Thompson Learning Co.

I SUBMITTED MY CSLB APPLICATION: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A practical guide from submission to an active contractor license.

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After you submit a California contractor-license application, CSLB reviews it for completeness, sends instructions for the next requirements, and determines whether the business can be licensed. For a typical first-time applicant, the path includes application review, fingerprints, required examinations, and a final bond-and-fee stage.

Your most useful next steps are simple: keep the copy you submitted, watch for CSLB correspondence, track the deadlines in each notice, and study while the paperwork is being processed. Submission, acceptance, passing the exams, and issuance are different milestones.

After acceptance, fingerprinting and exam arrangements may move forward alongside each other as the relevant instructions arrive. Follow each notice; completing one requirement does not automatically complete the others.

Find your place in the process

Just submitted? Check delivery or submission confirmation and watch for the acknowledgment.
Received a correction notice? Complete the requested corrections and return the packet promptly.
Accepted for processing? Follow the fingerprint and exam instructions.
Passed the required exams? Complete your bond-and-fee requirements, then verify that CSLB has issued an active license.

This guide follows a new original application requiring examinations. Approved examination waivers can change the testing stage; follow the notices issued for your application.

1. Confirm submission and save your acknowledgment

For a mailed application, keep the packet copy and any delivery tracking. If you submitted through CSLB's eligible online application system, keep its confirmation. **Easy-Fill is different:** generating a PDF online does not submit it. If you only completed Easy-Fill, follow its instructions to print, sign, and mail the application. Our original application guide explains those submission routes.

CSLB sends an acknowledgment containing an **Application Fee Number** and a **four-digit PIN**. Use those details for the secured application-status check. Keep the PIN private, and include the Application Fee Number when contacting CSLB about the file. See CSLB's acknowledgment guidance.

> **Example: delivered does not mean accepted**
>
> Alex mailed the application for Rivera Concrete. The carrier shows delivery, but Alex has not received an acknowledgment yet. Alex saves the delivery confirmation, checks the current processing information, and continues studying. Delivery confirms the envelope arrived; it does not establish exam eligibility or authorize contracting.

How long should you expect to wait?

Use CSLB's current processing-times page. It shows the received dates staff are working on for different document types and is updated weekly. Check the row that matches your stage: original exam applications, final issuance documents, bonds, and insurance have separate queues.

If staff are working on applications received before yours, that does not by itself mean your application is late. If the published dates have moved past yours and you have no explanation or notice, check your individual status and contact CSLB with your Application Fee Number. A queue date is a guide to workload, not a promised approval date.

2. Read the review result and handle corrections

CSLB reviews the application and may return it for missing information or corrections. A return for correction gives you specific work to do; read every item in the notice before sending the packet back.

1. Mark each requested correction and identify who must complete or sign it.
2. Use the form instructions and the return notice to make the changes.
3. Check the entire requested response for completeness.
4. Keep a copy and return it using the method and address in the notice.

The original application instructions require a corrected application to be resubmitted within **90 days after the date it was returned**. An abandoned application becomes void and cannot be reinstated. Read the notice immediately and work well ahead of the deadline.

Example: a missing Certifier signature

Alex's notice identifies an unsigned experience certification. Alex contacts Jordan, the Certifier. Jordan reviews and completes the certification, including the required signature and date. Alex checks the other items in the return notice and sends back the requested response. Alex does not sign Jordan's certification.

For help with that form, use our Certification of Work Experience guide.

What does "posted" mean?

CSLB uses **posted** to mean the application has been accepted as complete. It can then move to the next requirements. Some applications undergo additional experience verification after posting. If CSLB requests more information, answer that request and involve your Certifier when appropriate. Keep your submitted records available; provide additional support when requested. The application packet explains this review.

3. Follow the fingerprint instructions after posting

After posting, follow CSLB's fingerprint instructions for each person who must complete them. Take its Live Scan request and accepted identification to the provider.

The operator keeps one form copy; keep one yourself and **return the third to CSLB within 90 days after receiving the packet**.

Outside California or without Live Scan access, follow CSLB's hard-card instructions. Those submissions can take longer. See CSLB's fingerprinting guidance for the procedure, current charges, and background-review information.

