



# **SIMPLE, CHEAP, EFFECTIVE, & SCALABLE**

A Plug-and-Play Model  
for State Permitting  
Transparency

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# Executive Summary

## Problem

**Permitting can be slow, confusing, and frustrating.**

Very often, project sponsors cannot see where an application sits, agencies cannot spot bottlenecks, and governors cannot defend decisions. A core missing ingredient is *shared, real-time data* on every permit's status. Most states hold that data in dozens of legacy databases and spreadsheets that are not visible to outsiders.

## One Solution

**States can implement a single, public-facing, “permit transparency” platform.**

Virginia's Permitting Enhancement and Evaluation Platform (PEEP) proved that a light-weight dashboard can help cut processing times *by two-thirds* while improving accountability and rebuilding trust. Its expansion, the Virginia Permit Transparency Program (VPT), proved the model scaled beyond environmental permitting. This proposal adapts these successes into a plug-and-play model that other states can adopt, grounded in four design principles:

PRINCIPLE	MEANING FOR THE STATE
<b>Simple</b>	Uses existing databases and off-the-shelf tools
<b>Cheap</b>	One-time build of around \$3.5 million; annual operations costs less than \$0.5 million
<b>Effective</b>	Publishes end-to-end milestones, highlights delays, and drives ongoing improvement; permitting timeline cuts of 65 percent reported in Virginia
<b>Scalable</b>	“Test and learn” approach starts with one agency, then adds others via computer feeds; structure stays fixed across permit types

## Why Now?

**Upcoming federal permitting reform could create a substantial window of opportunity.**

Federal reform is on the horizon, with changes to environmental, energy, and infrastructure permitting possible. Reductions in federal requirements would provide an enormous opportunity for investment in states. However, because projects may not proceed without *all* the required permits, speed—and thus investment—is determined by the slowest permit. Historically, these slowest permits have been federally issued. States that do not prepare for permitting reform will soon find themselves becoming the new bottlenecks—and driving investment to the states that do.

## What Follows in This Report

1. **Reason and Goals:** *Why establish a permitting platform?* Quantifies economic drag from permit delays and defines success metrics
2. **Legal and Policy Scan:** *Are there any legal roadblocks?* Reviews open-records laws, trade-secret limits, and any statutory tweaks required to publish data
3. **Team Composition:** *Who should run each part of the project?* Assigns ownership: executive sponsor, steering committee, data stewards, and IT lead
4. **Permit Landscape Assessment:** *What is the current situation in the state?* Inventories every permit, its statutory clock, and its current data source
5. **Implementation Road Map:** *How do you get it done?* Lays out a month-by-month plan from pilot launch to statewide coverage, with critical-path dependencies
6. **Detailed Appendices:**
  - A. **Data Architecture:** *What should the platform look like?* Details common milestone schema, data pipelines, security, and accessibility standards
  - B. **Deployment and Training:** *How do you get stakeholders on board?* Outlines staff workshops, industry outreach, and public-facing comms
  - C. **Budget and Funding Strategy:** *How do you pay for it?* Includes a representative capital expenditures/operating expenses (capex/opex) curve and options for grants

- D. Continuous-Improvement Loop:** *How do you maximize value once it's set up?* Sets cycle-time targets, data-quality audits, and quarterly permit reviews
- E. Procurement and Contracting:** *How do you get the platform built?* Provides a walk-through of potential options and trade-offs available from outside vendors
- F. Model Bill/Executive Order:** Features model legislation for a State Permit Transparency and Efficiency Act
- G. Example Screenshot:** Demonstrates what a complete public-facing dashboard could look like for a specific project

After reading this report, a governor, CIO, or agency official will have a model for what to do, how much it costs, who must act, and when each milestone should be hit to replicate—and potentially surpass—Virginia's success with permitting reform.

## Beyond This Report

The permitting platform recommended here is a critical step, but it is not the only one. In addition to federal reform, states also need to consider the invaluable role that localities play in either enabling or blocking reform. Nor is a dashboard the only useful approach that states can take to improving their systems. For example, Pennsylvania set up a concierge service for businesses to help the state navigate different processes, providing a single point of contact for businesses on complex projects requiring cross-agency coordination.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the proposal here is a critical, high-value, low-cost approach to accelerating the permitting process.

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1 Donald Moynihan, "Pennsylvania Red Tape Reduction: A Case Study," Institute for Responsive Government (February 11, 2025), <https://responsivegov.org/research/pennsylvania-red-tape-reduction-a-case-study/>.

# Implementation

## 1. Reason and Goals

### 1.1 THE BOTTLENECK

America must build faster: Up to 2,300 gigawatts of power projects are stalled in interconnection and siting queues, and 61 percent of environmental reviews miss their statutory deadlines.<sup>2</sup> McKinsey estimates \$240 billion–\$280 billion of infrastructure capital enters the federal permitting process each year, which implies that \$1.1 trillion–\$1.5 trillion of capital is currently tied up in the federal permitting pipeline.<sup>3</sup> Once this capital is freed, insufficient state permitting systems will push it to other states and potentially spike consumer electricity costs. For those focused on non-carbon energy, estimates say that sluggish permitting now jeopardizes \$460 billion in private investment and 150,000 jobs in solar, wind, and batteries alone.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2 A ROOT CAUSE

The data needed to manage state permits—including milestone dates, statutory clocks, and agency handoffs—sit in dozens of legacy databases. They are invisible to applicants,

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2 John Jacobs, “Permitting Speeds Up, but 61% of Reviews Are Still Late,” Bipartisan Policy Center (January 28, 2025), <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/permitting-speeds-up-but-61-of-reviews-are-still-late/>.

3 Bob Sternfels, Adi Kumar, and Brodie Boland, “Unlocking US Federal Permitting: A Sustainable Growth Imperative,” McKinsey & Company (July 28, 2025), <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/unlocking-us-federal-permitting-a-sustainable-growth-imperative>.

4 “U.S. Permitting Delays Hold Back Economy, Cost Jobs,” American Clean Power, April 2024, [https://cleanpower.org/wp-content/uploads/gateway/2024/04/ACP-Pass-Permitting-Reform\\_Fact-Sheet.pdf](https://cleanpower.org/wp-content/uploads/gateway/2024/04/ACP-Pass-Permitting-Reform_Fact-Sheet.pdf).

legislators, and even cabinet-level executives. Without real-time, cross-agency data, leaders often cannot find bottlenecks or hold programs accountable.

### 1.3 AN OPPORTUNITY

Virginia’s Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) reports that its public dashboard cut average agency processing time by *65 percent* in two years—from 339 days to 120 days when this report closed for publication—and slashed status-inquiry calls.<sup>5</sup> Replicating that success inside your state could unlock billions in investment while costing states less than many single IT modernizations.

*Program Goals (12- to 24-Month Horizon)*

GOAL	TARGET METRIC	RATIONALE
<b>End-to-End Transparency</b>	100 percent of environmental permit types displayed in a public tracker within 12 months	Eliminates “black box” delays and builds political capital
<b>Cycle-Time Reduction</b>	≥30 percent drop in median processing time within 24 months	Delivers tangible economic wins; mirrors precedent
<b>Data Quality</b>	≥95 percent listed data goals achieved; automated nightly refresh	Ensures the dashboard drives correct operational decisions
<b>User Impact</b>	50 percent cut in applicant status-inquiry calls; ≥80 percent user-satisfaction score	Frees staff hours; proves value to industry and the public
<b>Cost Efficiency</b>	One-time build ≤\$3.5 million; annual operations and maintenance (O&M) ≤\$0.5 million	Keeps project in “quick win” territory for budget committees

### 1.4 WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

*Within one year*, every environmental permit in the state appears on a single URL, updated nightly, color-coding tasks that exceed their statutory clock. Agency managers receive automated reports on turnaround progress; applicants spend less time chasing

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5 “Governor Glenn Youngkin Announces Major Expansion of Virginia Permit Transparency Website,” Governor of Virginia Glenn Youngkin, July 21, 2024, <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/news-releases/2024/june/name-1029157-en.html>; “Governor Glenn Youngkin Announces Another Expansion of the Virginia Permit Transparency Website,” Governor of Virginia Glenn Youngkin, May 9, 2025, <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/news-releases/2025/may/name-1045818-en.html>.

status updates and more time building; and permitting officials start being treated fairly now that their work is being measured and celebrated by an objective standard.

In the political realm, legislators receive the data they need to address constituents' concerns about delays, and governors can use metrics to support investment. Over time, this model expands to encompass all permits issued by the state—and potentially relevant localities as well.

