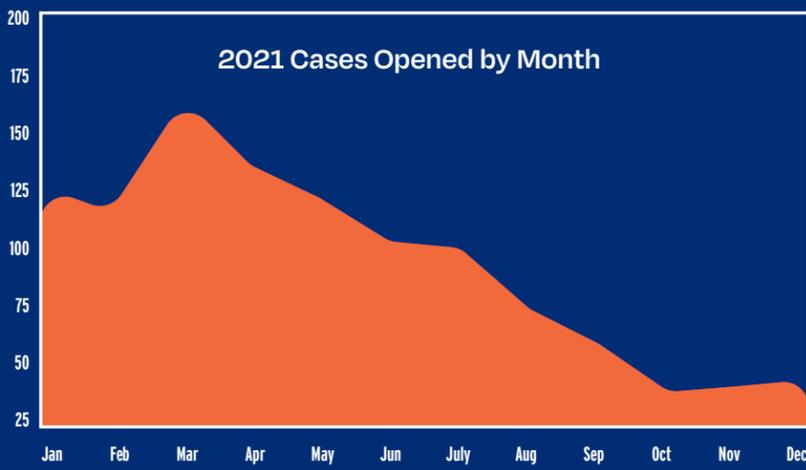


1,128 Small Businesses Busted Through Barriers in 2021

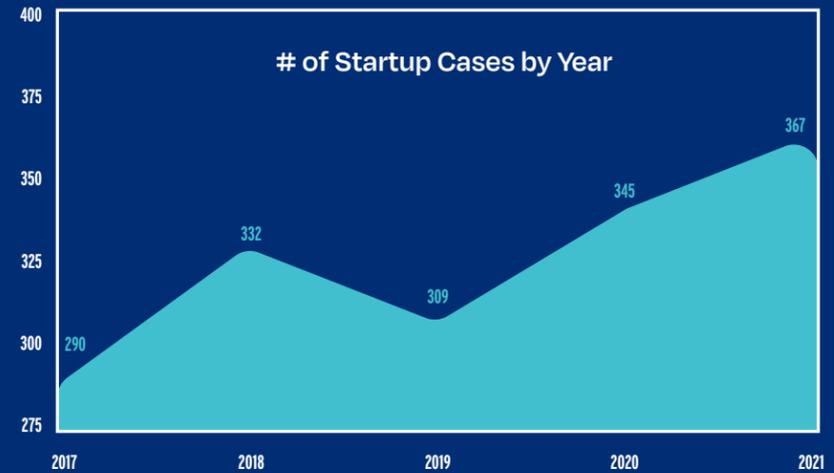


The majority of the remaining cases fell outside OSBA jurisdiction for a variety of reasons. It is routine for OSBA staff to redirect or offer alternate options and resources to solve the problem brought to us.

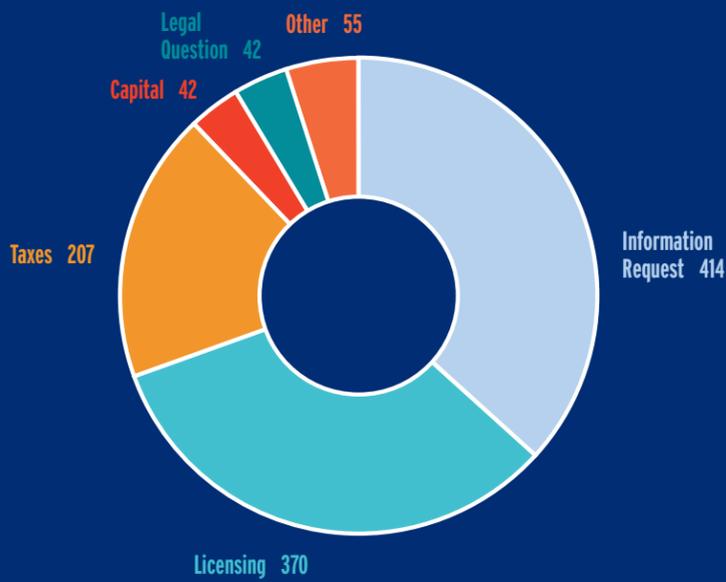
OSBA worked to improve accessibility and understanding of regulations in 2021, including a new web page cataloging previous public reports produced by the OSBA, a web page clarifying the many definitions of the term “small business”, a complete overhaul of the Business Xpress website, an in-depth review of the Business Xpress License Directory, and a collaborative update of *Oregon’s Start a Business Guide* and *Employer’s Guide*. The team also worked on complex cases involving Department of Transportation procurement practices and Construction Contractors Board licensing accessibility in Spanish. OSBA maintains excellent relationships with other regulatory agencies in order to collaboratively serve small businesses seeking guidance or resolving problems.

STATE OF SMALL BUSINESS

Most small businesses struggling through 2020 hoped that 2021 would bring prosperity and relief after the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, 2021 offered slow recovery and new obstacles for many small businesses to overcome. While regulations on business operations largely relaxed, ongoing hesitancy from the public to engage in commerce and a labor shortage overwhelmed businesses across Oregon. The OSBA found many small businesses persevered, resulting in fewer seeking assistance from OSBA. Pandemic-related cases dropped substantially, while questions involving startup processes remained consistent with previous years.

