

## **STREAMLINING OF BUSINESS PERMITS AND LICENSING SYSTEM (BPLS) IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS**

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**ABSTRACT:** Entrepreneurs and investors in the Philippines have long complained about the circuitous and long processing time of acquiring business permits at the local level. To address this concern, the government initiated a reform in their system which aimed in reconstructing and simplifying the complex business registration system in the country. This study assessed the compliance by the Local Government Units (LGUs) in Surigao del Sur, Philippines with Business Permits and Licensing System (BPLS) reforms by the Philippine Government pursuant to Joint Memorandum Circular no.1, series of 2010. At the same time, it evaluated the satisfaction level of the businessmen based on the CSI framework with the process of renewing business registration and permit in their respective LGUs. The study employed descriptive- evaluative and documentary analysis as research designs. Results revealed that majority of the LGUs of Surigao del Sur, Philippines were compliant with the guidelines on BPLS set under JMC no. 1, series of 2010. It was also found out that businessmen were somewhat satisfied with the overall quality of the business registration and renewal process. However, there are new revised standards based on the issuance of new JMC no.1, series of 2016. Therefore, a need to implement the new revised standards should is a must to ensure compliance of the LGUs.

**KEYWORDS:** business permits, BPLS reforms, business profile

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Streamlining of the Business Permits and Licensing System (BPLS) is a government initiative to reconstruct and simplify the complex business registration system in the Philippines. A Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, series of 2010 was issued to set guidelines in implementing the standards in processing business permits and licenses in all cities and municipalities in the country both for new and renewals. Hence, the study assessed the compliance by the LGUs of Surigao del Sur in the BPLS reform [1].

Through the years, the World Bank through its business survey has consistently identified the high cost of doing business in the Philippines as a major constraint to its competitiveness[2]. Entrepreneurs and investors have long complained about the circuitous and long processing time of acquiring business permits at the local level, apparently some disgruntled businessmen go to fixers[3]. Consequently, major cities in the National Capital Region (NCR) signed a covenant in February 2009 to standardize the procedures of acquiring permits and licenses to operate business. In 2010, DTI and DILG, through the Local Government Academy, have embarked a joint undertaking on the Nationwide Streamlining of BPLS Program in the country[4]. The program aims to address the high cost of doing business and respond to the call of the former President Aquino and directive of the current President Duterte to streamline the complex registration processes to make business start-ups and renewal easier and faster.

Evaluating the streamlined BPLS is desirable to various perspectives. It brings enormous benefits that include: (1) improved revenue generation; (2) reduced time and resources spent by the LGUs in the BPLS process; (3) more complete information based on business enterprises in the localities; (4) more informed policy and decision-making; (5) reduced graft and corruption; and (6) better image for the LGUs in the area of good governance. Moreover, entrepreneurs and investors as direct beneficiaries of the program may feel its advantage for less corruption and reduced time spent in registering their business redound to financial savings.

### **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study assessed the compliance by the Local Government Units in Surigao del Sur, Philippines with Business Permits and Licensing System reforms by the Philippine Government pursuant to JMC no.1, series of 2010.

Particularly, it endeavoured to determine:

1. The business profile of the businessmen;
2. The extent of compliance by the LGUs with of BPLS Streamlining as perceived by businessmen and BPLS frontline implementers;
3. The satisfaction level of the businessmen based on the CSI framework with the process of business registration and renewal in their respective LGUs;
4. The significant difference in the extent of compliance by the LGUs with the BPLS Streamlining as perceived by businessmen and BPLS implementers; and
5. The significant difference in the extent of compliance of BPLS Streamlining among the LGUs.

### **3. MATERIALS METHODS**

#### **Research Design**

The study employed descriptive- evaluative and documentary analysis research designs. Descriptive-evaluative is a design used to describe and evaluate the present behaviors or characteristics of a particular population [5]. On the other hand, documentary analysis is a social research method and is an important research tool in its own right and is an invaluable part of most schemes of triangulation. It refers to the various procedures involved in analyzing and interpreting data generated from the examination of documents and records relevant to a particular study. A document is something that can read and which relates to some aspect of the social world. Official documents are intended to be read as objective statements of fact but they are themselves socially produced [6].

