



A 15 MINUTE GUIDE TO OBTAINING
A DUBAI BUSINESS LICENSE



LET'S CREATE SUCCESS TOGETHER



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INTRODUCTION

Dubai, with its thriving economy and diverse business environment, has become one of the top destinations for entrepreneurs and business owners. The city is home to a wide range of industries, from finance and real estate to retail and technology, making it a global hub of business activity in the Middle East.

Obtaining a business license in Dubai is a crucial step for anyone looking to legally set up and operate a business in the emirate.

Whether you're a seasoned business owner or a first-time entrepreneur, this guide aims to provide a concise overview of the steps to ensure that your business setup is completed efficiently.

Who Are the Issuing Authorities in Dubai?

Business license issuing authorities in Dubai differ depending on whether you choose to set up in a Free Zone or Mainland. For Mainland licenses, the issuing authority is the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET). However, if you choose to set up in one of Dubai's Free Zones, it is the respective Free Zone authority that issues the license.

Features of a Business License in Dubai

01 __

Legal Compliance

Obtaining a business license is a legal requirement to operate a business in Dubai. Without a license, a business cannot legally operate and may face penalties, fines, or closure.

03 __

Access to Resources

Holding a Dubai business license enables companies to access various resources, including the ability to sponsor visas for employees, open bank accounts, and access business facilities.

02 __

Reputation

A business license is an indicator of credibility and legitimacy, and it shows that the company has met all the necessary requirements and standards set by the government.

04 __

Ease of Doing Business

A license is an important requirement for many business-to-business processes, thus making it easier for companies to operate in Dubai.

O5 __

Access to resources

A business license in Dubai enhances the reputation of a company and makes it more attractive to investors and customers, as it demonstrates that the business is committed to following the rules and regulations set by the government.

Understanding the Different Types of Dubai Business Licenses

Whether you're starting a new business or expanding an existing one, it is essential to understand the different types of business licenses available in Dubai.

O1 __

Commercial License

This license is for businesses involved in trading activities such as buying and selling goods. It is the most common type of license in Dubai and covers a wide range of activities, including wholesale and retail trade, import and export, and storage and distribution.

O2 __

Industrial License

An industrial license is required for businesses involved in manufacturing and production activities. This type of license covers businesses involved in the production of goods and products, including the manufacture of machinery, chemicals, and food products.

O3 __

Professional License

A professional license is needed for businesses that offer professional services such as consulting, accounting, and legal services. This type of license is also required for businesses involved in creative industries such as graphic design, architecture, and advertising.

O4 __

Tourism License

This license is required for businesses involved in the tourism sector such as hotels, tour operators, and travel agencies.

O5 __

Freelance Permit

This license is designed for individuals who want to work as freelancers in Dubai. It allows you to offer your professional services as an independent contractor, rather than as an employee of a company.

O6 __

e-Commerce License

This license is needed for businesses involved in online trading and e-commerce activities. It is important to note that this license only allows online sale of goods.

O7 __

Food and Beverage License

A food and beverage license is required for businesses involved in the food and beverage industry, such as restaurants, cafes, and catering services.

Eligibility Criteria for Obtaining a Business License

To obtain a business license in Dubai, you must meet the following criteria:

- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Be a resident of the UAE or hold a valid residency visa.
- Have a clean criminal record.
- Have a minimum share capital requirement, if required by the business activity.



Documents Required to Obtain a Dubai Business License

Obtaining a freelance license in the UAE can be a straightforward process, but it is important to have all the required documents to ensure that the application process goes smoothly.

01 __

Completed Application Form along with UBO

You will need to fill out an application form, which is usually provided by the Free Zone authority you are applying to. You will also need to complete a form declaring the Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO), or the person/persons who maintains control of the company and personally benefit from its profits.

02 __

Passport Copy

The passport should be valid for a minimum of six months from the date of submission of the application.

03 __

Passport-Size Photo

This photo should be clear and of good quality and must show your face and shoulders.

04 __

Updated Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Your CV should be updated and include information about your educational background, work experience, and any other relevant qualifications or certifications you may have.

05 __

Attested Academic Certificates

To prove your educational background and qualifications, certain authorities might require you to provide original academic certificates attested by the UAE Consulate or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

06 __

Two Professional References

Certain authorities may also require you to provide two professional references, along with their contact details, to support your application. These references can be from previous employers or colleagues who can vouch for your professional abilities and work experience.

07 __

NOC From Your Sponsor

If you are sponsored by an employer in the UAE, you will need to provide a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from your sponsor. This certificate confirms that your sponsor has no objections to your application for a freelance license. However, it should be noted that this is mandatory only for specific authorities.

