

YOUR FREEDOM TO BUSINESS LICENSING



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Useful information to help you understand Business Trade Licensing in South Africa

Five Key Facts You Need to Know About Applying for a Business Trade License in South Africa:

1. Not all businesses need one - Trade licenses apply to certain sectors like food, health, car washes, and entertainment.
2. Zoning is essential - Your premises must be correctly zoned or have land-use consent.
3. Annual renewal is required - Trade licenses expire every 12 months and must be renewed to stay valid.
4. No trading without approval - Operating before your license is issued is illegal and can lead to fines.
5. Licenses can be suspended - Noncompliance with health, safety, or zoning laws can result in cancellation.

PLEASE BE ADVISED

Business Trade Licensing is regulated by the National Business Act (Act 71 of 1991) and enforced through your local municipal bylaws and licensing authorities. Requirements and procedures may differ from one municipality to another. Incomplete or incorrect documentation can lead to delays, rejections, or legal penalties.

Licentia Franchise SA is a professional licensing service—we provide administrative support, expert guidance, and application tracking. We are not municipal officials, zoning authorities, or government inspectors. Our goal is to ensure your application meets all compliance requirements and maximize your chances of approval.

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REAL SUCCESS. REAL CLIENTS.

MPUMALANGA

87% approval rate for business trade licenses submitted through Licentia in 2024

GAUTENG

90% approval rate for trade license applications managed by Licentia

KWAZULU-NATAL

84% approval rate across key municipalities

Licentia consistently delivers high approval rates by preparing fully compliant, municipality-specific applications—helping clients across South Africa launch and operate with confidence.

What types of businesses require a Trade (Business) License?

The National Business Act No. 71 of 1991 mandates a Trade License for specific business categories. These typically include food establishments (restaurants, takeaways), businesses selling perishable goods, health, entertainment or wellness services (spas, cinemas), and venues with multiple vending machines or gambling devices.

Do I need a Business Trade License if I'm operating from home?

Yes—if you're running a business that involves direct interaction with the public (e.g., food preparation, hair salon, car wash), you may still require a Trade License, even from a residential property. You will also need to prove land-use consent or zoning approval from your local municipality. Home-based businesses that create noise, foot traffic, or waste often require municipal clearance.

How long does it take to get a Business Trade License approved?

Approval time varies by municipality but typically takes 30–90 days if all documents are in order. Delays often occur due to missing zoning documents, incomplete forms, or unpaid municipal accounts. Using a consulting firm like Licentia can help fast-track the process by avoiding these common issues.

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More Licensing FAQs

Can I transfer a Business Trade License to a new owner?

No, Business Trade Licenses are not transferable between individuals or businesses. If ownership of the business changes, the new owner must submit a new application in their name, meeting all the current municipal requirements.

What municipal departments review a trade license application?

After you submit your application, several municipal departments typically examine it—such as Town Planning (zoning), Health, Fire & Emergency Services, Building Control, and Environmental Services.

DID YOU KNOW?

If your business changes location—even within the same city—you must apply for a new Business Trade License. Licenses are linked to the premises, not just the business name.

Always check with your local municipality or let Licentia assist before relocating your business operations.

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Step-by-step: The Business Trade License Renewal Process

1. Check your expiry date - Trade licenses are valid for 12 months. Don't miss your renewal window.
2. Review compliance - Ensure your business still meets all health, fire, zoning, and safety requirements.
3. Prepare renewal documents - Typical documents include your current license, ID, lease/title deed, COA (if applicable), and fire clearance.
4. Submit renewal and payment - Complete the renewal form and pay the required fee at your local municipality.
5. Municipal review or inspection - Departments may inspect your premises or verify your documents before approval.
6. Get your renewed license - If approved, your updated license will be issued. If not, you'll receive guidance to correct issues.
7. Avoid late penalties - Renew on time to prevent fines, suspension, or cancellation.

WHAT DOCUMENTS IS REQUIRED?

- Certified copy of applicant's ID
- Company registration documents (CIPC certificate)
- Lease agreement or title deed
- Zoning certificate or land-use consent
- Recent municipal account (proof of business address)
- Certificate of Acceptability (if handling food)
- Fire safety compliance certificate

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Need help or ready to apply?

CONTACT US:

freedom@licentia.co.za
076 220 3689

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