



سلطة مدينة إكسبو دبي
EXPO CITY DUBAI AUTHORITY



How to set up your business in Expo City Dubai

Expo City Dubai

Expo City Dubai is a sustainable, innovation-driven, people-centric city of the future. It is an integral part of the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, which emphasises the need for sustainable growth and greener, healthier communities.

Expo City Dubai is an integrated community to work, live and play. A city built on sustainability and designed for wellbeing, where all daily needs are within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.

As a blueprint for eco-conscious urban planning, Expo City Dubai expects entities operating within the city to align with its goals in creating a balanced community that thrives in harmony with the environment.

Expo City Dubai is a purpose-driven community that comprises premium offices, unique event venues, stunning green spaces, exercise grounds, cultural and entertainment attractions, hotels, restaurants and residential units, all within a tech-enabled environment fully focused on sustainability.

The future of business

Located at the centre of Dubai's growth, Expo City Dubai enables the future of business through its innovation-driven ecosystem, bringing together multinational companies, entrepreneurs, SMEs, startups, government, academia, research and development institutions and more, to collaborate and thrive in a vibrant setting.

Expo City Dubai enables sustainable business growth through its dynamic free zone and empowering regulatory environment that enables entities to work smarter and more sustainably. It offers a variety of flexible licence and visa options that support diverse types of business setup, and provides fully integrated access to all services, digitally and physically.

Expo City Dubai offers a wide range of smart and flexible office space solutions. These include multi-building campuses, shell-and-core buildings with branding options, entire floors, private offices, shared desks and coworking spaces, as well as a business centre with flexible workspace options.

- › Grade A office space
- › Available from small sizes to large bespoke requirements
- › LEED Platinum and Gold certified buildings
- › Powered by a highly advanced digital infrastructure
- › Connected to metro and major highways
- › Ample parking and sustainable mobility options
- › Unique views of Expo City landmarks

Business setup in Expo City Dubai

Clients wishing to operate from and within Expo City Dubai (hereinafter known as ECD) must hold a valid Licence issued by the Expo City Dubai Authority (hereinafter known as ECDA). The ECD Licence is the foundational document necessary to operate within the ECD Free Zone.

The ECD Licence allows companies to enjoy a number of exclusive benefits operating in Expo City Dubai, these include:

Benefits of operating in Expo City Dubai



Figure 1 Benefits of operating in Expo City Dubai

ECDA offers clients a tailored and agile approach to setting up business within the City, ensuring an enjoyable and seamless client experience. Once registered, clients will be provided with fully integrated access to all ECDA services both virtually through the Expo City Dubai Portal (hereinafter known as ECD Portal) and physically through the Client Relations Centre located in ECD on level 2 of the Women's Pavilion in the Sustainability District.

How to get started


Clients wishing to obtain an ECD Licence must identify the type of legal entity applicable for their specific business.

Types of legal entities that can be formed under ECDA



Setup New Company

A Free Zone Limited Liability Company (FZ-LLC)
Setting up a new legal company incorporated/ registered by a single shareholder or multiple shareholders. The shareholder can be either an individual or a non-individual/corporate.



Setup Branch of a Company

Free Zone Branch (FZB)
Setting up a branch of a company currently registered outside of ECD (i.e. a branch of an overseas company or a branch of a UAE-registered company).

Figure 2 Types of legal entities that can be formed under ECDA

Clients must also identify the licence type that is best suited to their planned business activities. The ECDA team is available to provide the guidance required to help clients identify the most suitable licence type.







ECDA licence types on offer	
	Commercial Licence To conduct trading activities including importation, exportation, buying and selling, and distribution of items as per the industry groups selected on the licence.
	General Trading Licence To conduct trading activities including importation, exportation, buying and selling, and distribution of items in all categories of industries in line with the applied regulations.
	Service Licence To conduct service-oriented activities including but not limited to consultancy, hospitality, event management and training.
	E-Commerce Licence To conduct the trade of products and services online
	Logistics Licence To conduct services including but not limited to storage, transportation, distribution, sorting, forwarding and clearing activities, order management & inventory management.
	Holding Licence Provided to companies that hold assets and subsidiaries without running their day-to-day operations.

Figure 3 ECDA licence types on offer

To obtain an ECD Licence, the client must submit the mandated legal documents and complete the steps below. ECD will assign each client an Account Manager to support and manage their business set up journey.































Figure 4 Business Set up Journey

STEP 1 – New application submission for Initial Approval

Upon identification and confirmation of an ECD leased space, the client will sign the Offer Letter with their designated Account Manager. The Account Manager will then proceed with providing the client with login credentials to the ECD Portal. The client must then submit the ECDA Business Setup application form and supporting documentation (listed below) through the ECD Portal and complete a non-refundable AED 500 application fee.

If the ECDA Business Setup application form submission is completed by a legal entity, agency or representative on behalf of the shareholder(s) then an attested copy of the Power of Attorney stipulating the authority to complete submissions on behalf of the shareholder(s) must be provided at the time of application.

