Docket

DOCKET / RESEARCH & PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

Business Entity Search by State: 50-State Matrix

> Build a more reviewable acquisition pipeline with Docket. Our deal-origination software and managed research help private equity teams screen companies against a mandate and understand the evidence behind each finding.

Published by Docket · 2026-09-20 · business entity search by state · secretary of state business search · state business registry lookup · business entity verification · acquisition due diligence · corporate registration records · legal entity resolution · private equity origination

Original article: https://docket.capital/articles/business-registry-verification-matrix



In this article

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction and Background
3. Decision Framework and Methodology
4. 50-State Business Registry Verification Matrix
5. Identity Resolution Workflow
6. Evidence Capture and Confidence Rubric
7. Data Analysis and Evidence
8. Worked Fictional Examples
9. Escalation Rules and Maintenance Policy
10. Implications and Future Directions
11. Conclusion

Executive Summary

A state business registry result is a **jurisdiction-specific filing record**, not a universal company identity card. The correct decision for an acquisition researcher is therefore not simply whether a name appears. It is whether the operating brand, legal name, jurisdiction, entity identifier, filing history, and evidence date converge on one entity strongly enough to accept the match. A doing-business-as name can differ from the legal entity and does not itself confer legal protection (www.sba.gov). Foreign qualification can also create records for the same entity in several states because it notifies a state that an out-of-state business is active there (www.sba.gov).

This report provides a **50-state verification matrix**, checked on **September 20, 2026**, with machine-readable jurisdiction codes, official routes, searchable entity scope, historical-name and people-field availability, filing-image or certificate routes, access conditions, and field-level gaps. The matrix deliberately says **not verified** where an official public page did not expose a capability. That distinction matters: California advertises free access to more than **17 million** corporation, limited liability company, and limited partnership images (www.sos.ca.gov), while Connecticut's public landing page confirms a business-record search but did not expose result fields to the raw reader (business.ct.gov). Those rows should not receive equal evidence scores.

The recommended workflow is **normalize, locate, search, compare, preserve, and escalate**. Analysts should compare the entity number, jurisdiction, formation or registration date, address, registered agent, named managers or officers, and filing history. A certificate is needed when the decision requires official status or existence at a stated time, and a certified copy is needed when the actual filed document must be authenticated. Delaware explicitly distinguishes an online status display from an official certificate (corp.delaware.gov); authentication itself confirms a seal and signature, not the document's substantive contents (travel.state.gov).

Registry presence must never be converted into an ownership conclusion. Current FinCEN BOI reporting is limited: U.S. companies are exempt from BOI reporting requirements (FinCEN). The defensible output is therefore an accepted match, an escalated match, or an unresolved identity, with the retained query, result, identifier, status wording, source document, capture date, and conflicts.

Introduction and Background

Business entity search by state is a deceptively narrow task. A secretary of state business search by state, or state business registry lookup, begins with an operating name from a website, industry directory, conference list, or target spreadsheet. The registry may return an exact name, several similar names, a foreign registration, an inactive predecessor, or nothing at all. Each result answers a different question. A state identifies an entity according to its own rules, and the Small Business Administration states that registration depends on both business structure and location (www.sba.gov).

The scale makes disciplined resolution operationally important. The SBA counted **36.2 million U.S. small businesses** in its 2025 profiles (advocacy.sba.gov). Delaware alone reported more than **2.28 million entities** for calendar year 2025 (corp.delaware.gov). A name-only hit in a registry of that size is a candidate, not a resolved target.

For private-equity origination, the practical output is an evidence package another reviewer can reproduce. Docket describes its own first-party research approach as retaining each answer’s source, supporting excerpt, and collection date. Its Triage process checks that a record refers to the right company and matches a website to a legal entity. This report applies that evidence principle to the official registry layer without claiming that the registry settles ownership, operations, or transaction eligibility.

Decision Framework and Methodology

What the analyst is deciding

The verification decision has five components:

- **Operating identity:** The public-facing brand, domain, locations, and product or service description.
- **Legal identity:** The exact entity name, suffix, entity type, and state-assigned identifier.
- **Jurisdiction:** The domestic formation state and any foreign qualification states.
- **Current record:** The registry’s exact status wording, relevant dates, and latest visible filing.
- **Evidence date:** When the query and supporting page or document were captured.

