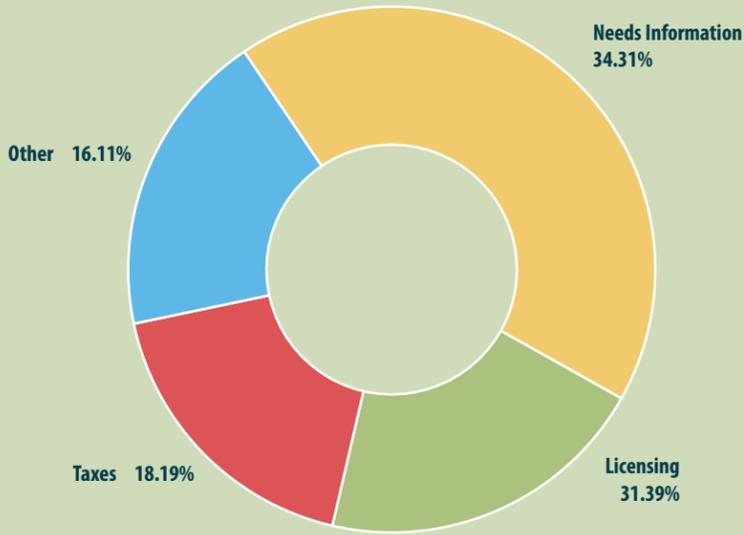


## 1,075 Businesses Busted Through Barriers In 2019 With Our Assistance



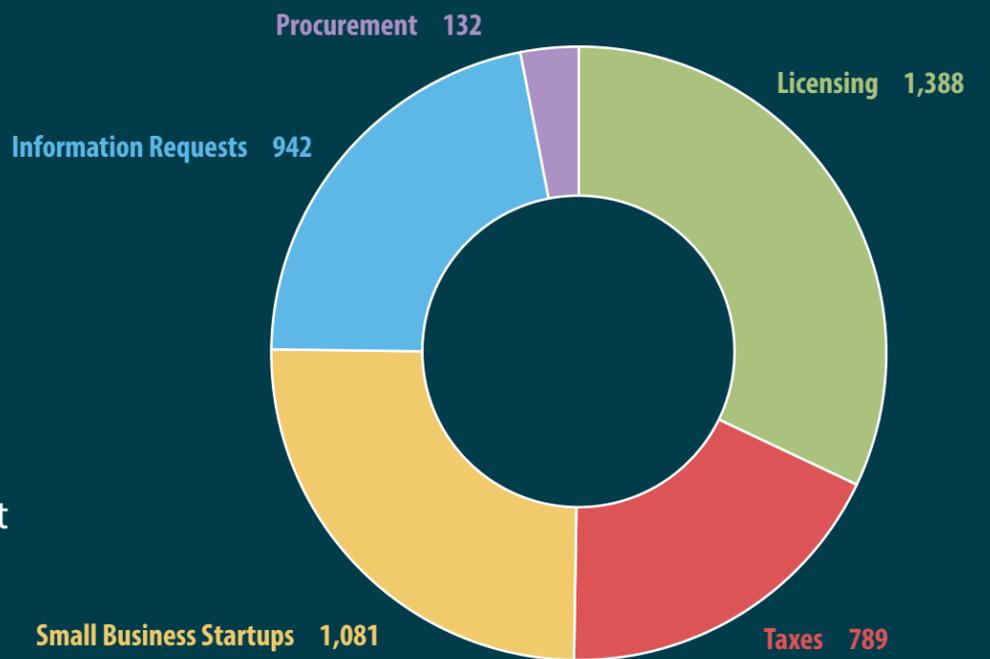
### Getting Businesses the Help They Need

Businesses continued to ask for help and information about tax obligations, business licensing and startup resources. These three categories made up **over 80% of all cases** in 2019.

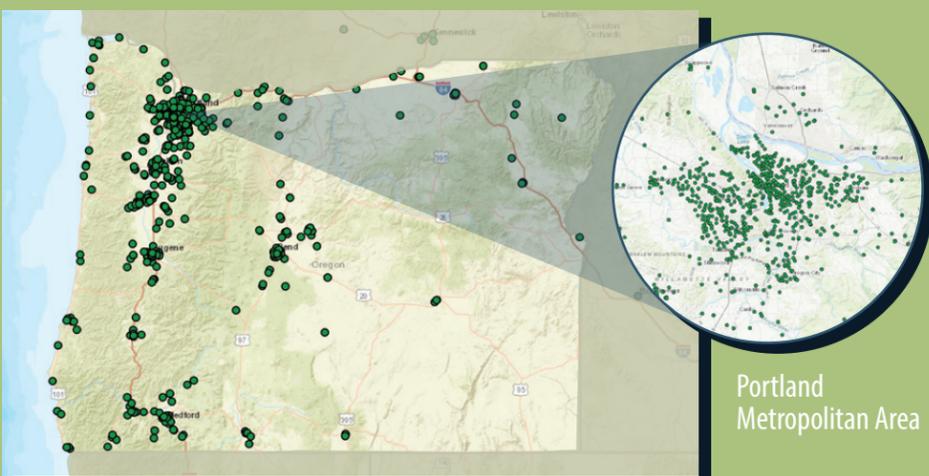
The Small Business Advocacy Team worked with over **70 different** agencies, boards, commissions, and local government entities in 2019. Some of the agencies most frequently worked with were the Department of Revenue, the Construction Contractors Board, Business Oregon, the Bureau of Labor and Industries, and the Employment Department. Whether these agencies handle trade licenses, business taxes, or help businesses get certified, each agency collaborated with the advocates to help small businesses.

