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## **An Analysis on the Implementation of Ease of Doing Business in the Province of La Union, Philippines**

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**Abstract.** The Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018 aims to streamline government services' current systems and procedures. This descriptive-quantitative of research assessed the implementing Local Government Units in the Province of La Union with RA 11032 regarding the Citizen's Charter, access to government services through frontline services, Report Card Survey, and Zero Contact Policy. Documentary analysis and survey questionnaire were used to gather the needed data from the 216 frontline personnel. The data were statistically analyzed and interpreted using frequency count, rank, percentages, and median. The following results were determined: (1) LGUs in the Province of La Union are fully implemented and adhered to EODB in terms of the Citizen's Charter, access to government services through frontline services, Report Card Survey; and Zero Contact Policy; (2) the top three causes on the implementation encountered were lacking documentary requirements, clients prefer old system and internet not yet centralized/fully established/upgraded/low connectivity. The findings led to crafting an innovative program to effectively implement the EODB act in local government units in the Province of La Union.

**Keywords.** Citizen's charter, government services, report card survey, zero contact policy, innovative program

### **1. Introduction**

The Ease of Doing Business (EODB) has been defined as “the level of simplicity and efficiency with which businesses can operate within an economy (The Economic Times, 2023)”. The Anti-Red Tape Act - ARTA (2018) amendments, the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act, and improvements to the issuance of construction permits are all ways that the government plans to speed up the distribution of business licenses and permits, according to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018). Anent, Republic Act No. 11032, otherwise known as Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 1018, amending the purpose of Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 was enacted, which aims to lessen the perennial problem of bureaucratic red tapes that cause graft and corruption by re-engineering systems and simplifying requirements and procedures to improve the turnaround processing time (Gabriel, 2018). Upon approval, ease of doing business is now on implementation stage along with the efficient delivery of

government service that was previously enacted by the amended law (Gabriel, 2017). The Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) has launched a nationwide campaign to assist local government units (LGUs) in implementing its policies for reduced red tape and ease of doing business. Local government employees and representatives from the Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, and Cordillera regions took an oath. The continuing red-tape inefficiencies among local government units (LGUs) also remain a concern. As per Section 15 of the Ease of Doing Business Law, "local government units, and national government agencies are each given seven working days for the processing and approval of licenses, clearances, permits, certifications or authorizations to put up and operate telecommunication facilities, broadcast towers, equipment, and services. During the pandemic, the Department of Interior and Local Government released guidelines for LGUs on how to expedite the construction of cell towers. However, much work remains to be done when it comes to supporting the digitalization of MSMEs even after the pandemic (Mia et. al., 2023). The researcher's observations indicate that a number of issues, such as the LGU's capacity and capability and the local chief executive's political will, among others, impede its implementation. The current study is being carried out to evaluate the EODB Act's implementation in the Local Government Units in the Province of La Union using particular provisions or variables and to offer suggestions for how to improve it.

## **2. Literature Review**

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) takes keen interest in the ARTA and EODB implementation as it monitors and inputs to the achievement of the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022. The study is anchored by Good Governance Theory. Good governance theory develops from a set of principles or policies first introduced by the World Bank in relating with and in assisting developing or third world countries. The World Bank usually requires good governance practice, among others, as a condition from the developing countries (Bjork and Johansson, 2001; Ekundayo 2017). The United Nations (UN) is playing an increasing role in good governance. According to former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "Good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration" (Pacific Judicial Conference, 2005). Perante-Calina and Brillantes (2018) states the relevance of bureaucratic inefficiency to the ineffective delivery of services as well as corruption. Calina and Brillantes (2018) also provides the help of the Filipino citizens to stop Anti-Red Tape Act as well as the effective implementation of the Citizen's Charter. However, most of the above-mentioned studies focused on red tape and the relevance of corruption in bureaucratic inefficiency. Ease of doing business index was authored by Simeon Djankov, Michael Klein and Caralee McIlesh, three leading economists at the World Bank Group, following the release of World Development Report 2002 (Taneja, 2024).

