

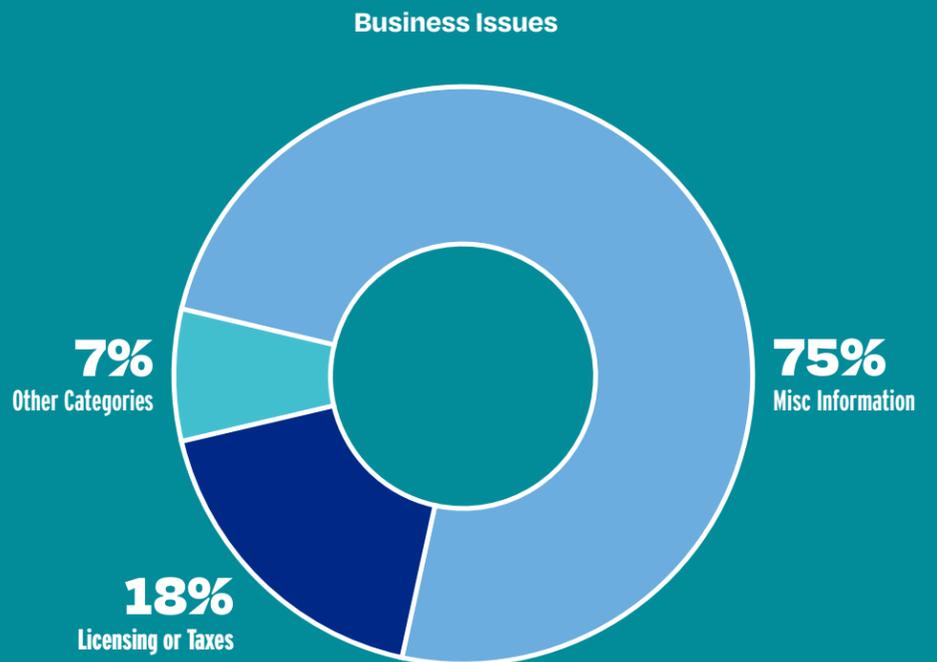
The Office of Small Business Assistance proudly served 3,265 businesses and prospective business owners in 2022.

STATE OF SMALL BUSINESS

While small businesses saw an end to most pandemic regulations, new obstacles such as worker shortages, inflation, and long processing times with state agencies presented new challenges.

OSBA is designed to help small businesses navigate state government, and this year we saw many business owners experience significant delays when dealing with state agencies. Backlogs of work, poor response times, and delays resulted in business owners paying operating costs without being able to legally provide goods or services.

Among many agencies requiring up-front expenses from businesses as a condition of licensing are the Construction Contractors Board and the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission, which both experienced long delays in processing license applications and do not allow businesses to provide goods or services until a license is granted. The Secretary of State's Corporation Division began facing backlog issues during the pandemic, exacerbated by ongoing workforce challenges alongside an increase of filings and call volume in comparison to the previous year. These issues have impacted business owners' ability to prove ownership of companies, resolve issues with banks and correct details such as addresses and entity changes. Small businesses attempting to remain compliant with state regulations deserve prompt service and clearer information about processing timeframes so that expenses and expectations can be managed appropriately. The Corporation Division is working toward enhanced automation and appropriate staffing levels to deliver timely service.



agencies are providing that in a meaningful way. It remained difficult to get help by phone from government agencies and technical assistance providers. Many groups serving small businesses limited contact by removing contact information from web pages, or chose single methods of contact that were not always optimal for some communities. Notable exceptions to this are Business Oregon, which posts all agency staff in a directory with personalized contact information; the Department of Revenue, whose Payroll and Withholding Tax Outreach Coordinator travelled throughout Oregon to engage with employers; and the Employment Department, which has been communicative and accessible about new programs and resources, hired multiple representatives throughout Oregon to better serve local populations, and implemented robust email campaigns and in-person appearances throughout Oregon.

OSBA Collaborates

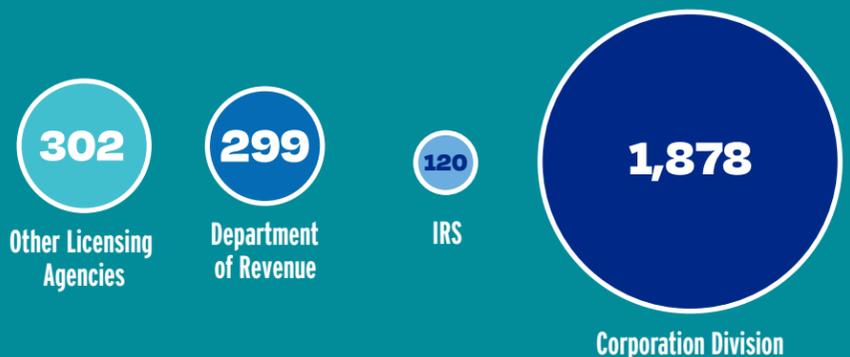


Since many agencies have pre-licensing requirements, the cost of starting a small business has increased and there are few sources for startup capital. The higher expense of starting a business and then waiting for state agencies to process licenses and registrations disadvantages entrepreneurs at the outset.

New industries, such as cannabis and psilocybin, are particularly underserved by state agencies. Business in these industries lack supportive technical assistance due to federal regulations on these substances that prohibit federally funded agencies or organizations from providing technical assistance, and misinformation about these programs is widespread.

State and local government agencies asked every small business to be flexible during the pandemic. Small businesses deserve more flexibility, grace, and transparency from state regulatory agencies, yet not all state

Case Counts by Primary Agency Involved



Awareness of and engagement with the Office of Small Business Assistance continued to increase this year, and customers appreciated our accessibility and prompt responses. We look forward to continually serving Oregon in this capacity.

