



California Competes Tax Credit

Frequently Asked Questions

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General

1. What is the California Competes Tax Credit?

The California Competes Tax Credit is an income tax credit available to businesses that want to locate in California or stay and grow in California. Tax credit agreements will be negotiated by GO-Biz and approved by a statutorily created “California Competes Tax Credit Committee,” consisting of the State Treasurer, the Director of the Department of Finance, the Director of GO-Biz, and one appointee each by the Speaker of the Assembly and Senate Committee on Rules.

2. How much in tax credits will be available each year?

The tentative amount of credits that can be allocated by GO-Biz is as follows:

- \$30 million in fiscal year 2013-14
- \$151.1 million in fiscal year 2014-15
- \$200 million in each fiscal year 2015-16 through 2017-18

3. Will small businesses be able to apply for the credit?

Yes, not only are small businesses able to apply for the credit, 25 percent of the total credits available each year are specifically reserved for small businesses (gross receipts, less returns and allowances, of greater than \$0 but less than \$2 million in the business’s prior tax year).

4. What is the maximum ratio that will move my application to the Phase II evaluation process?

Because the California Competes Tax Credit is based on a competitive application process, the maximum ratio for an application to move into Phase II is not set and can vary during each application period. For historical reference only, below are the cutoff ratios for the application periods to date:

FISCAL YEAR	BUSINESSES OTHER THAN SMALL	SMALL BUSINESSES
2013-14	.0184	.0925
2014-15 1 st period	.01383	.3442
2014-15 2 nd period	.01433	.8368
2014-15 3 rd period	.0134	.1389
2015-16 1 st period	.1449	.2016
2015-16 2 nd period	.0653	N/A ¹
2015-16 3 rd period	.1242	.1737
2016-17 1 st period	.0475	.2104
2016-17 2 nd period	.0684	N/A ¹
2016-17 3 rd period	.0389	N/A ¹

¹ All small businesses advanced into the Phase II evaluation in this application period.

5. Is there a fee to apply for the California Competes Tax Credit?

No, there is no fee to apply for the credit.

6. Can any business apply for the California Competes Tax Credit? Is the credit restricted to only certain industries or locations in California?

Any business can apply for the California Competes Tax Credit. The credit is available statewide to all industries. However, while there are no geographic or sector-specific restrictions, the purpose of the California Competes Tax Credit is to attract and retain high-value employers in California in industries with high economic multipliers and that provide their employees good wages and benefits.

Application Mechanics

1. When and how can businesses apply for the California Competes Tax Credit?

Applications for the California Competes Tax Credit are accepted at www.calcompetes.ca.gov during the application periods specified in the “Notice California Competes Tax Credit” located at www.business.ca.gov/CalCompetes.aspx.

2. How long will the process take from application to award?

The process takes approximately 90 days which includes the period when applications will be reviewed and presented to the California Competes Tax Credit Committee for approval.

3. If not awarded a credit, can a business reapply?

Applicants not awarded a credit during an application period can update and resubmit their application in a subsequent application period.

4. How do I update and resubmit an application if I was not awarded a credit and I want to reapply?

Log in to your account at www.calcompetes.ca.gov and click on “My Applications.” From the “My Applications” screen, click on the application you would like to update and resubmit; and then from the “Application Summary” screen, click on the “Options” button. From the “Application Options” screen click on “Copy,” and then complete the “Create Application” screen. The application will then be pre-populated with most of the data from the previous application.

5. Can a business that receives an award apply and receive another award in a subsequent year if it creates more full-time jobs and competes well according to the evaluation criteria?

Yes, businesses are not limited to the number of times they can apply or the number of times they can be awarded tax credits for additional full-time job growth and investments.

6. If I receive reimbursements, rebates, tax credits or other incentives related to the compensation I pay my new full-time employees, must I make an adjustment when computing the “Aggregate Employee Compensation” for my California Competes Tax Credit application?

No, no adjustment is necessary. However, you will need to list and describe such incentives in the “Incentives and Programs” section of the California Competes Tax Credit application.

7. Is the “Aggregate Employee Compensation” the total wages for all existing employees and the employees projected to be hired?

No. In short, the Aggregate Employee Compensation is an estimate of the total projected wages (not including tips, overtime, bonuses, benefits or other compensation of any kind) for the net increase in full-time employees to be employed in California by a business over a five tax year period.