In this study, a 2016 Customer Experience Survey Business Permit and Licensing System conducted by the National Competitiveness Council (NCC) of the Philippines in partnership with the regional and provincial offices of DTI were analyzed. Particularly, it used content analysis in treating the documents understudy. Content analysis is like a social survey but uses a sample of documents rather than people. Content analysis is formal and systematic. It lends structure to the research. Variables are categorized in a precise manner for logical analysis and interpretation[7].

#### **Research Environment**

The study was conducted in the province of Surigao del Sur. Surigao del Sur located in Caragaregion in Mindanao, Philippines. Its capital is Tandag City. The province comprised seventeen (17) municipalities namely: Barobo, Bayabas, Cagwait, Cantilan, Carmen, Carrascal, Cortes, Hinatuan, Lanuza, Lianga, Linging, Madrid, Marihatag, San Agustin, San Miguel, Tagbina and Tago; and two cities namely: Bislig and Tandag, further subdivided into 309 barangays. There are two congressional districts encompassing all cities and towns.

#### **Participants**

The study considered two groups of research respondents. The first group was the businessmen who were the direct beneficiaries of BPLS reforms. For this group, the study used the available documents based on the 2016 Customer Experience Survey Business Permit and Licensing System. Based on record, there were only 10 businessmen as sample respondents for each LGU in the province. Hence, the study only had 190 survey documents as unit of analysis. The second group of respondents was the implementers of BPLS streamlining in the LGUs of Surigao del Sur. They were the BPL officer, assessor, treasurer and staff from Mayor's Office. The study applied purposive sampling for this group, 40 respondents were subjected for evaluation.

#### **Instruments**

The study adopted a survey questionnaire used in the Business Permits and Licensing System Customer Experience Survey of NCC and DTI. For businessmen, the documents that were analyzed and interpreted was 2016 the Business Permits and Licensing System Customer Experience Survey particularly only in the province of Surigao del Sur. This evaluation was conducted by the National Competitiveness Council (NCC) of the Philippines, in partnership with the regional and provincial offices of the Department of Trade and Industry.

This survey was composed of three (3) parts: (1) business profile of renewals; (2) assessment of the renewal process in terms of BPLS Standards based on JMC no.1, s. 2010; (3) customer satisfaction index (CSI) framework. To determine the satisfaction level of the businessmen based on the CSI framework with the process of renewing Mayor's Permit in their respective LGUs, a 6 point Likert scale was used as follows: 10- Extremely Satisfied, 9 Satisfied, 7 – 8 Somewhat Satisfied, 5 - 6 Somewhat Dissatisfied, 3 – 4 Dissatisfied and

1 – 2 Extremely Dissatisfied. For BPLS frontliners, the survey focused only on the assessment of their renewal process in terms of BPLS Standards based on JMC no.1, s. 2010.

#### **Data Analysis**

Frequency and simple percentage count were applied on the business profile of the businessmen and on the extent of implementation of BPLS streamlining. Weighted mean was employed on the satisfaction level of the businessmen based on the CSI framework. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used on the significant difference in the extent of implementation of BPLS streamlining in the LGUs of Surigao del Sur as perceived by businessmen and BPLS frontliners and on the significance difference on the extent of implementation of BPLS among the LGUs in Surigao del Sur.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **Business Profile**

The profile of the businessmen is shown in Table 1. This profile includes business nature, business registration, business ownership, business classification and years in business operation.

*Table 1. Business Profile*

<b>Business Nature</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Banking and financial services	11	7.48%
Food /restaurant	17	11.48%
Health	7	4.73%
Wholesale and retail trade	79	53.38%
Agricultural, fisheries, forestry, agribusiness	13	8.78%
Communication	12	8.11%
Water	9	6.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Business Registration</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Single proprietorship	138	93.24%
Corporation	7	4.73%
Cooperative	3	2.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Business Ownership</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Filipino	148	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Business Classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Micro	123	83.11%
Small	18	12.16%
Medium	4	2.70%
Large	3	2.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Years in Business Operation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than twelve months	8	5.40%
1-5 years	62	41.89%
6-10 years	45	30.40%
11 years and above	33	22.31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>

As underscored in the table, 79 or 53.38% of the businessmen are into wholesale and retail trade while only 7 or 4.73% of the businessmen are into health services. This finding supports the results of the 2012 Census of the Philippine Business and Industry which showed that majority of the businesses in the Philippines were engaged in wholesale and retail trade[8]. This can be explained because the demand for wholesaling and retailing remains strong driven by demographics in the country, where population and household growth are

among the fastest in Asia [9]. The table also shows that 138 or 93.24% of the businesses are registered under single proprietorship while 3 or 2.03 are registered under cooperative. As to business ownership, 148 or 100% of the businesses are owned by Filipino. Many businessmen opted for single or sole proprietorship because it is the simplest form of business and the easiest to register in the Philippines. It is owned by an individual who has full control or authority of its own and owns all the assets, as well as personally answers all liabilities or losses. The fact that it is run by the individual means that it is highly flexible in which the owner retains absolute control [10].