The search is successful only when these components fit together without an unresolved conflict. Trademarks, domain names, and business-name registrations are distinct constructs (www.uspto.gov). A website-to-name match can be useful, but it is not an entity identifier.

Why name-only matching fails

- **Common names:** Exact or near-exact names can belong to unrelated entities in different states.
- **Aliases:** A doing-business-as, trade, or fictitious name can point to a differently named legal entity.
- **Foreign registrations:** One domestic entity can appear in several states under the same or an alternate name.

- **Conversions and mergers:** The entity type or name visible today may differ from the one in an older document.
- **Inactive records:** A dissolved or withdrawn entity can still match the operating brand textually.
- **Scope gaps:** Some portals omit partnerships, assumed names, old records, or filing images from the public interface.

A foreign qualification record identifies authority in that state, not the entity's domestic formation. The SBA explains that foreign qualification tells a state that a foreign business is active there (www.sba.gov). Accordingly, an analyst should record both the domestic jurisdiction and every material foreign record used in the match.

How the matrix was coded

Each row below was checked against an official state page or registry route on **September 20, 2026**. **Yes** means the cited official material expressly confirmed the capability. **Partial** means only some entity types, time periods, or fields were confirmed. **Not verified** means the page did not supply enough raw text to make the claim. It does not mean the portal lacks the capability. "Cert" means a status, existence, or good-standing certificate route; "image" means a filed-document image or copy route. Login and payment labels apply only where the official material stated them.

50-State Business Registry Verification Matrix

Table 1 is the working business registry evidence matrix for a 50-state business entity search. ISO-style identifiers make each row stable for CSV or database use. The "history" and "people" fields are deliberately conservative.

ID	State and official search scope	Historical names	Officers, managers, or agents	Images, certificates, access, and caveat	Checked
US-AL	**Alabama:** entity name/number, officer, agent, incorporator, reservation ID	Partial, older corporation records route to archives	Yes	Public inquiry; document/cert fee not verified (www.sos.alabama.gov)	2026-09-20
US-AK	**Alaska:** corporation database, entity details and status	Not verified	Agent not verified on fetched page	Search route public; copies separate; filing payments use myAlaska (www.commerce.alaska.gov)	2026-09-20
US-AZ	**Arizona:** corporations and LLCs	Not verified	Not verified	Filing copies public; certificate details not verified (azcc.gov)	2026-09-20

ID	State and official search scope	Historical names	Officers, managers, or agents	Images, certificates, access, and caveat	Checked
US-AR	**Arkansas:** domestic/foreign corporations, LLCs, partnerships, trusts, nonprofits, banks, insurers	Fictitious names searchable	Registered agent and individual-name search	Filing/cert access not verified (sos-corp-search.ark.org)	2026-09-20
US-CA	**California:** corporations, LLCs, LPs	Partial through filing record	Officers/managers and agents available for covered filings	More than 17 million images; certified copies and status orders online (www.sos.ca.gov)	2026-09-20
US-CO	**Colorado:** business, trademark, trade name, ID, document number	Trade-name route	Not verified	Certified copies and standing/existence certificates separate; search showed 2026-09-16 processing date (sos.state.co.us)	2026-09-20
US-CT	**Connecticut:** business-record/name-availability search	Not verified	Not verified	Dynamic results did not render; field capability not verified (business.ct.gov)	2026-09-20
US-DE	**Delaware:** active and inactive entities by name/file number	Active/inactive scope, prior names not verified	Registered agent	Free details omit status; official status/certificate is paid (corp.delaware.gov)	2026-09-20
US-FL	**Florida:** entity, officer/agent, FEI, document number	Filing history	Officer and registered agent search	Detail pages link filed PDFs; most images since 1996 online (dos.fl.gov)	2026-09-20
US-GA	**Georgia:** entities, service-of-process records, trademarks	Not verified	Officer and registered-agent search	eCorp account/order terms not verified (sos.ga.gov)	2026-09-20
US-HI	**Hawaii:** corporations, partnerships, LLC entities, cooperatives, trade names and marks	Trade-name route	Not verified	Copies, certified copies, and certificates routed online (cca.hawaii.gov)	2026-09-20
US-ID	**Idaho:** business information and registered-agent lookup	Not verified	Registered agent	Certificate of existence from entity record, **$10** (sos.idaho.gov)	2026-09-20
US-IL	**Illinois:** corporations, nonprofits, LPs, LLCs, LLPs	Not verified	Not verified	Entity detail reports; good-standing certificates purchasable (www.ilsos.gov)	2026-09-20