These goals frame the technical, legal, and organizational actions detailed in the sections that follow. Everything from here on is implementation.

## 2. Legal and Policy Scan

A permit-transparency platform has few legal consequences, but there are a handful of potential issues. The following scan flags the typical problems and associated actions a state must take before going live.

LEGAL/POLICY AREA	RISK IF IGNORED	ACTION TO DE-RISK
<b>Public Records (FOIA/Paper Reduction Act [PRA])</b>	Publishing data without clear statutory authority can trigger injunctions; withholding too much invites litigation for transparency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure data meets state’s FOIA exemptions.</li> <li>• If authority is unclear, add a short clause to the executive order or bill stating that permit metadata is a public record, subject to stated redactions.<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Trade Secrets and CBI</b>	Permit files often contain proprietary formulas, customer lists, or security plans. Disclosing them in full may violate both state trade-secret law and FOIA Exemption 4 equivalents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit the dashboard to milestone metadata (dates, statuses, point of contact).</li> </ul>
<b>Privacy and PII</b>	Applicant names, emails, or parcel IDs can be personally identifiable information under state privacy statutes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suppress direct personal identifiers; publish only business contact information.</li> </ul>
<b>Critical-Infrastructure Security</b>	Detailed facility layouts or throughput data can be restricted under federal CIP guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclude any field that could be weaponized (e.g., pipeline coordinates).</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility (ADA/§ 508)</b>	The new Department of Justice rule requires state websites to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 Level AA (WCAG 2.1 AA) within 2–3 years. <sup>7</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build to WCAG 2.1 AA post-pilot.</li> </ul>
<b>Cybersecurity</b>	A breach of permit data erodes public trust and can trigger mandatory notice laws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host on infrastructure that meets NIST moderate or state-equivalent standards.</li> <li>• Require annual penetration tests and log monitoring.</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> For an example, see Virginia Freedom of Information Act, 2.2 Code of Virginia §§ 3700–15.

<sup>7</sup> “State and Local Governments: First Steps Toward Complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Web and Mobile Application Accessibility Rule,” ADA.gov, January 8, 2025, <https://www.ada.gov/resources/web-rule-first-steps/>; “Fact Sheet: New Rule on the Accessibility of Web Content and Mobile Apps Provided by State and Local Governments,” ADA.gov, April 8, 2024, <https://www.ada.gov/resources/2024-03-08-web-rule/>.

LEGAL/POLICY AREA	RISK IF IGNORED	ACTION TO DE-RISK
<b>Interagency Data-Sharing Authority</b>	Some agencies can't legally push data outside their domain without a memorandum of understanding (MOU).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If an agency is in this category, draft standard MOUs that cover data ownership, refresh frequency, and Service Level Agreement (SLA) for corrections.</li> </ul>
<b>Records Retention and Litigation Hold</b>	Deleting or altering data on the dashboard could violate state records acts or discovery rules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declare the dashboard a "convenience copy."</li> <li>• Keep authoritative records in source systems that follow existing retention schedules.</li> </ul>
<b>Procurement and IT Standards</b>	Fast-track projects that skirt procurement law, risk protest, or audit findings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use an existing state contract or competitively bid a "software-as-a-service dashboard" RFP with open API requirements.<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Stand up or leverage an internal product team to focus on developing the dashboard.</li> </ul>

**Bottom Line:** Most legal barriers are manageable with narrow data scopes, clear statutory authority, and disciplined governance. The next section translates these guardrails into concrete roles and decision rights so that the project keeps moving.

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8 For more, see Appendix A.

### 3. Team Composition Phase 1 Scope: Environmental Permitting Office Only

This sample governance model covers the environmental agency’s own permits. Once the dashboard proves its value, the same structure can be cloned for transportation, energy, and licensure programs—mirroring how Virginia’s PEEP evolved into the multi-agency VPT portal. This iterative, “test and learn” approach allows for dashboards to be created more effectively than if every potential dashboard were fully scoped and resourced up front.

There is a risk-reward trade-off between the speed of implementation and the impact of failure. If you are confident in implementation and interested in a faster pace, see the State Permit Transparency and Efficiency Act model bill.<sup>9</sup> The bill showcases a path to a full state platform within two years. The principles are the same as those listed below; the pilot is simply three agencies instead of one, with simultaneous permit inventories across agencies.

#### 3.1 Governance Structure

ROLE	OWNER	CORE DUTIES
<b>Executive Sponsor</b>	Governor or cabinet secretary	Signs charter, allocates budget, clears internal roadblocks, owns public messaging
<b>Program Manager or Product Manager (PM)</b>	Assigned by agency head	Runs schedule, budget, vendor contracts, and sprint reviews; provides a single point of accountability
<b>Division Data Stewards</b>	1 per permitting division (e.g. Air, Water)	Maintain data dictionary, validate nightly feeds, fix quality flags
<b>Agency IT and Security Lead</b>	From agency CIO office with agency head’s approval	Hosts platform, ensures NIST moderate security, manages penetration tests and WCAG compliance
<b>Deployment Lead</b>	Appointed by agency head	Develops training, FAQs, and outreach to applicants; tracks adoption metrics

9 “State Permit Transparency and Efficiency Act,” American Legislative Exchange Council, finalized August 11, 2025, <https://alec.org/model-policy/state-permit-transparency-and-efficiency-act/>. For more, see Appendix F.

### 3.2 RACI for Key Deliverables

DELIVERABLE	EXECUTIVE SPONSOR	PM	DATA STEWARDS	IT/ SECURITY	DEPLOYMENT LEAD	COUNSEL
<b>Charter and 12-Month Road Map</b>	A	R	I	I	I	C
<b>Permit Portfolio Census</b>	I	A/R	R	I	I	I
<b>Data Dictionary and Quality Rules</b>	I	A	R	I	I	C
<b>Platform Selection and Security Plan</b>	I	A/R	C	R	I	C
<b>Pilot Go-Live (first permit type)</b>	I	A/R	R	R	C	I
<b>Public Launch (all agency permits)</b>	A	R	R	R	R	I
<b>Quarterly KPI Report</b>	A	R	R	I	C	I

**LEGEND:** R = Responsible A = Accountable C = Consulted I = Informed

### 3.3 Operating Cadence

MEETING	PARTICIPANTS	FREQUENCY	PURPOSE
<b>Director's Check-In</b>	Executive sponsor, PM	Biweekly until go-live, then monthly	Manage budget, monitor scope changes and risk escalations
<b>Sprint Review</b>	PM, IT lead, data stewards	Biweekly	Demo new features, clear blockers
<b>Data-Quality Huddle</b>	Data stewards, IT lead	Weekly	Resolve missing milestones, certify refresh
<b>Deployment Sync</b>	Deployment lead, PM	Monthly	Monitor training progress, manage user-feedback loop
<b>Security and Compliance Review</b>	IT lead, counsel	Quarterly	Review penetration test results, perform WCAG audit

### 3.4 FAST ESCALATION PATH

1. **Data Breach or Major Error:** IT lead notifies executive sponsor within one hour; public statement issued within 24 hours if warranted
2. **Scope Creep >10 Percent:** PM flags at Director's Check-In; decision made that same week
3. **Division Noncompliance with Data Feed:** PM notifies division chief; unresolved issues escalate to executive sponsor

### 3.5 WHY THIS NARROW SCOPE WORKS

Focusing first on the environmental agency keeps governance lean: one sponsor, one PM, one data steward per area, one tech stack. The team can hit deadlines without waiting on external MOUs. After the initial wins are public, the governor can replicate the model across other permitting agencies by expanding the existing dashboard.

## 4. Permit Landscape Assessment

A dashboard is only as good as the data it tracks. Time to deployment will depend heavily on the quality and formatting of already existing data. Upstream data issues are to be expected because the completeness of state data inventories varies widely. This section shows how to build a complete permit inventory once those issues are resolved and then zero in on the handful of permits that deliver the biggest return in transparency and time savings.

### 4.1 PURPOSE

1. **Create a single source of truth** for every permit that the environmental agency issues and appoint an individual responsible for that source.
2. **Rank permits by impact** so the pilot targets high-volume, high-delay, and high-complexity programs first.
3. **Expose bottlenecks** by pairing each permit's statutory clock with actual cycle-time data.

