

New technology, cross-training, and process streamlining keeps NCARB's Business Process Re-engineering initiative moving in the right direction.

RE-ENGINEERING OUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

A switch from paper processes to automated services, staff restructuring, and more user-friendly communications are just a few of the changes that NCARB has made over the last three years to improve how it does business.

Interns can now create an online NCARB Record to begin the Intern Development Program (IDP) and they can more easily document their experience through NCARB's new electronic Experience Verification Reporting (e-EVR) system. Architects can renew their Record and apply for reciprocal registration online, and customers who call NCARB can expect to receive enhanced customer service. Web technology has been effectively utilized to provide easy access to information about NCARB programs as well as details on their individual NCARB Record.

The Council underwent this makeover as part of its Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) Initiative. Launched in 2007, the

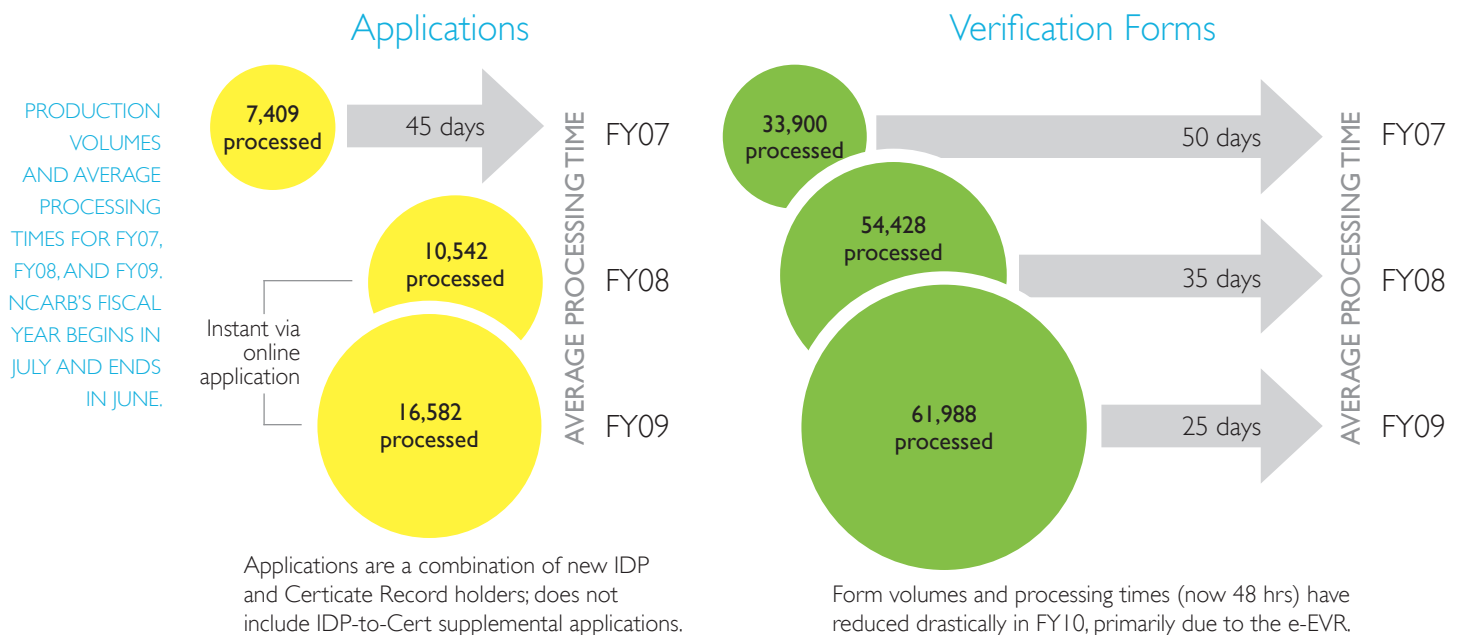
BPR was designed to reinvent the Council's systems and processes. NCARB enlisted ICP International to assist with the identification of root causes for errors and delays within its Records and Administration Directorates. ICP's analysis found that antiquated paper and manual processes, delayed response times caused by backlogs, confusing messaging, and phone and e-mail backlogs were key factors that resulted in frustration and discontent among customers.

"We have more than 78,000 customers and we want to provide them with personalized service. This is part of our mission, and we are constantly looking for ways to be efficient," said Doug Morgan, Director, Records.

Since the BPR has been implemented, the Records Directorate's customer service staff has significantly reduced backlog and slow response times. The upgrade to online and automated services has dramatically

increased processing times and has also decreased the number of rejected experience reports submitted for the IDP—making the process smoother. The changes have also allowed staff to effectively manage a record number of new applications and related form submissions, requests for evaluations, and customer service inquiries. Efficiencies have also been gained by implementing electronic delivery of NCARB Records in support of initial and reciprocal registrations. As of January of this year, all jurisdictions only accept electronic submissions for both processes. This reduces processing time by many days while improving the information exchange with our Member Boards.