8. Is the \$2 million threshold to determine whether I am a “small business” only based on gross receipts attributable to my business’s gross receipts in California?

No, a business’s worldwide gross receipts, less returns and allowances, from its most recently completed tax year are used to determine if the business is considered a “small business”.

9. If I am a sole proprietor and own multiple “Schedule C” businesses, do I need to add the gross receipts of all those businesses to determine whether my business is a “small business” for the California Competes Tax Credit?

No. Only use the gross receipts of the “Schedule C” business that will be doing the activity (hiring and or investing) that is the basis for the award of the California Competes Tax Credit.

10. How do I determine if I am a “small business” if my tax filing is included in a combined report filed with the Franchise Tax Board?

If a taxpayer is included in a combined report (whether required or allowed) for purposes of determining whether that taxpayer is a “small business,” the aggregate worldwide gross receipts, less returns and allowances, of all taxpayers in the combined report would be used.

11. How do I determine if my proposed employee growth is in an area of High Poverty or High Unemployment when filling out the application?

You can find the list of cities and counties that fall within areas of high poverty or high unemployment [here](#) on our website. Additionally, there is a link in the proposed project section of the application. If at least 75% of your proposed net increase of new full-time employees will work at least 75% of the time in an area of high unemployment or high poverty, the application will automatically move into Phase II, regardless of your cost-benefit ratio.

Evaluation Factors

1. What factors will GO-Biz consider when reviewing applications for the credit?

The amount of the credit will be based on the following factors:

- The number of jobs the business will create or retain in this state.
- The compensation paid or proposed to be paid by the business to its employees, including wages, benefits, and fringe benefits.
- The amount of investment in this state by the business.
- The extent of unemployment or poverty where the business is located.
- The incentives available to the business in this state, including incentives from the state, local government, and other entities.
- The incentives available to the business in other states.
- The duration of the business' proposed project and the duration the business commits to remain in this state.
- The overall economic impact in this state of the applicant's project or business.
- The strategic importance of the business to the state, region, or locality.
- The opportunity for future growth and expansion in this state by the business.
- The extent to which the anticipated benefit to the state exceeds the projected benefit to the business from the tax credit.

2. Will new or emerging industry/sectors be considered during the evaluation?

Yes, this will be taken into consideration during the Phase II evaluation.

3. Are other grants/incentives included in Phase I evaluation?

No, these are not taken into consideration until Phase II. However, including other grants/incentives does not necessarily negatively impact an applicant. It is a useful tool for GO-Biz to identify if the applicant may be able to take advantage of other grants/incentives. Applicants will also be asked as part of the application if they would like for a GO-Biz business specialist to contact them about other incentives of which they might not be aware that could benefit their project or business.

4. Will letters of support from local governments be a part of the process?

Yes, although not required, letters of support will be taken into consideration during Phase II of the application process. Applicants will be invited to upload supporting documents after being notified of their application being forwarded to Phase II.

5. **Is a business required to have site control to be eligible for tax credits? For example, if a company is looking to start a business in California, must they have already signed a property lease or property purchase agreement?**

Businesses that apply for the tax credit are not required to have an existing signed lease or purchase agreement; but, applicants should have an idea of the general location in California because this will be taken into account during the Phase II evaluation. The applicant should also be able to demonstrate the finance mechanism(s) it has secured or will use to secure its facility(ies).

Evaluation Process

1. **Is the Phase I formula detailed in the California Competes Tax Credit regulations?**

Yes, please go to www.business.ca.gov/CalCompetes.aspx for a copy of the regulations.

2. **What is the difference between the Phase I evaluation and the Phase II evaluation?**

The Phase I evaluation is a quantitative analysis in which the credit amount requested is compared to the hiring and investment commitments of each applicant. This “ratio” is automatically calculated based on the applicant’s credit request divided by the sum of its aggregate investment and aggregate employee compensation. Phase II brings into consideration a variety of quantitative and qualitative factors, including local unemployment and poverty, competing incentives, economic impact, strategic importance, and industry outlook.

