Setting up Non-Financial Entity in DIFC

Handbook

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1. Introduction

This handbook explains how to set up a non-financial entity in the DIFC. The overall process is the same for all non-financial entities, but the specific requirements may differ depending on the legal structure and the business activities selected. For detailed Registrar of Companies requirements, refer to the relevant Non-Financial Checklists.

To view the list of non-financial business activities, please click here.

2. DIFC Legal Structures

DIFC has 4 main legal structures under the DIFC Laws and Regulations namely:

- Companies
  - Private Company
  - Public Company
  - Recognised Company
  - Special Purpose Company
  - Variable Capital Company
- Partnerships
  - General Partnership (GP)
  - Recognised Partnership (RP)
  - Limited Partnership (LP)
  - Recognised Limited Partnership (RLP)
  - Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)
  - Recognised Limited Liability Partnership (RLLP)
- Non Profit Incorporated Organizations (NPIO)
- Foundations
  - Foundation
  - Recognised Foundation

To learn more about the above legal structures, refer to DIFC Laws and Regulations.

3. Establish a non-financial entity in DIFC

To establish a non-financial entity in the DIFC, an application must be submitted on the DIFC Portal.

- If you already have access to DIFC Portal:

Log in, select the user icon in the top-right corner, and choose "Add New Entity" to initiate the application.

- If you do not have DIFC Portal access:

You may create portal access using this link to begin the onboarding process.

- Alternatively:

You may contact the DIFC Business Development team directly at setup@difc.ae to request portal access and receive support with your onboarding application.

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Set up process

Establishing a Non-Financial Services entity in DIFC is a Five-step process, as outlined in the diagram below and explained in more detail in the sections that follow:

1. Submit "Register with DIFC"
   Applicants begin the registration process by submitting their company registration application through DIFC Portal. No payment is required at this stage.

2. Receive Initial Approval Email
   Once the application is reviewed, applicants will receive an initial approval email from DIFC, typically within 3 to 5 working days. This confirms that the application has passed the preliminary review stage.

3. Registered Address
   Once DIFC initial approval is issued, the following actions are required:
   - Entities that intend to lease office space not managed by DIFC Investments Ltd. are required to register their lease with the Registrar of Real Property after receiving initial approval (click here for more details).
   - This step is not required for entities that:
     - Share office space
     - Use co-working facilities
     - Lease office space managed by DIFC Investments Ltd.
   - Entities operating from a purchased unit, the unit must be owned by the entity itself or by the sole shareholder or controller. The entity must submit a request to DIFC Services to
     - issue a "Self-Occupy" certificate.
     - For further guidance and to submit your request, email rorp@difc.ae.

4. E-signing of constitutional documents and payment
   - The portal will initiate a Docusign envelope for the electronic execution of the Constitutional documents and Personnel Sponsorship Agreement (if applicable).
   - Payment of applicable fees (including the license, certificate, data protection fees, and establishment card fees where applicable) must be completed to proceed.

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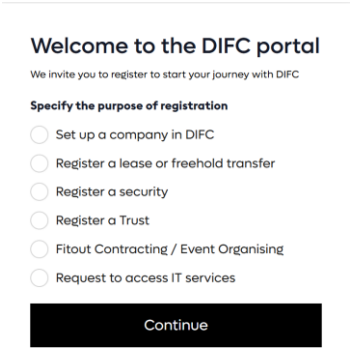
5. Obtain License & Certificate of Incorporation
   Upon successful completion of all updates and payments, DIFC will issue the entity license and the Certificate of Incorporation or Registration.

4. DIFC Portal

The DIFC Portal is the single online platform used to submit and manage all entity-related requests in the DIFC, for both new and existing entities.

Registering on the DIFC Portal

To set up a new entity in the DIFC, the application must be submitted through the DIFC Portal. If you do not already have portal access, you can self-register using the link: User Registration. When registering, select the option to set up a company in DIFC as per the image below.



Application Submission and Payment

Once the DIFC initial approval is issued, the portal will notify you to proceed with the required payment. Details of the applicable fees can be found in the fees section of the relevant Non-Financial Entity Checklist.

Payments can be made through the portal using:

- Credit card
- Portal wallet: you may top up the entity wallet using:
  - **Bank transfer**: Using the bank details below, you can directly transfer to your wallet. The transfer must be made in AED only and it will take 2 working days from the date the money is received to reflect the balance in your portal account.
    To help us identify your account, ensure that sufficient details are included in the swift note including entity name and BP number:
    DIFC Investments LTD Collection Account
    Emirates NBD- Deira Branch

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Account No 101-1434147-605- AED
Swift Code: EBILAEAD
IBAN No - AE280260001011434147605

- **Credit card**
- **Cheque payment**: the cheque must be in AED only. Address the cheque to 'DIFC Investments LTD - Collection Account' and submit it through the payment kiosks located in DIFC services. It takes 2 working days from the date the money is received to reflect the balance in your portal account.

Returned Submissions

The DIFC Portal allows applications to be returned where further information or documents are required. If additional clarification or documentation is needed, the portal user associated with the entity will receive an email notification.
The portal user can follow the link in the email to upload the requested information or amend the application. You may also log in to the DIFC Portal and view outstanding items in the 'Pending Actions' section on the homepage.

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