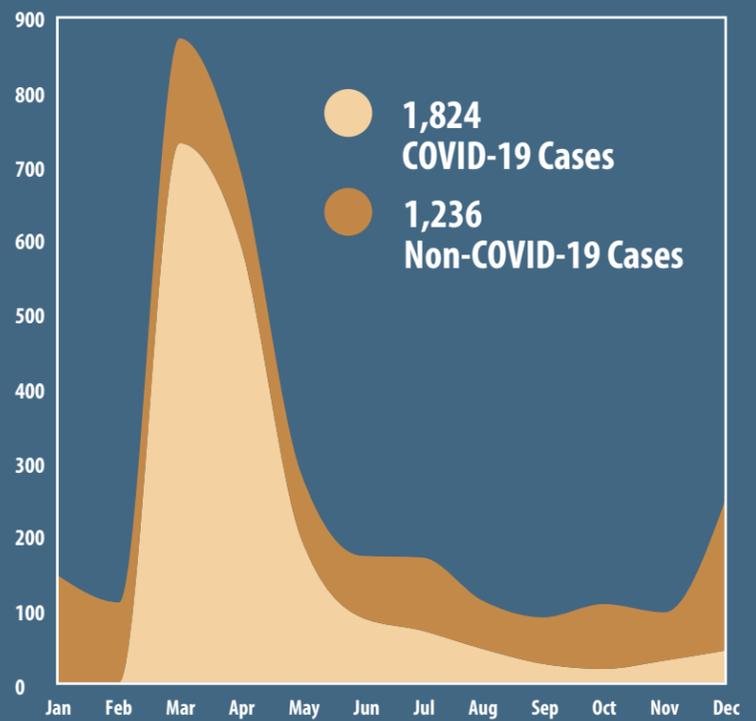


3,060 Businesses Connected with the Small Business Advocates To Get the Help They Were Seeking in 2020

Making a Difference for Small Businesses

Since 2014, the Advocates have helped **7,429** businesses get answers, solve problems, connect with resources, and understand regulations at the state and local level.

In 2020, the Advocates helped **3,060** businesses from all over Oregon learn about new requirements to operate, connect with resources, navigate government problems, and make educated decisions about starting, growing or closing a business.



Getting Businesses the Help They Need

Businesses in Oregon were desperate for help and information in 2020. Most businesses who contacted the Advocacy Team were seeking:

- **Pandemic-related financial aid**
- **Help with unemployment**
- **Clarification of pandemic regulations**



931

Cases involved **Business Oregon** and locating funding streams or certifying a business



760

Cases involved the **Oregon Employment Department** and accessing **Unemployment Claim** resources

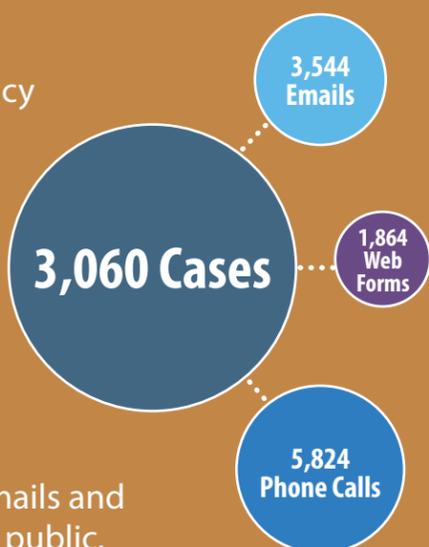


183

Cases involved the **Oregon Health Authority** and operating a business under pandemic regulations

Accessibility

Throughout 2020, the Advocacy Team remained accessible to the public through a variety of means. **1,864 customers** sent requests for help via www.oregon.gov/smallbusiness. Cases were created from **827 emails** and **364 phone calls**, and the Advocacy Team responded to thousands of additional emails and phone calls received from the public.



