated achievements to date, it asked each

ministry to make a tangible contribution to the further development of Service Alberta. Service Alberta received contributions including direct funding, on-line services, and the loan of human resources for a year from ministries in Alberta.

#### *Customer confidence in conducting business over the Internet*

Through surveys and focus groups, Service Alberta identified privacy and confidentiality as an issue for citizens conducting transactions with government over the Internet. This issue is not unique to Alberta; it has been identified as a concern for citizens across Canada. Building trusted online services, including implementing authentication solutions and continuing to consult with Albertans to ensure that they are satisfied their privacy is protected, is part of Service Alberta's Strategic Plan for 2003-06.

#### *Technical Evolution*

Ministries are at different stages of technical evolution. Many have developed their own legacy systems and Web applications. Opportunities exist for common modules that can be built once and used by all ministries. Innovation and Science has provided leadership in this area by working with ministries to define the Government of Alberta Enterprise Architecture. Service Alberta is now working with ministries to further define this architecture as it relates to the government-to-citizen (or Service Alberta) Web environment.

#### *Marketing/Communicating to Albertans*

Service Alberta recognises the need to increase awareness amongst Albertans of Service Alberta and what it means for them. Although funding is limited, marketing initiatives include advertising via Internet, newspaper and other media, and providing information via posters, postcards and presence at career and trade fairs.

### **Critical Success Factors**

#### *Cross-ministry collaboration*

As a Key Administrative Initiative for the third year in a row Service Alberta receives support from Deputy Ministers and their ministries. Objectives and targets are established on an annual basis. Ministries are responsible for reporting on their contributions to Service Alberta, and the DMSC reports to the full Deputy Minister Committee on overall performance in relation to targets. Service Alberta relies on extensive collaboration between ministries and is supported by a Deputy

Minister Steering Committee. This level of buy-in/support has been key to the successful implementation of Service Alberta.

*Ongoing consultation with Albertans has been another key success factor for Service Alberta.*

From the outset Service Alberta based their vision on feedback from Albertans, through focus groups and surveys. Usability testing with Albertans in the summers of 2001 and 2002 helped Service Alberta develop and refine the organisation of the site.

In June 2002, just prior to the launch, Service Alberta surveyed Albertans to gain baseline data on their satisfaction levels and preferences. This was repeated in February 2003.

In November 2002 focus groups were also conducted with Albertans in six different locations to gain their advice on an approach to providing further integration of over-the-counter services.

*Incremental Approach and Demonstrating Value*

Due to lack of funding, Service Alberta was compelled to adopt an incremental approach to reaching their vision. Their first focus was the development of the web site, which, with partnerships and resource sharing, cost only \$100,000 to develop/implement. Because they implemented incrementally, Service Alberta did not make any large investments in technology that they, in retrospect, may not have needed. Another benefit of using the incremental approach was their ability to watch and learn what other provinces were doing and incorporate/adapt best practices into their own model.

Having demonstrated their ability to achieve tangible results, such as their web site, Service Alberta is in a strong position and is moving forward with new goals/objectives.

## **Highlights**

- Integrated web site (concentrated on this)
- Service Alberta Contact Centre
- Cross Government Service Delivery Model – extensive collaboration and implementation across ministries
- Partnerships
- Accountability framework
- Incremental implementation approach
- Citizen consultation re: types of services wanted.

## ***Alberta Revenue***

**Contact:** David Ho  
Manager Business Support  
Alberta Revenue  
**Tel:** (780) 427-9403  
**Email:** David.Ho@gov.ab.ca

### **ISD Initiative**

Net File – Internet based system through which Alberta Corporations can file corporate tax returns.

### **Vision**

To make it easier for citizens and businesses to conduct business with the government regardless of jurisdiction.

Integrated service delivery projects are widely supported across the Alberta government and receive high level support through the Service Alberta initiative. To learn more about Service Alberta, please refer to the Service Alberta case study.

### **Overview of Net File**

Currently, only three provinces in the country file and process their own corporate tax returns. They are Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. Canada Customer Revenue Agency (CCRA) files and processes corporate tax returns for the remaining provinces/territories. Corporations must file both with CCRA and the provinces. However, the provinces use the federal returns to match the provincial return. Joint development effort would benefit the software developers and maybe the users of tax software.