When it comes to business classification, 123 or 83.11% of the businesses are classified as micro, and 3 or 2.03% of the business are categorized as large. In terms of the years in business operation, 62 or 41.89% of the businesses are operated in 1 – 5 years, while only 8 or 5.40% of the businesses are in operation for less than twelve months. This only means most businesses in Surigao del Sur have very small start-up capitals and assets; and they are still in the start-up years.

#### **Compliance by the LGUs with BPLS Streamlining**

JMC No. 01. Series of 2010 lays down the guidelines in implementing the standards in BPLS. These standards include renewal period, processing time, number of steps, number of signatories, number of form and facilitation fees.

***Table 2. Compliance of BPLS Streamlining as Perceived by the Businessmen***

<b>Renewal Period</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
First week of January (04-08)	27	18.24%
Second week of January (11-15)	33	22.29%
Third week of January (18-22)	39	26.35%
Last week of renewal period	49	33.12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Processing Time</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
10-30 minutes	11	7.43%
31-60 minutes	3	2.03%
1-2 hours	19	12.83%
Within the day	26	17.56%
2-3 days	31	20.94%
4 -5 days	21	14.19%
6-10 days	18	12.19%
More than 10 days	19	12.83%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Number of Steps</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1 step	32	21.62%
2 steps	6	4.05%
3 steps	2	1.35%
4 steps	7	4.73%
5 steps	38	25.67%
6 or more steps	63	42.58%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>

Number of Signatories	Frequency	Percentage
1 signatory	24	16.22%
2 signatories	86	58.11%
3 – 5 signatories	13	8.78%
6 signatories or more	25	16.89%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
Number of Forms	Frequency	Percentage
1 form	98	66.22%
2 forms	17	11.48%
3 or more forms	33	22.30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
Facilitation Fees	Frequency	Percentage
1001 – 5000	45	30.40%
5001- 10000	44	29.73%
Above 10000	59	39.87%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 reflects the result of the compliance by the LGUs of Surigao del Sur with the BPLS streamlining as perceived by the businessmen. When asked to identify the exact date of business permit renewal, 49 or 33.12% of the businessmen answered that they renewed their business permits on the last week of the renewal period while 27 or 18.24% of the businessmen filed their renewal on the first week of January. The findings show that the businessmen filed the renewal of their business permits prior to the deadline to avoid penalties. Further, the results imply that the businessmen conformed to the DTI to renew their business name on or before the deadline to avoid the rush applicants for registration and somehow avoid being charged with penalty[11].

As to the processing time, 31 or 20.94% of the businessmen consume 2 – 3 days while 3 or 2.03% of the businessmen have their business permit renewed within 31 – 60 minutes. Results imply that most of the LGUs are compliant with the Standard Processing Time following the ARTA classification of not more than ten (10) days for complex transactions, five (5) days or less for average transactions and one (1) day or less for simple transactions. However, the table also shows that there are 19 or 12.83% of the businessmen who have renewed their permit for more than 10 days which suggests that there are still LGUs who are non-compliant with the standard processing time.

In terms of the number of steps involved in business permit renewal, 63 or 42.58% of the businessmen undertake 6 or more steps while only 2 or 1.35% of the businessmen go through 3 steps. JMC no. 01, series of 2010 clearly specified Five Standard Processing Steps in applying for new business permits or for business renewal. However, majority of the businessmen answered that they undergone 6 or more steps in renewal process. Hence, most LGUs did not observe the five standard processing steps.

As to the number of signatories, 86 or 58.11% of the businessmen responded that there are 2 signatories affixed to the Mayor's Permit, while 13 or 8.78% of the businessmen answered that theirs have 3 – 5 signatories. The data imply that only few LGUs observe only two signatories in processing business permit – the mayor and treasurer/ business permits and license head, with alternate approving signatories – required as mandated in the JMC no 1., series of 2010[1]. However, there are still LGUs that were not compliant on this standard.

