



L & I PUBLICATIONS:
**HOW TO START A BUSINESS IN THE CITY
OF PHILADELPHIA**



LICENSE ISSUANCE

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES & INSPECTIONS?

The Department of Licenses and Inspections (L & I) is the chief regulatory agency for the City of Philadelphia. One of its major responsibilities is to regulate business activity through the issuance of licenses and permits. The License Issuance Unit processes license requests and issues the documentation required to conduct a variety of activities.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I NEED A LICENSE FOR MY TYPE OF BUSINESS?

License Issuance will help you get information about the process as well as provide application packages upon request.

For information, call the License Issuance Hotline:
686-2490

When you speak to a service representative, be prepared to provide:

- The applicant name and address
- The address of the business
- A description of the business

The service representative will provide information on:

- The type of license(s) the venture requires
- The cost of each license
- What, if any, other conditions you may have to fulfill to obtain the license(s)
(i.e., Zoning approval, Certificate of Occupancy, Health Department approval, etc.)

The representative will mail you an application package at your request. You may also obtain this material in person or by mailing your request to:

Department of Licenses and Inspections
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard
Public Services Concourse
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Note: If you are not calling during regular business hours, you will receive an answering service. Please leave a message and a representative will return your call or send you a package at your request.

WHAT SHOULD THE APPLICATION PACKAGE INCLUDE?

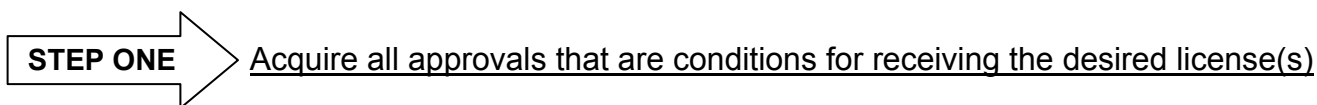
The package you receive will include:

- An application for a Philadelphia Business Tax Number (if necessary)
- An application for each type of license you desire to obtain
- Instructions about how to complete the forms

Note: Please read the instruction sheets carefully before proceeding

WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO COMPLETE THE APPLICATION PACKAGE?

When you receive the package and have read the instruction sheets, follow these steps:



There may be multiple approvals necessary to license your business. Some of these approvals are issued through L & I. Others must come from other City departments. Here is a list of departments along with common types of approvals:

1. L & I Approvals

This department regulates land use and construction. You may require these approvals:

- Zoning Approval

No business can be licensed unless the location is properly zoned.

License Issuance will make you aware if you must apply to the Zoning Unit for approval. In most cases, if the kind of business you intend to operate is the same as the one which was previously operated at that address, additional zoning approval will not be required. However, if you propose a different kind of business for that location, in most cases you will require this approval.

During the zoning review process, the “use registration” currently on file is compared with your proposed use. If the structure will be used differently from the previous owner’s use, you will require a Use Registration Permit. This permit is the City’s official record of the new use of your business site.

A zoning application can be requested by calling the *Zoning Unit* at **686-2435**.

- Construction Permits (Building / Plumbing / Electrical)

If your structure is new or an existing structure requires major renovations for the proposed business, the construction work must be approved by the appropriate permit units.

For information regarding... Building permits, call **686-2467**
Plumbing permits, call **686-2578**
Electrical permits, call **686-2513**

- Certificate of Occupancy

Some business licenses require that you have occupancy approval before you can receive a license. This usually occurs in instances when the building is new or where there is a change in use. A Certificate of Occupancy (C.O.) certifies that building requirements have been met.

The process of obtaining a C.O. begins in the *Building Services* section of L & I when you apply for a permit. The actual C. O. is finally issued from our district offices after the completed work has been inspected. When you apply for your business license, you may forward a copy of the C.O. to License Issuance, along with your license application. This will allow the unit to process the application more quickly. Please do not send the original document.

For information regarding a C.O., call *Building Services* at **686-2467**.

- Site Inspection – Business Compliance Unit

Certain licenses such as parking lots and garages, auto wrecking yards, and laundromats require a site inspection as part of the license processing procedure. This inspection is prompted by the application itself and must be completed before a license will be issued. Your application will automatically be forwarded to the L & I *Business Compliance Unit* for the inspection.

- Site Inspection – Commercial and Industrial Fire Inspection Unit

The *Commercial and Industrial Fire Inspection Unit* (C & I) conducts site inspections for safety factors in places of public assembly. If you operate a business such as a dance hall or dance studio, your license application will be forwarded to C & I for approval.

- Fire Plans – Fire Plans Inspection Unit

Businesses that use hazardous materials such as compressed gas or acetylene need this approval. Plans (i.e., drawings) may be required.

