

**CITY OF
SANTA ANA**



**BUSINESS
STARTUP**

**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

**LOCAL
BUSINESS**

• 2025 •

STARTING A BUSINESS STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Presented by:
Economic Development Division



Starting a Business in Santa Ana: A Step-by-Step Guide

1. Determine Your Business Needs & Location

The City of Santa Ana's Economic Development Division offers resources to help businesses start, grow, and succeed. Contact us or come visit us at our weekly office hours for assistance with business incentives, job training, and finding a location.

Phone: (714) 647-5445

Cost: \$0

Website: [Economic Development - City of Santa Ana](#)

Additional Support:

- Orange County Inland Empire Small Business Development Center (SBDC) offers free workshops and consulting on marketing, planning, funding, and management.

Phone: (800) 616-7232

Cost: \$0

Website: [OCIE SBDC](#)

- SCORE Orange County provides free expert mentoring, workshops, and online business tools.

Phone: (714) 550-7369

Cost: \$0

Website: [Orange County | SCORE](#)

2. Check Zoning Requirements

Confirm your business location complies with city zoning laws. Check your zoning using the City's Property Activity Search AND Contact the Planning and Building Agency.

Phone: (714) 647-5804

Cost: \$54 – \$19,945 (varies by zoning request)

Website: [Property Activity Search](#)

More Info: [Zoning documents - City of Santa Ana](#)

3. Choose a Business Structure

Select a legal entity type (LLC, Corporation, Sole Proprietorship, etc.). This affects taxation, liability, and financing. Consult an attorney or tax professional for guidance.

Cost: Varies by structure and filing type

More Info: [Online Business Services | California Secretary of State](#)

4. Register Your Business with the CA Secretary State

Certain business structures must register with the California Secretary of State:

Required: Corporations, LLCs, LPs, LLPs

Optional: General Partnerships and Sole Proprietorships

Cost: Varies by entity type (\$50 - \$120)

More Info: [Starting a Business – Entity Types :: California Secretary of State](#)



5. File a Fictitious Business Name (DBA)

If using a name other than your own, register a DBA with the Orange County Clerk Recorder.

Phone: (714) 834-2500

Cost: \$23 - \$32

Website: [Fictitious Business Name | OC Clerk Recorder Department](#)

6. Get a Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN)

Required for partnerships, corporations, and businesses with employees. Sole proprietors without employees can use their Social Security number.

Phone: (800) 829-4933

Cost: \$0

Website: [Get an EIN | Internal Revenue Service](#)

More Info: [How to Apply for an EIN | Internal Revenue Service](#)

7. Home-Based Businesses (home based businesses ONLY)

Obtain a Home Occupation Permit before applying for a business license.

Cost: \$54

Website: [Home Occupation Permit - City of Santa Ana](#)

More Info: Home-based businesses are not required to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy (COO).

8. Mobile Food Facility Permit (food trucks & carts ONLY)

Required for food trucks and carts in Orange County. First-time permits must be obtained through OC Environmental Health.

Cost: \$183 - \$488 annual fee

Application: [Mobile Food Facility Health Permit Application 2023.pdf](#)

Fee Schedule: [Mobile Food Facility Permit Fee Schedule](#)

More Info: [Mobile Food - Trucks and Carts | Orange County California - Health Care Agency](#)

9. Obtain a Business License

A business license is required to operate in Santa Ana. Contact the Business Tax Office for applications and fees.

Phone: (714) 647-5447

Cost: \$57

Website: [Business license & related services - City of Santa Ana](#)

10. Apply for a Motor Carrier Permit (MCP) (transportation businesses ONLY)

If operating oversized or overweight vehicles, obtain a special transportation permit through the California Department of Motor Vehicles.

Cost: \$35 - \$2,500 (varies by vehicle weight and type)



Website: [Caltrans - Transportation Permits | Caltrans](#)
More Info: [How To Apply | Caltrans](#)

11. Apply for OCTAP Permit (ride-share transportation businesses ONLY)

Taxi businesses operating in Orange County must obtain an OCTAP permit to operate legally.

Application: [OCTAP Company Permit Application](#)
Website: [Orange County Transportation Authority](#)

12. Get a Certificate of Occupancy

Required for businesses operating out of a physical location.

Cost: \$147 (Tier 1) or \$544 (Tier 2)
Website: [Certificate of Occupancy Application | City of Santa Ana](#)
Schedule Inspection: [Occupancy Inspections](#)

13. Food Facility Health Permit (food businesses ONLY)

Required to operate a food establishment in the County of Orange.

Cost: \$460 - \$2,817
Application: [Food Health Permit Application](#)
Fee Schedule: [Food Facility Permit Fee Schedule](#)
More Info [Food Facility Health Permit | Orange County California - Health Care Agency](#)

14. Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) Permit (food businesses ONLY)

Businesses serving food must comply with the City of Santa Ana's FOG program.

Cost: Free to enroll (additional fees for appliances may be necessary)
Website: [Fats, oils, and grease control program - City of Santa Ana](#)
More Info: [Food Service Establishment – Fats, Oils, Grease Application Form](#)

15. Seller's Permit (retail businesses ONLY)

Required if you are selling a product in the State of California.

Cost: \$0
Application: [CDTFA Online Services](#)
Website: [Obtaining a Seller's Permit](#)

16. Obtain State Permits & Licenses

Depending on your business type, you may need:

- Liquor Stores and Restaurants Serving Liquor – Liquor License
Phone: (714) 558-410
Website: [Apply for a New License | Alcoholic Beverage Control](#)
- Manufacturing and Emissions – Air Quality Permit
Phone: (909) 396-2000
Website: [Permits | AQMD](#)



17. Get a State Employer Payroll Tax Account

Employers must register with the Employment Development Department (EDD).

Phone: (888) 745-3886

Cost: \$0

Website: [Employers: Payroll Tax Account Registration](#)

18. Open a Business Bank Account

Keeping business and personal finances separate is essential for tax and legal purposes.

19. Create a Business Plan

A solid business plan increases your chances of success. Free resources are available:

- SBDC (Small Business Development Center)
Phone: (800) 616-7232
Website: [Home - OCIE SBDC](#)
- SCORE Orange County
Phone: (714) 550-7360
Website: [Orange County | SCORE](#)