### **Research Method**

1. In this study, the researcher used descriptive research design. The descriptive research design is a type of research design that a systematically obtain information to describe a phenomenon, situation, or population. More specifically, it helps answer the what, when, where, and how questions regarding the research problem rather than the why. The research design should be carefully developed to ensure that the results are valid and reliable. (McCombes, 2022). This design is appropriate because the study determined the implementation of ease of doing business of the local government units in La Union. The

descriptive research design was utilized to measure the implementation of RA 11032 in terms of Citizen’s Charter, Accessing Government Service through Frontline Services, Report Card Survey, Zero Contact Policy, the causes on the implementation of ease of doing business along the implementation to the Act.

2. Quantitative method deals on the numerical analysis of data collected through the results ng of the tabulation of the responses in the questionnaires. This type of research undergoes the process of collecting and analyzing numerical data. It can be used to find patterns, averages, make predictions, test casual relationships, and generalize results to wider population (Bhandari, 2020).

The quantitative approach comes into the area in which the researcher were able to formulate generalizations from the collected and analyzed numerical data from the survey and have it tabulated in which are gathered from employees in the five offices in the 20 Local Government Units in La Union.

3. Based on the data obtained from the respected LGUs, there are 492 employee respondents, respectively for the quantitative part. After rounding off the resulting counts to the nearest whole number, the final total number of employee respondents was computed at 216. Meanwhile, stratified random sampling was used to determine the number of respondents. Otherwise, stratified random sampling allows researcher to get a sample population. Overall, 216 employee-respondents was taken as respondents in this study. A questionnaire was used as instrument of this study.

4. To determine the central tendency of the implementation level, median was used to treat the data. For the explanation of causes of the level of implementation were treated using frequency counts and percentages.

**Table 1. Level of Implementation of the LGUs with RA 11032 in terms of Citizen’s Charter**

Indicators	Classification													
	Third Class Component City		First Class		Second Class		Third Class		Fourth Class		Fifth Class		Total	
	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med
1. is posted at the main entrance of offices or at the most conspicuous place in your institution/agency	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
2. is posted on the agency’s official website.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
3. is in the form of published materials written either in English or Filipino or local dialect.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4

4. Includes the mandates statement in the office.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
5. Includes the vision statement in the office.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
6. Includes the mission statement in the office.	31	4	70	4	22	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	215	4
7. Includes the service pledge statement in the office.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
8. enumerates the comprehensive checklist of requirements needed for each type of request.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
9. has a uniform checklist of requirements needed for each type of request.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
10. indicates the step-by-step procedure on how to obtain a particular service.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
11. indicates the person responsible for each step.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
12. indicates the maximum time to conclude the process.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
13. indicates the documents to be presented by the requesting party if necessary.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
14. indicates the amount of fees needed if necessary or if any.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
15. indicates the procedure of filing a complaint in relation to the application or request.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
Overall	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4

The Local Government Units (LGUs) in La Union have fully implemented RA 11032 provisions regarding the Citizen's Charter, meeting all indicators. The Citizen's Charter is prominently displayed at main entrances and offices, detailing mandates, vision, mission, transaction processes, responsible personnel, time requirements, fees, and complaint procedures. This reflects the LGUs' commitment to efficient, transparent, and citizen-friendly

services, promoting good governance, accountability, and community responsiveness. The full implementation demonstrates that the LGUs have established clear, accessible, and transparent service processes. Prominently displaying the Citizen's Charter reinforces principles of good governance. By adhering to RA 11032, the LGUs show accountability to the public, maintain high service standards, and actively reduce bureaucratic delays. The full implementation demonstrates that the LGUs have established clear, accessible, and transparent service processes. Prominently displaying the Citizen's Charter reinforces principles of good governance. By adhering to RA 11032, the LGUs show accountability to the public, maintain high service standards, and actively reduce bureaucratic delays.

