How Can I Start a Small Business or Get a Street Vendor's License?

In order for a business to operate legally in New York City, it must be licensed by the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA). The DCA website offers useful information about getting a business license, the relevant laws and rules applicable to the license categories and frequently asked questions about the application process.

You can visit the website via this link http://www.nyc.gov/html/dca/html/licenses/licenses.shtml. You can also visit the DCA Licensing Center in person at 42 Broadway, 5th Floor, in Lower Manhattan, or call 311, New York City's 24-hour Citizen Service Center.

In March 2008, Mayor Michael Bloomberg signed Local Law 9, which established 1,000 permits for Green Carts. Green Carts are mobile food carts that sell raw fruits and vegetables at designated areas within each of the five boroughs. To operate a Green Cart, you need both a mobile food vending license and a Green Cart permit.

For more information on the application process, call 311 and ask for "Green Carts Permit" and/or "Green Carts Waiting List Application" or visit this link:
http://home2.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cdp/cdp_pan_green_carts.shtml.

The DCA also offers information on how to become a Green Cart mobile food vendor including the costs and financial assistance available.

If you are interested in becoming a general mobile food vendor or a general merchandise vendor (also referred to as a "peddler"), be advised that all available permits have been issued. The waiting list for a general merchandise vendor license is closed, except for veterans or their surviving spouses, who may get a vendor license for free. Because the wait-list for a food cart permit is very long, you might want to consider adding your name to the wait-list for a food vending permit in a specific borough, or applying for a seasonal food vending permit, which is awarded on a lottery basis.

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