How to Apply for a Dubai Mainland Business License

01 —

Choose the Right Business Activity

There are many business activities that Mainland companies can engage in. The key is to choose the activities that best suit your product or service mix, interests, and financial capability.

02 —

Choose the Right Legal Structure

Once you have decided on the type of business activity you want to engage in, the next step is to choose the right legal structure for your business. Dubai has several legal structures to choose from, including Sole Proprietorship, Partnership, Limited Liability Company (LLC), and others. It is important to choose the right legal structure for your business as this will affect your liability, tax obligations, and the overall operation of your business.

03 —

Register Your Business

The next step is to register your business with the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET). To register your business, you will need to provide the following information:

- Your business activity
- Your legal structure
- Your business name
- Your commercial license numbers
- Your contact details

04 —

Obtain Approvals and Clearances

Once your business is registered, you will need to obtain approvals and clearances from relevant authorities, such as Dubai Customs, Dubai Municipality, and the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), among others. The approvals and clearances you need will depend on the type of business activity you are engaging in.

05 —

Submit Your Application

Once you have obtained all the necessary approvals and clearances, the next step is to submit your business license application. You will need to provide the following information:

- Your business activity
- Your legal structure
- Your business name
- Your contact details
- Your office location

06 —

Pay the Fees

The fees will vary depending on the type of business activity you are engaging in and the legal structure you have chosen.

07 —

Approval Process

Once your application has been submitted and the fees have been paid, you will need to wait for approval from the Department of Economy and Tourism (DET).



O8 ____

Obtain Your Business License

Once your license is approved, the final step is to collect the physical copy from the DET.

How to Apply for a Dubai Free Zone Business License

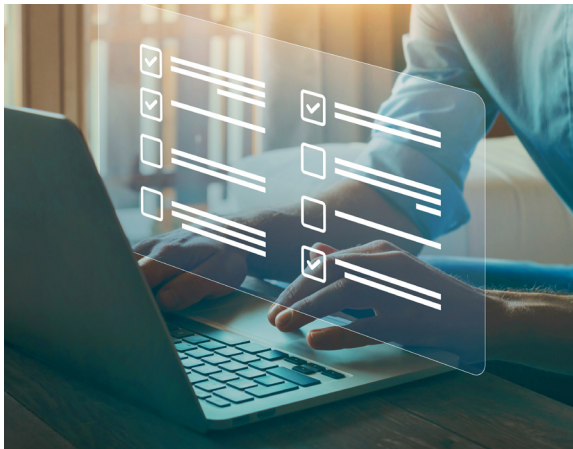
Obtaining a Dubai business license in a Free Zone such as IFZA can be quicker and more simple. Here's everything you need to know:



O1 ____

Required Forms

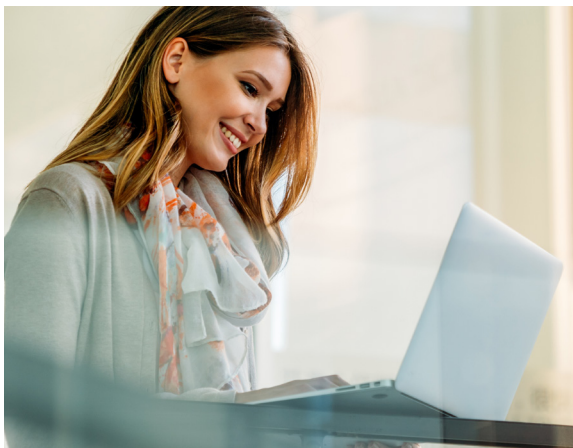
- [License Application Form with Ultimate Beneficial Owner \(UBO\)](#)



O2 ____

Supporting Documents

- Passport Photo
- Passport Copy
- Emirates ID & Residency Visa Copies (If residing in UAE)



O3 ____

Incorporation Process

- Application and UBO Form Submission
- Security Clearance
- E-Legal Process
- Issuance of Documents

Additional Information

- The Application Form should include 3 Company Name options. ([See Company Name Guidelines for detailed information.](#))
- Ensure all supporting documents such as Passport Photos and Passport Copies meet IFZA standards. ([See Passport Copy and Passport Photo Reference for more information.](#))
- If the client requires a specific Arabic company name translation be sure to type it on the application form.
- Professional Partners should sign, stamp and date all forms and supporting documents.
- Be sure to include relevant and accessible email addresses on the application form.
- Once security clearance is obtained, the client will be sent via email an e-legal form and a signatory form to sign.
- If there is more than one shareholder, the General Manager must sign and return the forms first before processing of the other shareholders can start.
- The applicant's name should be written on the application form exactly as per passport and the full name will appear on the trade license.
- If the client requires a variation of their name (not as per passport) this will need to be applied for through direct correspondence with IFZA (e.g. no middle name required).
- A UBO Form must be completed by every Licensee upon incorporation to inform IFZA of who ultimately controls the FZCO or the Parent Company of the Branch Office.
- Section 1 of the UBO Form must be completed and signed by an authorized signatory of the Licensee (the 'licensee' is the FZCO or Branch office that holds a license).
- If there is more than one UBO, each UBO must complete the multiple UBO form to include their individual information.
- If any of the UBO information should change, the Licensee will inform IFZA within 15 days of becoming aware of such change.