### Making a Difference for Small Businesses

Since 2014, the Advocacy Team has helped over **4,300** businesses get answers, solve problems, connect with resources and understand regulations at the state and local level. In 2019, the Advocacy Team helped 1,075 businesses navigate government problems from all over Oregon.



### 2019 SMALL BUSINESS CASES BY LOCATION



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

## Advocates Go the Distance

Relationships are important, so the Small Business Advocates participated in **107 unique business outreach events**, logging nearly **12,000 miles** crisscrossing Oregon in 2019. When we're in your community, we visit with and often train local businesses, check in with your chamber of commerce, Small Business Development Centers, and state agency field offices. We're always looking to forge strong relationships, make connections, and provide resources, whether we're with local staff at city halls, county seats or in the business community.

Businesses and nonprofits throughout Oregon contacted the Small Business Advocacy Team to get information about regulations involved in starting a business. With a complex patchwork of state and local regulations, the Advocates are able to provide clear guidance and identify decision points for entrepreneurs.

In addition, Advocates work with an amazing network of strategic partners who serve the business community. Helping entrepreneurs connect with free or low-cost training and expertise can reinforce confidence, empowering a business to start smart.



## GREAT STORIES

### Transit Troubles:

Frank is a technical consultant for businesses, so as you'd expect, he's on the ball with taxes. Imagine his surprise when he received a penalty for not submitting a Statewide Transit Tax return. After his letters to the Department of Revenue went unanswered, he called the Advocacy Team. The Advocates learned that the returns had been received but not processed before the agency sent Frank a penalty letter. Since everyone agreed that Frank had sent in the returns, the penalty was waived, and Frank got back to helping other businesses.

### Wrapper's Delight:

Twelve-year-old Diana is looking to start up a gift wrapping business. Like many new entrepreneurs, she started with a great idea but wanted help with the details of opening a business. The most important question Diana had was IF she could start a business at her age. The Advocate was able to clarify different business structures, provide information on age requirements and offered her options instead of barriers. Diana received her own gift-wrapped package of information from multiple agencies, letting her make informed decisions on her next steps as a business owner.

### A Shocking Conclusion:

Kelly wanted to know if an AED was required on her private school campus. She wasn't sure who to contact, so she reached out to the Advocacy Team, who found four different agencies with laws involving AEDs and first aid equipment. Each agency contacted confirmed to the Advocate that none of the laws applied to private schools. Although Kelly wasn't required by law to have an AED on site, she ultimately decided to get one anyway in order to keep her students safe.

## Transition

2019 was a year of transition for the Small Business Advocacy Team, with changes in existing duties and the addition of two new team members. With stronger training and intake procedures that build on the foundation already established for the office during its first five years in existence, the Advocates are even more of an unstoppable team. They continue their critical work of helping small businesses navigate through government processes, getting complaints and questions addressed, and cutting through government red tape.

As 2019 came to a close, the Office launched its new website at <https://www.oregon.gov/smallbusiness>, successfully recruited a permanent Small Business Ombudsman to manage the office, and revamped its own internal workflows to manage cases and provide better customer service.

With a fully staffed office and improvements to internal processes, the Advocacy Team is hitting the ground running in 2020.

## Looking Ahead

While business inquiries about licensing and taxes decreased in 2019, they still accounted for **50% of the Advocacy Team's work**. Businesses crave clear and direct answers to questions about whether licensing is required for an industry or trade, and appreciate when agencies proactively provide this information. When an answer isn't evident, the Advocates use their vast network of strategic partners to help business owners get connected.

More agencies are establishing outreach programs to facilitate better communication with Oregon's business community. Because of this, access to experts within agencies has increased. However, there are always opportunities for improvement. Interagency collaboration and partnerships encourage better customer service. Agencies who invest in these outreach programs are likely to satisfy small businesses.

2019 brought new taxes and unfamiliar reporting requirements. Tax agencies would benefit from ensuring that new taxes can be incorporated into existing reporting methods, lessening the burden of paperwork and new processes for small businesses.

## About the Office

The Office of Small Business Assistance was established with the passage of HB 3459 (2013). The Small Business Advocacy Team works with businesses 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.

They continuously reach 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 many 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.