

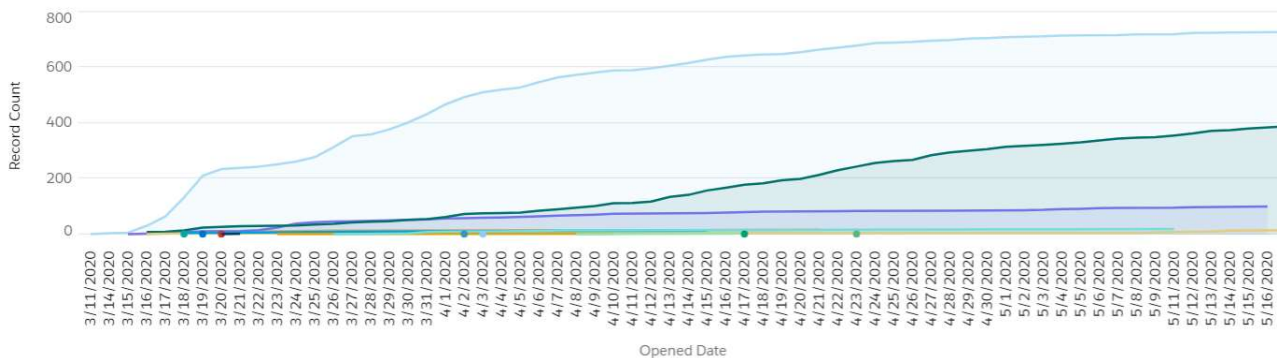
Oregon Secretary of State

Office of Small Business Assistance - COVID-19 Response

The Office of Small Business Assistance is housed within the Oregon Secretary of State and was established upon the passage of HB 3459 (2013). The office operates under the authority of ORS 056.200 through 056.209, and began serving Oregon businesses in 2014. The Office is staffed with a team of two Advocates, an intake specialist, and managed by the Small Business Ombudsman.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent executive orders issued by Governor Brown, almost every business in Oregon was impacted. With so many diverse businesses and unique situations, business owners began seeking guidance from the Office of Small Business Assistance along with other support resources. The number of businesses seeking help increased dramatically in March of 2020, with 1,767 cases opened since March, and 1,758 cases closed.

As the pandemic situation progressed and new resources became available for businesses, the nature of questions and problems brought to the Small Business Advocacy team shifted. Initially, most cases involved businesses seeking financial aid, often from the US Small Business Administration. To date, 730 cases of the 1,305 COVID-19 related cases sought some sort of financial aid and were referred to Business Oregon, the Small Business Development Centers, and the US SBA. More recently, there has been a noticeable increase in customers seeking help with the Employment Department's PUA program (396 cases). In the chart below, the blue line represents the cumulative total of businesses seeking financial aid, and the green line represents cases seeking help with the Employment Department and Unemployment Insurance.



In addition to connecting businesses with the appropriate resource for their specific need during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Advocacy team continues to offer customized responses to questions, engages customers by email and telephone, and explains government systems, programs, and regulations as needed. We remain accessible and eager to help businesses overcome this difficult period, providing the desired information to customers within 48 hours nearly 75% of the time since March.