BUSINESS REGISTRATION PROCESS

Incorporation of a Free Zone business at IFZA is a straightforward process for business setup consultants. This business registration process is identical for both individual and corporate shareholders, however, the supporting documents vary.

01 ____

Consultation & Proposal

Our process begins with a consultation to establish your licensee's requirements, followed by a tailored proposal that outlines the best type of license, business activities, visa package, and office solutions.

02 ____

Documentation

Next we require a set of documents including the license application form (including UBO), passport copy, digital passport photo, Emirates ID and visa copy for UAE residents.

03 ____

Processing

Once the documents are received, our support team will register your shareholder's documents on the registration portal. Once approved, the Authority will issue 2 E-legal forms, to be signed prior to issuance of incorporation documents.

04 ____

License Approval

The authority approves the application

05 ____

MOA/AOA Process

A digital Memorandum of Agreement/Articles of Association will be sent to all Shareholders for e-signatures.

06 ____

License Issuance

A soft copy is sent via email with the original license available for collection from our office upon request.





How long will it take to apply for a Business License?

The processing time usually ranges from a few days to a maximum of four weeks, depending on the type of business activities you conduct and the approvals required. To ensure a fast processing time, it is important to have all the necessary documentation in order and complete the application form correctly to minimize the chance of any delays or mistakes.

The Renewal Process for Trade License in Dubai Mainland

To ensure that your business remains compliant and continues to operate, it is important to be aware of these steps and complete them correctly. Here is a detailed explanation of the renewal process:

Valid Documents and Paperwork

A) Tenancy Contract

A tenancy contract that has been approved by Ejari is a crucial document for the renewal process. This contract must be valid for at least one month before the renewal date.

B) Photocopy of Passports

The passport photocopies of all business partners involved in the trade must be taken and attached to the application.

C) Photocopy of Trade License

A photocopy of the old trade license must be attached to the application. Without the original permit to conduct business in the UAE, applying for renewal will not be possible.



Renewal Application Form

To begin the renewal process, you must complete a renewal application form called BR/1. This form must be typed, and you must fill in all the relevant details of your business. The form should be signed by the existing partners of the business. Along with the form, you must also attach all the required documents, including the tenancy contract, photocopies of the passports of business partners, and a photocopy of your old trade license. Once you have completed the form and attached all the necessary documents, submit it to the Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) for review and approval.

Payment Voucher and Payment

The DET will review your application and ensure that all the necessary documents are in order. Once approved, the DET will send you a payment voucher. This voucher will detail the amount you need to pay for the renewal of your license. After receiving the voucher, you must make the payment to the DET. The renewal of your license is only complete once you have made the payment, so it is important to do this promptly.

It is crucial to renew your trade license on time, as failure to do so can result in heavy penalties. The penalties for not renewing your license on time can reach up to AED 5,000, and in some cases, your business may be blacklisted or banned altogether. Dubai's business-friendly policies make the process of renewing your trade license simple, but it is important to be aware of the steps involved and complete them correctly.



Additional Information

Any amendments should be completed prior to the renewal. If the license has expired, you must renew it before any changes can be carried out.

If the shareholders did not complete the “Signatory DocuSign/E-Legal Confirmation” within the first 12 months this must be completed prior to the license being released. Please ensure the correct email addresses have been provided and to check all inboxes.

If the company was issued a Third Party Approval Letter (TPA) this should be provided prior to the license being renewed.

Ready To Set Up Your Business in Dubai?

Setting up a business may seem like a daunting task, but with the right support, it can be completed within a few days. If you’re looking for a one-stop-shop for all your business setup needs, get in contact with us at IFZA – Dubai’s truly international Free Zone.

At IFZA, we understand the complexities of setting up a business and strive to simplify the process for our licensees. Our experts will assist you every step of the way - from drafting documents to managing submissions, setting up bank accounts, securing approval, and so much more. Contact an IFZA Professional Partner today to learn more about how we can help take your business to the next level.





FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT US ON
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