

Business Registration Checklist

1. Choose a Business Structure

- Evaluate Business Needs:
 - Consider liability, taxation, capital requirements, and long-term business goals.
 - Research the pros and cons of different business structures (e.g., sole proprietorship, partnership, LLC, corporation).
- Consult with a Legal or Financial Advisor:
 - Seek professional advice to determine the most suitable business structure based on your circumstances.
 - Discuss potential tax implications, liability protection, and operational flexibility.
- Select a Business Structure:
 - Decide on the final business structure, ensuring it aligns with your business plan and long-term objectives.
- File Formation Documents:
 - For corporations, file Articles of Incorporation with the state.
 - For LLCs, file Articles of Organization.
 - Ensure all required documentation is completed and submitted to the appropriate state agency.

2. Register a Business Name

- Choose a Business Name:
 - Brainstorm a list of potential business names that reflect your brand identity and resonate with your target audience.
 - Ensure the name is unique, memorable, and easy to pronounce and spell.
- Check Name Availability:
 - Search to verify that the business name is not already used or trademarked by another entity.
 - Check availability at the state level (for state registration) and with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (for federal trademark).
- Register the Business Name:
 - If operating as a sole proprietorship or partnership, file a "Doing Business As" (DBA) or fictitious name registration with the appropriate county or state agency.
 - The business name is typically registered as part of the formation process if an LLC or corporation is formed.
 - Consider registering the business name as a trademark for additional legal protection.

- Secure a Domain Name:
 - Check the availability of the desired domain name for your website.
 - Register the domain name through a reputable domain registrar to establish an online presence.

3. Obtain Necessary Licenses and Permits

- Identify Required Licenses and Permits:
 - Research the licenses and permits required for your business type and location (e.g., city, county, state).
 - Consider industry-specific regulations, such as health permits, zoning permits, or environmental permits.
- Federal Licenses:
 - Determine if your business requires federal licenses or permits, such as those from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
 - Apply for federal licenses through the appropriate federal agencies.
- State and Local Licenses:
 - Obtain state-level licenses from the relevant state agency, such as professional licenses or seller's permits.
 - Apply for local business licenses from the city or county government where your business will operate.
 - Verify compliance with zoning regulations and building codes, if applicable.
- Renewals and Compliance:
 - Note the expiration dates for all licenses and permits.
 - Establish a system for tracking and renewing licenses and permits to ensure ongoing compliance.

4. Register for Taxes

- Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN):
 - Apply for an EIN (also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number) from the IRS, required for most businesses, especially those with employees.
 - Use the EIN to identify your business for tax purposes.
- State Tax Registration:
 - Register with your state's tax agency for state taxes, such as income, sales, and employment taxes.
 - If applicable, register for local taxes, including city or county business taxes.
- Sales Tax Permit:

- Apply for a sales tax permit if your business sells taxable goods or services.
- Ensure you understand the rules for collecting, reporting, and remitting sales tax in your state.

- Register for Payroll Taxes:
 - If you plan to hire employees, register for payroll taxes, including federal and state unemployment taxes, and withhold income tax, Social Security, and Medicare.

- Understand Tax Obligations:
 - Research and understand your federal, state, and local tax obligations, including filing deadlines, estimated tax payments, and deductions.
 - Consider consulting with a tax professional to ensure compliance and optimize tax planning.

5. Open a Business Bank Account

- Choose a Bank:
 - Research banks that offer business accounts, comparing fees, services, and convenience.
 - Consider proximity to your business location, online banking options, and customer service.

- Gather Required Documentation:
 - Prepare the necessary documents to open a business bank account, including your EIN, business formation documents, ownership agreements, and identification for all account holders.

- Open a Business Checking Account:
 - Open a dedicated business checking account to separate your business and personal finances.
 - Ensure the account offers features such as online banking, debit card access, and check-writing capabilities.

- Set Up a Business Savings Account:
 - Consider opening a business savings account to set aside funds for taxes, emergencies, or future investments.

- Establish Payment Processing:
 - Set up payment processing services to accept credit card payments, ACH transfers, and other forms of payment from customers.
 - Ensure the payment processing system integrates with your accounting software for easy reconciliation.

- Review Bank Account Fees:

- Understand the fees associated with your business accounts, such as monthly maintenance, transaction, and overdraft fees.
- Monitor account activity regularly to manage cash flow and avoid unnecessary fees.

6. Additional Steps (if applicable)

- Register for State and Local Employer Accounts:
 - If you have employees, register with your state's employment agency to report wages, pay unemployment taxes, and comply with workers' compensation requirements.
- Obtain Business Insurance:
 - To protect your business from risks, purchase appropriate business insurance, such as general liability, property, or professional liability insurance.
 - Review insurance options and choose coverage that aligns with your business's needs.
- Set Up Accounting and Record-Keeping Systems:
 - Choose accounting software or hire an accountant to manage your finances.
 - Establish a system for maintaining accurate financial records, including receipts, invoices, and tax documents.
- Develop a Business Plan:
 - Create a comprehensive business plan outlining your goals, strategies, financial projections, and operational plans.
- Establish Online Presence:
 - Build a website and social media profiles to promote your business and engage with customers.
- Legal Compliance:
 - Ensure compliance with federal, state, and local regulations, including ADA compliance, data privacy laws, and industry-specific regulations.
- Set Up Office/Business Location:
 - Lease or purchase a location for your business operations, ensuring it meets zoning requirements and is equipped for your needs.
 - Set up utilities, internet, and office equipment.
- Hire and Train Employees:
 - Develop job descriptions, interview candidates, and onboard new employees.
 - Provide training and resources to help employees succeed in their roles.