Major priorities during the BPR have included eliminating multiple hand offs and other inefficiencies that led to duplication of effort and backlogs of work. NCARB took steps to address these issues by cross-training staff on multiple functions within the Records



Directorate while removing unnecessary or duplicative steps from the process

“Our goal is to become a full-service department,” said Demetrius Norman, Assistant Director, Records, Evaluation and Certification. “We want our entire staff to have the same knowledge base and the ability to take a customer from A to Z by providing them with accurate and efficient information on everything within NCARB’s scope.”

Norman said that whether it is giving interns information on the IDP, explaining the Broadly Experienced Foreign Architect (BEFA) and Broadly Experienced Architect (BEA) programs to candidates who want to become certified, or giving college and university officials guidelines for the NCARB Prize, our customer service representatives (CSRs) will be able to answer your questions. We will also continue to stay focused on our value-added services

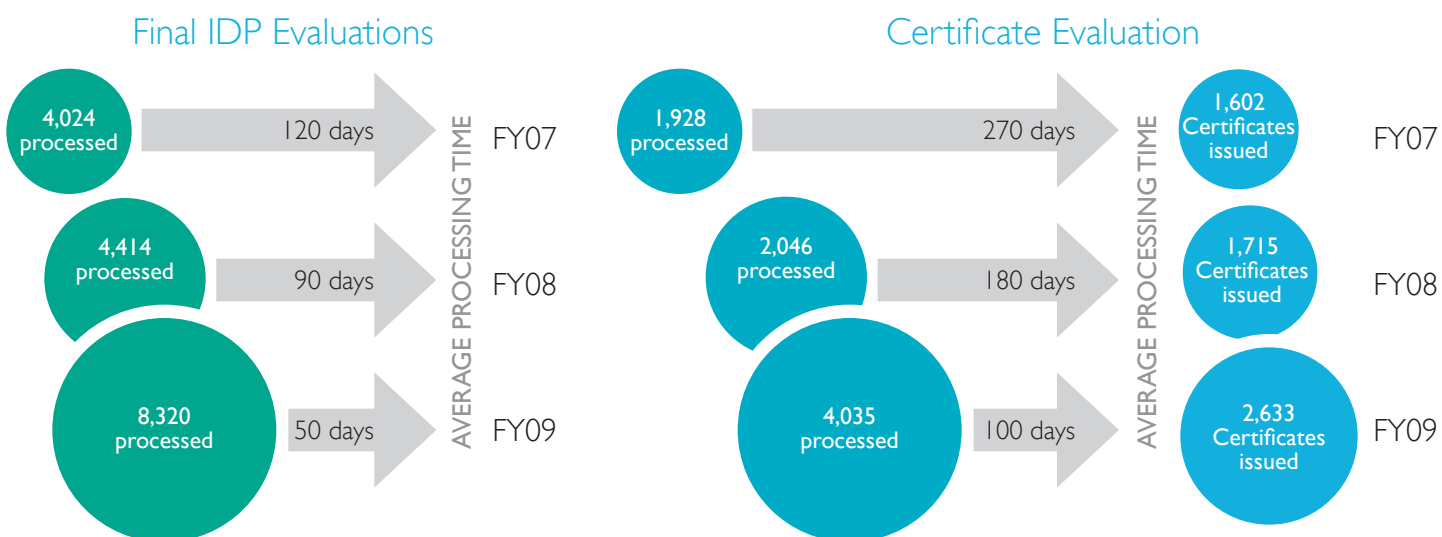
such as Record evaluations for admittance to the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®) and transmittals to registrations boards.

Through job restructuring, NCARB more than tripled its customer service staff size. By consolidating duties and automating many functions, NCARB was able to cross-train and reassign existing staff into direct customer service support. A new telephone system was also installed to address the high volume of telephone calls and long wait times experienced by many customers.

“Our old phone system was outdated and it was not meeting our needs,” said Roxanne Alston, Assistant Director, Records, Outreach and Audit. “We needed a system that could accommodate not only the Records Directorate’s growth, but the Council’s overall growth as well.”

This system has been in place since October 2009 and a number of new services have been added including a call-back feature for customers who do not want to stay on hold during peak business hours, and call tracking and monitoring. Alston said the new software for call monitoring is used for training and coaching CSRs, as well as quality assurance for our customers. She adds call tracking is helpful because it analyzes call activity and provides the information to adjust staff levels accordingly.

NCARB’s re-engineered way of doing business is a force in motion. Providing professional, expert, courteous, respectful, and responsive service is a staff-wide commitment to our customers. We are continuously looking for ways to increase customer satisfaction and will work to improve our services, now and for the future. **DC**



Estimated times start reflects the time between when all required documentation is received and a customer is placed into the evaluation queue to when the evaluation is complete and a formal update is provided.