

Small Business Liaisons Team Charter

Background and Purpose

Small business owners have many online resources to complete their regulatory requirements and receive guidance about running their business in Washington. However, they consistently request access to personal assistance.

In 2006, Labor & Industries started a successful Small Business Liaison program to provide personal attention to inquiries. Small business owners attending the 2007 small business roundtable requested that other agencies copy L&I's liaison program. By summer 2008 Departments of Revenue, Employment Security, Community, Trade & Economic Development (now Commerce), Office of Secretary of State, , and the Office of Women & Minority Business Enterprises each identified a Small Business Liaison.

In January of 2012, Governor Gregoire formalized the Small Business Liaison Team (SBLT) that currently consists of 27 state agencies whose role is to listen to businesses, then drive action to make it easier to do business in Washington State.

The overall goal of the Small Business Liaison Team is to have an informed small business community capable of understanding and ultimately complying with the State's licensing / regulatory requirements.

Desired Outcomes

- Agency collaboration to simplify and/or streamline regulatory processes.
- Increase effective outreach to small businesses and non-profit organizations with 50 or fewer employees and \$7M or less in gross revenue.
- Stronger collaboration with industry associations and Small Business Development Centers across Washington.
- Small business owners receive information they need because SBLT uses a "No wrong door" approach.
- Customer service to small business owners is more relevant, informed and empathetic.

Scope

The work of small business liaisons is aligned with two Governor's Executive Orders 10-05, 12-01 and RCW 43.330.440 (Attachments 1, 2, 3, respectively).

- 1) Improve regulatory processes that are duplicative or have conflicting requirements, decisions or inspections across state and/or local government agencies - early focus is on food and beverage industry. (EO 12-01)

- 2) Coordinate with agency technology departments to improve websites and online assistance for small businesses. (EO 12-01)
- 3) Maintain a consolidated online small business guide that provides direction to prospective and existing businesses. (EO 10-05)
- 4) Plan and collaborate on small business outreach (EO 10-05)
- 5) Provide routine and consistent responses to questions and requests from small business owners. (EO 10-05)
- 6) Map current processes and find ways to reduce steps required for regulatory processes without compromising the environment and maintaining health and safety. (EO 10-05)
- 7) Focus on the manufacturing industry sector as a pilot project to conduct a multijurisdictional regulatory streamlining project (RCW 43.330.440)

Team Members

[Small Business Liaisons](#)

Responsibilities and Expectations

- Understand your agency's regulatory requirements and/or processes that affect businesses so you can provide or coordinate consistent responses to small business owners.
- Act as single point of contact for businesses with questions about your agency.
- Engage agency experts to maintain highly-responsive and effective customer service to small business customers.
- Educate agency customer service staff about tools and resources that assist small business owners, i.e. online business guide, tax and audit videos, etc.
- Develop relationships with leaders of business organizations.
- Learn about other agencies' regulatory requirements and know who to contact with questions for each agency.
- Be a resource for other liaisons when they receive questions about your agency. Collaborate with other Small Business Liaisons to coordinate answers so small business owners experience one-stop assistance that helps them understand and complete their regulatory requirements.
- Plan and deliver outreach to small businesses statewide.
- Through outreach, learn about pain points for small businesses and develop ways to reduce challenges. Coordinate agency materials for outreach activities.
- Monitor recurring questions and issues and find ways to eliminate/reduce these questions or issues, i.e. plain-talked guidance, training, etc.
- Participate in regulatory Lean process improvements that are focused on small businesses and/or invite your agency experts to become involved with process and technology changes.

- Work closely with your agency representative on the Business Portal Maintenance Team to ensure new information to assist businesses is highlighted in the appropriate places on www.Business.wa.gov.
- Market the services and tools we provide, i.e. business website and consolidated online small business guide.

Critical Success Factors - Liaisons need:

- Direct line of communication with the agency director.
- Support from agency executive leaders.
- Willingness and ability to share agency regulatory information, streamline business processes and review existing policies.
- Time to interact with small business owners.
- Access to agency experts to answer questions received from business owners.
- Direction/connection from agency leaders to resources to fix challenging processes when critical changes are needed.

Resources

- Resource commitment is different for each agency and will be defined by each agency's leaders.
- Small Business Liaisons will meet once a month for approximately 2 hours. While coordinating project activities, liaison work may increase.
- Work will be completed with each agency's existing resources. No new budget will be allocated to complete this work.

Work plans

Specific plans for each project will be created outlining who will be involved, what the expectations are, and how results will be measured. Projects may include:

- Conducting outreach events similar to the 2007 & 2008 Small Business Roundtable events across Washington that bring agency leaders together with small business owners. Coordination with industry associations and inclusion of minority, women and veteran owned small businesses is encouraged.
- Develop and lead/coordinate multi-agency action items identified during outreach events.
- Plan joint agency efforts such as the tax video; include all involved agencies.
- Plan and deliver training to agency front line staff who interact with small business owners as new tools are developed, i.e. agency front counter and call center staff need to know about consolidated online business guide,

Business.wa.gov and regulatory Lean projects that are making a positive difference for small businesses.

- Interact with key business organizations to share guidance and changes to agency regulatory processes.

Risks

- Agency employee assigned to be Small Business Liaison may change.
Response: ORIA's Deputy Director and the team will assist new Small Business Liaisons as they assume their role.
- Dependence on any single liaison is so much that there is not enough time or capacity to perform well.
Response: Agency leaders will assist in determining best approach which might include additional staffing, partner liaisons or other methods.
- Competing priorities do not provide enough time to meet the needs of the small business community.
Response: Agency leadership will prioritize work the team should complete.

Success Measures (suggestions only – choose 1 or 2 and align with GMAP measures when possible)

- Results from outreach action items completed
- Number of improved processes – each liaison tracks and reports
 - Increased #/ % of improved processes produce accurate reporting
 - Process time saved by a single business owner
 - Increased compliance \$ as a result of changed processes
 - Fewer # of violations or \$ in penalties/fines small businesses pay
- Growth of knowledge bank inside agencies, i.e. % of questions answered by call center staff (no escalation required to agency experts or liaisons)
- Percentage of satisfied people we serve – survey results or other written feedback