## 4.2 FIVE-STEP METHOD

STEP	ACTION	PRIMARY OWNER	OUTPUT
<b>1. Compile Inventory</b>	Pull permit lists from statutes, regulations, program web pages, and fee schedules, including statutory deadlines.	PM, division chiefs	“Portfolio Census” spreadsheet
<b>2. Classify Tier 1 vs. Tier 2</b>	Use three filters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual volume (&gt;100 applications/year)</li> <li>• Economic importance (&gt;\$5 million project value typical)</li> <li>• Permit complexity (&gt;5 steps to complete)</li> </ul>	PM, executive sponsor	Tier tags in census
<b>3. Map Steps to Complete Each Permit</b>	Record every agency and associated step required to issue the permit (e.g., agency coordination, draft permit, public comment), including a complete list of requirements that need to be completed by the applicant for approval. <sup>10</sup> At minimum, every handoff point should be identified and ordered.	Data stewards	Columns in census
<b>4. Identify Data Sources</b>	Link each permit to its system of record (SQL DB, Access file, spreadsheet). Note refresh method (API, nightly dump, manual).	IT lead, data stewards	“Source and Refresh” fields in census
<b>5. Quantify Pain Points</b>	Pull last 2–3 years of issue dates; calculate average and 90th-percentile cycle times; flag gaps vs. statutory clocks and internal goals. If possible, calculate averages by step.	PM analyst	Heat-map table and chart

<sup>10</sup> For an example, see Appendix G.

### 4.3 RECOMMENDED PORTFOLIO CENSUS FIELDS

FIELD	EXAMPLE VALUE	NOTES
<b>Permit Code</b>	AIR-GNS	Short, unique identifier
<b>Permit Name</b>	Minor Source General Air Permit	Plain English
<b>Tier</b>	1	1 = pilot candidate
<b>Statutory Clock</b>	180	From statute or regulation (days)
<b>Internal Target</b>	120	Agency policy (days)
<b>FY 2024 Volume</b>	312	Applications received
<b>Average Cycle Time</b>	142	Calendar days, FY 2021–FY 2024
<b>90th Percentile</b>	228	Highlights outliers (days)
<b>System of Record</b>	Oracle EPA_PERM	Database or file
<b>Refresh Method</b>	API	API; nightly extract, transform, load (ETL); manual
<b>Data Owner</b>	Air Division Steward	Point of contact
<b>Number of Steps Involved</b>	7	Process steps
<b>Agencies Involved</b>	State DEQ, State Department of Water Management, State Forestry	Every agency that touches

### 4.4 PAIN-POINT HEAT MAP (SUMMARIZED)

PERMIT FAMILY	AVERAGE CYCLE VS. STATUTORY CLOCK (EXAMPLE)	BOTTLENECK STAGE (DATA AVAILABILITY PERMITTING)	PRIORITY
<b>Construction Stormwater</b>	+45 days	Completeness review	<b>High</b>
<b>Air Minor Source</b>	+12 days	Public notice	Medium
<b>Wetlands Individual</b>	-10 days	n/a (ahead of clock)	Low

#### 4.5 KEY INSIGHTS TO EXPECT

- Roughly *20 percent of permits cause 80 percent of total delay*—usually high-volume construction and discharge approvals.
- Many programs lose weeks before *clock start* due to incomplete applications; a “pre-screen” milestone should be added. This ensures that applicant and contractor delays are not misattributed to the government.
- Data availability is uneven: older waste permits may live in scanned PDFs; air and stormwater data often sit in modern SQL tables. Some departments may need to set up basic tracking tables alongside the permit inventory.

#### 4.6 NEXT ACTIONS

1. Finalize the Portfolio Census for Tier 1 permits.
2. Present the heat map findings at the next governor progress brief.
3. Confirm the list of priority permits for the pilot based on complexity and delay. If the program can tackle the most complicated permits, adding on more will be a small lift.
4. Hand the census to the Data Architecture team to design the milestone schema and data transfer pipeline.

This disciplined inventory ensures the project tackles the permits that matter most and equips the tech team with clean, well-mapped data from day one.

## 5. Implementation Road Map

Below is a 12-month, critical-path schedule for the environmental agency.

MONTH	MILESTONE	KEY DELIVERABLES	CRITICAL DEPENDENCIES	PRIMARY OWNER
0	<b>Kick-Off</b>	Governor signs executive order or legislature passes bill PM named, budget released	None	Governor or cabinet champion
0-1	<b>Portfolio Census</b>	Spreadsheet of all permits, statutory clocks, and data sources completed	Budget and PM in place	PM, division chiefs
1-2	<b>Data Dictionary Locked</b>	Header and milestone schemas frozen; validation rules drafted	Portfolio Census complete	PM, data stewards
2	<b>Platform Decision</b>	Software platform (e.g., ArcGIS or Tableau stack) or alternative selected	Data Dictionary drafted	PM, IT lead
2-3	<b>Data Pipeline Scripts Written</b>	Nightly jobs pull from legacy data bases into staging schema implemented, quality control log email set up	Platform provisioned, schemas frozen	IT lead, data stewards
3	<b>Sandbox Dashboard</b>	Platform view renders three pilot permits end to end	ETL operational	PM, IT lead
3-4	<b>Pilot Go-Live</b>	Public dashboard for pilot permits created, "last refreshed" stamp verified	Sandbox user testing passed	PM (accountable), data stewards
4	<b>Gate 1 Review</b>	Governor briefed; decision to scale or pause made	Pilot performance data acquired	Governor, cabinet champion
4-6	<b>Scale to All Tier 1 Programs</b>	Data pipeline expanded, dashboard filters added (facility, locality, owner, permit number)	Gate 1 "Go" achieved	PM, IT lead
6	<b>Public Launch</b>	All Tier 1 permits visible, press release issued, FAQs posted	Scale work complete	Cabinet champion, deployment lead
6-9	<b>Stabilize and Train</b>	Staff workshops conducted, applicant webinars hosted, first KPI baseline captured	Public dashboard live	Deployment lead, data stewards
9	<b>Gate 2 Review</b>	Cycle-time change vs. baseline analyzed, plan for Tier 2 or cross-agency expansion made	Six months of KPI data collected	Governor, cabinet champion
9-12	<b>Lean "Permit Sprints"</b>	Two training events on top bottlenecks to improve implementation;	Stable data feeds	PM + division chiefs
12	<b>Year 1 Report</b>	Goal review, user satisfaction survey, cost report, and expansion road map completed	All prior phases closed	PM (draft) to governor (publish)

## **5.1 CRITICAL-PATH DEPENDENCIES**

1. The Data Dictionary depends on Portfolio Census.
2. The data pipelines cannot start until the platform is chosen and the dictionary is frozen.
3. The pilot cannot go public until the quality control log shows less than 1 percent error rows for seven straight days.
4. Gate 1 and Gate 2 briefings are hard stops; failure to meet timelines should lead to strong interference by the accountable party to enforce catch-up.

## **RESULT**

By Month 12, the state displays every high-impact environmental permit on a single URL, refreshed nightly, with the governor armed to show measurable cycle-time cuts and a plan to take the model statewide.

# Conclusion

*Permitting delays are now an enormous barrier to jobs and private capital. They often stem not from statute but from invisible handoffs and missing data. Virginia's PEEP proved that a lean, public dashboard can reveal the choke points and cut cycle times without rewriting a single law.*

## The Payoff

BENEFIT	PROOF POINT	WHO WINS
<b>Faster Approvals</b>	65 percent cycle-time cuts in pilot states	Builders, ratepayers
<b>Regulatory Credibility</b>	Real-time statistics, not anecdotes	Governors, legislators, media
<b>Staff Efficiency</b>	50 percent fewer "Where is my permit?" calls	Permit writers, analysts
<b>Data Foundation</b>	Same schema supports AI bots, geographic information system (GIS) maps, performance pay	CIOs, innovation teams
<b>Low Cost, Quick Win</b>	<\$4 million capex, live in 6–12 months	Budget committees

## Four Guiding Principles

- 1. Simple:** One milestone table, one header table; no bespoke code
- 2. Cheap:** Use existing GIS and business intelligence (BI) licenses, lean cloud hosting, fractional staff
- 3. Effective:** Dashboards drive Lean sprints that keep shrinking timelines
- 4. Scalable:** Same schema slots in transportation, energy, and local agencies

Adhering to these principles helps minimize scope creep, vendor lock-in, and cost overruns.

