



STATE OF CALIFORNIA | OFFICE OF GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM

## Office of Permit Assistance (OPA) Annual Report

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# OVERVIEW: OFFICE OF PERMIT ASSISTANCE (OPA):

The Office of Permit Assistance (OPA) is housed within the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) to provide support to the business community by:

- Providing permitting and regulatory compliance assistance to businesses.
- Assisting businesses in accessing information and resources related to permitting and regulatory compliance.
- Providing mediation and third-party facilitation to resolve conflicts between applicants and permitting and regulatory entities, and;
- Working with federal, state, regional, and local permitting, and regulatory entities to exchange best practices and implement improvements to modernize permitting processes.

The following are highlights of OPA achievements during the reporting period of October 1, 2023– September 30, 2024:

- Resolution of a total of 2,719 permitting inquiries.

| Permit Assistance Type                 | Count |
|--|-------|
| Complex Permit Identification Projects | 159   |
| Complex Permit Mediation Projects      | 40    |
| Phone Calls – General Permit Inquiries | 545   |
| GO-Biz Help Desk Inquiries             | 1975  |
| Total                                  | 2,719 |

- Design, Data Validation and Development of CalGOLD 2.0
- Update of 4 Quick Start Guides

## PERMITTING ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

The following sections detail significant activities of the OPA for the reporting period of October 1, 2023 September 30, 2024.

### Regulatory Compliance Assistance

The OPA staff assists business owners in identifying permits and other regulatory requirements needed to start a new business or expand an existing one. Staff respond to business inquiries by email or phone and provide a list of regulatory entities and specific permitting requirements. Staff also coordinate pre-application meetings between business owners and the appropriate regulatory agencies to bring more clarity on more complex permitting requirements if this level of intervention is requested or if necessary.

In addition, OPA staff provide responses to requests submitted through the online California Business Portal Service Help Desk (<https://gobiz.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/requests/new>). Requests are typically resolved within 48 hours and require permit specialists to provide tailored permit identification information. Some requests may take significantly longer based on the complexity of the situation.

For this reporting period, OPA answered a total of 1975 permitting inquiries received through the Help Desk. The chart below is a summary of the inquiries received by region:

| CA REGION                  | COUNT       |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Bay Area                   | 335         |
| Central & Eastern Sierra   | 9           |
| Central Coast              | 47          |
| Central San Joaquin Valley | 66          |
| Greater Sacramento         | 176         |
| Inland Empire              | 130         |
| Kern County                | 22          |
| Los Angeles County         | 514         |
| North San Joaquin Valley   | 7           |
| North State                | 32          |
| Not Available              | 396         |
| Orange County              | 136         |
| Redwood Coast              | 7           |
| Southern Border            | 98          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>         | <b>1975</b> |

### Permit Identification

During the reporting period, OPA staff received 159 requests that required more complex permit identification services. A complex request requires additional research and engagement with regulatory partners to ascertain permitting requirements and typically takes more than a day to resolve.

OPA staff also help identify permits and permit processes related to local, state and federal permitting authorities.