Posting the Citizen's Charter in visible areas within government agencies ensures compliance with transparency requirements in government operations. Transparency is vital as it correlates with improved practices and performance (Gabriel & Gutierrez, 2017) and is closely tied to accountability, enhancing legislative performance relative to public funds' value (Gabriel & Ong, 2018). The Charter informs the public about service standards, empowering them to hold the government accountable.

**Table 2. Level of Implementation of the LGUs with RA 11032 in terms of access to government services through frontline services**

	Classification													
	Third Class Component City		First Class		Second Class		Third Class		Fourth Class		Fifth Class		Total	
	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med
1. The employees accept written request of the requesting party whether online or onsite. The receiving officer issues to the applicant an acknowledgement receipt.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
2. The receiving officer issues the applicant an acknowledgment receipt and a unique identification number to an applicant upon submission of all the requirements needed for the request/availed service.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
3. The processing time prescribed by the CC is no longer than 3 working days for simple transactions.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4

4. The processing time prescribed in the CC is no longer than 7 working days for complex transactions.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
5. The processing time for highly technical transactions is no longer than 20 working days.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
6. All of the accepted/received requests are acted upon by the assigned officer within the prescribed processing time in the CC.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
7. The processing time limit can only be extended once, and the extension must be for the same number of days as specified in the CC.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
8. The office will send a written notification that includes the reasons for the extension and the new deadline for processing before the initial processing time runs out.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
9. The notification bears the signature of the requesting party that serve as proof of notice.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
10. If an application or request is declined, the officer or employee making the decision will send a formal notification to the applicant or requesting party within the designated processing time.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
11. Formal notice for a disapproved request clearly indicates the reason of disapproval.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
12. Signatories in any documents are limited to three (3).	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
13. There is an alternate signatory if the authorized signatory is on official business.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4

14. The Citizen's Charter (CC), there are service assurances pertaining to the steps involved in transactions.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
15. The CC details the potential expenses associated with each service offered by the institution.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
Overall	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4

Table 2 highlights that the Local Government Units (LGUs) of La Union have fully implemented all indicators of access to government services through frontline services, meeting the median rating of 4. Employee feedback confirms the successful execution of various frontline service components. The full implementation of the Citizen's Charter provisions demonstrates the LGUs' commitment to effective, citizen-centered governance and service delivery.

The proactive acceptance of requests or applications, both online and in writing, underscores their accessibility and responsiveness. Issuing acknowledgment receipts and unique identification numbers ensures transparency, accountability, and effective tracking of citizen requests, leading to enhanced service quality and reliability. The researcher analyzed documents to evaluate the implementation of RA 11032 regarding access to government services through frontline services in the LGUs of La Union. The findings reveal that LGUs accept written requests and applications, offering various forms to facilitate transactions. These include business application forms for permits related to new businesses or renewals and mayoral permit application forms for activities such as events and goods sales. The forms collect essential details and ensure compliance with local regulations. Notably, all forms are easily accessible online via LGU websites, enabling clients to download and use them conveniently.

The findings align with Del Mundo's (2022) study, which highlighted that staff consistently accept written applications, requests, or documents from clients, with designated employees confirming receipt. In cases of denial, the responsible officer issues a formal notice within five working days, detailing the reasons and missing requirements. Additionally, receiving employees perform an initial evaluation of submitted documents, ensuring adequacy. To streamline processes, the number of required signatories on documents is limited to a maximum of five, representing key office supervisors.

Adrutdin et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of client-oriented and inclusive management strategies to boost client satisfaction, recommending systematic and uninterrupted service interactions, even during lunch breaks. Tumampus et al. (2018) further underline that public personnel play a critical role in determining the quality of services delivered by the government.