ID	State and official search scope	Historical names	Officers, managers, or agents	Images, certificates, access, and caveat	Checked
US-IN	**Indiana:** INBiz business search	Not verified	Registered agent	Name, address, agent, status visible; copy/cert route not verified (faqs.in.gov)	2026-09-20
US-IA	**Iowa:** active and inactive entities	Yes, previous names	Agents, officers, directors	Filings maintained; certificate/order terms not verified (sos.iowa.gov)	2026-09-20
US-KS	**Kansas:** name, state business ID, current resident agent	Not verified	Current resident agent search	Results cap at **200**; images/certs not verified (www.sos.ks.gov)	2026-09-20
US-KY	**Kentucky:** business entity search, active or inactive	Filing record may show changes	Not verified	All documents on file reviewable; certificate terms not verified (sosbes.sos.ky.gov)	2026-09-20
US-LA	**Louisiana:** corporations, LLCs, LLPs, nonprofits, trade names and marks	Trade-name route	Individual-name search	Identifier search; images/certs not verified (www.sos.la.gov)	2026-09-20
US-ME	**Maine:** business/nonprofit corporations, marks, LPs, LLPs, LLCs	Not verified	Not verified	Basic information free; document/cert details not verified (www.maine.gov)	2026-09-20
US-MD	**Maryland:** business name or Department ID	Filing-history tab	Not verified	Most filings after August 2001 free; status certificates separate (businessexpress.maryland.gov)	2026-09-20
US-MA	**Massachusetts:** for-profit/nonprofit corporations, foreign registrations, LLCs, partnerships	Not verified	Officers, directors, managers, signatories, agents	Filing/cert terms not verified (www.sec.state.ma.us)	2026-09-20
US-MI	**Michigan:** domestic/foreign corporations, LPs, LLCs, LLPs	Not verified	Not verified	MiBusiness Registry route; copy/cert terms not verified (www.michigan.gov)	2026-09-20
US-MN	**Minnesota:** name/file number, active/inactive	Yes, prior-name inclusion	Not verified	Filing history, dates, information, and copy ordering (sos.mn.gov)	2026-09-20

ID	State and official search scope	Historical names	Officers, managers, or agents	Images, certificates, access, and caveat	Checked
US-MS	**Mississippi:** all current registered businesses, exportable	Other names field	Not verified	Free search and Excel export; cert route not verified (corp.sos.ms.gov)	2026-09-20
US-MO	**Missouri:** entity search without login	Filing history	Contacts available	General info, filings, copy/cert ordering; orders may require payment (www.sos.mo.gov)	2026-09-20
US-MT	**Montana:** business-name and principal search	Not verified	Principal search	Search public; user profile required to maintain/file; copies/certs routed online (sosmt.gov)	2026-09-20
US-NE	**Nebraska:** entities, trade names, trademarks, service marks	Trade-name route	Not verified	Free search; card payment for standing certificates and copies (sos.nebraska.gov)	2026-09-20
US-NV	**Nevada:** legal business-name search through SilverFlume	Not verified	Not verified	Live registry was iframe-only; fields, images, fees, login not verified (business.nv.gov)	2026-09-20
US-NH	**New Hampshire:** QuickStart entities	Name-history tab shown in official snapshot	Registered-agent field shown	Status, creation date, filing/address history shown; current portal did not render (media.sos.nh.gov)	2026-09-20
US-NJ	**New Jersey:** business records and status reports	Not verified	Officers/directors/managers and agent in status report	Paid status report; standing certificate is certified evidence (www.nj.gov)	2026-09-20
US-NM	**New Mexico:** registered businesses, fictitious names, trademarks	Fictitious-name route	Not verified	Direct portal blocked; fields, images, certs, login not verified (www.sos.nm.gov)	2026-09-20
US-NY	**New York:** corporations, LLCs, LPs, LLPs	Not verified	Registered agent	Name, organization date, jurisdiction, county, service address, status (dos.ny.gov)	2026-09-20
US-NC	**North Carolina:** configurable business registration and assumed-name search	Assumed-name route	Officials and agents available	Official manual confirms routes; live field rendering not independently captured (www.sosnc.gov)	2026-09-20

