

Small Business Startup Checklist

Starting a new small business can seem overwhelming and many entrepreneurs are tempted to skip steps and take short cuts to save time in the moment. However, taking the time to create a solid foundation for your business will not only improve your chances of success, but will save you headaches and time dealing with issues further down the road. Below is a start-up checklist.

Business Start-up Checklist	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Come up with a good idea for a product or service and consider how to protect it (such as through intellectual property protections like trade secrets, copyrights, or patents)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do market research to confirm the product or service will be in demand, check on key attributes or characteristics, and learn about the competition (census data, government reports, and chambers of commerce are all good sources)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine where the business will be located (brick & mortar location, online e-commerce, kitchen table, garage, home office, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine how the business will reach customers (advertising, social media, networking, fliers, word-of-mouth, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create a unique business name or brand - Check the Department of State business name records to make sure that another company does not already have the same name
<input type="checkbox"/>	Select a desired domain name, check that it is available, and reserve it
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decide on a business structure (Corporation, S-Corporation, Limited Liability Company (LLC), Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), Sole Proprietorship, Non-Profit, etc.) and create a written agreement between all parties
<input type="checkbox"/>	Collate the above information into a detailed business plan (this should outline your goals for your business and your projections for how you will get there, including marketing plans, operating budgets, and sales projections)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Register the business with the required Federal, State, and Local Government agencies (business structure, Employer Identification Number (EIN), sales tax, business privilege, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain any required licenses (such as for cosmetology, engineering, real estate, and medical)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check to make sure the business meets all local regulations, including zoning requirements
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create employee documents (handbook, at-will agreements, etc.,) these should not just be standard forms from the internet, which may or may not be favorable to your business
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create an organized bookkeeping system (avoid comingling personal and business funds)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider legalities when raising capital (cash) for your business; for example, carefully review bank loan agreements if borrowing, read the terms carefully if using crowdfunding options like GoFundMe, and be sure to comply with all State or Federal SEC disclosure laws if accepting investments from family, friends, and others for shares in the company
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain business insurance

For more information on how to legally start a small business in Pennsylvania please see the [PA Business website](#). If you have a demonstrable financial need for free legal or business advice, or are in need of a referral for professional services such as accounting, legal, or tax preparation, please fill out our [intake form](#).