**Table 3. Level of Implementation of the LGUs with RA 11032 in terms of report card survey**

Indicators	Classification													
	Third Class Component City		First Class		Second Class		Third Class		Fourth Class		Fifth Class		Total	
	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med
1. There is an existing anti-fixing campaign located in the vicinity.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
2. There is an anti-red tape campaign poster that can be seen by clients and employees.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
3. No noon break policy is observed.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
4. There is public assistance and complaint desk and assigned officer to address any complaints.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
5. The employees wear their identification cards.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	3	50	4	14	4	216	4
6. Quality is observed in the frontline services through feedback forms answered by the clients.	31	4	69	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	215	4
7. There is a visitor's logbook.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
8. There is issuance of visitor pass.	31	4	70	3	23	4	28	3	50	3.5	14	3	216	4
9. The frontline service providers act in a timely and prompt manner.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4

Table 3 shows that the local government units of La Union are fully implemented in all indicators of report card survey, meeting 4 median. This marks that the implementation with

the Report Card Survey of the Local Government Units of La Union within the five frontline offices is consistent with the provisions of the law.

Institutions in La Union promote transparency through anti-fixing, anti-red tape, and no-noon-break policies, with a public assistance desk to handle grievances. Staff display identification cards, and client feedback forms are used to assess service quality. Visitor logbooks are maintained, and institutions are evaluated through a Report Card Survey to gauge efficiency, service quality, and adherence to the Citizen's Charter. Frontline staff provide courteous, timely, and impartial service, even outside regular hours, in a well-structured environment that fosters positive service delivery.

The findings reveal that the Local Government Units (LGUs) of La Union fully comply with the Report Card Survey requirements and demonstrate strong adherence to legal provisions. The LGU's of La Union effectively combats bribery, corruption, and favoritism through its anti-fixing campaign, and actively promotes anti-red tape efforts to reduce bureaucratic delays. The LGUs also adhere to the no-noon-break policy, provide spaces for citizen assistance and complaints, and utilize feedback forms to improve frontline services. The layout of the offices fosters a positive work environment, enhancing efficiency and client satisfaction. Frontline personnel consistently exhibit professionalism, courtesy, and efficiency, contributing to positive client experiences. These practices reflect the LGUs' commitment to continuous improvement, accountability, and responsiveness to community needs.

Indriastuti (2023) highlights that the quality of service should be assessed from the customer's perspective, as they are the end users. The concept of equity is crucial, as both the institution and the customer's views on service quality must be considered. Delays in addressing public complaints can harm the perception of public servants' performance, leading to decreased public trust in the government. Thus, continuous and sustainable efforts to improve public service quality are essential to maintaining trust and satisfaction.

**Table 4. Level of Implementation of the LGUs with RA 11032 in terms of zero-contact policy**

	Classification													
	Third Class Component City		First Class		Second Class		Third Class		Fourth Class		Fifth Class		Total	
	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med	f	Med
1. The processor has no direct contact to the requesting party.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4

2. The receiving officer conducts a preliminary assessment to check the completeness of the application or request. In case of deficiency of requirement, the receiving officer informs the applicant by enumerating all the missing requirements is the only time where direct contact can be observed.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4
3. The institution is presently using a system electronic version of certifications or authorizations that can be printed by the requesting party with the same level of authority as to the signed hard copy to ease their transaction.	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	3.5	50	4	14	4	216	4
Overall	31	4	70	4	23	4	28	4	50	4	14	4	216	4

Table 4 shows that all Local Government Units (LGUs) in La Union have fully implemented the zero contact policy, achieving a median rating of 4. The policy aims to reduce direct interactions between processors and the public to prevent bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption. This is made possible through the adoption of electronic Business Permits and Licensing Systems (BPLS), aligning with the zero contact approach. The process involves no direct contact between the processor and the requester, with the receiving officer conducting an initial assessment to check for completeness. If there are deficiencies, the officer informs the applicant of the missing requirements. In some cases, direct contact occurs only when essential, such as for complex transactions or at the applicant's request.

