



BELIZE

**BUSINESS NAMES ACT
CHAPTER 247**

REVISED EDITION 2020

**SHOWING THE SUBSTANTIVE LAWS AS AT
31ST DECEMBER, 2020**

This is a revised edition of the Substantive Laws, prepared by the Law Revision Commissioner under the authority of the Law Revision Act, Chapter 3 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020.

This edition contains a consolidation of amendments made to the law by Acts No. 15 of 2018 and No. 15 of 2020.



BELIZE

**BUSINESS NAMES ACT
CHAPTER 247**

REVISED EDITION 2020

**SHOWING THE SUBSTANTIVE LAWS AS AT
31ST DECEMBER, 2020**

This is a revised edition of the Substantive Laws, prepared by the Law Revision Commissioner under the authority of the Law Revision Act, Chapter 3 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020.

This edition contains a consolidation of amendments made to the law by Acts No. 15 of 2018 and No. 15 of 2020.

CHAPTER 247

BUSINESS NAMES

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

PART I

Preliminary

1. Short title.
2. Interpretation.

PART II

Registration of Business names etc.

3. Firms and persons to be registered.
4. Registration by nominee, etc.
5. Manner and particulars of registration.
6. Statement to be signed by persons registering.
7. Time for registration.
8. Registration of changes in firm.
9. Penalty for default in registration.
10. Disability of persons in default.
11. Penalty for false statements.
12. Duty to furnish particulars to Registrar.
13. Registrar to file statement and issue certificate of registration.
14. Index to be kept
15. Removal of names from register.
16. Misleading business names.
17. Inspection of statements registered.

PART III

Miscellaneous

18. Minister may make rules.
19. Publication of true names, etc.
20. Offences by corporations.
21. Transfer of business or stock-in-trade.
22. Application.

SCHEDULE

CHAPTER 247

BUSINESS NAMES

Ch. 105.
R.L. 1958.
CAP. 204.
R.E. 1980-1990.
40 of 1963.
1 of 1969.
23 of 1985.
22 of 1987.
15 of 2018.
15 of 2020.

[30th December, 1950]

PART I

Preliminary

1. This Act may be cited as the Business Names Act.

Short title.

2.(1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires—

Interpretation.

“business” includes profession;

“business name” means the name or style under which any business is carried on, whether in partnership or otherwise;

“Christian name” includes any forename;

“court” means the Supreme Court or a judge thereof;

“firm” means an un-incorporate body of two or more individuals, or one or more individuals and one or more corporations, or two or more corporations, who have entered into partnership with one another with a view to carrying on business for profit;

“foreign firm” means any firm, individual, or corporation whose principal place of business is situate outside any Commonwealth country;

“individual” means a natural person and does not include a corporation;

“initials” includes any recognised abbreviation of a christian name;

15 of 2020.

“Minister” means the Minister responsible for finance;

15 of 2018.

“Registrar” means the Registrar of Companies and Corporate Affairs.

(2) References in this Act to a former christian name or surname shall not, in the case of natural-born Belizean citizens, include a former christian name or surname where that name or surname has been changed or disused before the person bearing the name had attained the age of eighteen years, and, in the case of a married woman, shall not include the name or surname by which she was known previous to the marriage.

(3) References in this Act to a change of name shall not include, in the case of natural-born Belizean citizens, a change of name which has taken place before the person whose name has been changed has attained the age of eighteen years.

PART II

Registration of Business names etc.

Firms and persons to be registered.

3. Subject to this Act—

- (a) every firm having a place of business in Belize and carrying on business under a business name which does not consist of the true surnames of all partners who are individuals

and the corporate names of all partners who are corporations without any addition other than the true christian names of individual partners or initials of such christian names;

- (b) every individual having a place of business in Belize and carrying on business under a business name which does not consist of his true surname without any addition other than his true christian names or the initials thereof;
- (c) every individual or firm having a place of business in Belize, who, or a member of which, has either before or after the commencement of this Act changed his name, except in the case of a woman in consequence of marriage,

shall be registered in the manner directed by this Act, provided that—

- (i) where the addition merely indicates that the business is carried on in succession to a former owner of the business, that addition shall not of itself render registration necessary; and
- (ii) where two or more individual partners have the same surnames, the addition of an “s” at the end of that surname shall not of itself render registration necessary; and
- (iii) where the business is carried on by a trustee in bankruptcy or the Official Receiver or a receiver or manager appointed by the court, registration shall not be necessary; and

- (iv) a purchase or acquisition of property by two or more persons as joint tenants or tenants in common is not of itself to be deemed carrying on a business whether or not the owners share any profits arising from the sale thereof.