CCRA implemented Netfile as a pilot last fall. Net File allows corporations to file tax returns through the Internet instead of sending them via mail. Alberta Revenue and CCRA have just recently partnered and are in the initial stages of the project. The main achievements to date include continuing dialogue and consultation with CCRA to design a solution.

The project has two main objectives, first, it will create internal efficiencies within Alberta Revenue and second, it will provide

quicker turnaround times for processing tax returns resulting in better service for Alberta corporations. Currently, Alberta Revenue is responsible for processing corporate tax returns. This includes scanning returns as they arrive and entering data into data base/computer programs. The implementation of Net File will allow corporations to file their tax returns via the internet, which will create internal efficiencies, quicker turn around times and more accurate results, all leading to the final objective, better customer service for Alberta corporations.

### **Partners**

- Alberta Revenue
- Canada Customs and Revenue Agency
- Ontario and Quebec

### **Project Catalysts/Drivers**

- Provide improved customer access/service to corporations.
- Improve efficiencies within Alberta Revenue.
- Service Alberta – service improvement initiatives are strongly supported across all ministries in the Alberta government.

### **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

As Net File is a new initiative, it does not have many lessons learned to contribute at this time. However, Alberta Revenue is drawing experience from previous e-file projects to mitigate challenges it anticipates down the road. Challenges include the following list.

#### *Changing technology for e-based business solutions*

Technology is in a constant state of flux. If technology based solutions do not or can not keep pace with the changes and demands of customers/citizens, they face becoming outdated and lose relevancy. Acknowledge the fast pace of change.

#### *Partnerships and Maintaining Project Momentum*

Working in partnerships and defining project objectives and requirements is often challenging. Building consensus on these topics can be time consuming, dragging the project on and increasing costs on all sides. If project agreements and processes are long and drawn out (over months and even years), the project itself may be outpaced by changes in technology. In order to keep Net File on track, Alberta Revenue

is using models on project agreements, determining technology requirements and processes for systems support after implementation adapted from previous e-file project experience to keep Net File on track.

### **Critical Success Factors**

#### *Consult Key Stakeholders/Users*

In order to ensure that technology solutions provide benefits and meet user needs, it is necessary to consult your target user markets. In the case of Net-File this is Alberta Corporations. If Internet or technology tools are developed without user consultation, it is probable that the product produced will not meet their demands, will be difficult to “sell” and that money, effort and time will have been spent on an unsuccessful project.

#### *ISD Long-term Support and Commitment at Executive Level*

While there are numerous challenges during the initial development of e-projects, once implemented they require long-term commitment at the Executive Level. This commitment encompasses providing on-going systems support and technology upgrades so the e-solution remains current and relevant to the users needs. If an e-solution is implemented and does not have long term commitment and support, it may eventually lose relevancy for the users and no longer be a useful tool.

### **Potential Future Pilots**

- Comprehensive Fuel Tax Reporting – addresses the problem of reconciling the production and sale of fuel. Alberta, partner provinces, and private sector partners are already working on the issue. Potential exists for a pilot to emerge.

## ***Alberta Government Services***

**Contact:** Mike Reynolds  
Executive Director  
Private Agent Services/General Registry  
Alberta Government Services  
**Tel:** (780) 427-0937  
**Email:** [mike.Reynolds@gov.ab.ca](mailto:mike.Reynolds@gov.ab.ca)  
**Web site** [www.gov.ab.ca/gs](http://www.gov.ab.ca/gs)

### **Overview**

Alberta Government Services (AGS) uses a public-private model to deliver over-the-counter service to Albertans. While AGS is responsible for policy and governance, Alberta services are delivered by private businesses called Registry Agents. Alberta Registry Agents are a network of community-based service centres, offering one-stop shopping for a wide range of registration, information, and licensing services on behalf of AGS. Services provided include motor vehicle registration, driver licensing and testing, personal property (lien) searches and registrations, land title searches, Corporate Registry searches, and Vital Statistics searches.

Currently there are 226 registry agents located across the province servicing both urban and rural communities. Registry agents are funded through service fees to customers.