A few case studies of engagement on permit identification services are highlighted below:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <p><b>November 2023</b></p> | <p><b>Medical Office (Contra Costa County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> In December 2023, a group of doctors contacted OPA for assisting them in starting a clinic.</p> <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> The company was struggling to ascertain what forms and permits would be required and how to contact the permitting agencies.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA staff walked the company through a list of permits required for such businesses. OPA staff also connected the company with permitting specialists at various regulatory agencies.</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 2 weeks</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• California Department of Waterboards</li> <li>• California Department of Tax &amp; Fee Administration</li> <li>• California Franchise Tax Board</li> <li>• California Employment Development Department</li> <li>• California Department of Industrial Relations</li> <li>• Medical Board of California</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>December 2023</b></p> | <p><b>Chamber of Commerce (Santa Barbara County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> In January 2024, Economic Development Director from Santa Barbara County contacted OPA for assisting a business in identifying NAICS codes that their business would fall under and what permits would be required for opening an amazon store.</p> <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> Company did not know who to contact or which permits they would need.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA Staff connected the company with Secretary of State to register their company, California Tax and Fee Administration to obtain seller's permit and resale certificate, California Franchise Tax Board to pay taxes for their business entity.</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 1 week</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• California Secretary of State</li> <li>• California Department of Tax &amp; Fee Administration</li> <li>• California Franchise Tax Board</li> <li>• California Employment Development Department</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>February 2024</b></p> | <p><b>Foam Designing Company (Solano County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> In May 2024 business owner reached out to OPA for seeking assistance in permitting their company.</p>  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
|          | <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> They did not know what permits they required and how to obtain them. They needed hazardous waste permit, seller's permit, resale certificate and Secretary of State and Franchise Tax Board and local permits.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA scheduled a meeting with the company to learn about their process and provided a list of all the regulatory agencies that they would have to contact.</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 1 week</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• California Department of Tax &amp; Fee administration (CDTFA)</li> <li>• Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC)</li> <li>• Franchise Tax Board (FTB)</li> <li>• Secretary of State (SOS)</li> <li>• Employment Development Department (EDD)</li> <li>• Department of Industrial Relations (DIR)</li> <li>• Local permitting agencies</li> </ul>   |
| May 2024 | <p><b>Industrial Hardware Company (Santa Barbara County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> In May 2024 a small business owner contacted OPA regarding permits required for pickling vegetables and canning them from their home-based business. County health department informed them that they need permits from the state.</p> <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> Permits required at the state level and how to contact them.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA scheduled a meeting with the business to get additional information. Contacted the state regulatory agencies to get permitting information and shared it with the business and connected them with the permitting agencies.</p> <p><b>Resolutions Time:</b> 1 week</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secretary of State (SOS)</li> <li>• California Department of Tax &amp; Fee Administration (CDTFA)</li> <li>• Franchise Tax Board (FTB)</li> <li>• California Department of Public Health (CDPH)</li> </ul> |

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <p><b>June 2024</b></p> | <p><b>Medical Spa and Skin Care Products (Los Angeles County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> On June 1, 2024, business owner contacted GO-Biz via ZenDesk asking for permit assistance for proposed new business. They were struggling to determine what permits would be required for such business and who to contact.</p> <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> Unclear of the permit requirements for this industry.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA contacted the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology, California Department of Public Health and Medical Board. Advised the County Health Department is the lead agency but for weight loss injections they will need to perform it under a licensed doctor.</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 5 days.</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Los Angeles County Health Department</li> <li>• California Department of Public Health</li> </ul> |
|-------------------------|--|

## Mediation Services

OPA offers neutral mediation services for business entities and regulating government agencies. Case resolution can last anywhere from a few weeks to several months, depending on the complexity of the dispute. Mediation services are not unique to any specific industry or issue type.

During the reporting period, OPA staff received 40 requests that required complex permit mediation services.

Complex permit mediation projects took between one and 60 days to resolve.

OPA helped identify permits and permit processes related to local, state, and federal permitting authorities.

A few case studies of OPA engagement on permit mediation assistance are highlighted below:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <p><b>November 2023</b></p> | <p><b>International Wood Based Panels Manufacturing (Glenn County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> In November 2023, an international company contacted OPA regarding the purchase of a property for their business that had the potential of increased property tax while it acquired new ownership.</p> <p><b>Permit Challenge:</b> CalPlant brokers were engaged with the company to purchase the property which was an abandoned mill. There were unresolved property tax issues with Glenn County and the company wanted those issues to be addressed before they bought the property and set up their business. The State Board of Equalization provides guidelines for resolution of such issues.</p> |
|-----------------------------|--|

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
|               | <p><b>Achieved Results:</b> OPA reached out to the Board of Equalization for guidance, and they wanted to engage directly with the company and assist. OPA connected both parties.</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 15 days.</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of Equalization</li> <li>• Glenn County</li> </ul>   |
| November 2023 | <p><b>Security Guard Firearm License (Los Angeles County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> In January 2024 OPA was contacted by an individual who was having trouble getting his employment application for security guard and firearms license approved. He was seeking employment as a security guard and needed the firearm in his possession before starting the job.</p> <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> He filed applications with the Department of Justice (DOJ) &amp; Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS). He was not successful in availing the permits as there were delays.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA contacted BSIS and DOJ to learn more about the process and to assist in getting the permits approved. After scheduling a meeting with all parties, DOJ and BSIS worked with GO-Biz and the client, and the permits were approved.</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 6 Days</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Justice (DOJ)</li> <li>• Bureau of Security &amp; Investigative Services (BSIS)</li> </ul> |
| January 2024  | <p><b>Virtual Vehicle Dealer Agency (Los Angeles County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> In January 2024, OPA was contacted by a company that was looking to start a virtual vehicle dealer agency.</p> <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> The company was facing challenges in getting permit information and approval from the Department of Motor Vehicles as it is unfamiliar technology, and DMV was in the process of creating permit guidance for such projects.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA reached out to Department of Motor Vehicles and scheduled meetings with the company. OPA requested DMV to provide guidance to the company. DMV worked with the applicant and provided information to start the business</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 15 Days</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p>   |