Example: record two fingerprint dates

Alex notes the date the packet arrived, books the fingerprint appointment, and keeps the completed form. Alex then records the date the required copy was sent to CSLB. "Appointment completed" and "copy returned" are separate entries on the tracker.

4. Use the examination notice to schedule with PSI

When CSLB refers the application for testing, it sends a **Notice to Schedule an Examination**. You arrange and pay for the assigned exams through PSI. You cannot reserve the exams before CSLB has referred your application for testing.

Follow the notice and use PSI's California contractor examination page. Each exam has a separate fee. Exams can be booked on the same day or on different dates, subject to available appointments. Save the confirmation for each appointment and check the name, exam, location, date, and time.

TLC-ProTip: take your exams on separate days

Taking Law & Business and your trade exam on the same day can be overwhelming. At Thompson Learning, we recommend scheduling them on separate days. CSLB allows up to 3½ hours for each exam. Two appointments can mean up to seven hours of testing, in addition to check-in, breaks, and travel. Separate days give you one exam to concentrate on at a time.

- **Choose your first exam by readiness.** Put the exam you are better prepared for first, while continuing to study for both.
- **Give yourself time to rest and review.** Choose a gap that lets you recover from the first appointment and focus on weaker topics for the remaining exam. Your work schedule, travel, and preparation should guide the spacing.
- **Keep a definite plan for the second exam.** Put both appointments on your calendar when you are ready to commit. Keep them within your application's eligibility window and leave room for a possible retake.

Use the days between appointments for focused preparation, then arrive ready to tackle the remaining exam. See CSLB's exam FAQ for the official scheduling options and time allowance.

If you requested disability accommodations, wait for CSLB's approval before scheduling. Translator arrangements also require advance approval where applicable; check the available exam languages and your notice. See CSLB's exam-scheduling and accommodation FAQ.

Example: two exams, two appointments

Alex is referred for Law & Business and C-8 Concrete. Alex is ready for Law & Business first and books it for a Tuesday, with C-8 on the following Monday. That leaves several days for rest and focused concrete review. Alex saves both confirmations and checks that the appointments leave time before the application's exam-eligibility deadline.

TLC-ProTip: use processing time for study

Start a steady study routine while CSLB reviews the application. Work through lessons, practice questions, and the topics you miss. As exam day approaches, compare your preparation with the official exam outline. If you are unsure which tests apply, read Which California Contractor Exam Do I Need?

Before traveling to PSI, check its current identification and check-in instructions. Your application name must match the accepted photo identification. Our study and test-day strategy guide covers preparation, exam day, and educated guessing.

5. Keep your results and act on any retake

You receive a pass-or-fail report at the test site. If you do not pass, use the section breakdown to focus your next study sessions. CSLB requires **21 calendar days** before a failed exam can be retaken; arrange the new attempt through PSI according to its instructions.

You ordinarily have **18 months from acceptance/posting to pass the required exams**. The deadline does not start over after each attempt. If you passed one exam and failed the other, CSLB says you need only repeat the failed exam while the passed result remains valid within its five-year period. That does not extend the current application's 18-month window. See CSLB's examination and retake guidance.

Example: passed Law & Business, failed the trade

Alex passes Law & Business but does not pass C-8. Alex saves both reports, studies the weaker C-8 sections, and follows PSI's retake process. The next study plan focuses on concrete while Alex keeps the current application deadline in view.

6. Complete the bond-and-fee requirements

After you pass the required exams, CSLB sends a **Bond and Fee letter** listing the remaining issuance requirements for your application. Use that letter as your checklist. Passing the exams is a milestone; the license still has to be issued.