The findings align with De Vera & Noriega's (2019) study on the Bureau of Customs' zero-contact policy, which minimizes face-to-face transactions to reduce corruption. The Bureau also introduced a Customer Care Portal for inquiries and follow-ups. Their modernization efforts, such as the Goods Declaration Verification System and BOC Portal, further support the transition to electronic processes, improving service efficiency and transparency.

**Table 5. The Causes on the Level of Implementation of the Local Government Units in the Province of La Union**

Causes	Classification														Total
	Third Class Component City		First Class		Second Class		Third Class		Fourth Class		Fifth Class				
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%			
1. Lacking documentary requirements.	17	73.9	36	69.2	8	50	14	70	19	54.3	6	60	64		
2. Problem with land, building, machine	6	26.1	22	42.3	7	43.8	10	50	10	28.6	2	20	37		
3. Lack of awareness on LGU processes/guidelines	5	21.7	11	21.2	3	18.8	5	25	5	14.3	2	20	20		
4. Clients prefer old system	7	30.4	22	42.3	11	68.8	6	30	14	40	4	40	41		
5. Internet not yet centralized/fully established/upgraded/low connectivity	4	17.4	19	36.5	10	62.5	3	15	21	60	3	30	38		
6. No generator during brownout	0	0	2	3.8	0	0	7	35	9	25.7	0	0	12		
7. Website not operational	0	0	8	15.4	4	25	10	50	3	8.6	3	30	18		
8. Varying views and opinions and personal agenda.	1	4.3	9	17.3	1	6.3	4	20	6	17.1	0	0	13		
9. Lack of funds	1	4.3	4	7.7	1	6.3	1	5	7	20	2	20	10		
10. Lack of Executive order/guidelines (Office not institutionalized/Separate/distant offices/Lack of manpower.	3	13	4	7.7	0	0	3	15	1	2.9	2	20	8		
11. Merely political	0	0	3	5.8	2	12.5	1	5	1	2.9	2	20	5		
12. Lack of cooperation among government officials	3	13	0	0	1	6.3	1	5	0	0	4	40	5		

As shown in Table 5, LGUs in La Union encountered significant causes in the areas of 1) lack of documentary requirements (64%), 2) clients prefer old system (41%), and 3) Internet not yet centralized/fully established/upgraded/low connectivity (38%).

The findings show that the frontline personnel in the Province of La Union encountered diverse causes that impacted their efficacy and the overall quality of service delivery. These causes are rooted in various operational, legal, and informational aspects of their roles, each contributing to the complexity of their work environment.

According to Cadmus (2022), in light of the increasing demand for enhanced bandwidth resulting from the adoption of digital technologies, local government units (LGUs)

must take a more proactive approach to improve internet coverage and the quality of service in their jurisdictions. Furthermore, the Local Government Code and the Mandanas-Garcia Ruling have clarified that the responsibility for delivering basic services, including telecommunications, has been fully devolved to the LGUs.

Given their closer understanding of local conditions, LGUs are ideally positioned to develop strategic plans that will establish a digital infrastructure responsive to the needs of their constituents. A proactive stance is essential for building a digital ecosystem where access to affordable, reliable, and secure internet enables Filipinos to seize social and economic opportunities within the expanding digital economy.

### **Conclusions**

The Local Government Units (LGUs) in the Province of La Union have demonstrated a commitment to adhering to the guidelines stipulated by the law, which aims to simplify procedures, reduce processing times, and enhance overall efficacy in service delivery. LGUs in the province are also on track to modernize government processes and improve accessibility for businesses and citizens. Despite this progress, there are still hurdles in fully implementing the Ease of Doing Business Act, which can be addressed moving forward. Furthermore, program innovations may play a crucial role in improving the frontline services of the LGUs in the Province of La Union, Philippines.

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