## What It Takes

- **Executive Mandate:** Governor signs two-page order and names program manager with agency head's input
  - **12 Months:** Portfolio Census → ETL jobs → pilot go-live → statewide launch
  - **\$3–4 Million:** Covered by federal grants, trust-fund interest, or a \$10 fee surcharge.
- No multiyear enterprise resource planning, no new data center, and no army of consultants is required. Success with one agency can easily scale into a comprehensive statewide dashboard.

## Why Act Now

*Federal permitting reform is likely on the way, private capital is mobile, and competing states are moving fast.* A transparency dashboard signals that your state can handle growth without sacrificing oversight. Early movers will capture projects—and political credit—long before slower states rewrite their statutes.

# Appendices

## A. Data Architecture

What follows is built to mirror Virginia’s PEEP, with every data element visible in the public dashboard except personal information (highlighted in red).

### A.1 CORE DATA MODEL

LAYER	PURPOSE	KEY COLUMNS (ALL IN SNAKE_CASE)
<b>A. Permit Header</b>	One row = one permit	<code>permit_id</code> (primary key) • <code>permit_number</code> • <code>permit_type</code> • <code>request_type</code> • <code>facility_name</code> • <code>consultant_name</code> (if applicable) • <code>owner_name</code> • <code>agent_name</code> • <code>agent_office</code> • <code>supervisor_name</code> • <code>locality</code> • <code>lat</code> • <code>lon</code> • <code>application_received_date</code> • <code>current_milestone_code</code> • <code>current_milestone_name</code> • <code>percent_complete</code> (0–100) • <code>target_issue_date</code> • <code>actual_issue_date</code>
<b>B. Milestone Detail</b>	One row = one milestone for that permit	<code>permit_id</code> (FK) • <code>milestone_seq</code> (1 ... n) • <code>milestone_code</code> • <code>milestone_name</code> • <code>responsible_party</code> (DEQ, applicant, or other agency) • <code>recommended_days</code> • <code>date_target</code> • <code>date_actual</code> • <code>status</code> (pending, complete, or n/a) • <code>days_ahead_behind</code> (signed integer) • <code>last_updated</code>
<b>C. Lookup Tables</b>	Keeps codes human-friendly	<code>milestone_codes</code> (INTAKE, CR_START, CR_DONE, PN_POST, COMMENT_END, DRAFT_ISSUE, FINAL_ISSUE, APPEAL_END) and any program-specific adds

*Why two tables?* The header powers search filters (facility, owner, locality, permit number). The detail drives the Gantt chart and SLA math shown to users. All fields come directly from the public PEEP widget or its underlying Tableau filters.<sup>11</sup>

11 Charlie Paullin, “Virginia Launches Platform to Make Environmental Permit Info Public,” *Virginia Mercury*, December 16, 2022, <https://virginiamercury.com/briefs/virginia-launches-platform-to-make-environmental-permit-info-public/>; “PEEP Data Search,” Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, accessed October 7, 2025, <https://portal.deq.virginia.gov/reports/tableau/>

## A.2 CANONICAL MILESTONE LIST

CODE	DISPLAY NAME	CLOCK STARTS?	DEFAULT OWNER	RECOMMENDED DAYS
INTAKE	Application Received	✓	Applicant	0
CR_START	Completeness Review Begins		DEQ	5
CR_DONE	Completeness Review Complete		DEQ	15
PN_POST	Public Notice Posted		DEQ	2
COMMENT_END	Public Comment Period Closes		Public	30
DRAFT_ISSUE	Draft Decision Issued		DEQ	20
FINAL_ISSUE	Final Decision Issued		DEQ	10
APPEAL_END	Appeal Period Expires		Applicant, public	30

States add or drop milestones per program, but the code and sequence stay consistent so dashboards stay one-size-fits-all. The “Recommended Days” column populates the expected versus actual bars that PEEP shows.

## A.3 DATA FLOW

### Graph Flow

A[Legacy Permit DBs & Spreadsheets] -->|nightly ETL| B(Staging Schema, Agency SQL)

B -->|row-level QC + de-dup| C[Milestone & Header Tables]

C -->|daily JSON| D(API Gateway /permit/{id})

D -->|pull| E(ArcGIS Hub map + Tableau Gantt dashboard)

C -->|CSV weekly| F(Open Data portal, if desired)

- **ETL Rules:** Reject rows with missing IDs, corrupt dates, or out-of-order milestones; email error log to each division steward before 8 a.m. each day.
- **Refresh Cadence:** Permits pull nightly. “Last refreshed DD:MM:YYYY” stamp prints on the public page.
- **Growth Path:** When other agencies join, add `agency_code` to both tables and point their ETL jobs at the same schema—no dashboard rebuild required.

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[peep-public-data-access](#).

#### A.4 IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

1. **Lock the Data Dictionary** (header and milestone) and publish to all division stewards.
2. **Build an SQL staging schema** identical to the two tables above.
3. **Write ETL jobs** for each legacy source; include validation and send failures to the steward list.
4. **Stand up REST endpoints** that expose header and milestone JSON for the dashboard pull.
5. **Configure Tableau or ArcGIS** to read the API, render the Gantt bars, and expose filters for `facility_name`, `locality`, `owner_name`, `agent_name`, `permit_number`, and `request_type`.
6. **Test with pilot permit**, confirm percent-complete math and “days ahead/behind,” and expand to all Tier 1 programs.

This pared-down architecture delivers every field required while keeping the data model so small that a single analyst can maintain it and future agencies can slot in without significant schema modifications.

## B. Deployment and Training

Transparency succeeds only if people trust the data and know how to use it. This plan turns previously overlooked staff into advocates and equips applicants to self-serve while freeing analysts to focus on permits rather than phone calls.

### B.1 OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE	SUCCESS METRIC
<b>Build Buy-In</b>	≥80 percent of permit staff say the dashboard “helps my work” (survey at Month 9).
<b>Develop Skills</b>	100 percent of data stewards and permit writers complete training within 60 days of launch.
<b>Shift Workload</b>	Status-inquiry calls drop 50 percent within six months of public launch.
<b>Capture Feedback</b>	Public bug/idea backlog is triaged weekly; issues are resolved within two sprints.

### B.2 TRAINING PLAN

PHASE	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	DURATION	OWNER
<b>1. Pre-Pilot (Month 2–3)</b>	Data stewards	2-day workshop on schema, data pipeline validation, and error handling	16 hours	Deployment lead
	Permit writers (pilot divisions)	1-hour demo and sandbox practice	2 hours	PM, stewards
<b>2. Pilot Go-Live (Month 3–4)</b>	Help desk team	Scripted responses, knowledge base	4 hours	Deployment lead
<b>3. Tier 1 Launch Prep (Month 5–6)<sup>12</sup></b>	All division staff	e-Learning module, quiz (pass ≥80 percent) <sup>13</sup>	1 hour	Human Resources Learning Management System (HR LMS)
	Applicants, public	30-minute recorded webinar, step-by-step PDF	Self-paced	Comms
<b>4. Post-Launch (Month 6–9)</b>	New hires	e-Learning auto-assign on start date	1 hour	HR
	All users	Monthly “Ask Me Anything” drop-in	1 hour	Deployment lead

<sup>12</sup> Tier 2 launch should not change the system, merely add more addressable permits.

<sup>13</sup> Try to keep this actually useful; include only the core elements to ensure the party can use the system, nothing more. Do not waste the permit writers’ time.

### B.3 TACTICAL CHANGES

1. **Early Involvement:** Pilot permit writers help refine milestone names; their suggestions make Tier One Release.
2. **Visible Leadership:** The governor cites dashboard statistics in press releases; the agency director praises teams in emails.
3. **Champion Network:** One “super-user” is established per division to answer peer questions and flag feature requests.
4. **Incentives:** A data-quality score is baked into annual reviews for stewards and permit writers; the cycle-time goal is included in the division scorecard.

### B.4 ADOPTION AND FEEDBACK LOOP

METRIC	SOURCE	REPORTING CADENCE
Training Completion Rate	e-Learning management system	Weekly until 100 percent
Status-Inquiry Calls	Call center logs	Monthly
Dashboard Uptime and Refresh Latency	Monitoring tool	Real-time dashboard
User-Satisfaction Score (internal and external)	5-question survey pop-up	Quarterly
Open vs. Closed Bug Tickets	Service desk	Biweekly sprint review

Issues that stay open for more than two sprints escalate to the program manager; systemic training gaps trigger a content update.

### OUTCOME

By anchoring change in clear metrics, short training bursts, and visible executive approval, staff learn to see the dashboard as a tool that speeds permits, and applicants gain a self-service window that sharply reduces back-and-forth.