Registration by nominee, etc.

4. Where a firm, individual, or corporation having a place of business within Belize carries on the business wholly or mainly as nominee or trustee of or for another person, or other persons, or another corporation, or acts as general agent for any foreign firm, the first mentioned firm, individual, or corporation shall be registered in the manner provided by this Act and, in addition to the other particulars required to be furnished and registered, there shall be furnished and registered the particulars mentioned in the Schedule,

Schedule.

provided that where the business is carried on by a trustee in bankruptcy or the Official Receiver or a receiver or manager appointed by the court, registration under this section shall not be necessary.

Manner and particulars of registration.

5.-(1) Every firm or person required under this Act to be registered shall furnish to the Registrar a statement in writing in the prescribed form containing the following particulars—

- (a) the business name;
- (b) the general nature of the business;
- (c) the principal place of the business;
- (d) where the registration to be effected is that of a firm, the present christian name and surname, any former christian name or surname, the nationality, and if that nationality is not the nationality of origin, the nationality of origin, the usual residence, and the other business occupation, if any, of each of the

individuals who are partners, and the corporate name and registered or principal office of every corporation which is a partner;

- (e) where the registration to be effected is that of an individual, the present christian name and surname, any former christian name or surname, the nationality, and if that nationality is not the nationality of origin, the nationality of origin, the usual residence, and the other business occupation, if any, of such individual;
- (f) where the registration to be effected is that of a corporation, its corporate name and registered or principal office;
- (g) if the business is commenced after the commencement of this Act, the date of the commencement of the business.

(2) Where a business is carried on under two or more business names, each of those business names shall be stated.

6. The statement required for the purpose of registration must in the case of an individual be signed by him, and in the case of a corporation by a director or secretary thereof, and in the case of a firm either by all the individuals who are partners, and by a director or the secretary of all corporations which are partners or by some individual who is a partner, or a director or the secretary of some corporation which is a partner, and in either of the last two cases must be verified by a statutory declaration made by the signatory,

Statement to be signed by persons registering.

provided that no such statutory declaration stating that any person other than the declarant is a partner, or omitting to state that any person other than as aforesaid is a partner, shall be evidence for or against any such other person in respect of his liability or non-liability as a partner, and that the court may, on

application of any person alleged or claiming to be a partner, direct the rectification of the register and decide any question arising under this section.

Time for registration.

7.-(1) The particulars required to be furnished under this Act shall be furnished within fourteen days after the firm or person commences business, or the business in respect of which registration is required, as the case may be,

provided that if such firm or person has carried on such business before the coming into force of this Act or commences such business within two months thereafter, the statement of particulars shall be furnished after the expiration of two months and before the expiration of three months from the coming into force of this Act and that if at the expiration of the said two months the conditions affecting the firm or persons have ceased to be such as to require registration under this Act, the firm or person need not be registered so long as such conditions continue.

(2) This section shall apply, in the case where registration is required in consequence of a change of name, as if for references to the date of the commencement of the business there were substituted reference to the date of such change.

Registration of changes in firm.

8. Whenever a change is made or occurs in any of the particulars registered in respect of any firm or person, such firm or person shall, within fourteen days after such change, or such longer period as the Registrar may, on application being made in any particular case, whether before or after the expiration of such fourteen days, allow, furnish to the Registrar a statement in writing in the prescribed form specifying the nature and date of the change signed, and where necessary verified, in like manner as the statement required on registration.

Penalty for default in registration.

9. If any firm or person required by this Act to furnish a statement of particulars or of any change in particulars shall without reasonable excuse make default in so doing in the manner and within the time specified by this Act, every partner

in the firm or the person so in default is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty dollars for every day during which the default continues, and the magistrate shall order a statement of the required particulars or change in the particulars to be furnished to the Registrar within such time as may be specified in the order.