|              |  |
|--------------|--|
|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)</li> </ul>   |
| January 2024 | <p><b>International Board Manufacturing Company (San Diego County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> In January 2024, an International Board Manufacturing Company reached out to OPA for assistance in resolving issues with the Secretary of State and County of San Diego</p> <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> The owner applied to the Secretary of State for registration of their business. They needed the expedite approval to meet the deadline for getting the trainer contract.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA contacted the Secretary of State to inquire about the status of their application and explained the reason for their expedited request. SOS worked with him and issued his permit in a timely manner. OPA also reached out to the City of San Diego for local requirements, and they worked with him, and his permits were issued on time.</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 7 days</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secretary of State (SOS)</li> <li>County of San Diego</li> </ul> |
| January 2024 | <p><b>Restaurant at the airport (Santa Cruz County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> In March 2024 the owner of a restaurant at the Watsonville airport contacted OPA as they were having financial hardship and the California Department of Tax &amp; Fee Administration (CDTFA) was asking them to pay thousands of dollars in outstanding tax payments.</p> <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> Assistance with CDTFA's tax payment plan or any relief that they could provide to the business.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA scheduled a meeting with CDTFA and shared all the information that business owner provided regarding their books and records for the income from the restaurant. CDTFA worked with the business and shared some ways to ease the financial burden.</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 2 weeks</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>California Department of Tax &amp; Fee Administration (CDTFA)</li> </ul>   |
| March 2024   | <p><b>Carbon Removal Technology (San Joaquin County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> In March 2024 a direct Air Capture company contacted OPA for mediation in acquiring local permits for construction of permanent carbon removal storage credits to enable governments, organizations, and marketplaces with demonstrable commitment to emissions reduction to</p>  |

|            |  |
|------------|--|
|            | <p>achieve their climate goals.</p> <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> Company reached out to OPA for assistance in getting their local permits issued to start construction and be successful in opening their facility in a timely manner.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA was able to connect with the city manager and discuss the project and the desired timelines. The city agreed to have a meeting with the company that resulted in mutual agreement to move the project forward.</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 2 Weeks</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Manager Tracy</li> <li>• City Attorney Tracy</li> </ul>  |
| March 2024 | <p><b>Director of Business compliance for associated students at UCLA (Los Angeles County)</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b> Director of Business compliance contacted OPA for assistance in getting a events liquor license for the campus event center issued by the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control. They were having difficulty in working with regional ABC office for completing their paperwork</p> <p><b>Permitting Challenge:</b> Application that the company submitted to ABC was not complete and business was struggling to understand the compliance requirements.</p> <p><b>Achieved Result:</b> OPA contacted Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control Regional Office to get the status update. ABC was confronting difficulty in processing the paperwork that was incomplete, ABC informed OPA that they will contact the applicant and help them with their application filing.</p> <p><b>Resolution Time:</b> 4 Days</p> <p><b>Involved Agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control</li> </ul> |

## CONSOLIDATING & DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

### California Online Permit Assistance Tool (CalGOLD)

The OPA is responsible for maintaining the California Online Permit Assistance Tool – CalGOLD ([www.calgold.ca.gov](http://www.calgold.ca.gov)). CalGOLD is an easy-to-use tool that allows businesses to search for permit requirements tailored to their business type and location in California. Search results are sorted by local, state, and federal requirements, and, for each regulatory agency listed, contact information including physical address, web address, and telephone number is provided.

CalGOLD also includes a Forms and Fees Finder, developed, and maintained by the relevant department, to help businesses find application forms and associated fees.