## C. Budget and Funding Strategy

The good news is that a permit-transparency platform is a high-impact, low-ticket project—roughly the cost of two median IT hires. Below is a realistic spend curve and a menu of funding levers that states have used to cover it.

### C.1 COST MODEL (YEAR 0 LAUNCH + 4 YEARS O&M) (IN THOUSANDS)

COST CATEGORY	YEAR 0 (BUILD)	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	NOTES AND LEVERS
<b>Platform Licensing (ArcGIS Hub and Tableau or equivalent)</b>	\$270	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	Use existing statewide enterprise agreements to cut in half; open-source alternative ≈ \$0 license + \$100,000 in development.
<b>Systems Integration and ETL</b>	\$2,420	–	–	–	–	One-time vendor or in-house developer; piggyback on current master contract to skip RFP.
<b>Cloud Hosting and Backups</b>	\$40	\$60	\$70	\$80	\$90	Leverage state Azure or Amazon Web Services (AWS) enclave; cost scales only with new agencies.
<b>Staff Backfill and Training</b>	\$270	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	Covers 1 full-time employee (FTE) PM and fractional stewards; can be potentially absorbed by vacancy savings.
<b>Deployment and Comms</b>	\$60	\$25	\$15	\$15	\$15	Includes webinar production, LMS modules, and FAQ site.
<b>Security Review and Pen Test</b>	\$60	\$15	\$15	\$15	\$15	Use existing statewide security services contract to bundle.
<b>Contingency (10 percent)</b>	\$312	–	–	–	–	Held by CFO; to be allocated where needed most.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,432</b>	<b>\$300</b>	<b>\$300</b>	<b>\$310</b>	<b>\$320</b>	Five-year cost ≈ <b>\$4.662 million</b>

## C.2 FUNDING TOOLBOX

SOURCE	TYPICAL SIZE	HOW TO ACCESS
<b>Permitting Council Environmental Review Improvement Fund Assistance Program</b>	\$3 million <sup>14</sup>	States join the federal FAST-41 Dashboard (worthwhile), then are eligible for funding aid to support dashboards.
<b>EPA Exchange Network (and EN-LOD [estimated concentration at the limit of detection])</b>	\$200,000–\$500,000 grants	Apply each January; modernize environmental data sharing is the exact mission fit.
<b>State IT Capital Pool</b>	\$500,000+ per project	Many states earmark 1–2 percent of total IT budget for cross-agency pilots; dashboard qualifies.
<b>American Rescue Plan Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Tail Dollars</b>	Varies	Treasury allows IT modernization spending through December 2026—perfect for Year 0 build.
<b>Permit Fee Surcharge</b>	Varies; VPT would be \$1 million/year	Statute or rule can add <\$10 to high-volume permits.
<b>Environmental Trust Fund Interest</b>	\$100,000–\$300,000/year	Most states hold dormant balances; the interest alone can fund O&M.
<b>Performance Reinvestment</b>	\$75,000–\$150,000/year	Keep 20 percent of FTE hours saved from fewer status calls and use them for platform O&M.
<b>Philanthropic and GovTech Grants</b>	Up to \$500,000	Some organizations may fund “data for permitting” pilots.

**Projects that pair *one-time federal dollars for build with self-funding fees or efficiency savings* for O&M make fiscal justification easy.**

<sup>14</sup> This amount represents \$43 million spread across 14 IT projects.

### C.3 CREATIVE STRETCH OPTIONS

1. **“Data Dividend” Sponsorship:** Utilities or renewable developers chip in if the dashboard promises faster approvals.
2. **Unspent Bond Authority:** Environmental bonds often include “project management” buckets eligible for IT.
3. **Revenue-Sharing with Counties:** Localities can embed the dashboard and cover a slice of hosting; they save staff time too.

### C.4 COST-AVOIDANCE PROOF POINTS

BENEFIT	ANNUAL AVOIDED COST	BASIS
Reduce average review time per permit by 3 minutes across 100,000 permits	~5,000 staff hours ≈ \$300,000	Back-of-envelope calculation
15 percent cycle time cut on construction storm-water permits leads to earlier fee payments	\$4 million–\$6 million net present tax revenue	Commerce Department multiplier
Reduction of one litigation hold	\$25,000–\$50,000 in discovery prep	Attorney general’s office estimate

Even if only *one* of these savings hits, Year 0 net cost approaches zero (depending on litigation metrics).

### BOTTOM LINE

- Capex is less than \$2.5 million; O&M is around \$300,000 per year. These numbers are small enough to fit inside most agencies’ discretionary lines.
- At least seven funding channels exist; mixing even two covers full costs.
- Efficiency and fee revenue gains can make the project cash-positive in under 24 months, turning budget skeptics into champions.

## D. Continuous-Improvement Loop

A dashboard that is only used to record will stall. Real value comes when leadership uses the data to remove friction, every quarter, without fail.

### D.1 CORE KPI SET

KPI	DEFINITION	BASELINE (MONTH 0)	TARGET (MONTH 12)	DATA SOURCE	REPORT TO
<b>Median Cycle Time</b>	Calendar days from application received to final decision (by permit type)	142 days	≤100 days (-30 percent)	Milestone table	Governor
<b>90th-Percentile Cycle Time</b>	Same window: 90 percent of permits finish within <i>X</i> days	228 days	≤160 days	Milestone table	Cabinet champion
<b>Milestone SLA Hit Rate</b>	Percent of milestones completed on or before <code>date_target</code>	62 percent	≥90 percent	Milestone table	Division chiefs
<b>Data-Quality Score</b>	Rows passing all QC rules/total rows	96 percent	≥99 percent	ETL log	PM
<b>Status-Inquiry Calls</b>	Calls and emails asking, “Where is my permit?”	1,200/month	≤600/month	Call center CRM	Deployment lead
<b>User-Satisfaction Score</b>	Percent of users selecting “easy to use” in 5-question pop-up survey	n/a (launch)	≥80 percent	In-app survey	PM

Targets align with the business goals outlined in Section 1; each appears on the public dashboard’s KPI banner.

### D.2 OPERATING RHYTHM

CADENCE	MEETING	PARTICIPANTS	FOCUS
<b>Weekly</b>	Ops Huddle	PM, data stewards	Review target timing misses; assign fixes before next refresh.
<b>Monthly</b>	Division Scorecard	Division chiefs, PM	Determine trend line on three KPIs; pick “quick hit” fixes.
<b>Quarterly</b>	Governor Permit Brief	Governor, cabinet champion, PM	Analyze median and P90 cycle-time deltas; approve next Lean sprint.

Dashboards refresh automatically; discussion time goes to why metrics moved, not whether they're accurate.

### **D.3 LEAN “PERMIT SPRINT” PLAYBOOK**

- 1. Select Bottleneck:** Choose the permit type with the largest gap versus the target.
- 2. Map Current Flow:** Host a two-day workshop; sticky-note every handoff.
- 3. Root-Cause Analysis:** Answer the 5 Whys; quantify wait versus work time.
- 4. Rapid Fixes:** Examples include templated deficiency letters, parallel reviews, and auto-reminders.
- 5. Implement and Measure:** Changes go live in the next sprint; KPI impact is tracked for 90 days.

### **D.4 SUNSET AND RESET**

KPIs and targets are revisited each fiscal year. When a target is beaten for three straight quarters, it resets to the new 75th-percentile value, driving continuous gains.

### **RESULT**

With hard targets, fixed review cadences, and Lean sprints baked in, the dashboard becomes a positive feedback loop with the potential to shave weeks off permit review processes.

## E. Procurement and Contracting

### E.1 WHAT THIS SECTION COVERS

While an internal team may be able to build this dashboard in-house, this appendix shows how to procure a dashboard if needed, through a typical state process. It does three things:

1. Maps the standard, four-step buying cycle most states follow
2. Highlights Virginia DEQ’s PEEP and VPT experience as an example pace
3. Flags a handful of shortcuts and guardrails for those who want to move faster—or simply avoid common missteps

This appendix assumes a typical, if optimized, IT procurement path. To meet modern service delivery expectations, state governments should also consider shifting to a “product operating model”<sup>15</sup> in which tools like permitting dashboards are seen as products to be maintained actively as opposed to one-off “IT projects.” Under such a model, agile principles are embedded in how new tech tools are scoped, built, and maintained, allowing governments to more effectively marshal resources and deliver outcomes.