Total Number of Cases Opened: 3,265



BUSINESS SOS

2022

The State of Small Business
Office of Small Business Assistance (OSBA) Annual Report

Business Startup and Closure Questions



Startups continue to outpace business closures, with 610 customers asking questions about starting a business and 116 requesting information about closing their business.

OSBA VIDEO SERIES

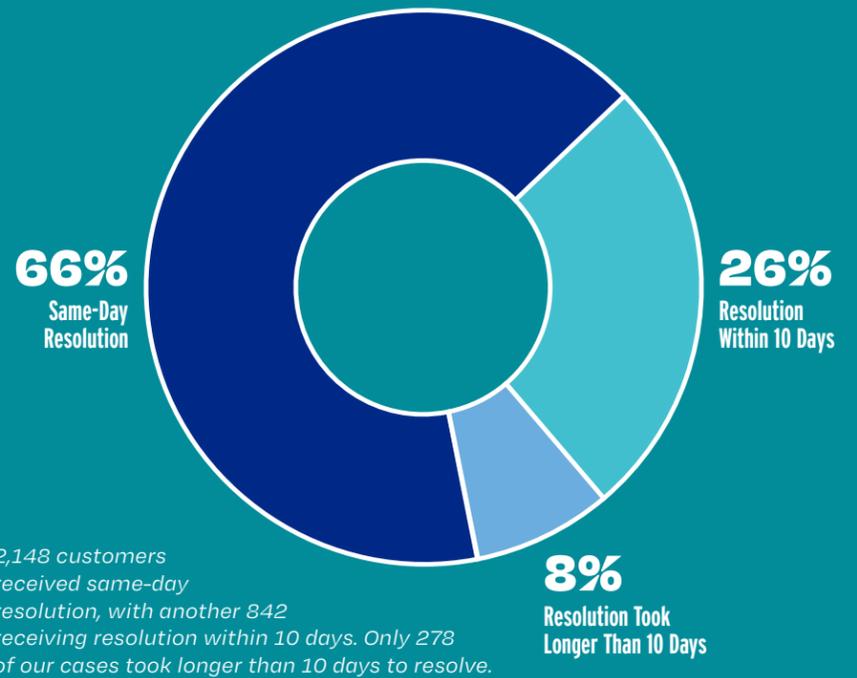
OSBA continued developing its YouTube Channel by adding 7 new videos that highlight other agencies and topics relevant to small businesses. Information from experts about Paid Leave Oregon, the Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID), US Small Business Administration programs, and benefit companies reached 1,149 views. Our channel includes 38 videos that have been viewed 53,270 times since 2018.

PSILOCYBIN

In 2022, OSBA partnered with the Oregon Health Authority's new Psilocybin Services team to provide accurate and helpful information to businesses interested in growing, processing, or facilitating the use of psilocybin. Oregon voters in November 2020 approved Measure 109, the ballot initiative to regulate the manufacturing, delivery, and administration

of psilocybin by licensed businesses, and the state will start issuing licenses in 2023. OSBA co-facilitated the virtual Psilocybin Fall Business Forum in October, which featured speakers from multiple state agencies and had over 300 audience members. OSBA continues to assist OHA and our state's new psilocybin industry by developing guides with information on state and local regulations, employer responsibilities and requirements, and general resources.

Response Time



WHAT'S NEXT FOR OSBA?

In 2023, the OSBA team will continue traveling the state to share resources and information, learn more about each community's challenges, and educate the public about how we help small businesses. Ongoing partnerships with regional development officers at Business Oregon, economists at the Employment Department, and community leaders will help establish more robust networks. We will work more closely with libraries to find out what resources their communities desire from government agencies. We'll continue to seek ways to identify and connect with underserved communities by remaining accessible and present across Oregon.

SMALL BUSINESS RULES ADVISORY COMMITTEE STUDY

OSBA recently surveyed all state agency rules coordinators. The purpose was to figure out which agencies are using the Small Business Rules Advisory Committee and how agencies decide whether a proposed rule or a rule under review affects small businesses. The survey had a 74% response rate. OSBA expects to issue the study early in 2023.

OUTREACH EVENTS

As pandemic-related restrictions eased, OSBA resumed travel in Oregon, visiting 18 counties across Oregon to meet with Chambers of Commerce, libraries, partners, local governments, and small businesses. OSBA continues to partner with other agencies and community organizations to connect with small businesses through their outreach events including the Latino Business Alliance's Expo Negocio, the Small Business Administration's Boots to Business Reboot, and Connect 2 Oregon, which helps businesses prepare for contracting opportunities. Our primary message is that we're accessible in whichever format a business prefers, including in-person in their community.

Past Year Startup Questions



ABOUT THE OFFICE

Launched in January 2014, the Office of Small Business Assistance serves as the statewide ombudsman for Oregon's small businesses. Businesses and nonprofits with 100 or fewer employees turn to us when they need help interacting with state and local government agencies. We work collaboratively with small businesses, government agencies, and technical assistance providers to make navigating state and local government easier. We work with our partners to maintain and update the content of Oregon's Start a Business and Employer Guides, as well as the Business Xpress website.

The Office of Small Business Assistance has a legal mandate to receive complaints from small businesses concerning interactions with state agencies. As an ombudsman office, we are independent, objective, and confidential. Our role is to help resolve problems in a non-adversarial manner. We are independent advocates for fair, transparent, and responsive government that serves all Oregonians. The OSBA team includes an intake specialist, a public outreach facilitator, and three members who perform ombudsman duties.

How Customers Contacted OSBA