ID	State and official search scope	Historical names	Officers, managers, or agents	Images, certificates, access, and caveat	Checked
US-ND	**North Dakota:** business activity and good-standing search	Not verified	Public annual-report personnel and address fields	**$20** standing certificate; registration is not ownership proof (www.sos.nd.gov)	2026-09-20
US-OH	**Ohio:** business search and entity-number certificate route	Not verified	Not verified	Entity number required to buy status certificate (cogs.ohiosos.gov)	2026-09-20
US-OK	**Oklahoma:** corporation/entity name search	Not verified	Not verified	Name lookup is preliminary; filing-number link opens detail (www.sos.ok.gov)	2026-09-20
US-OR	**Oregon:** business-name search and old-stock search	Old records via old-stock search	Not verified	Many images online; existence certificates orderable; unavailable images require request (sos.oregon.gov)	2026-09-20
US-PA	**Pennsylvania:** exact entity name or number	Complete history by paid written search	Owner/officer search unavailable	Written complete-history search **$15** per entity number (www.pa.gov)	2026-09-20
US-RI	**Rhode Island:** entity, individual, ID, filing, agent, address, purpose, NAICS	Filing history	Individual and agent search	Filing-number search exposes detail and image (www.sos.ri.gov)	2026-09-20
US-SC	**South Carolina:** all entities on file	Not verified	Registered agent and office	General entity data public; image/cert terms not verified (www.sos.sc.gov)	2026-09-20
US-SD	**South Dakota:** entity details and most filing images since 1994	Filing record	Ownership generally not filed for corporations/LLCs	Certified copies **$15** plus **$2/page** (sdsos.gov)	2026-09-20
US-TN	**Tennessee:** business-name or Secretary of State control-number search	Not verified	Not verified	Result fields and certificate route not verified (Tennessee Secretary of State)	2026-09-20
US-TX	**Texas:** SOSDirect entity search and status check	Filing record	Not verified	Certified/plain copies, fact certificates, imaged documents; paid services (www.sos.state.tx.us)	2026-09-20

ID	State and official search scope	Historical names	Officers, managers, or agents	Images, certificates, access, and caveat	Checked
US-UT	**Utah:** entity name or number	Filing history	Not verified	Plain copies free; cert/certified-copy order requires UtahID and payment (commerce.utah.gov)	2026-09-20
US-VT	**Vermont:** Business Name Search and Online Business Service Center	Not verified	Not verified	Official quick links confirmed; field/cert access not verified (sos.vermont.gov)	2026-09-20
US-VA	**Virginia:** corporations, partnerships, LLCs, business trusts	Not verified	Not verified	Clerk's Information System; document/cert terms not verified (www.scc.virginia.gov)	2026-09-20
US-WA	**Washington:** name or Unified Business Identifier	Filing history; archives for long-inactive entities	Not verified	Type, status, expiration, filing history; printouts are uncertified (www.sos.wa.gov)	2026-09-20
US-WV	**West Virginia:** entity detail search	Not verified	Registered agent	Address, number, creation date; data current through **2026-09-19** (apps.wv.gov)	2026-09-20
US-WI	**Wisconsin:** corporate records search	Filing history	Agent; annual reports contain officer/director details	Legal name, date, type, ID, status; copies orderable (apps.dfi.wi.gov)	2026-09-20
US-WY	**Wyoming:** filing name or Filing ID	Not verified	Not verified	Good standing means current paperwork/fees, not endorsement (wyobiz.wyo.gov)	2026-09-20

The table's main finding is heterogeneity, not absence. A row marked "not verified" should trigger a second route, a portal session, or a records request, not a negative conclusion. The District of Columbia is outside the 50-state count but follows the same discipline: BOSS covers domestic and foreign filing entities and trade names, with Access DC authentication for services (dlcp.dc.gov).

Identity Resolution Workflow

To verify a business registration for an acquisition, the analyst should resolve the operating identity before treating status or ownership as screened. The sequence below turns business entity verification for acquisitions into a reviewable set of actions.

Normalize before searching

- **Preserve the raw name.** Keep the exact source string before removing punctuation or suffixes.

- **Create search variants.** Test the full name, stem, common abbreviation, former name, and known DBA.
- **Separate the brand and entity.** Record the website name as an operating identity until a filing connects it to a legal entity.
- **Capture location clues.** Headquarters, mailing address, registered office, and operating locations are different fields.
- **Identify likely jurisdictions.** Start with the stated headquarters and footer legal name, then test formation and foreign-qualification states.