10.-(1) Where any firm or person required by this Act to furnish a statement of particulars or of any change in particulars has made default in so doing, then the rights of that defaulter under or arising out of any contract made or entered into by or on behalf of such defaulter in relation to the business in respect to the carrying on of which particulars were required to be furnished, at any time while he is in default, shall not be enforceable by action or other legal proceeding either in the business name or otherwise,

Disability of persons in default.

provided that—

- (a) the defaulter may apply to the court for relief against the disability imposed by this section, and the court, on being satisfied that the default was accidental, or due to inadvertence or some other sufficient cause, or that on other grounds it is just and equitable to grant relief, may grant such relief either generally or as respects any particular contracts, on condition of the costs of the application being paid by the defaulter, unless the court otherwise orders, and on such other conditions, if any, as the court may impose, but such relief shall not be granted except on such service and such publication of notice of the application as the court may order, nor shall relief be given in respect of any contract if any party to the contract proves to the satisfaction of the court that, if this Act had been complied with, he would not have entered into the contract;

- (b) nothing herein contained shall prejudice the rights of any other parties as against the defaulter in respect of such contract as aforesaid;
- (c) if any action or proceeding is commenced by any other party against the defaulter to enforce the rights of such party in respect of such contract, nothing herein contained shall preclude the defaulter from enforcing in that action or proceeding, by way of counterclaim, set off, or otherwise, such rights as he may have against that party in respect of such contract.

(2) Without prejudice to the power of the court to grant such relief, if any proceeding to enforce any contract is commenced by a defaulter in a district court, such last named court may, as respects that contract, grant such relief.

Penalty for false statements.

11. If any statement required to be furnished under this Act contains any matter which is false in any material particular to the knowledge of any person signing it, that person is on summary conviction liable to a fine not exceeding three hundred dollars, or to imprisonment not exceeding three months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

Duty to furnish particulars to Registrar.

12.-(1) The Registrar may require any person to furnish to him such particulars as he thinks necessary for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not such person or the firm of which he is partner should be registered under this Act, or an alteration made in the registered particulars, and may also, in the case of a corporation, require the secretary, or any other officer of a corporation performing the duties of secretary, to furnish such particulars.

(2) Any person, when so required, who fails to supply such particulars as it is in his power to give, or furnishes particulars which are false in any material particular, is on summary

conviction liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to a fine not exceeding two hundred dollars, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

(3) Where from any information so furnished it appears to the Registrar that any firm or person ought to be registered under this Act, or an alteration ought to be made in the registered particulars, the Registrar may require the firm or person to furnish to him the required particulars within such time as may be allowed by the Registrar, but, where any default under this Act has been discovered from the information acquired under this section, no proceedings under this Act shall be taken against any person in respect of such default prior to the expiration of the time within which the firm or person is required by the Registrar under this section to furnish particulars to him.

13. On receiving any statement or statutory declaration made in pursuance of this Act, the Registrar shall cause the same to be filed, and he shall send by post or deliver a certificate of the registration thereof to the firm or person registering, and the certificate or a certified copy thereof shall be kept exhibited in a conspicuous position at the principal place of business of the firm or individual, and, if not kept so exhibited, every partner in the firm or the person, as the case may be, is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding two hundred dollars.

Registrar to file statement and issue certificate of registration.

14. The Registrar shall keep an index of all the firms and persons registered under this Act.

Index to be kept.

15.-(1) Where any firm or individual registered under this Act ceases to carry on business, it shall be the duty of the persons who were partners in the firm at the time when it ceased to carry on business, or of the individual, or, if he is dead, his personal representative, within three months after the business has ceased to be carried on, to deliver to the Registrar notice in the prescribed form that the firm or individual has ceased to carry on business.

Removal of names from register.

(2) Any person whose duty it is to give such notice who fails to do so within such time as aforesaid, shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding two hundred dollars.

(3) On receipt of such notice the Registrar may remove the firm or individual from the register.

(4) Where the Registrar has reasonable cause to believe that any firm or individual registered under this Act is not carrying on business, he may send to the firm or individual by registered post a notice that, unless an answer is received to such notice within one month from the date thereof, the firm or individual may be removed from the register.

(5) Where the Registrar either receives an answer from the firm or individual to the effect that the firm or individual is not carrying on business, or does not, within one month after sending the notice, receive an answer, he may remove the firm or individual from the register.

Misleading
business names.

16.-(1) Where any business name under which the business of a firm or individual is carried on contains any word which, in the opinion of the Registrar, is calculated to lead to the belief that the business is under the ownership or control of Commonwealth citizens, and the Registrar is satisfied that the nationality of the persons by whom the business is wholly or mainly owned or controlled is at any time such that the name is misleading, the Registrar shall refuse to register such business name, or, as the case may be, remove such business name from the register.

(2) Any person aggrieved by a decision of the Registrar under this section may appeal to a judge in chambers whose decision shall be final.