Website traffic for CalGOLD during the reporting period:

- Page Views: 237,505
- Active Users: 149,913
- New Users: 146,932

Please see the top 10 cities that CalGOLD active users are located:

| California City | Users  |
|-----------------|--------|
| Los Angeles     | 29,017 |
| San Jose        | 11,843 |
| Not set         | 6,748  |
| San Diego       | 5,731  |
| San Francisco   | 4,410  |
| Sacramento      | 4,228  |
| Fresno          | 1,615  |
| Oakland         | 1,249  |
| Long Beach      | 1,225  |
| Irvine          | 1,173  |

### CalGOLD 2.0 New Application & Data Migration Activities

The OPA and the GO-Biz IT Units continue to work on the development of CalGOLD 2.0 to transfer existing data into a new system that will allow GO-Biz staff to better manage the database, make timely updates and additions, allow for external partners to update relevant content, and provide a platform for further agency collaboration to improve the overall permitting process in California.

CalGOLD 2.0 will provide updated content through a refreshed user interface for a more streamlined user and staff maintenance experience.

CalGOLD 2.0 implements new technology, design, and information to improve the overall user experience and quality of permit assistance information. The following steps have been achieved in the current reporting period:

- Implemented the current State of California web template.
- Implemented responsive design to allow for CalGOLD 2.0 to be used on desktop computers, laptops, tablets, phones, and other devices.
- Redesigned CalGOLD 2.0 to be hosted in GO-Biz cloud. Cal GOLD v1 was previously hosted in a physical server environment. Cal GOLD v1 has been moved to California Department of Technology Azure cloud environment. Cal GOLD v2 is hosted in the GO-Biz cloud environment.
- Redesigned the new application to improve ability to create and update all permit related information, permit authorities, contacts, and cities.
- Performed initial data migration and clean up from Cal GOLD v1 to Cal GOLD v2.
- With the data migration process complete, a final review and approval from the OPA remains before the application can be officially launched.

- Functionality for permitting authority users to create, read, and update permit and license related information is waiting for user acceptance testing. Once user acceptance testing is complete, this functionality will be released.

A current version of the CalGOLD 2.0 production environment can be viewed and accessed through the following link: <https://prod.calgold.ca.gov/>

The main goal for the CalGOLD 2.0 platform is to allow permitting agencies to update their permits content in real-time. This would shift the responsibilities for maintaining data in the tool to local and state permitting authorities.

GO-Biz staff sees the build-out of CalGOLD 2.0 as an opportunity for future collaboration with permitting officials to provide more customer service focused engagements with applicants in the overall permitting process and anticipates a re-launch of the new tool in Q1 of 2025.

### Quick Start Guides

Quick Start Guides for common industry types are available for business owners to serve as reference tools for new business launches. These guides are available on the California Business Portal at <http://businessportal.ca.gov/business-assistance/start-a-business/quick-start-guides/>

The Quick Start Guides are intended to be used as a singular guide for commonly asked questions related to specific industries.

For this reporting period, the GO-Biz Business Portal Quick Start Guide webpage received over 9623 unique visits from users. The site maintains Quick Start Guides on the following industries:

- Automotive Repair
- Barber Shops and Beauty Salons
- Building or Engineering Contractor
- Business Consultants
- Cannabis Operations
- Catering Businesses
- Cottage Food Operation
- Domestic Repair (Handyman)
- Fitness Centers
- Mobile Food Vendors
- Pet or House Sitting
- Photographer
- Physical Therapist
- Restaurants, Bakeries, and Bars
- Retail Stores
- Software/Mobile App Developer
- Tutoring
- Recycling and Recovery
- Aquaculture
- Alcoholic Beverage Licenses

For this reporting period, the OPA updated links to the following Quick Start Guides:

- [Mobile Food Truck](#)

- [Freight & Trucking Industry](#)
- [Alcoholic Beverage Licenses](#)
- [Business Consultants](#)

## **MAJOR REGULATIONS - STANDARDIZED REGULATORY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (SRIA)**

The OPA team did not comment on any SRIA's this reporting period.

## **ADRESSING CUSTOMER INQUIRIES**

For this reporting period Office of Permit Assistance created 45 macros for various business types to streamline responses and enhance customer service. There is guidance for starting any business in California with or without employees, out of state companies hiring California based employees, permit requirements for starting a cottage industry and commercial kitchen business, home health care business, massage therapy business, medical clinic business, hydrogen projects etc.