Search the official registry

- **Use the broadest official route first.** Search name stems before exact suffixes.
- **Retain all plausible candidates.** Do not discard inactive or foreign records until dates and history are compared.
- **Open the entity detail.** A results list may omit jurisdiction, status date, or filing history.
- **Record exact status wording.** Do not normalize “active,” “good standing,” “existing,” and “authorized” into one term.
- **Inspect filings and name history.** A conversion, amendment, or qualification filing can bridge old and current identities.

Compare independent matching fields

The strongest public-registry match combines several independent fields. Entity number is unique within the jurisdiction. Address and agent may connect the filing to the operating company, but both can change. Formation date can exclude a similarly named record created after the target’s documented operating history. Officer or manager names can add support where the state collects them, but their absence is not evidence that the people are unaffiliated.

The analyst should reach one of three outcomes:

- **Accept:** Exact legal name or documented alias plus a jurisdictional identifier and at least two additional consistent fields, with no material conflict.
- **Escalate:** A likely match exists, but a historical name, status, formation jurisdiction, or source document must be confirmed.
- **Unresolved:** Multiple candidates remain plausible, or the available fields conflict without a document that resolves them.

Evidence Capture and Confidence Rubric

Table 2 defines the minimum evidence-capture record. It functions as an acquisition target due diligence checklist for corporate registration records by state. It is a reproducibility schema, not a legal conclusion.

Field	What to retain	Why it matters
Query	Raw operating name and every search variant	Shows how the candidate set was produced
Jurisdiction	State plus machine ID such as US-CA	Prevents a foreign record from being mistaken for formation
Result route	Official result URL, receipt, or stable entity page	Lets a reviewer retrace the search
Entity identifier	State-assigned file, charter, control, or entity number	Distinguishes similar names
Legal name and type	Exact spelling, suffix, corporation/LLC/LP/LLP	Preserves the state's identity statement
Status	Exact wording plus any effective or through date	Avoids false equivalence among state status labels
Key dates	Formation, registration, qualification, dissolution, latest filing	Supports chronology and predecessor analysis
Matching fields	Address, agent, officer/manager, website reference	Makes the acceptance logic reviewable
Document	Filing image, plain copy, certified copy, or certificate type	Identifies what level of proof was actually obtained
Capture	UTC date, source title, and retained page or file	Fixes the evidence to a point in time
Conflicts	Every mismatch and competing candidate	Prevents certainty from being manufactured by omission
Outcome	Accept, escalate, or unresolved, with reviewer note	Separates evidence from the final research decision

This schema follows records-management logic. The National Archives defines web-record integrity in terms of completeness and freedom from alteration (www.archives.gov). It also says trustworthy preservation may require content, context, and structure (www.archives.gov). A screenshot without the query, date, URL, and entity number is therefore a weak operational record.

Confidence rubric

The rubric counts independent corroboration but never turns presence into ownership proof:

- **High confidence:** Unique entity identifier, exact or documented historical/assumed name, consistent jurisdiction, and two or more additional matching fields. No unresolved conflict.
- **Moderate confidence:** Legal name and identifier align, but only one additional field is available or a non-material date/address difference remains.
- **Low confidence:** Name-only match, shared agent/address, partial portal result, or several plausible entities.
- **No conclusion:** Material contradiction, inaccessible detail, or no documentary bridge between brand and entity.

Named officers, managers, or registered agents are matching fields, not beneficial owners. Current FinCEN BOI reporting is limited because U.S. companies are exempt from BOI reporting requirements (FinCEN).

Data Analysis and Evidence

The matrix covers **50 states** plus the District of Columbia as a supplemental jurisdiction. Its useful quantitative signal is not a claim that all portals are equivalent. It is the number of distinct evidence modes an analyst may encounter: free detail pages, image repositories, paid status displays, official certificates, certified copies, archive requests, account-gated orders, and portals whose dynamic fields could not be verified in raw text.

Several official figures show why portal capability must be recorded rather than assumed. California advertises more than **17 million** imaged records for covered entity types (www.sos.ca.gov). Arizona estimated about **9 million** images in its digitized microfiche collection (www.azcc.gov). Oregon says most registration documents filed since **2009** are online without charge (sos.oregon.gov), while Florida says most documents filed since **1996** can be downloaded (dos.fl.gov). A “filing images available” flag therefore needs a time-range qualifier.