(3) The registration of a business name under this Act shall not be construed as authorising the use of that name if, apart from such registration, the use thereof could be prohibited.

17.-(1) Any person may inspect the documents filed by the Registrar on payment of such fees as may be prescribed not exceeding fifty dollars for each inspection, and any person may require a certificate of the registration of any firm or person, or a copy of or extract from any registered statement, to be certified by the Registrar, and there shall be paid for such certificate of registration, certified copy, or extract such fees as may be prescribed, not exceeding fifty dollars for the certificate of registration, and not exceeding twenty-five dollars for each folio of seventy-two words, of the entry, copy or extract.

Inspection of statements registered.

(2) A certificate of registration, or a copy of or extract from any statement registered under this Act, if duly certified to be a true copy or extract under the hand of the Registrar (whom it shall not be necessary to prove to be the Registrar) shall, in all legal proceedings, civil or criminal, be received in evidence.

PART III

Miscellaneous

18.-(1) The Minister may make rules concerning any of the following matters—

Minister may make rules.
40 of 1963.
23 of 1985.

- (a) the fees to be paid to the Registrar under this Act, but so that they do not exceed the sum of one hundred dollars for the registration of any one statement;
- (b) the forms to be used under this Act;
- (c) the duties to be performed by the Registrar under this Act; and
- (d) generally, the conduct and regulation of registration under this Act, and any matters incidental thereto.

(2) All fees payable in pursuance of any such rules shall be paid into the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Publication of true names, etc.

19.-(1) Every individual and firm required by this Act to be registered shall, in all trade catalogues, trade circulars, and business letters, on or in which the business name appears and which are issued or sent by the individual or firm to any person or firm outside Belize, have mentioned in legible characters—

- (a) in the case of an individual, his present christian name or the initials thereof, and present surname; and
- (b) in the case of a firm, the present christian names or the initials thereof and present surnames, of all the partners in the firm or, in the case of a corporation being a partner, the corporate name.

(2) Where default is made in compliance with this section, the individual or, as the case may be, every member of the firm, is on summary conviction liable for each offence to a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars.

1 of 1969.

(3) No proceedings shall be instituted under this section except by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Offences by corporations.

20. Where a corporation commits an offence under this Act, every director, secretary, and officer of the corporation who is knowingly a party to the default commits a like offence and is liable to a like penalty.

Transfer of business or stock-in trade.

21.-(1) Whenever any person desires to transfer his business, or to transfer or sell, with a view to the transfer or abandonment of any business, any stock-in-trade or other assets held or used for the purpose of such business, notice of the proposed transfer or sale, and the date thereof, shall be advertised by that person, before the date upon which the transfer or sale is to take effect,

in three consecutive issues of the *Gazette*, and once a week for three consecutive weeks in any local newspaper circulating in Belize.

(2) Every agreement to transfer or sell any business, or to transfer or sell, with a view to transfer or abandonment of any business, any stock- in-trade or other assets held or used for the purpose of such business, or to reconstitute any business, shall be void as against creditors of the business, unless the provisions of sub-section (1) have been complied with.

(3) Any person carrying on any business who fails to give the notice prescribed in sub-section (1), commits an offence and is on summary conviction liable to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars or in default of payment to six months' imprisonment.

(4) For the purposes of this section, unless inconsistent with the context, "business" means any business carried on in Belize by one or more persons, whether in partnership or not, but does not include—

- CAP. 250. (a) a company registered under the Companies Act;
- CAP. 313. (b) a society registered under the Co-operative Societies Act;
- (c) the business of a hawker or pedlar; or
- (d) the business of an attorney-at-law.

22. This Act applies throughout Belize.

Application.

SCHEDULE*[section 4]*

Additional Information for Particular Businesses

Description of Firm, etc.

Where the firm, individual, or corporation required to be registered carries on business as nominee or trustee.

Where the firm, individual, or corporation required to be registered carries on business as general agent for any foreign firm.

The additional particulars.

The present christian name and surname, any former name, nationality, and if that nationality is not the nationality of origin, then the nationality of origin, and usual residence, or, as the case may be, the corporate name, of every person or corporation on whose behalf the business is carried on:

Provided that if the business is carried on under any trust and any of the beneficiaries are a class of children or other persons, a description of the class shall be sufficient.

The business name and address of the firm or person as agent for whom the business is carried on:

Provided that if the business is carried on as agent for three or more foreign firms it shall be sufficient to

state the fact that the business is so carried on, specifying the countries in which such foreign firms carry on business.