Oregon Secretary of State
Small Business Advocacy Team
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310-1327

Communicating with the Public

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and related travel restrictions, in-person outreach by Advocates was suspended. The team quickly shifted to a virtual platform, addressing frequently asked questions in a series of online presentations that were free and open to the public. Each presentation was recorded and posted on the Corporation Division's YouTube channel. Presentation topics included business licensing, hiring and correctly classifying employees, understanding business tax obligations, and more. The 14 online videos have collectively been **viewed 1,054 times**, and the catalog of topics continues to grow based on public interest and input from the business community. As more businesses pivoted to virtual networking, so did many technical assistance providers and business support organizations. The Advocacy team participated in **99 physical and virtual events**, reinforcing the fact that the team continued to be easily accessible to provide customized assistance and resources for businesses and nonprofits.

The year began with new requirements on bags at retail establishments and restaurants. The Corporate Activities Tax also went into effect. While there were a number of inquiries on these new regulations, these were quickly eclipsed by questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. New regulations involving social distancing, face coverings, public gatherings, and direct personal service limitations meant affected businesses had to pivot quickly in order to survive. Although many businesses were able to implement a new business model, others could not. By the end of 2020, **345 customers** asked the Advocates about starting or moving their business to Oregon. **81** had asked about the requirements to close or sell a business. During this same time, new business registries in Oregon remained strong.

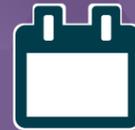
Agencies Working to Help

Thousands of Oregonians contacted the Advocacy team to get help when they didn't know where to turn. The Advocacy Team answered every call and email with information, guiding customers to the right place based on specific need. Businesses seeking financial resources were routinely connected with Business Oregon, who helped administer funding provided from both the CARES Act and state resources, and managed the Small Business Navigator website. The Employment Department implemented the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Program designed to help normally ineligible workers receive unemployment. In July, advocates saw a substantial drop in the number of cases related to the PUA program after the Employment Department deployed a new web form to aid in communication about unemployment claims. Businesses seeking guidance on reopening and ensuring safety for customers and workers contacted the Advocates and received information about Health Authority guidelines from Governor Brown's website coronavirus.oregon.gov. Frequent press briefings and swift updates to coronavirus.oregon.gov allowed the Advocacy team to ensure that businesses received current and correct information.



1,054

Views of the Advocacy Team's 14 YouTube videos



99

Physical and virtual business outreach events



345

Requests for information about starting or moving a business to Oregon

Looking Ahead

Almost all of 2020 was challenging for businesses and nonprofits globally. While it remains unclear the challenges 2021 will bring, it stands to reason that businesses who can continue to adjust and remain nimble can survive. Businesses will need to continue to adapt their business models and embrace new ways to provide services and products to their customer base.

Using technical service providers such as the Small Business Development Centers, SCORE, and Livelihood NW (to name a few) will bring new ideas, perspective, and support systems to small businesses looking to start and grow. Networking continues to be an imperative for businesses to thrive, given the shift to virtual platforms. Staying in touch with peers across industries maintains relationships and promotes exposure to opportunities, potential partners, and diverse ideas.

Small Business Rules Advisory Committee

The Office of Small Business Assistance appointed Tina Donnaloia, the owner of Hoot-N-Annie Resale Boutique LLC to the Small Business Rules Advisory Committee. The Small Business Rules Advisory Committee serves as an advisory group for agencies adopting new or reviewing existing administrative rules. The group provides the unique perspective of small business owners and helps agencies to meet their obligations to include small business in the rulemaking process.

Tina's business has expanded this year, and she continues to be an active member of the community both as a small business owner and an individual.

About the Office

The Office of Small Business Assistance was established with the passage of HB 3459 (2013). The Small Business Advocates work with businesses and nonprofits employing 100 or fewer individuals when they have questions or problems with state and local government agencies. As one of the most robust programs of its kind in the US, the team has grown in direct proportion to need. It now includes an intake specialist, two Advocates and a Small Business Ombudsman who oversees the office and its operations.

The team continuously reaches out across Oregon to business leaders and associations, tribes, chambers of commerce, and community partners to hear their concerns about getting caught in red tape. And everywhere they go, they run with scissors.



About the Help Button

When you need help, you need it right away. That's why you'll see this button on state agency websites. Click and tell us who you are, your question or concern, and how to get in touch with you. That's our cue to get to work.