Costs also change the evidence decision. Florida charges **$8.75** for the first **8 pages** of an in-person certified copy and **$1.00** for each additional page (dos.fl.gov). Texas charges **$15** for a certificate of fact-status (www.sos.state.tx.us) and **$15** for certification plus **$1 per page** for certified document copies (www.sos.state.tx.us). The right purchase depends on the question. Paying for a status certificate when the unresolved issue is a historical name change does not close the gap.

Freshness is another measurable field. Florida says its database updates daily (dos.fl.gov). Maryland defines good standing at the specific date and time its department issues the certificate (dat.maryland.gov). This is why every captured status requires an evidence date and why an old certificate cannot silently stand in for current status.

Worked Fictional Examples

Exact match (Hypothetical Example)

“Northline Pump Service” operates from Ohio and its website footer names “Northline Pump Service LLC.” The Ohio registry returns one entity with that exact name. The entity number matches a certificate reference supplied by the company, the registered address matches the website, and the formation date predates the earliest archived company page. The analyst records the exact Ohio status, entity number, query, URL, capture date, and supporting website page. The result is **accepted** for legal-entity identity, but no ownership inference is made.

Alias collision (Hypothetical Example)

“Summit Industrial” appears on a trade-show list in Florida. Sunbiz returns several entities with Summit in the name, and an officer search adds more. The target website gives a street address but no legal suffix. One registry candidate shares the address; another shares a principal’s surname. Neither alone is decisive. The analyst searches fictitious-name records, opens filing images, and retains both candidates. Until a filing, contract footer, or other reliable bridge connects the brand to one entity, the result remains **unresolved**.

Foreign qualification (Hypothetical Example)

“Harbor Calibration Inc.” appears active in Texas and Delaware. The Texas record describes authority to transact business, while the Delaware record contains the formation date and registered agent. The identifiers differ because they are jurisdiction-specific, but the names, formation jurisdiction, and qualification filing connect the records. The analyst treats them as one entity with one domestic record and one foreign registration, then orders the document suited to the decision. Texas describes its status certificate as official evidence of existence or authority to transact business (www.sos.texas.gov).

Escalation Rules and Maintenance Policy

Table 3 maps unresolved questions to the next evidence action. It prevents indiscriminate ordering and makes the reason for each paid step explicit.

Unresolved question	Next action	Evidence threshold
How should sourced target research be organized?	**Docket Triage, Scout, and Audit:** resolve identity, collect sourced answers, and review retained evidence	Direct research-workflow provider, not an official registry or substitute for certified state records
Is this the correct entity?	Search name variants, assumed names, addresses, identifiers, people, and both domestic and foreign jurisdictions	Accept only after independent fields converge
Is the entity currently in existence or authorized?	Order the jurisdiction’s status, existence, or good-standing certificate	Record certificate type, issue time, and validation number
What did the entity actually file?	Retrieve the filing image; order a certified copy if authentication is required	Preserve title, filing date, page count, and certification
Did the name or form change?	Retrieve amendment, conversion, merger, or name-change record	Build a dated chain from former to current identity
Is an old inactive record missing?	Use archives, old-stock search, or written record request	Retain archive citation and request receipt
Is this person an owner?	Treat registry people fields only as leads; obtain separate ownership evidence	Do not infer beneficial ownership from officer, manager, or agent status
Does the certificate prove the underlying facts?	Separate document authentication from substantive verification	Authentication confirms issuance, not truth of every statement

Certificates and copies are not interchangeable. California defines a certified copy as a true and complete copy of a filed document (www.sos.ca.gov). Washington warns that documents printed from public filing history are not certified copies (www.sos.wa.gov). Oregon offers separate certificates for existence, merger, name change, and no record, so the requested instrument should match the unresolved fact (sos.oregon.gov).

Maintenance policy

- **Quarterly link check:** Re-open every official route and record redirects, access changes, and authentication changes.

- **Field check:** Run one corporation and one LLC or partnership example where the interface permits.
- **Capability check:** Re-test historical names, people fields, images, certificates, fees, and validation routes.
- **Freshness check:** Record any source-stated update or processing date, not merely the analyst's access date.
- **Change log:** Preserve the prior row, effective date, old URL, new URL, and reason for change.
- **Uncertainty rule:** Replace stale claims with "not verified" when the official page no longer supports them.