Everything below is drawn from publicly available best-practice guides (National Association of State Procurement Officials [NASPO], Government Accountability Office [GAO], and 18F) and from DEQ’s PEEP rollout.<sup>16</sup>

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15 Ann Lewis and Jennifer Pahlka, “The Product Operating Model: How Government Should Deliver Digital Services,” Niskanen Center (July 10, 2025), <https://www.niskanencenter.org/the-product-operating-model-how-government-should-deliver-digital-services/>.

16 National Association of State Procurement Officials, *Modular Procurement: A Primer* (updated 2023), [https://cdn.naspo.org/RI/ModularProcurement\\_APrimer\\_UpdatedSeptember2023.pdf](https://cdn.naspo.org/RI/ModularProcurement_APrimer_UpdatedSeptember2023.pdf); U.S. Government Accountability Office, GAO-25-900-611, *GAO Bid Protest Annual Report to Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (2024), <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-25-900611>; Billy Mitchell, “18F Awards First Agile Task Order—Building a FedRAMP Dashboard,” *FedScoop*, June 7, 2016, <https://fedscoop.com/truetandem-scores-first-18f-agile-task-order-to-build-fedramp-dash/>; “DEQ Permitting Enhancement and Evaluation Platform,” Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, accessed October 7, 2025, <https://portal.deq.virginia.gov/peep-search>.

## E.2 THE “PLAIN VANILLA” PROCUREMENT PATH

Most state IT buys—large or small—run through four stages. The timeline shown is typical; many states complete smaller software buys at the shorter end of each range.

STAGE	MAIN ACTIVITIES	TYPICAL DURATION*	LEADER	KEY OUTPUT
<b>1. Plan and Scope</b>	List goals, confirm budget, talk to IT and security, gather sample dashboards	4–6 weeks	Program manager	One-page Statement of Need
<b>2. Draft and Post Solicitation</b>	Write solicitation, legal review, post on e-procurement system, hold vendor Q&A	6–8 weeks	Procurement officer	RFP or Invitation for Bid (IFB) posted
<b>3. Evaluate and Select</b>	Score written proposals, check references, negotiate terms	6–10 weeks	Evaluation team	Notice of Intent to Award
<b>4. Award and Kick-Off</b>	Resolve protests (if any), sign contract, vendor starts	4–6 weeks	Procurement officer	Signed contract, kickoff date

\* The total baseline is 20–30 weeks ( $\approx$  5–7 months). National surveys show this is within the norm for state IT contracts.<sup>17</sup>

## E.3 CASE STUDY: VIRGINIA DEQ’S PERMITTING ENHANCEMENT AND EVALUATION PLATFORM

- **Late 2022:** DEQ launched PEEP as a pilot covering one permit family.
- **2023:** DEQ rolled the tool across 10 additional permit programs on a published schedule.
- **2024:** DEQ folded PEEP into the larger VPT portal, which now spans 10 agencies, with more to come.

How Virginia bought it:

- Used existing contracts for Tableau and ArcGIS
- Issued a small, outcome-based task order (fixed price, clear “go-live” date)
- Completed entire pilot—from charter to public launch—in around months, faster than the baseline but still inside formal rules

**Lesson:** A narrow scope plus pre-approved tools can shave months off the cycle without shortcuts or waivers.

<sup>17</sup> National Association of State Procurement Officials, *Survey of State Procurement Practices Report (2022)*, <https://www.naspo.org/research-and-innovation/survey-of-state-practices-page/survey/2022/>.

## E.4 GOING FASTER

If political pressure or opportunity allows for a quicker launch, borrow from agile-procurement playbooks already vetted by other governments.

FAST-TRACK TOOL	DEFINITION	TIME SAVED	REFERENCE
<b>Leverage an Existing Contract</b>	The state can “piggy-back” on a statewide BI, GIS, or cloud contract.	6–8 weeks (skip Stage 2)	Virginia’s eVA catalog shows dozens of such vehicles <sup>18</sup>
<b>Outcome-Based Scope (SOO)</b>	The state defines <i>results</i> , not how to build them.	Fewer vendor questions, leaner proposals	NASPO modular primer <sup>19</sup>
<b>Prototype Demo Round</b>	Top bidders show a working slice with dummy data.	Clarifies quality in days, reduces protest risk	18F FedRAMP dashboard award, 60-day delivery <sup>20</sup>
<b>Milestone Payments</b>	Pay per completed feature, not monthly hours.	Keeps vendor incentives aligned, avoids schedule creep	18F Contract Guide <sup>21</sup>

**Reality Check:** Even with these accelerators, expect at least 12–16 weeks from scope to kickoff. Anything quicker generally requires emergency authorities or sole-source justifications.

## E.5 PITFALLS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

PITFALL	WHY IT HURTS	SIMPLE FIX
<b>Over-Specifying the Tech</b>	Lengthy RFPs invite protests and lock you into one vendor.	Stick to outcomes: “Dashboard refreshes daily; WCAG 2.1 AA compliant.”
<b>Ignoring Accessibility and Security Until the End</b>	Retrofits cost money and delay going live.	Put ADA/WCAG and basic security tests in the evaluation checklist after successful pilot.
<b>Forgetting Exit Clauses</b>	Upgrades or vendor failure become painful and expensive.	Require data export (CSV/JSON) and month-to-month hosting after Year 2.
<b>Fearing Protests</b>	Teams over-document, slowing everything down. GAO sustains only around 16 percent of protests. <sup>22</sup>	Keep clear scoring rubrics, debrief all bidders promptly.

18 “Contracts & Solicitations,” Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, accessed October 7, 2025, <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/news-info/about-us/contracts-solicitations>.

19 National Association of State Procurement Officials, *Modular Procurement: A Primer*.

20 Mitchell, “18F Awards First Agile Task Order.”

21 Ibid.

22 Kayleigh Scalzo and Jay Carey, “GAO’s Annual Bid Protest Report: Fiscal Year 24 Protest Filings and Sustain Rate Fell After Unusually High Fiscal Year 23,” *Inside Government Contracts*, November 26, 2024, <https://www.>

## E.6 CHECKLIST FOR NON-EXPERTS

Use this list before you send anything to the procurement office:

1. Is the goal statement one page or shorter? If not, trim.
2. Can you point to three existing dashboards that meet 80 percent of your needs?
3. Do you know which statewide contracts already cover cloud, GIS, or BI tools?
4. Have you listed 3–5 measurable success criteria (e.g., page load  $\leq 2$  seconds, daily refresh)?
5. Does the draft solicitation say who owns the data and code on exit?
6. Have you reserved at least 20 percent of the budget for post-launch tweaks?

Tick every box and you will enter Stage 2 (Draft and Post Solicitation) with everything procurement officers typically need.

### BOTTOM LINE

- **You do not need to reinvent the wheel.** A standard four-step procurement, run cleanly, delivers the dashboard in about six months.
- **Virginia proved the process can go faster** by scoping narrowly and using contracts already on the shelf.
- **If speed is critical**, outcome-based scopes and short prototype demos are the safest accelerators.
- **Staying plain-English and outcome-focused** keeps lawyers, budget officers, and vendors aligned—and gets the permit-tracking site in front of the public while projects are still in the works.

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[insidegovernmentcontracts.com/2024/11/gaos-annual-bid-protest-report-fiscal-year-24-protest-filings-and-sustain-rate-fell-after-unusually-high-fiscal-year-23/](https://insidegovernmentcontracts.com/2024/11/gaos-annual-bid-protest-report-fiscal-year-24-protest-filings-and-sustain-rate-fell-after-unusually-high-fiscal-year-23/)

## F. Model Bill/Executive Order

### STATE PERMIT TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY ACT

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE

This Act shall be known and may be cited as the “State Permit Transparency and Efficiency Act.”

#### SECTION 2. LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT

(a) **Findings.** The Legislature finds that:

1. The timely and efficient processing of permits, licenses, certifications, registrations, and other forms of agency approval is essential to economic development and public welfare within the state.
2. Transparent and predictable permitting processes improve regulatory compliance and create a more favorable environment for business development, job creation, and economic growth.
3. Many permits involve multiple procedural stages, agencies, and approval requirements, which can create delays, uncertainty, and inefficiency.
4. A comprehensive audit of existing permitting processes is necessary to identify opportunities for improvement, consolidation, or elimination of unnecessary requirements.
5. An accessible online tracking system for permit applications will benefit both applicants and agencies by creating accountability, improving communication, and promoting efficiency by identifying where delays are occurring and allowing agencies to make process improvements.