In terms of the number of application forms, 98 or 66.22% of the businessmen responded that they use only 1 form, while 17 or 11.48% of them answered that they used 2 forms. Results show that although there are still LGUs that use more than 1 form, majority of the LGUs complied using a single Unified Form in processing new applications for business permits and renewal. The unified form consolidated all the information about the business registrant needed by various local and national agencies. The adoption of this form was anticipated to contribute to reduction of steps and time in applying for business permits.

With regards to the facilitation fee, 59 or 49.87% of the businessmen pay above Php.1,000, while 44 or 29.73 of the businessmen pay Php.5,001 – Php.10,000. The data show that the LGUs' collection of payment for business permit renewal is within what are expected to be collected. Hence, they are compliant to this standard.

Based on the perception of the businessmen, majority of the LGUs in Surigao del Sur were complaint with the guidelines in BPLS pursuant to JMC no. 1, series of 2010[1]. However, there are new amendments in the provision based on the issuance of new JMC no.1, series of 2016 using revised standards to streamline BPLS. This new joint circular requires LGUs to cut processing time to 2 days for new business registration and 1 day for renewal. Also the number of steps for new applicants and renewal. LGUs are still directed to use a single unified form and observe 2 signatories just like the guidelines set in JMC no. 1, series of 2010. In addition, to streamlining, the new circular also recommends that LGUs should automate and computerized business transactions to be able to hasten frontline services.

**Table 3. Compliance of BPLS Streamlining as Perceived by BPLS Implementers**

<b>Processing Time</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
10-30 minutes	2	5.00%
31-60 minutes	1	2.50%
1-2 hours	5	12.50%
Within the day	8	20.00%
2-3 days	12	30.00%
4 -5 days	4	10.00%
6-10 days	3	7.50%
More than 10 days	5	12.50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Number of Steps</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1 step	7	17.50%
2 steps	3	7.50%
3 steps	2	5.00%
4 steps	4	10.00%
5 steps	9	22.50%
6 or more steps	15	37.50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Number of Signatories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1 signatory	6	15.00%
2 signatories	23	57.50%
3 – 5 signatories	3	7.50%
6 signatories or more	8	20.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Number of Forms</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1 form	21	52.50%
2 forms	8	20.00%
3 or more forms	11	27.50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Facilitation Fees</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1001 – 5000	10	25.00%
5001- 10000	12	30.00%
Above 10000	18	45.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 shows the compliance by the LGUs of Surigao del Sur on the BPLS streamlining as perceived by BPLS implementers. These implementers involve the BPL officer, assessor, treasurer and staff from Mayor's Office. Data show that in terms of the processing time, majority or 12 or 30.00% of the BPLS implementers responded that it takes 2-3 days while only 5 or 12.50% of the BPLS implementers answered more than 10 days. As to the number of steps involved, many or 15 or 37.50% of the BPLS implementers said that there are 6 or more steps involved in renewal processing and only 15 or 37.50% of the BPLS implementers disclosed that

there are only 6 or more steps involved. When it comes to the number of signatories, most of the BPLS implementers or 23 or 57.50% answered that only 2 signatories are present while 11 or 27.50% of the BPLS implementers said that there are more than 2 signatories required. In terms of facilitation fee, majority of the BPLS implementers or 18 or 45.00% answered that they collect above P10,000 and 10 or 25.00% of the BPLS implementers disclosed that they collect only P1001 – P5,000.

Based on the guidelines set under JMC no. 1, series of 2010, majority of the BPLS implementers in the LGUs of Surigao del Sur are compliant. Nevertheless, there are still LGUs that are non-compliant. Hence, they still have to cope with some provision of the joint circular especially with the revised standards in BPLS streamlining set under JMC no.1, series of 2016. Although these revised standards pose challenge to the BPLS implementers but if this be fully implemented, it will bring substantial improvement in government transaction in terms of speed and efficiency in rendering services and will make it possible for LGUs to achieve one-day business registration

#### **Satisfaction Level of the Businessmen in the Renewal of Mayor's Permit based on the CSI Framework**

Table 4 shows the satisfaction level of the businessmen in the process of renewing Mayor's Permit.