Documents required for ECDA Initial Approval	 FZ-LLC Individual Shareholders	 FZ-LLC Non-Individual Shareholders	 FZB
ECDA Business Setup application form (refer to Appendix 1)			
Signed copy of the ECD lease offer letter (optional)			
Passport copies of all licensed parties (e.g. shareholders, directors, company managers, secretary)			
United Arab Emirates visa copies of all licensed parties (if applicable)			
Emirates ID copies of all licensed parties (if applicable)			
Additional documents for entities undertaking controlled business activities (if applicable)*			
A copy of the Parent Company Licence			
Brand Ownership Document or Franchise Agreement (If applicable)			
Specimen signature of shareholders of all licensed parties (adhering to the ECDA templates provided)			
Specimen signature of the Company Manager (adhering to the ECDA templates provided)			

*Please refer to the 'Expo City Dubai controlled business activities - food and beverage, shisha and alcohol' guide for details.

Table 1 Documents required for ECDA Initial Approval

STEP 2 – Initial review and approval

Once all documents are received, ECDA will review to ensure all requirements are met and necessary approvals obtained. The Initial Approval will include confirmation of the availability of the trade name as well as validation of the business activities planned.

Upon completion of Initial Approval, the client will be notified along with any letters addressed to the relevant authorities to obtain approval for any controlled business activities. If clients are unable to provide the required information and documents for controlled business activities at the Initial Approval or Final Approval stage, they can be provided later to ECDA. However, clients are reminded they will not be able to operate any controlled activities within ECD without the relevant approvals. Additionally, any relevant document templates required for Final Approval will also be provided to the client. Initial Approval is valid for 30 (thirty) days and submission of legal documents must be completed within this period.

STEP 3 – Legal document submission for entity registration

Once Initial Approval is obtained, the client can submit their final documents directly and be invoiced immediately. However, it is recommended that a draft of the legal documents and relevant external authority approvals for controlled business activities be shared with the ECD Account Manager for validation ahead of the official signing.

This is to avoid any additional costs as a result of resubmission or re-attestation of legal documents that are not accepted by ECDA. Once draft legal documents have been validated by ECDA, an invoice will be issued to the client to complete payment of registration fees for the Entity Registration, Licence, Company Card and Lease Security Deposit. Payment of the invoice must be completed within 7 (seven) days from the date of issuance. The ECD Account Manager will then schedule an appointment with the client to proceed with the signing of the original legal documents.

The signing of legal documents must be completed by a legal representative of the entity either in person or virtually, adhering to ECDA templates.

If the Entity's shareholder(s) is/are to be represented by a legal entity or agency to complete the physical signing, then an original Power of Attorney stipulating the authority to sign on behalf of the shareholder(s) must be presented at the time of signing.

For virtual signing through video call, photo identification in the form of an original Passport or Emirates ID or National ID must be presented by the Entity's shareholder(s) or legal representative at the time of signing.

Documents required for ECDA Final Approval	FZ-LLC Individual Shareholders	FZ-LLC Non-Individual Shareholders	FZB
Articles of Association (adhering to the ECDA templates provided)	✓	✓	
Shareholder Resolution/Declaration to set up a new company (adhering to the ECDA templates provided)	✓	✓	
Approvals from government authorities for any controlled business activities (if applicable)	✓	✓	✓
ECDA Ultimate Beneficial Owner Declaration (adhering to the ECDA templates provided)		✓	
A copy of the Parent Company Licence with a minimum validity period of 6 (six) months		✓	✓
Good Legal Standing, issued no later than 3 (three) months from date of application (optional)		✓	✓
Incorporation Certificates		✓	✓
Shareholder Resolution/Declaration to set up a new branch in ECD and appointment of the Company Manager (must clearly stipulate the Delegation of Authority of the appointed Company Manager)			✓
Parent Company approvals from government authorities for any controlled business activities (if applicable)			✓
Articles of Association of the parent company			✓

Table 2 Documents required for ECDA Final Approval

STEP 4 – Final review and approval

When signed legal documents and payment for the registration fees have been received, ECDA will carry out the Final Review and complete registration of the Entity.

STEP 5 – Signing of final Expo City Dubai Lease Agreement

Once the Entity is registered, ECD will generate a final Lease Agreement which must be signed by both ECD and the client or an authorised representative. The registration of the Entity and signing of the Lease Agreement will take place either physically or virtually as requested by the client.

STEP 6 – Issue of Licence, Registration Certificate and Company Card

Once the final Lease Agreement has been signed, a final compliance check of all documentation will then be carried out

by ECDA. The ECD Licence, Registration Certificate and Company Card will then be issued and provided to the client by the ECD Account Manager as part of the welcome pack.

The Company Card is an essential tool to business operations that serves as the official identification card of the company and a confirmation of its legal existence. The card specifies information about the company name, card number, expiration date, and ECDA as the authorised signatory. Along with the Company Card, the client will be issued with their ECD employee allocation. Please refer to Appendix 1 for details on employee allocations as regulated by ECDA.

Congratulations

You are now licensed within Expo City Dubai
For any further queries or clarifications please contact the Expo City Dubai Authority Client Relations Centre at **CRC@expocitydubai.ae** or contact your ECD Account Manager.

ECD licensing requirements are subject to change and the client may be required to provide additional documentation to complete the licensing process. Please refer to the latest requirements as set out in the 'How to set up your business in Expo City Dubai' guidelines.

Appendix 1

Employee Allocation



Office Space

1 employee per 9 sqm*
1 employee per 96 sqft*



Showroom

1 employee per 15 sqm*
1 employee per 162 sqft*



Shared Desk

2 employees per desk



Food and Beverage and Retail

1 employee per 15 sqm*
1 employee per 162 sqft*



Warehouse

1 employee per 12 sqm*
1 employee per 129 sqft*

*May vary depending on business activity, layout of the premises, and considerations related to health and safety.