- (b) **Intent.** It is the intent of the Legislature to:
1. Create transparency in the permitting process to allow applicants to understand requirements and track application status.
  2. Establish clear timelines for the processing of permit applications.
  3. Provide publicly accessible information regarding permits issued by state agencies.
  4. Improve efficiency in the permitting process and reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens.
  5. Establish a centralized oversight body to coordinate these efforts.

### **SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this Act:

- (a) "Agency" means any department, board, commission, division, office, or other authority of the state government.
- (b) "Agency owner" means the individual or unit within an agency, locality, another state, or the federal government who has specific responsibility for a particular type of permit or approval who serves as the accountable party for an approval process or a designated step of that process.
- (c) "Approval" means a permit, license, certification, registration, or any other form of authorization that a regulated party must obtain from an agency prior to engaging in a particular activity.
- (d) "Average processing time" means the total amount of time that an agency took to fully process all approval applications of a particular type on which a final decision was made in the previous year, measured from the date of submission to the date

of final decision, divided by the total number of the particular type of approval being assessed on which a final decision was made.

- (e) "Comprehensive permit audit" means a systematic review and assessment of all approvals issued by agencies to identify opportunities for streamlining, consolidation, or elimination.
- (f) "High-impact approval" means any approval that either:
  1. Has an average processing duration of ten or more days and for which more than one hundred applications are received annually;
  2. Has an average processing time exceeding thirty days; or
  3. Is reasonably expected to generate investment in the state exceeding \$1 million.
- (g) "Low-volume approval" means any approval issued by an agency with five or fewer issuances per year.
- (h) "Permit transparency portal" means the online platform established pursuant to Section 6 of this Act that allows for the tracking of approval applications.
- (i) "Procedural stage" means a distinct step in the approval process at which an application is transferred or reviewed by an agency owner or designee. Agency owners or designees may be within the agency or may be affiliated with another governmental entity, including officials from another agency, a locality, another state, or an agency of the federal government.
- (j) "Program" means the Permit Transparency Program established pursuant to Section 4 of this Act.

#### **SECTION 4. PERMIT TRANSPARENCY PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.**

- (a) Designation of Authority. The Department of Administration [or alternatively, Department of Management Services, Administrative Services, General Services, or similar central administrative agency as exists in the state] shall establish and administer a Permit Transparency Program to implement the provisions of this Act.
1. The Secretary/Director of the Department shall designate a senior official to serve as the Permit Transparency Program Director (hereafter, the Director).
  2. The Program Director shall report directly to the Secretary/Director of the Department and shall be responsible for implementing the provisions of this Act.
- (b) Powers and Duties. The Department, through the Permit Transparency Program, shall have the following powers and duties:
1. Oversee the implementation of the comprehensive permit audit required under Section 5 of this Act.
  2. Develop, implement, and maintain the permit transparency portal required under Section 6 of this Act.
  3. Establish standards for approval processing timelines based on complexity and impact.
  4. Coordinate with agencies to develop and implement approval streamlining initiatives.
  5. Provide technical assistance to agencies in mapping and improving their approval processes.
  6. Develop standardized metrics for measuring approval efficiency.
  7. Issue annual reports on approval efficiency as required under Section 7 of this Act.

8. Provide recommendations to the Governor and Legislature regarding potential statutory, regulatory, or administrative changes to improve approval processes.
  9. Maintain an inventory of all active approval types issued by state agencies.
  10. Develop guidance for agencies to assist in mapping approval processes and identifying procedural stages.
- (c) Interagency Coordination Committee.
1. There is established a Permit Transparency Interagency Coordination Committee composed of representatives from each agency that issues approvals subject to this Act.
  2. The Committee shall meet at least quarterly to: (i) Coordinate implementation of the provisions of this Act; (ii) Share best practices in approval processing; (iii) Identify opportunities for interagency collaboration; and (iv) Develop recommendations for improving the state's permitting processes.
  3. The Committee shall be chaired by the Permit Transparency Program Director.
- (d) Authority to Request Information. The Department may request, and agencies shall provide, any information necessary to fulfill its duties under this Act.
- (e) Use of Existing Resources. To the extent practicable, the Department shall utilize existing staff, systems, and resources in implementing this Act.

## **SECTION 5. COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT AUDIT**

- (a) Requirement. Within 180 days of the effective date of this Act, each agency shall conduct a comprehensive permit audit of all

approvals it issues and submit the results to the Director.

(b) Audit Contents. The comprehensive permit audit shall include, for each type of approval:

1. A description of the approval and the statutory, regulatory, or other legal basis for the approval.
2. The total number of applications processed annually for the previous three years.
3. The average processing time for each type of approval.
4. Any fees or charges associated with the approval.
5. A detailed mapping of all procedural stages in the approval process, including: (i) each distinct step in the process; (ii) the individual or unit responsible for each step; (iii) the expected timeline for completion of each step; (iv) any involvement of other federal, state, or local government entities in the approval process; and (v) documentation of hand-offs between departments, agencies, or individuals.
6. The format in which applications are accepted (paper, electronic, or both).
7. Identification of low-volume approvals.
8. Identification of high-impact approvals.
9. Identification of duplicative approvals.
10. Recommendations for streamlining, consolidating, or eliminating unnecessary approvals or procedural stages.
11. Recommendations for appropriate processing timelines for each approval type.

Any changes or updates made by an agency to this information shall be reported to the Director immediately upon implementation.

(c) Exclusions. The following approval types shall be excluded from the comprehensive permit audit:

1. Driver's licenses and identification cards issued by the state Department of Motor Vehicles.
  2. Hunting and fishing licenses.
- (d) Review of Low-Volume Approvals.
1. For each low-volume approval identified in the comprehensive permit audit, the issuing agency shall:
    - (i) provide a recommendation as to whether the approval should be eliminated, consolidated with another approval, or maintained; and
    - (ii) indicate whether the authority for issuing such approval is statutory, regulatory, or administrative.
  2. Where a low-volume approval is purely administrative or authorized by regulation without specific statutory mandate, the agency shall, within 90 days of completing the audit, initiate the process to eliminate or consolidate such approval, unless the agency provides written justification to the Director explaining why the approval should be maintained.
- (e) Review of Duplicative Approvals.
1. Where the comprehensive permit audit identifies multiple approvals that serve substantially similar purposes or require substantially similar information, the relevant agencies shall develop a plan for consolidating such approvals and submit the plan to the Director within 90 days of completing the audit.
  2. In the instance that duplicative approvals are identified in which one or multiple of such approvals are purely administrative or authorized by regulation without a specific statutory mandate, the agency shall initiate

the process to eliminate or consolidate such approval(s) within 90 days of submitting the consolidation plan to the Director.

## **SECTION 6. PERMIT TRANSPARENCY PORTAL**

- (a) Development and Implementation. The Director, in coordination with the state's information technology agency, shall develop, implement, and maintain a publicly accessible online permit transparency portal.
- (b) Timeline. The permit transparency portal shall be:
  - 1. Launched in a pilot phase, including three agencies with approvals that have the highest financial impact on citizens of the state or the most approvals by volume made by the state, within 12 months of the effective date of this Act; and
  - 2. Fully implemented for all agencies within 24 months of the effective date of this Act.
- (c) Required Features. The permit transparency portal shall include the following features:
  - 1. A searchable database of all approval types offered by state agencies, including: (i) a description of each approval; (ii) the legal basis for each approval; (iii) application requirements and forms; (iv) associated fees; (v) expected processing timelines; and (vi) contact information for the individual or unit responsible for each step of an approval process.
  - 2. The ability for applicants to submit applications and supporting documentation electronically, and interoperable data exchange protocols enabling authorized agencies to

access submitted applications and documentation.

3. A tracking system that allows applicants to monitor the status of their applications through each procedural stage.
  4. Automated notification capabilities to alert applicants and agency staff of approaching or missed deadlines.
  5. The ability for applicants to pay fees electronically.
  6. An interactive map showing the geographic distribution of pending and approved applications, where applicable, to allow the tracking of the geographical distribution of individual permit types.
  7. Historical data on agency performance, including average processing times and compliance with established timelines.
  8. A dashboard displaying aggregated data on approval processing by agency.
- (d) Integration Requirements. The permit transparency portal shall be designed to:
1. Integrate with existing agency permitting systems where possible;
  2. Minimize duplication of data entry;
  3. Ensure data security and privacy in accordance with state and federal law; and
  4. Comply with accessibility standards for persons with disabilities.
- (e) Phased Implementation. The Director shall prioritize the integration of high-impact approvals into the permit transparency portal.
- (f) Exclusions. Simple approvals that involve only a single procedural stage may be excluded from the tracking functionality of the permit transparency portal, though information about such approvals

shall still be included in the database described in subsection (c)(1).

