

David M. Apatang
Governor



Dennis James C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 2025-004

SUBJECT: Establishing the Business Permitting Center to Streamline Business Permitting Processes in the Commonwealth

AUTHORITY: NMI Const. art. III, § 1 provides that “[t]he executive power of the Commonwealth shall be vested in a governor who shall be responsible for the faithful execution of the laws” and NMI Const. art. III, § 15 permits the governor to “make changes in the allocation of offices, agencies and instrumentalities and in their functions and duties that are necessary for efficient administration.”

WHEREAS; the Commonwealth recognizes that an efficient and transparent business permitting process is critical to supporting private-sector growth, job creation, and overall economic development; and

WHEREAS; businesses currently face multiple, fragmented procedures and agency requirements for obtaining permits, licenses, and clearances, resulting in unnecessary administrative burdens, delays, and costs; and

WHEREAS; it is in the best interest of the Commonwealth to streamline and coordinate these processes to foster an enabling environment for investment and entrepreneurship; and

WHEREAS; the Department of Commerce serves as the lead agency for economic and business regulation, and is best positioned to coordinate central government interagency permitting reform efforts in collaboration with other departments and agencies;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, David M. Apatang, Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, by virtue of the power vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth, hereby order the following:

Section 1. Establishment.

There is hereby established within the Department of Commerce, under the auspices of the Office of Foreign Corporation Liaison established under 1 CMC § 2494 et seq., the Business Permitting Center (“the Center”). The Center shall serve as the Commonwealth’s hub for coordinating and facilitating all business-related permits, licenses, and clearances required by law.

Section 2. Purpose.

The Center shall:

- a. Streamline and simplify the process for obtaining business permits, licenses, and clearances;

- b. Reduce paperwork burdens, duplicative requirements, and processing times;
- c. Improve interagency coordination and transparency for applicants;
- d. Provide centralized information, forms, and assistance to businesses; and
- e. Promote investment and compliance through efficient service delivery.

Section 3. Composition.

The Center shall be led by the Department of Commerce under the auspices of the Office of Foreign Corporation Liaison, which shall coordinate with designated representatives from:

- 1. The Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services (DFEMS), for fire code and safety inspections;
- 2. The Department of Public Works (DPW), for building-code compliance;
- 3. The Zoning Office, for land-use and development approvals;
- 4. The Department of Finance; for business licensure;
- 5. The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) Division of Environmental Health, for sanitation and health permits; and
- 6. any other agencies or offices deemed necessary by the Governor or Secretary of Commerce to streamline the permitting process.

Each agency shall designate a representative with decision-making authority to be stationed or readily accessible to the Center.

Section 4. Location.

The Department of Commerce shall identify and establish, in conjunction with the Special Assistant for Administration, a physical location for the Center that is accessible to the public and the business community. The Center shall also provide online access to information, forms, and application tracking, as resources permit.

Section 5. Payment and Collection Services.

The Department of Commerce, in consultation with the Department of Finance, shall establish a payment window or treasurer function within the Center to facilitate payment and collection of fees associated with business permits and licenses.

Section 6. Implementation and Coordination.

The Secretary of Commerce shall, within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Order, take all necessary actions to operationalize the Center, including:

- a. Identifying staff and coordinating with stakeholder agency heads to select their representatives;
- b. Begin developing standardized forms and workflows in conjunction with stakeholder agencies;
- c. Establishing an interagency Memorandum of Understanding to define coordination protocols; and
- d. Launching public communications to inform the business community.

The agency representatives identified in Section 3 of this Order shall be responsible for recommending changes to internal operating procedures, regulations, and/or statutes, as applicable, bearing on permitting requirements at their respective agencies.

Such recommendations shall seek to harmonize and standardize workflows across agencies and simplify procedural and substantive regulatory requirements to the extent feasible and consistent with the public interest.

Heads of departments and agencies are hereby directed, in their discretion, to implement and advocate for such recommendations to the extent practicable and consistent with the public interest.

Section 7. Funding.

The Department of Commerce may utilize existing resources, appropriations, or grants, and may seek additional funding, technical assistance, or federal support for the implementation and operation of the Center.

Section 8. Progress Report.

Within forty-five (45) days of the establishment of the Government Business Permitting Center, the Secretary of Commerce shall submit a written progress report to the Office of the Governor. The report shall include the Center's operational status, staffing and agency participation, workflow improvements achieved, and any recommendations for further streamlining the business permitting process.

Section 9. Compliance.

All departments, offices, divisions, boards, commissions, and other entities of the Commonwealth Government shall comply with the provisions of this Executive Order. Each agency shall cooperate fully with the Department of Commerce to ensure the timely and effective implementation of this Executive Order.

Section 10. Severability.

If any provision of this executive order or the application of any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this executive order or the application of its provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

Section 11. General Provisions.

- (a) This executive order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law.
- (b) This executive order is not intended to and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the Commonwealth, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.
- (c) Because this executive order does not affect existing law within the meaning of Article III, section 15 of the NMI Constitution, it does not require submission to the Legislature and is effective from the date of its promulgation.

It is so Ordered,

SIGNED AND PROMULGATED on this 18th day of November 2025.


David M. Apatang
Governor