During 2000 the AGS began exploring opportunities for delivering municipal services through Registry Agents. In August 2001, AGS and the City of Edmonton developed a project charter for a pilot program to deliver four municipal services through 38 Registry Agents located in the Metropolitan area of Edmonton. The four services include: payment of bylaw tag fines, payment of property, and the renewal of cat and dog licences. The pilot commenced March 2002 and was set to run for one calendar year.

The pilot program required the creation of a web-based application so Registry Agents could complete service transactions and the establishment of the co-ordination of daily reconciliation of payments to the City of Edmonton.

## **Project Catalysts/Drivers**

- Service Alberta's vision/model to provide Citizen-Centred services through the integration of services across levels of governments. Registry Agents providing municipal services creates a broader array of options available to the public.
- The Alberta Registry Agents Association, the Alberta Motor Association and AGS are open to exploring new opportunities for providing services through the agents.

## **Partnerships**

- Alberta Government Services
- Registry Agents
- Alberta Motor Association
- City of Edmonton

## **Achievements**

### *Implementation of Pilot Program*

Program has been up and running since March 20, 2002. While there is no movement, at this time, to expand the program beyond the City of Edmonton metropolitan area, discussions are underway regarding the feasibility of adding new services such as business licenses.

## **Challenges**

### *Technology Challenges*

There were several technology-related challenges that the Registry Agents needed to overcome prior to/during the implementation of the pilot. The first challenge was reconciling payments to the city on the same day as the transaction occurred. The first system the Registry Agents used caused a 3-4 day delay in payments, which was not acceptable to the City of Edmonton. Together, with the significant involvement of the Registry Agents, a new banking process was created which allowed for the same day reconciliation of transactions and funds between the City of Edmonton and the Registry Agents.

### *Marketing and Promotion*

There was no formal public education campaign to let customers know they could conduct new city services at the Registry Agents. AGS and the Registry Agents developed a limited promotion campaign including posters and an insert

announcing the new services distributed via vehicle registration renewals.

### **Critical Success Factors**

#### *Demonstrating Value*

The City of Edmonton was reluctant to use the Registry Agents to delivery services, but AGS and the Registry Agents were able to build up their confidence and trust. Two key factors for this were communicating positive customer satisfaction survey results and coming together and simply initiating dialogue amongst the parties. This last action helped “demystify” Registry Agents in the eyes of the City and the pilot project progressed from there.

#### *Sufficient investment in information technology infrastructure*

Developing the necessary technology and support system was essential to the success of this project.

#### *MOUs to formalise relationship*

The four Pilot partners established a project charter with agreed program objectives, project scope and deliverables.

#### *Effective reporting and accountability mechanisms*

The Pilot partners agreed to a pilot review at the end of one year, which will commence in May 2003 with a report expected by July 1 2003.

#### *Effective communication between partners at all levels*

## ***Alberta Energy***

**Contact:** Wally Goeres  
Registry Manager  
Alberta Energy  
**Tel:** (403) 297-3605  
**Email:** wally.goeres@gov.ab.ca  
**Web site:** <http://www.petroleumregistry.gov.ab.ca>

### **Vision**

Alberta Energy does not have a specific integrated service delivery vision. However, the vision for the Petroleum Registry of Registry (the Registry) is “Effective, efficient information management”.

### **Overview**

In Alberta, oil and gas companies are required by law to submit statistics on the volume of their oil/gas production. In the past, companies submitted individual forms, with the same statistics, to both the Alberta Department of Energy and the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (both organisations are within the Ministry of Energy). This created a duplication of effort and process in both the public and private sectors. In the late 1990s there was a move to simplify and streamline the process for submitting volumetric data. The goal was to reduce duplication as well as achieve cost efficiencies for both the Ministry of Energy as well as the oil and gas industry. Working together, the three began a collaborative process to reengineer business processes that lead to the design and implementation of the Petroleum Registry of Alberta.

The Petroleum Registry of Alberta is a shared, secure, interactive database, accessed through the Internet. The Registry serves three distinct functions. It is a central database for all of the volumetric and infrastructure data related to Alberta's upstream oil and gas industry. It is a communication tool enabling both Ministry of Energy (Department of Energy and the Utilities Board) and industry stakeholders to exchange accurate information quickly and efficiently and, it is an analysis tool. As an analysis tool, the Registry avoids common mathematical errors by saving the information in its most basic form and then performing calculations as required.