## **SECTION 7. PERMITTING EFFICIENCY REPORTING**

- (a) Annual Report. The Director shall prepare and publish an annual permitting efficiency report by [February 1] of each year, beginning the year following full implementation of the permit transparency portal.
- (b) Report Contents. The annual report shall include:
  - 1. Statistics on the number of approval applications received, processed, approved, and denied by each agency.
  - 2. The average processing time for each type of approval.
  - 3. The percentage of approvals processed within established timelines.
  - 4. For applications that have not met established timelines, an analysis of the reasons for delay, including: (i) delays caused by applicant responsiveness; (ii) delays caused by staff shortages; (iii) delays caused by scientific or technical concerns; and (iv) delays caused by public engagement processes.
  - 5. Year-over-year trends in processing times and efficiency metrics.
  - 6. Recommendations for program or system changes necessary to improve efficiency, and clear objectives as to the point at which an approval, procedure, program, or system may be considered efficient.
- (c) Public Availability. The annual report shall be:
  - 1. Posted on the Department's website and the permit transparency portal;

2. Submitted to the Governor; and
3. Submitted to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees having jurisdiction over governmental operations, economic development, and environmental policy.

## **SECTION 8. AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES**

- (a) Cooperation. All agencies shall cooperate with the Program in the implementation of this Act, including by:
  1. Conducting the comprehensive permit audit required under Section 5;
  2. Promptly providing data and information requested by the Director;
  3. Designating a liaison to coordinate with the Program; and
  4. Integrating agency approval processes with the permit transparency portal.
- (b) Process Improvements. Each agency shall:
  1. Review the results of its comprehensive permit audit to identify opportunities for streamlining approval processes;
  2. Develop and implement process improvements to reduce approval processing times;
  3. Establish clear timelines for each procedural stage in the approval process;
  4. Regularly review and update approval requirements to determine ongoing relevance and eliminate unnecessary or duplicative elements; and
  5. To the extent practicable, accept electronic submissions of approval applications and supporting documentation.
- (c) Notification of Completeness. Within 10 business days of receiving an application for an approval subject to tracking on the permit

transparency portal, the agency shall notify the applicant, in writing, whether the application is complete or incomplete. If the agency determines that an application is incomplete, the notice to the applicant must enumerate all deficiencies, citing specific provisions of the applicable rules and statutes, and advise the applicant on how the deficiencies can be remedied.

#### **SECTION 9. TIMELINE STANDARDS**

- (a) Establishment of Standards. Based on the results of the comprehensive permit audit, the Director shall work with agencies to establish target processing timelines for each type of approval.
- (b) Transparency of Standards. The timeline standards established pursuant to subsection (a) shall be:
  - 1. Published on the permit transparency portal;
  - 2. Included in application materials provided to applicants;  
and
  - 3. Used as benchmarks in the annual permitting efficiency report.
- (c) Revision of Standards. The Director shall review and, if necessary, revise timeline standards at least once every five years.

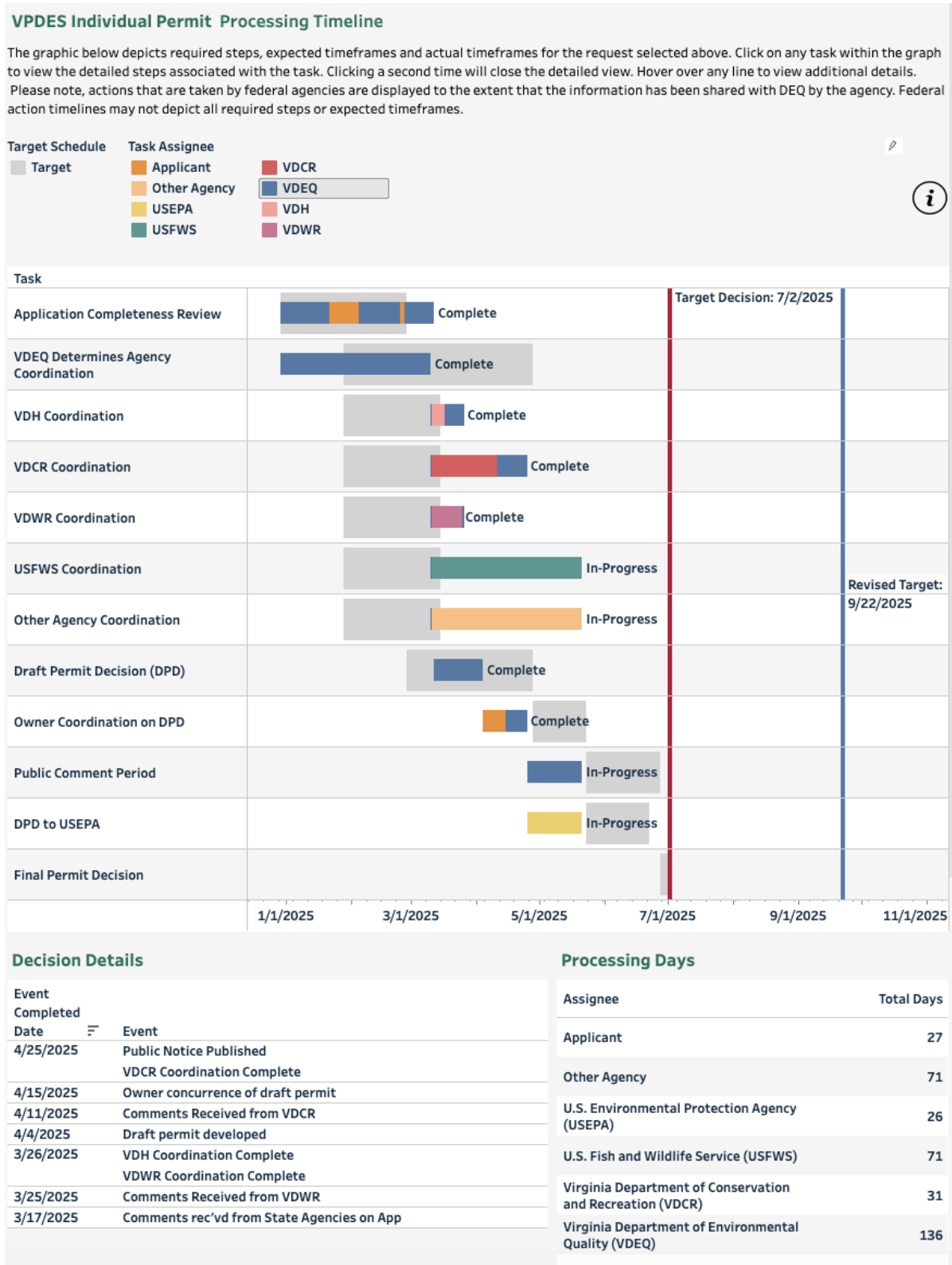
#### **SECTION 10. FUNDING AND RESOURCES**

- (a) Initial Implementation. For the initial implementation of this Act, including the development of the permit transparency portal, there is appropriated from the General Fund to the Program the sum of \$[AMOUNT] for the fiscal year ending [DATE].
- (b) Ongoing Operations. For the ongoing operations of the Program and maintenance of the permit transparency portal, there is appropriated from the General Fund to the Program the sum of \$[AMOUNT] for each fiscal year.

- (c) Fee Authority. The Director, working with agencies, may incorporate a reasonable surcharge into existing approval fees for the purpose of maintaining the permit transparency portal. This surcharge shall be a component of the total approval fee, not a separate charge, and shall be proportionate to the costs of maintaining and improving the portal. All funds collected through this surcharge shall be deposited in a special fund to be used solely for the maintenance and improvement of the portal.]

## **SECTION 11. EFFECTIVE DATE**

# G. Example Screenshot



# About the Author

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Samuel Roland is a research fellow at the Foundation for American Innovation, where he researches legal structures shaping technological innovation and regulatory reform. He is also a JD candidate at Scalia Law School at George Mason University. He holds a Business Honors degree from the University of Texas at Austin and focuses on modernizing environmental permitting to accelerate infrastructure and national competitiveness. He previously worked in legislative policy, legal consulting, and business operations across the U.S. Senate, Squire Patton Boggs, and a fast-growing energy logistics firm.

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