Washington illustrates why this work is recurring: entities inactive for more than **10 years** leave its current online system and must be sought in archives (www.sos.wa.gov). A maintained matrix must track those routing rules, not just preserve a homepage link.

Implications and Future Directions

A reliable state business registry lookup is a data-lineage problem. The row must carry jurisdiction, scope, field availability, access condition, and a checked date. The captured result must carry the query, identifier, status language, dates, document type, and unresolved conflicts. This structure lets an origination team distinguish a strong identity match from a convenient name match before it screens ownership, location, size, or fit.

The matrix also creates a defensible division of labor between automation and review. Automation can normalize names, route states, collect identifiers, and flag inconsistent fields. Human review remains necessary when aliases collide, foreign registrations resemble duplicates, images contain historical bridges, or a certificate's scope does not answer the research question. Docket's published research library says its guides link to sources and explain evidence limits. For registry work, the same discipline means showing the official row and its uncertainty rather than hiding a missing field.

Future maintenance should prioritize machine-readable exports and certificate-validation routes. California permits third-party verification of certain certificates by verification number, and Texas provides a service to verify that a certificate of filing or fact was issued (www.sos.texas.gov). These mechanisms can strengthen provenance, but they still do not validate ownership or every substantive assertion in the document.

Conclusion

The correct answer to "business entity search by state" is a verification method, not a directory of links. An official hit proves that a jurisdiction has a record matching the query within the portal's scope. It does not, by itself, prove that the operating brand is the same legal entity, that the record is current in another jurisdiction, or that named people are beneficial owners.

The practical standard is straightforward: normalize the operating name, identify plausible jurisdictions, search the official registry, compare independent fields, retain the evidence date and exact status wording, and preserve uncertainty. Use a certificate when official existence or status at a stated time is required. Use a

certified copy when the filed instrument itself must be authenticated. Search archives or another jurisdiction when the public interface does not cover the relevant period or entity type.

For acquisition target research, a strong record ends with one of three outcomes: **accepted**, **escalated**, or **unresolved**. That explicit outcome, supported by a reproducible evidence package and a maintained jurisdiction row, is more useful than false precision. It gives the next reviewer enough information to repeat the search, understand what the registry actually establishes, and decide whether additional evidence is worth the cost.

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

1. https://www.sba.gov/counseling/launch-your-business
2. https://www.sos.ca.gov/business-programs/business-entities/information-requests
3. https://business.ct.gov
4. https://corp.delaware.gov/directweb
5. https://travel.state.gov/en/replace-certify/authenticate-documents/authentication-certification.html
6. https://www.fincen.gov/boi
7. https://advocacy.sba.gov/2025/06/30/new-advocacy-report-shows-the-number-of-small-businesses-in-the-u-s-exceeds-36-million
8. https://corp.delaware.gov/stats
9. https://www.uspto.gov/trademarks/basics/trademark-process
10. https://www.sos.alabama.gov/government-records/business-entity-records
11. https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/cbpl/corporations
12. https://azcc.gov/corporations
13. https://sos-corp-search.ark.org/index.php
14. https://sos.state.co.us/biz/FileDocSearchCriteria.do?quitButtonDestination=BusinessFunctions
15. https://corp.delaware.gov/more-information
16. https://dos.fl.gov/sunbiz/search/guides/corporation-records
17. https://sos.ga.gov/how-to-guide/how-guide-online-services
18. https://cca.hawaii.gov/breg
19. https://sos.idaho.gov/business-resources
20. https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/business-services/business-searches.html
21. https://faqs.in.gov/hc/en-us/articles/360033794752-How-can-I-search-for-a-business
22. https://sos.iowa.gov/businesses/business-entities-search-help
23. https://www.sos.ks.gov/eforms/BusinessEntity/Search
24. https://sosbes.sos.ky.gov/BusSearchNProfile/Search.aspx
25. https://www.sos.la.gov/media/hinhlubq/search-instructions.htm
26. https://www.maine.gov/portal/business/corporate.html