The Petroleum Registry went live in October 2002 and it is anticipated that it will achieve significant benefits for both the public and private sectors. Benefits for the Ministry of Energy include \$2.5 million in annual savings achieved through sharing in the development/ maintenance of one system for both the Energy and Utilities Board and the Department of Energy as well as the cost avoidance of the previous in-house systems, which duplicated resources on both sides for processing information. Benefits for the private sector include \$12 million in annual savings reached through the reduction of administration costs related to reporting the data to both the Department of Energy and the Utilities Board.

### **Strategic Initiative**

Shared Registry was developed in co-operation with Alberta oil and gas industry (co-ordinated through the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Small Exporters and Producers Association of Canada) and the Alberta Ministry of Energy (Alberta Energy and Utilities Board and the Alberta Department of Energy).

### **Project Catalyst/Driver**

Industry identified the need to reduce administration costs for completing and sending in volumetric and royalty related information. The Minister of Energy recognised that cost efficiencies could be gained for both the public and private sectors by simplifying the current information submission processes. In 1996, the Minister of Energy initiated a project to re-engineer business processes in order to simplify the collection and processing of volumetric data.

### **Achievements**

#### *Petroleum Registry*

The initiation, development and launch of a shared registry system, which allows oil and gas companies to submit required volumetric data on-line and provides a shared data base for the Department of Energy and the Energy and Utilities Board.

#### *New Collaborative Model*

The creation of the registry was possible through an unprecedented joint strategic initiative between the oil and gas industry (co-ordinated through the Canadian Association of

Petroleum Producers and the Small Explorers and Producers Association of Canada) and the Alberta Ministry of Energy (Department of Energy, the Energy and Utilities Board).

The private sector representatives were not only active on the project steering committee, but also contributed significant resources to it with up to 15 staff working with the public sector at peak points in the project.

Through this project a good working relationship and trust was established between the public and private sectors. Alberta Energy hopes to build on this relationship and, where possible, initiate new joint strategic initiatives in the future.

## **Challenges**

### *Cultural differences*

Differences in cultures between the public and private partners arose on occasion during the project. The biggest challenge was establishing an agreed upon common set of business requirements for the project. The established collaborative working relationship between public and private sector stakeholders allowed for both sides to reach compromise and agreement throughout all phases of the project.

### *Balanced Stakeholder Representation*

While the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Small Explorers and Producers Association of Canada represent the majority of oil/gas producers in Alberta they do not represent all of them. Approximately 100 companies belonged to neither organisation and it was necessary to undertake consultation that included these stakeholders.

## **Critical Success Factors**

### *Political Champions*

Initially, the Minister of Energy championed the project in 1996-97. The minister recognised the need to simplify the system for both the public and private sector and provided significant support to initiate, build and maintain project momentum.

### *Securing Firm Multi-Year Project Funding*

The Minister's support was also key to securing multi-year project funding. At the initial stages of the project the Minister

secured funding for four years. The project was never hindered by having to obtain additional funding and, what is more, the private sector also contributed significant resources throughout the project.

#### *Project Management*

As with many projects, delivering the registry on time and on budget was a challenge. In order to complete project objectives in a timely manner, an independent project director was hired to manage the project. Because the project director was an independent, he was considered unbiased and was able to credibly direct completion of the next steps in the project.

#### *Active Stakeholder Participation*

Representatives from the oil and gas industry not only sat on the steering committee but also actively participated in the development of the project. Stakeholder participation included the creation and funding of their own team to develop a training program to teach industry production accountants how to use the registry system.

#### *Long-term Commitment at Executive Level*

The Ministry of Energy and Industry are committed to funding the Registry during the Foundation Phase of the Project (until March 31, 2004). Governance of the Registry will adhere to the established collaborative process followed during the project phase of the Registry.

A commitment has been made to continue the current governance model after the Foundation phase has been completed.

#### *Buy-in from Senior Management*

Within the Ministry of Energy, approval was sought from each of the Business Area Senior Managers to proceed to the construction phase of the project. Each senior manager provided approval to proceed and, where cases warranted, the resources to assist in a timely implementation of the Registry.