For more information, call the *Fire Unit* at **686-2534**

2. Health Department Approvals

Businesses that handle food, as well as other enterprises such as barber and beauty shops, require Health Department approval. The instruction sheet attached to your license application will inform you when this approval is required.

For more information, contact one of the following Health Centers:

<u>District</u>	<u>Address & Telephone Number</u>
Center City and South Phila. (#1,2,& 6)	500 S. Broad St., Zip 19146 (685-6572)
West and Southwest Phila. (#3 & 4)	555 S. 43 rd St., Zip 19104 (685-2285)
North and N.W. Phila. (#5,8,& 9)	131 E. Chelton Ave., Zip 19144 (685-2285)
Northeast Phila. (#7 & 10)	2230 Cottman Ave., Zip 19149 (685-0620)
Vendors	321 University Ave., Zip 19104 (685-7495)

3. Police Department Approvals

Certain licensed activities are monitored by the Police Department. This includes the sale of firearms and ammunition or the operation of a pool room or dance hall. The instruction sheet attached to your license application will inform you when this approval is required. L & I will forward your application to the Police for approval, if necessary.

For more information, call the *Police Department* at **686-3656**.

4. Streets Department Approvals

Licenses for businesses that involve sidewalks and streets, such as newsstands or parking lots, require Streets Department approval. Scaled drawings may be required. Read your license application instruction sheet carefully. The telephone number pertaining to the appropriate unit will be listed there.

For more information, call the *Streets Department* at **686-5501**.

5. Art Commission

Signs, awnings, canopies, or similar fixtures or structures that encroach the public sidewalk or are located in certain zoning control areas may require Art Commission approval. You may be required to submit working drawings of the actual design – drawn to scale – and other documentation.

The *Art Commission* is located on the 12th Floor of 1515 Arch Street. For more information, call **683-2095**.



STEP TWO

Complete the application for a Philadelphia Business Tax Account Number
(If you already have a Philadelphia Business Tax Number, skip this step)

The application for this requirement will be included with your package. Remember to sign it once you have filled in the required information. When you are assigned a Business Tax Account Number, it can be used for all of your Philadelphia business ventures.

Note: In order to operate a business in the City of Philadelphia, you **MUST** obtain **BOTH** a Business Privilege License (BPL) and a Business Tax Number. Obtaining a Business Tax Number alone does NOT satisfy or supercede the requirement for BPL.



STEP THREE

Complete the license application form(s)

Carefully review the application(s) and provide the required information. Remember to sign it.



STEP FOUR

Attach a check or money order for the appropriate fee amount (if applicable)

License fees vary. The fee is listed on each license application form. The cost of a particular license can be found by calling the License Issuance hotline number. Please make checks payable to “City of Philadelphia”. Do not send cash. This form of payment can not be accepted.

STEP FIVE

Compile all the required items and return the package to the License Issuance unit

Your completed application package should include:

- ✓ Completed license application(s) (with signature)
- ✓ Completed Business Tax Account Number application (with signature)
- ✓ All required approvals
- ✓ Check or money order for required license fee(s)

Mail the package to the address listed on the license application or bring it to the License Issuance Customer Service counter at the Municipal Services Building – Concourse Level at 1401 JFK Boulevard.

WHAT DOES L & I DO WHEN MY APPLICATION PACKAGE IS RECEIVED?

When L & I receives your package, the following process takes place:

1. L & I forwards your Business Tax Account Number application to the Revenue Department so that it can assign you a number.
2. The Revenue Department will forward your tax number to L & I so that License Issuance can process your license application.
3. License Issuance will review your application for completeness, process it, forward it for approvals (if they had not already been received), issue your business license, and mail it to you (or present it to you over the counter, in person, in applicable situations).
4. If your application is incomplete, License Issuance will contact you by telephone at the number you provide on your application form or return the application to you by mail for completion.

HOW LONG DOES THIS PROCESS NORMALLY TAKE?

- Processing time depends on the completeness of your application. If the application forms are completed fully and all other applicable conditions are met, issuance of your license may be processed in the same day. However, this time period may be extended when additional approvals are required.
- If all required information is not available at the time of application, your application will not be accepted.
- In certain cases, applicants will be required to show some form of identification, i.e., photograph ID, voter registration card, social security card, utility bill, etc.

Note: Regular business hours for the License Issuance Unit:

8:00 AM to 5:00PM,
Monday through Friday.

WHAT CAN I DO IF L & I DENIES MY APPLICATION?

If your license request has been denied or your existing license has been revoked, you can appeal the decision to the Board of Licenses and Inspections Review.

To file the appeal, call the Board at **686-2427**.

HOW DO I RENEW A LICENSE?