**Table 4. Satisfaction Level of the Businessmen in the Process of Registering and Renewing Business Permit**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Adjectival Description</b>
Expectations of the overall quality of the renewal process	9.11	High
Services of the LGUs considering all expectations	7.92	Somewhat Satisfied
Speed of the renewal process	8.05	Somewhat Fast
Number of steps involved	7.16	Somewhat Few
Number of signatures affixed to the business permit	9.44	Few
Number of forms issued by the LGU to facilitate the renewal process	9.38	Few
Delivery of the services of the Business Permits and Licensing Office (BPLO) frontlines;	9.22	Efficient
Cost of fees paid to renew business permits	8.37	Somewhat Reasonable
Overall quality of the renewal process this year	9.09	Satisfied
Overall quality of the renewal process last year	7.61	Somewhat Satisfied
<b>Grand Weighted Mean</b>	<b>8.53</b>	<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>

Table 4 underscores that businessmen are somewhat satisfied with the overall quality of the process as reflected in the grand weighted mean of 8.53. This means that they are likely pleased with this government transaction in terms of speed, efficiency and reasonable cost in rendering services. Data from the table also show that there is an improvement in the rating of the businessmen based on the overall quality of the renewal process in 2016 which gets a weighted mean of 9.09 describes as satisfied, compared to its rating during the previous year which has a weighted mean of only 7.61 described as somewhat satisfied.

**Significant Difference in the Compliance by the LGUs with the BPLS Streamlining as Perceived by Businessmen and BPLS Implementers**

Table 5 shows the analysis of variance in the extent of compliance of BPLS streamlining in the LGUs in Surigao del Sur as perceived by businessmen and BPLS implementers.

**Table 6. Analysis of Variance on the BPLS Streamlining Compliance**

Source of Variation	Df	Adj SS	Adj MS	F-value	P-value
Factor	9	0.10404	0.01156	1.91	0.512
Error	1	0.00605	0.00605		
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0.11009</b>			

Result shows the sources of variation with the computed gained P-value of 0.512 which is higher than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. The result implies that there is no significant difference in the extent of implementation of BPLS streamlining in the Local Government Units in Surigao del Sur as perceived by businessmen and BPLS implementers. Hence, the perceptions of the two groups of respondents are consistent and do not contradict with each other.

**Significant Difference in the Compliance of BPLS Streamlining among LGUs in Surigao del Sur**

Table 6 presents the analysis of variance in the compliance of BPLS streamlining among the Local Government Units in Surigao del Sur. The data show the sources of variation with the computed gained P-value of 0.305 which is higher than 0.05 level of significance. The decision is to accept the null hypothesis. Hence, the extent of implementation of BPLS streamlining in the Local Government Units in Surigao del Sur does not differ significantly.

**Table 6. Analysis of Variance among LGUs on the BPLS Streamlining**

Source of Variation	Df	Adj SS	Adj MS	F-value	P-value
Factor	22	6.302	0.286	1.56	0.305
Error	6	1.104	0.184		
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>7.406</b>			

This finding supports the results of the Customer Experience Survey in 2015 that Surigao del Sur is one of the 75% of the LGUs across the country which was able to comply with the 2010 circular[12].

**5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Majority of the LGUs in Surigao del Sur were compliant with the BPLS standards set under JMC no. 1, series of 2010. However, there are new revised standard in the guidelines of BPLS based on the issuance of new JMC no.1, series of 2016. Hence, LGUs still have to adopt and implement the new revised standards in the locality for them to be compliant with the new provision.

With this, the BPLS implementers and Local Government Units are highly recommended to follow the revised standards in streamlining the BPLS as mandated in the new JMC no.1, series of 2016 especially on the cutting short of the processing time to 2 days for new business registration and 1 day for renewal; number of steps for registration set at a maximum of 3 steps for both new applicants and renewal; using of a single unified form; and observing 2 signatories. In addition, they are also recommended to automate and computerize their business transactions be able to hasten frontline services. Automation of the BPLS reforms will bring substantial



improvement in terms of speed and efficiency of rendering services for application and renewal of business permit.

BPLS Oversight Committee such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) are encouraged to impose stricter performance standards for BPLS streamlining in line with its mandate to provide overall policy direction in the provincial-wide upscaling of BPLS reforms. Businessmen, investors and entrepreneurs are recommended to be vigilant and be active in providing their honest feedbacks as room for improvements of this reform in order to have a more efficient and hassle-free government services. The improved business permit procedures greatly help them to enjoy hassle-free, effective, efficient and fast application and renewal of business permits. With simpler permitting system, they will better access financing and other support for their operations since proof of registration is a usual requirement of banks and financing institution.

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