

# Tips on How to Start a Small Business in Santa Ana



## Tip 1:

Before you sign a lease or begin a business from your home, please contact the City Planning & Building Agency to:

- Confirm your proposed business activity is permitted in the desired zoning district; and
- Get a Certificate of Occupancy \* or Home Occupation Permit †



## Tip 2:

Will the business require physical alterations to the building, or interior, including signage?



## Tip 3:

After you have applied for your COO or HOP (and any other required permits) - contact the City Business Tax Office at (714) 647-5447 for a business license application, or stop by our office at City Hall, or email us at:

[BusinessTax@santa-ana.org](mailto:BusinessTax@santa-ana.org).



## Tip 4:

Complete a Business License Tax Application and appropriate Tax Fee Schedule based on your type of business.



## Tip 5:

The details of your business operation will determine the type of other City, County, State, or Federal licenses, permits, certificates and approvals you will need prior to commencing business. Information on some of these various requirements are provided below along with appropriate telephone number and internet links.

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|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Fictitious Business Name / Doing Business As (DBA)</b><br>(714) 834-2500<br><a href="https://cr.ocgov.com/">https://cr.ocgov.com/</a> | <b>Seller's Permit</b><br>(949) 440-3473<br><a href="https://www.taxes.ca.gov/">https://www.taxes.ca.gov/</a>       | <b>Federal Employer Identification Number</b><br>(800) 829-4933<br><a href="https://www.irs.gov/">https://www.irs.gov/</a> | <b>Preparation or Sale of Food</b><br>(714) 443-6000<br><a href="http://www.ochealthinfo.com">www.ochealthinfo.com</a> |
| <b>Alcoholic Beverage Control License</b><br>(657) 205-3533<br><a href="http://www.abc.ca.gov">www.abc.ca.gov</a>                        | <b>State Employer Identification Number</b><br>(888) 745-3886<br><a href="http://www.edd.ca.gov">www.edd.ca.gov</a> | <b>State Franchise Tax Board</b><br>(800) 852-5711<br><a href="https://www.ftb.ca.gov/">https://www.ftb.ca.gov/</a>        | <b>Worker's Comp. Insurance</b><br>(800) 927-4357<br><a href="http://www.insurance.ca.gov">www.insurance.ca.gov</a>    |



## Tip 6:

**Congratulations**, now that you have completed the process and complied with City, State, County, and Federal requirements, **you are ready to open for business!!!**



**Certificate of Occupancy \***: Every business, including temporary businesses, operating from commercial premises within the City is required to obtain a **Certificate of Occupancy (COO)** for their commercial location. The COO is to ensure that the business use of commercial premises is in compliance with all applicable provisions of the City of Santa Ana Municipal Code relating to Zoning and Building & Fire Safety.

**Building Permits**: Are required when changing the inside or outside of a building. Some of the following are examples of required building permits: erecting, installing, enlarging, altering, repairing, removing, converting or replacing any electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing systems.

**Home Occupation Permit †**: Every home-based business operating from a residential premise within the City is required to obtain a **Home Occupation Permit (HOP)** and comply with all applicable provisions of the Santa Ana Municipal Code relating to home-based businesses.

\*\*\* Please note City Hall is closed alternate Fridays \*\*\*

The **Business Tax Office Counter** is Located at:  
First Floor Santa Ana City Hall – Ross Annex, 20 Civic Center Plaza, Santa Ana, CA 92701

\*Contact the **City of Santa Ana Planning & Building Agency** at (714) 647-5804 or via email at [Planning@santa-ana.org](mailto:Planning@santa-ana.org) to verify zoning and confirm permitted uses and to apply for a Certificate of Occupancy or HOP. You may also visit their counter at First Floor City Hall – Ross Annex. For more detailed information visit [www.santa-ana.org/pba/](http://www.santa-ana.org/pba/). The Planning Counter is open Monday - Thursday from 8:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M. for customers submitting plans, pulling permits or paying fees.

## Business Licenses Small Businesses - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### **Q : What is a business license?**

*A : A business license is an annual non-regulatory licensing fee charged by individual California cities and counties on business owners for the privilege of conducting business within a city or county. Business license fees are due and payable before starting the business. The fees assessed are intended to raise revenue for the general operating expenses of a cities or county. The City of Santa Ana business license revenue is used to pay for Police, Fire, and Safety expenses as well as other general operating costs of the City.*

### **Q : Who is required to have a business license?**

*A: City law states that no person shall engage in business or transact and carry on a business, trade, profession, calling or occupation in the city without first having procured a license from the city to do so.*

### **Q : What does Santa Ana consider to be "doing business"?**

*A : Santa Ana Municipal Code defines business as including "all activities engaged in or caused to be engaged in within the city, including any commercial or industrial enterprise, trade, profession, occupation, vocation, calling, or livelihood, including rental of residential or commercial real estate, and every other kind of activity whether or not carried on for gain or profit, and whether or not engaged in as a principal or as an independent contractor, but shall not include the services rendered by an employee to his employer."*

### **Q : I received a 1099 Form instead of a W-2 from my work. Am I required to have a business license?**

*A: Yes, individuals that work as an independent contractor and are reported on a 1099 Form instead of a W-2 need to have a City of Santa Ana Business License.*

### **Q : I do part-time consulting/independent contractor work from my home. Do I need a business license?**

*A : Yes, businesses both large and small are required to obtain a Santa Ana Business License to be in compliance with the Santa Ana Municipal Code. If the consulting work or other independent contractor work is done from a location within the City limits, such as your residence, you are required to obtain a City of Santa Ana Business License. (Note: hobbyists and part-time businesses making less than \$5,300.00 per year may apply for a reduced gratuitous license fee.)*

### **Q : I am an independent operator performing services in association with a licensed Santa Ana business, or nonprofit organization or government agency. Do I have to get a separate business license?**

*A : Yes, engaging in business in association with, or performing services for, or in the name of a licensed Santa Ana business or nonprofit organization, or government agency does not relieve separate business entities, independent contractors, consultants or other self-employed individuals from the requirement to obtain a City of Santa Ana Business License.*

### **Q : May I Register To Do Business From A Post Office Box Or Private Postal Mailbox (PBM) Located Within The City Of Santa Ana?**

*A : No, a post office box or PMB address cannot be substituted as the business location address for any business, whether physically located within the City of Santa Ana or physically located outside of the City of Santa Ana.*

### **Q: I want to do multiple business activities from one location - Can I?**

*A separate license is required for each separate type of business done at the same location and for each separate branch or business property location.*

### **Q : Do I Need A Business License If I Wish To Operate A Home-Based Business In Santa Ana?**

*A : If you run a business from a residential premise within Santa Ana you are required to obtain a business license. Prior to the issuance of a business license, businesses operating from residential premises within the City, need to obtain a Home Occupation Permit and comply with all applicable provisions of the Santa Ana Municipal Code relating to home-based businesses. Home businesses must receive an approved Home Occupation Permit before they apply and pay for their Business License. The Planning Agency approves these permits. For information on obtaining a Home Occupation Permit, please contact the Planning Agency at (714) 647-5804 or via email at [Planning@santa-ana.org](mailto:Planning@santa-ana.org). A separate business license is required for each type of business operating at the same residential location*