What may be needed before an active license is issued

Requirement	What to arrange	What to check
Initial license fee	Standard fee: $200 for a sole owner; $350 for a non-sole owner.	Separate from the application and exam fees. Follow any approved fee benefit shown in your notice.
Contractor license bond	A $25,000 contractor bond or an accepted alternative.	The business information must match CSLB's record.
Qualifier bond, if required	A separate $25,000 Bond of Qualifying Individual when applicable.	Requirements depend on the Qualifier's role and any applicable exemption.
Workers' compensation	Accepted coverage or a valid exemption when eligible.	No employees does not automatically establish exemption eligibility.
Asbestos open-book requirement	Complete the required awareness exam and verification if not previously completed.	This does not authorize asbestos abatement work.
Additional LLC requirements	The additional $100,000 employee/worker bond and required liability insurance.	These are additional to the ordinary contractor license bond.

Confirm the current license fees, bond requirements, and LLC requirements. A bond's face amount is different from the premium a surety charges to provide it; ask the bonding company for the premium and filing arrangements.

For workers' compensation, check your employees, Qualifier arrangement, and classification. For example, **a C-8 Concrete applicant needs coverage even without employees**. A license qualified by an RME also cannot use the ordinary no-employee exemption. The certificate must identify the business and its license or application number. Ask the insurer to file acceptable evidence and check that it appears in your record. See CSLB's workers' compensation requirements.

Example: Alex's final requirements

Alex is a sole-owner C-8 applicant. After passing the required exams, Alex follows the Bond and Fee letter to pay the standard $200 initial license fee, arrange the contractor bond and required workers' compensation evidence, and finish the asbestos requirement if needed. Alex checks that CSLB has received the requested items and follows any remaining instructions.

Some applications need further review even after the exams are passed. Respond to the specific request and check your individual status. CSLB must approve the application and receive the required issuance items before it can issue the license. See CSLB's issuance guide.

7. Verify that the license is issued and active

Use CSLB's Check a License tool to verify the issued license, business name, classification, and current status. **An application number or exam pass report is not an active contractor license.**

An active license permits contracting within the classifications and applicable scope on that license. An inactive license does not permit bidding or contracting. Before offering work that requires a contractor license, confirm the active status and finish any remaining business requirements. CSLB's active-versus-inactive explanation describes the difference.

Keep the deadlines separate

Different notices start different clocks. Record the actual notice or receipt date, the deadline, and the date you responded. The examination window does not replace the shorter deadlines for paperwork.

Deadlines to put on your calendar

Event	Usual deadline	Action
Application returned for correction	90 days from the date of the original return notice.	Complete and resubmit the required correction response.
Live Scan packet received	Return CSLB's copy within 90 days after receiving the packet.	Record both the appointment and the copy-return date.
Application accepted/posted	18 months to pass the required exams.	Track the void date; allow time for any retake.
Initial license fee or issuance documents requested	90 days from the relevant notice.	Submit the fee, bond, and other required issuance items as directed.

See Business and Professions Code section 7074 in CSLB's 2026 law book for application-voiding deadlines and limited extensions. Extensions depend on the stated conditions and supporting evidence; contact CSLB promptly if a qualifying emergency affects your deadline. The Live Scan copy deadline is explained in the fingerprint guidance linked above.

A simple tracker is enough to get started

Print this guide and fill in your dates

Milestone	Date or deadline	Next action / completed
Submitted / delivery confirmed	_____	_____
Acknowledgment received	_____	Save Application Fee Number and PIN privately.
Correction response, if requested	_____	_____
Accepted/posted; exam void date	_____	_____
Fingerprints / copy returned	_____	_____
Each required exam	_____	_____
Bond and Fee letter / response	_____	_____
License issued and active	_____	Confirm business name and classification.

When you need help

For a file-specific decision or missing notice, check your secured application status and contact CSLB through the instructions in your correspondence or its Public Information Center guidance. Have your Application Fee Number and the notice you are asking about ready.

TLC includes expert application review and assistance with its California contractor exam-prep program. If you are a student and receive a correction notice, bring the notice and the relevant application pages so we can help you understand what needs attention. CSLB controls processing, approvals, and issuance.

For the full process, use the Un-Official CSLB License Checklist. For help with the original paperwork, return to our application guide and work-experience certification guide.

Prepared by Thompson Learning, an independent exam-preparation provider. Alex and Rivera Concrete are fictional examples, not a prediction of processing time or an approval outcome. Requirements and linked guidance checked October 15, 2026. Use the current CSLB notices and instructions for your application.