- Most licenses are renewable annually and the expiration dates vary. Usually, renewal notices are sent out automatically. You simply need to pay the fee indicated on the notice.
- In some cases, your renewal notice will tell you to file a new application. Please consult your license application and the instruction sheet for information on the expiration date and renewal process for your particular license.
- License renewals can be made in person or by mail. Please submit check or money order. License Issuance will not accept cash.
- Failure to obtain a necessary renewal will make you subject to enforcement action on the part of the Department.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT LICENSE REQUIREMENTS?

There are some common requirements pertaining to licenses:

- Business Privilege License

The Business Privilege License is L & I's most-issued license. Every person who desires to engage in any business in the City of Philadelphia, whether or not that person maintains a place of business in the City, must possess one. This is a one-time license and can be used for all businesses operated within the City.

- Multiple Licenses

Some business operators only need a Business Privilege License. However, other business operators need a combination of licenses in addition to the Business Privilege License.

For example, a street vendor selling fruit and vegetables may need four licenses: Sidewalk Sales; Food Preparing and Serving; Scales; and Business Privilege. The type of license you need depends on the kind of business activity you will engage in.

By calling the License Issuance hotline number, a customer service representative will tell you which license or combination of licenses you need.

WHAT OTHER AGENCIES CAN ASSIST ME IN STARTING A BUSINESS?

There are a number of agencies that can help, including the following:

1. **Department of Commerce** (Phone #: 215-683-2100)
One Parkway / 1515 Arch Street – 12th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

The Department of Commerce, the economic development arm of the city, implements the City's economic development policy. One primary goal of the Department is to support activities that cultivate economic opportunities for residents. Using local, state and federal funding, the Department of Commerce supports commercial and industrial rehabilitation, and infrastructure and business development.

2. **City of Philadelphia – Mayor’s Business Action Team** (Phone #: 215-683-2100)

One Parkway / 1515 Arch Street – 12th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

The Mayor's Business Action Team (MBAT), a division of the City's Commerce Department, provides Philadelphia businesses with a source of reliable and comprehensive business assistance. MBAT is the primary point of contact between the Department of Commerce and the business community. MBAT business account executives are familiar with a wide range of business-related information such as start-up requirements, licensing and permit issues. MBAT also brings together city departments and agencies to resolve business concerns and ensure full delivery of city services.

3. **Philadelphia Commercial Development Corporation** (Phone #: 215-238-7676)

714 Market Street – Suite 433
Philadelphia, PA 19106

The Philadelphia Commercial Development Corporation (PCDC) is the City's primary agency for assisting small businesses throughout the City's neighborhoods. PCDC's mission is to revitalize neighborhoods and assist small businesses. PCDC's financial services include small business lending through such loan funds as the Small Business Revolving Loan Fund, the Housing Contractors Program, the Comcast Loan Fund, and the Small Business Micro Loan Fund. PCDC also manages the City's Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization Program.

4. **Women’s Business Development Center** (Phone #: 215-790-9232)

1315 Walnut Street – 11th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107

The Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) is a non-profit organization committed to helping women in the Greater Philadelphia Region achieve economic self-sufficiency. WBDC provides products and services that promote the economic empowerment of women, accelerate women's business ownership, and strengthen the impact of women on the Region's economy.

5. **Minority Business Enterprise Council** (Phone #: 215-686-6370)

Municipal Services Building / 1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard – Suite 330
Philadelphia, PA 19102

The Minority Business Enterprise Council (MBEC) was established in 1982 to ensure minority-owned enterprises are afforded equal access and opportunity to compete for and secure contracts within the City of Philadelphia. As part of its role, MBEC promotes economic development through its certification program, contract review and monitoring activities, and ongoing interaction with other City Departments, quasi-public agencies, and the local marketplace.

6. **State of Pennsylvania – Small Business Action Center**

P.O. Box 8100
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Write a letter to request information.

7. **Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs)**

These centers, administered through the State, are available to assist you. Some are located at a number of colleges and universities in Philadelphia. For information, call:

- University of Pennsylvania – The Wharton School (Phone #: 215-898-1219)
- Temple University (Phone #: 215-204-7282)
- LaSalle University (Phone #: 215-951-1416)
- Drexel University (Phone #: 215-895-0302)

8. **Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce** (Phone #: 215-545-1234)

200 South Broad Street – Suite 700
Philadelphia, PA 19102

The Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to supporting and encouraging the continued growth of each of its nearly 6,000 member companies, and the business community at large. Its main objectives are to influence business-friendly legislation in government, participate in initiatives to improve education and the community, present professional enrichment programs, and to provide its members with cost-efficient ways to run their businesses.

On behalf of the Department of Licenses and Inspections,
thank you for choosing to conduct business in the
City of Philadelphia.

We are happy to serve you.