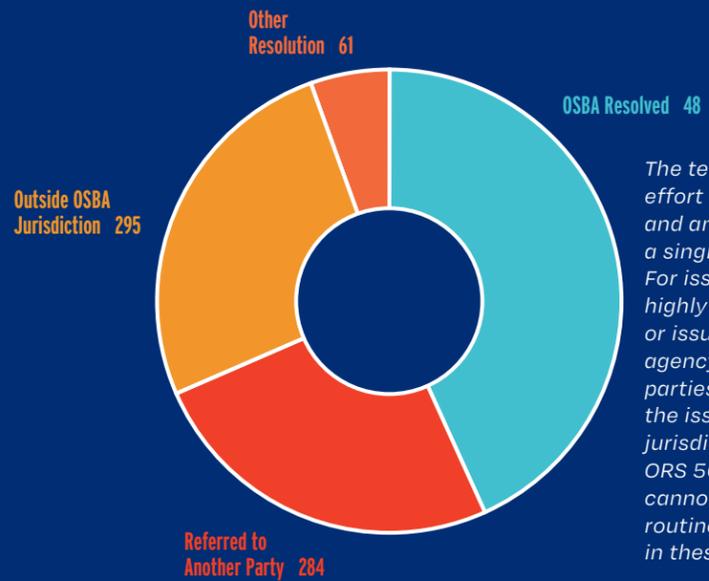


2021 Cases By Business Issue



Licensing, information requests, and taxes were the three largest categories of casework for the OSBA in 2021, accounting for 88% of total cases. Nearly two-thirds of all cases were either resolved by OSBA staff or referred to a more appropriate party for resolution.

2021 Business Solutions



The team makes every effort to resolve problems and answer questions with a single conversation. For issues involving taxes, highly technical issues, or issues not involving any agency, referrals to other parties must be made. If the issue falls outside the jurisdiction set in ORS 56.206, the team cannot investigate, but routinely shares resources in these circumstances.

BUSINESS SOS

RESILIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE



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

BUSINESS XPRESS UPDATE

Business Xpress is Oregon's one-stop shop for businesses of all sizes to connect with government agencies and resources. It also hosts Oregon's Business License Directory, where anyone can search for business license requirements by keyword. The Office of Small Business Assistance overhauled the Business Xpress website in 2021 for a more phase-driven flow. Whether a business is planning, starting, managing, growing, or closing, Business Xpress provides assistance based on where they are in the process.

Find out more at www.oregon.gov/business.

WHAT'S A SMALL BUSINESS?

In November, OSBA released a report identifying the many uses of the term "small business". We reviewed existing laws, rules, and federal code. We also examined the definitions used in the states bordering Oregon. As the report makes clear, federal, state, and local governments use various definitions and size criteria. This means small businesses must navigate multiple programs and examine the various applications of the term to decide whether they qualify for assistance.

See the list and read the report at: www.oregon.gov/smallbusiness/Pages/small-business-definitions.aspx

EDUCATION AND NETWORKING

OSBA continued to meet the challenges of effective virtual communication with customers and partners. Members of the team attended virtual meetings throughout the year, including bimonthly

meetings of Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME), monthly meetings of Salem Capitol Connections, and monthly meetings with representatives from each of Oregon's federally recognized Tribes. Team members also participated in panel discussions for Livelihood Northwest, presented information alongside the US Small Business Administration for Small Business Week, and facilitated education for contractors about the shift to OregonBuys for state government procurement. The Secretary of State's *Start a Business Guide* and *Employer's Guide* were both updated as part of a collaborative effort involving ten other agencies. Educational interviews were posted on the Corporation Division's YouTube channel, with many more topics scheduled to be added in 2022. There are many training events available from a variety of government agencies, non-profits, and business support services.

Visit the Business Xpress training calendar at: www.oregon.gov/business/Pages/Training.aspx to learn more.

Case Counts by Primary Agency Involved



OSBA staff helped small businesses interact with many other agencies, including the Department of Revenue, Employment Department, Business Oregon and 45 other state agencies, 14 counties, and 33 cities.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2020 and early 2021, OSBA saw a surge of small businesses and individuals seeking resources to stay afloat. As we move into 2022, we've noticed an expected drastic reduction in questions or issues relating to Unemployment Insurance benefits, emergency assistance, and business or workplace safety requirements.

Recent activity at the federal level should bring good news to Oregon in the form of new infrastructure projects. These projects stand to bring opportunities not only for manufacturers and construction contractors, but also the business-to-business services necessary to support them. OSBA continues to underscore the value of networking for small businesses. Those who have built relationships through local networking groups and other community resources will have already laid the groundwork to take advantage of upcoming opportunities. We recommend reaching out to local chambers of commerce and professional networking groups, as well as technical service providers such as the Small Business Development Centers and SCORE for businesses to better position themselves for the coming year.

OREGON'S LICENSE DIRECTORY

OSBA staff have answered thousands of questions about business licensing since 2014 and continue to find new ways to educate small business owners. This year we did an in-depth analysis of our Business Xpress License Directory to ensure small businesses have access to information about license requirements and which authority regulates such licensing. The OSBA looks forward to collaborating with agencies listing information in the directory to support small businesses.

Origin of Cases



ABOUT THE OFFICE

The Office of Small Business Assistance (OSBA) was established with the passage of HB 3459 (2013). The Small Business Assistance Team works with businesses who have 100 or fewer employees. The team assists with questions or issues 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, Public Outreach Facilitator and two Advocates. The Small Business Ombudsman oversees the office and its operations.

OSBA continuously reaches out across Oregon to Tribes, business leaders and associations, chambers of commerce, and community partners to hear their concerns and collaborate on ways to assist Oregon small businesses.



Small businesses contacted the team most often via telephone, answering more than 4,300 calls in 2021. Casework was mostly generated using the web form or email in 2021. The team continues to answer calls in-person and return voicemails either same day or within 24 hours.