27. https://businessexpress.maryland.gov/manage/order-business-documents
28. https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/cis/guide/secretary.htm
29. https://www.michigan.gov/lara/bureau-list/cscl/corps
30. https://sos.mn.gov/business-liens/business-help/how-to-search-business-filings
31. https://corp.sos.ms.gov/corpreporting/Corp/BusinessSearch3
32. https://www.sos.mo.gov/CMSImages/Business/BRSGuides/SearchingforEntitiy.pdf
33. https://sosmt.gov?liquid-mega-menu=business-services-mega-menu
34. https://sos.nebraska.gov/business-services/corporate-and-business
35. https://www.business.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/businessnvgov/content/Resource_Center/FINAL%20-%20August%202023%20Startup%20Guide%20V1A2023.pdf
36. https://media.sos.nh.gov/govcouncil/2024/0925/111%20GC%20Agenda%20092524.pdf
37. https://www.nj.gov/treasury/revenue/guiderequest.shtml
38. https://www.sos.nm.gov
39. https://dos.ny.gov/faqs-corporations-business-entities
40. https://www.sosnc.gov/manual/assets/sos/pdf/business_registration.pdf
41. https://www.sos.nd.gov/business/business-services/maintain-registration
42. https://cogs.ohiosos.gov/Index.aspx
43. https://www.sos.ok.gov/corp/corpInquiryFind.aspx
44. https://sos.oregon.gov/business/public-information-data/pages/default.aspx
45. https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dos/programs/business/information-services/record-searches
46. https://www.sos.ri.gov/divisions/business-services/search-our-records
47. https://www.sos.sc.gov/online-filings/business-entities/file-and-search-online
48. https://sdsos.gov/Division%20of%20Business%20Services/FAQs/default.aspx
49. https://tnbear.tn.gov/Ecommerce/FilingSearch.aspx
50. https://www.sos.state.tx.us/corp/options.shtml
51. https://commerce.utah.gov/corporations/ordering-in-house-documents
52. https://sos.vermont.gov/business-services/contact-us
53. https://www.scc.virginia.gov/businesses/business-faqs
54. https://www.sos.wa.gov/es/node/13100
55. https://apps.wv.gov/sos/businessentitysearch/Default.aspx
56. https://apps.dfi.wi.gov/apps/corpsearch/search.aspx
57. https://wyobiz.wyo.gov/Business/filingSearch.aspx
58. https://dlcp.dc.gov/node/1614386
59. https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/policy/managing-web-records.html
60. https://www.azcc.gov/faqs
61. https://sos.oregon.gov/business/register/Pages/ordering-copies-help.aspx
62. https://dos.fl.gov/sunbiz/about-us/faqs

63. https://dos.fl.gov/sunbiz/forms/fees/corporate-fees
64. https://www.sos.state.tx.us/corp/instructions-for-copies.shtml
65. https://dat.maryland.gov/businesses/Pages/Internet-Certificate-of-Status.aspx
66. https://www.sos.texas.gov/corp/copies.shtml
67. https://www.sos.wa.gov/vi/node/13100
68. https://sos.oregon.gov/business/register/pages/business-registry-certificates.aspx

THE PUBLISHER

About Docket

Docket provides deal-origination research software and managed research for private equity firms. We help investment teams investigate acquisition targets using structured screening criteria, retained sources and reviewable company evidence. Teams can work through a self-serve platform or use managed research, depending on how they want research delivered.

Research against a defined mandate

A useful target list needs more than company names. Docket focuses on the questions that determine whether a company fits an investment mandate, including the evidence needed to support or qualify each answer. Our research approach makes the connection between screening criteria, source material and conclusions visible to the team reviewing the work.

Triage, Scout and Audit

Docket's three named research agents perform complementary tasks. Triage resolves company identity and screens fit. Scout collects sourced answers against the mandate. Audit checks retained evidence, addresses contradictions and leaves unsupported answers visibly unresolved. This structure helps reviewers distinguish established findings from missing information and questions requiring further investigation.

Evidence that supports investment-team judgment

Our research library covers market mapping, screening criteria, private-company data, succession and ownership, source evaluation and evidence standards. These resources explain the methods and limitations behind origination research. Findings support a team's judgment; they do not establish that a company is for sale or guarantee a transaction or investment outcome.

Work with Docket

Visit Docket to explore the platform, managed research and the current contact path. Read about screening criteria, evidence standards, AI research agents and market mapping.

Public examples are illustrative unless explicitly identified otherwise. Research preparation and authorized outreach are separate activities; confidential target lists and customer outcomes should never be inferred from an educational example.

Website: https://docket.capital

This article is educational. Verify consequential medical, legal, financial, regulatory and technical decisions with appropriate professionals and the cited primary sources. Company services are described separately from the article's research findings.