3. **Are there any exemptions to the Phase I calculation which would allow an application to be considered in Phase II?**

Yes, GO-Biz may move an application to Phase II if the owner, president, chief executive officer, chief financial officer or other equivalent representative of the applicant certifies to GO- Biz that absent award of the credit the applicant’s project may/will occur in another state or the applicant may/will terminate or relocate all or a portion of its employees to another state.

In addition, if at least 75% of the applicant’s proposed net increase of new full-time employees will work at least 75% of the time in an area of high unemployment or high poverty, the application will automatically move into Phase II.

Tax Credit Mechanics

1. What types of taxes can the California Competes Tax Credit offset?

The California Competes Tax Credit only applies to income tax owed to the Franchise Tax Board. The credit is non-refundable. If the credit allowed exceeds the tax due, the excess may be carried over to reduce the tax in the following year, and the succeeding five years if necessary, until exhausted.

2. Is there a minimum credit amount that a business may request?

Yes, the minimum amount a business can request is \$20,000.

3. If I am awarded a California Competes Tax Credit, when can I claim it on my tax return?

Each negotiated and approved tax credit agreement will specify the terms and conditions of when the tax credit may be claimed.

4. If I am awarded the California Competes Tax Credit, may I assign it to an affiliated corporation?

The normal credit assignment rules under Revenue and Taxation Code section 23663 apply.

5. What happens if an S-Corp is awarded the California Competes Tax Credit?

One-third of the California Competes Tax Credit may be utilized by an S-Corp to offset the tax on net income at the S-Corporation level. The remaining two-thirds of the credit is disregarded and may not be used as a carryover for the S-Corp. However, the full amount of the California Competes Tax Credit is also passed through to the S-Corp's shareholders.

Employment Requirements

1. Is there a minimum number of jobs that must be created?

There is no minimum number of jobs that must be created. However, the credit will be awarded on a competitive basis. Applicants should keep in mind that the primary goal of the California Competes Tax Credit program is to stimulate the creation of full-time jobs. Note that applications from small businesses will be compared to the applications from other small businesses.

2. What is considered a full-time employee for the California Competes Tax Credit?

A full-time employee is defined as an individual that is paid wages for services in this state of not less than an average of 35 hours per week.

3. Can new part-time employees be combined to fulfill the new full-time employee requirements?

No, new part-time employees do not qualify and will not be counted towards the employment requirement, even partially. For example, two new part-time hires do not equal one new full-time hire for the purpose of fulfilling the credit requirements. Likewise, part-time employees should not be included in the “base year” calculation either.

Privacy

1. Is a California Competes Tax Credit application subject to a public records request?

GO-Biz is subject to the California Public Records Act (PRA) (Government Code section 6250 et. seq.). Technically, the applications could be subject to a PRA, but GO-Biz will work to protect the information by excluding proprietary information, financial information and trade secret type information. GO-Biz will also apply the balancing test to protect the information, as needed. GO-Biz will notify an applicant in the event their data is requested and will work with the applicant to protect the data, to the extent GO-Biz can. With that said, GO-Biz will enter into agreements with the most competitive applicants and will make recommendations to the California Competes Tax Credit Committee to award the credit to such taxpayers. In addition, the law requires GO-Biz to post on our website the following information:

- (A) The name of each taxpayer allocated a credit
- (B) The estimated amount of the investment by each taxpayer
- (C) The estimated number of jobs created or retained
- (D) The amount of the credit allocated to the taxpayer
- (E) The amount of the credit recaptured from the taxpayer, if applicable
- (F) The primary location where the taxpayer has committed to increase the net number of jobs or make investments
- (G) Whether the taxpayer was given priority for being located in a high poverty or high unemployment area
- (H) Whether the taxpayer is identified as a small business

Additional Economic Development Initiatives

1. Is the California Competes Tax Credit the only component of Governor Brown's Economic Development Initiative?

No, in addition to the California Competes Tax Credit, the Governor's Economic Development Initiative (GEDI) provides a partial sales tax exemption and a hiring credit that are administered by the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration and the Franchise Tax Board respectively. More information on the partial sales tax exemption and the hiring credit can be found here:

- http://www.boe.ca.gov/sutax/manufacturing_exemptions.htm
- https://www.ftb.ca.gov/online/New_Employment_Credit_Reservation/index.shtml

Contact Information

If any additional assistance is needed, please email CalCompetes@gov.ca.gov or call 916-322-4051.