



Trade Name Registration & Evidence Guide

This guide is intended to help you register a new unincorporated Trade Name and obtain evidence of your registration through the RI Department of State's [Trade Name online filing system](#). This document **is not intended to be used by those who wish to file an alternate name or "DBA"** on behalf of a Business Corporation, LLC, or Non-Profit Corporation; these filers must instead file a fictitious business name statement through the [corporate online filing system](#). This information is offered as a public service and should not be used as a substitute for professional advice.

The RI Department of State processes most filings within two to five business days, so there is no need to rush. We encourage you to take your time to read through the information below and assess your readiness to register.

If you have questions about any document you plan to file with the RI Department of State, please contact us! We are available Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. by phone (401-222-3040) or email (corporations@sos.ri.gov). You can also [schedule a virtual appointment](#) to meet virtually with a member of our team. Be sure to check out our [Trade Name Basics](#) for more information about preparing, registering, maintaining and updating a registered Trade Name.

Business Services Division

RI Department of State

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Are you ready to register a Trade Name?

All business owners contend with the answer to one question when getting ready to register a business: what business structure and liability protections are right for my business needs? In simpler terms: should I register an incorporated business entity or an unincorporated Trade Name?

Unlike [incorporated entities](#), Trade Names are one and the same with their owners, which means that they don't offer business owner(s) limited personal liability for debts incurred by or legal claims lodged against the business. For some business owners, this might not be a concern. If you're conducting business that has inherent risk involved, you might consider purchasing liability insurance for your registered Trade Name, and/or incorporating a business instead of operating as an unincorporated business name.

This [structure chart](#) outlines the basic differences between six of the most commonly used business structures in Rhode Island and may help you determine which business structure is right for you. You should discuss your options with a qualified corporate attorney, certified public accountant (CPA), and an insurance broker to understand your risk and what you can do to mitigate it.

Once you register a Trade Name, you will be required to:

- **File an annual renewal with the RI Department of State**
 - *What is it for?* The annual renewal is a short, simple online form that captures basic information about your Trade Name. The annual renewal allows the RI Department of State to maintain accurate records of active Trade Names used in the State of Rhode Island.
 - *How much does it cost?* The annual renewal is free to file.
 - *When is it due?* The annual renewal is due between September 1 – November 30 each year, starting the calendar year after registration.
- **Pay applicable business taxes**
 - *What is it?* While Trade Names are not subject to the State's minimum corporate tax like LLCs and Corporations, they are still required to report income generated by the business activity and pay applicable state, federal, and municipal taxes as required. For example, if you sell taxable items at

retail, you will be required to collect and remit sales tax to the RI Division of Taxation each month.

- *How much does it cost?* The cost varies based on the income generated by your business activity and the products or services you sell.
- *When is it due?* Your Trade Name's tax filings will be due at the same time as your personal state and federal income tax returns. Retail sales tax returns must be filed monthly. Tangible property must be reported to your local Tax Assessor's Office by December 31st, and a municipal annual return must be filed by January 31st.
- **Contact the city/town filing office/zoning board**
 - *What is it?* Each city or town has rules defining where and what type of business you can legally operate. Several municipalities also require all businesses to submit a registration form and file an annual renewal to operate your business legally. Depending on the business activity and the exact location, you may need to work with the municipality's zoning board before opening for business.
 - *How much does it cost?* Fees may vary between \$10.00 to approximately \$125.00 depending on the city or town your Trade Name operates out of, and renewals may be required each year.
 - *When is it due?* You should contact the city/town filing office/zoning board before you begin conducting business. If an annual renewal is required, ask the filing office when the filing deadline is and how to complete the process.

If you've determined that registering a Trade Name is right for your business, create a user profile to get started.

Create a user profile

1. Navigate to trade.sos.ri.gov. Click "Create a Profile".
2. Enter all required registration information, including your First Name, Last Name, Email Address, and Password. You must confirm the Password you have chosen by typing it into the "Confirm Password" text box.
3. Double check the Email Address you provided. Once submitted, you won't be able to change the Email Address used to register your user profile. This Email Address will receive notifications when your Trade Name filings have been accepted or rejected.

4. Click “Register Me.”
5. Once your user profile has been created, return to the login screen at trade.sos.ri.gov. Enter your Email and Password and click “Log In.”

Register a Trade Name

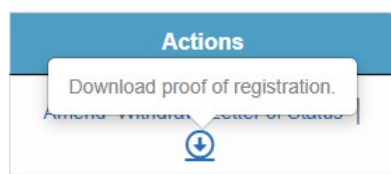
After logging in to your user profile, select “Register a Trade Name” from the Trade Name Registry dashboard.

- You must select one of Rhode Island’s 39 cities/towns as the municipality in which business will be conducted. Your Trade Name registration will only allow you to conduct business in a single RI municipality; if you wish to register your Trade Name in more than one municipality, you must file multiple Trade Name registrations, one for each city/town.
 - NOTE: To conduct business throughout the State of Rhode Island, you may consider registering an incorporated business entity such as an LLC or Corporation.
- Enter your desired Trade Name EXACTLY as you intend to use it. Double check your spelling; once accepted, you won’t be able to change it.
 - NOTE: Your Trade Name must be distinguishable from the active Trade Names already in use in the city or town in which you choose to register. Check to see if your Trade Name is available in one of RI’s 39 cities/towns by searching the [Trade Name Database](#).
- Enter an Email Address for the Trade Name. This can be a personal or business Email Address. You can update this as needed so long as your Trade Name remains Active. This email address will be visible to the public via the [Trade Name Database](#).
- Next, you must select a North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code that best matches your Trade Name’s primary industry or business activity. Select a radio button to search by code or keyword and begin typing numbers or letters in the “NAICS Code” text box. Click on your desired NAICS code from the options that appear. **Both the code and the description** must populate in the text field to submit.
- Use the radio buttons to select an entity or individual who will be an owner of the Trade Name. Enter the entity or individual’s information and click “Add Owner”.

- NOTE: Your Trade Name can have any number of owners, but only one may be marked as the Primary Contact. You must indicate a Primary Contact to submit the Trade Name registration. The Primary Contact is the person who will receive notices if the Trade Name’s business address is undeliverable.
- Enter the business address. This must be a deliverable postal address.
- The signature must be completed by an authorized person—an individual owner or someone authorized to file the Trade Name on an owner’s behalf. **An individual person’s name** must be typed in this text field.
- Choose how you’d like to submit the Trade Name registration and \$20.00 filing fee.
 - Pay and submit online with credit/debit card. A convenience fee of 3% will be applied at checkout.
 - Print filing confirmation and pay offline with cash or check (**DO NOT** mail cash. Cash payments will **only** be accepted at the public service counter). Payment must be remitted within 10 days or your filing will be rejected.
- The email address used to create your user profile will receive an email once the Trade Name has been accepted or rejected. If rejected, you may use the instructions found in the rejection email to revise and resubmit your registration. If accepted, you can find your registered Trade Name in the Trade Name Database or log in to your user profile to obtain formal evidence of your registration.

Obtain Evidence

- Navigate to trade.sos.ri.gov.
- Use your Email and Password to log in to your user profile.
- From the Trade Name Registry dashboard, click “My Trade Names”.
- From the Actions column, find and click the blue downward facing arrow.



- NOTE: Your browser must **allow pop-ups**.
- A Certificate of Trade Name Registration will open in a new tab. Print or download the certificate as desired.
- You can also view and print the details of your filing by searching for your Trade Name in the [Trade Name Database](#).