

- **Business Licenses**

- **Definition:** a permit issued by a government entity that allows a business to operate. For example, lawyers need a law license to practice law. These licenses can be at the local or state level. In rare instances, a federal permit may be necessary. Federal permits are beyond the scope of this site.

State of Wisconsin

- **Business Licenses**

Unlike some other states, Wisconsin does **not** issue a “general business license” or a “small business license.” In Wisconsin, there are over 700 different licenses, permits, certifications, and registrations. The state regulates occupations and businesses with legal, educational, and examination requirements along with those that deal with health and safety situations. Business regulatory requirements are described in the Wisconsin Statutes and Wisconsin Administrative Codes. Because your business may be involved in many different types of activities, more than one license or permit may be needed. Keep in mind, some businesses may not need any type of license because state statute or administrative code does not direct an agency to administer a license or permit.

Wisconsin offers two key online resources to assist entrepreneurs in obtaining state license and permit information. Both resources can be tremendous time-saver in locating state agency contacts, application forms, and license requirements.

If you **know** the license or permit that you need, click on [Licensing and Permitting](#). Start here to find out how to apply for these types of services. Although all services are not currently available, the number of available services will increase over time, providing you with more convenient access to a greater variety of statewide services.

If you **do not know** the license or permit that you need, select the [Business Wizard](#). Using a series of five question-and-answer pages, the Wizard provides customized information to help you start and operate a Wisconsin-based business. By investing a few minutes of your time, the Business Wizard will help you to:

- Determine licensing, permitting and regulatory requirements
- Obtain necessary application forms
- Identify available state resources
- Access other valuable business-related information

Your customized information will be contained in a results page that can be saved, printed or bookmarked for future reference. In order for the Wizard to work properly, session cookies are used to create a customized result page based on responses to questions in the Business Wizard

Important: The Business Wizard covers licensing, permitting and regulatory requirements for the State of Wisconsin. It also covers certain federal and local regulations. When reviewing your results page, be aware that the list of licensing, permitting and regulatory requirements may not be complete. Depending on your specific business type and geographic location, additional federal and local regulations may apply.

Local Licenses and Regulations

When starting a business in any city, town, or village, it is imperative to contact the local unit of government responsible for licensing local businesses. You may be directed to other municipal departments to apply for other necessary permits or additional licenses depending on your business or industry.

- **Sauk County**
Business licenses are not required by any municipality in Sauk County.
- **Columbia County**
Business licenses are not required by any municipality in Columbia County.

Zoning—Home Occupancy Permit

Before selecting a location for your business, make sure the area is zoned for business and not just residential/agriculture. Check with your local zoning office to see that the location may be used for what you plan to do.

If you plan to work out of your home, you may be required to file a home occupancy permit. This is often handled by the city, village, or town clerk. There may also be restrictions of the type of business that may operate out of the home. In general, if you plan on sending or receiving large amounts of material that increases traffic to your home address, expect to encounter more licensing requirements or zoning restrictions.

Industry-Specific Local Licenses

Depending on the city or town, some small businesses may need a special license to operate. State law grants local authorities the power to issue these types of licenses. In addition to local licenses, some businesses may also need state-level licensing. For example, a restaurant owner will need to apply for a liquor license through the local Alcohol Review Board and obtain an Alcohol Beverage Permit from the state Department of Revenue's Business Tax Registration application form.

Building Permits

If you are building from scratch in a business-zoned area or expanding an existing building, you will be required to obtain a building permit, which triggers a number of local and statewide regulations.

State building codes require that building construction conforms to the Wisconsin Commercial Building Code. The Department of Commerce, Division of Safety and Buildings, reviews building plans for public buildings and places of employment prior to construction for compliance. These plans include the review of all commercial buildings, plumbing, heating, fire sprinkler and alarms, and private onsite wastewater treatment systems. Online information building code information and plan reviews can be obtained at www.commerce.state.wi.us/SB/SB-HomePage.html.

Local building officials perform field enforcement of the regulations to ensure that the building complies with code. A local building official can be reached through the municipal clerk's office to ensure compliance with regulations affecting construction, alterations, demolitions, occupancy, and use of buildings.