

DC Business Startup Checklist

Write a Business Plan

- ☐ If you haven't already, prepare at least a preliminary business plan.

Select a Name and Legal Structure

- ☐ Sole Proprietorship - <https://dlcp.dc.gov/node/1619191>
- ☐ Partnership - <https://dlcp.dc.gov/node/1619141>
- ☐ Limited Liability Company (LLC) - <https://dlcp.dc.gov/node/1616716>
- ☐ Corporation or S-Corporation - <https://dlcp.dc.gov/node/1619121>

Register Your Business with the State Secretary's Office or DCRA (if DC business).

- ☐ File for an Articles of Incorporation for an LLC, LLP, C or S-Corporation, etc. - <https://corponline.dcr.dc.gov/Home.aspx/Landing> (if you don't have an account, you will need to create one).
- ☐ File for a DBA (doing business as, if needed) <https://corponline.dcr.dc.gov/Home.aspx/Landing> (if you don't have an account, you will need to create one).
DBA stands for "doing business as." It's also called your business's assumed or fictitious name.

Apply For All Necessary Licenses and Permits.

- ☐ Basic Business License - <https://dlcp.dc.gov/service/get-business-license>

A Basic Business License (BBL) is a document issued from the DCRA's Business Licensing Division and is required for such business activities as the operation of restaurants, convenience/retail stores, consulting firms, home improvement businesses, and many more.

- ☐ Certificate of Occupancy/Home Occupation Permit - <https://dlcp.dc.gov/node/1622906>

A Home Occupation Permit ("HOP") is required if you work from home in DC.

- ☐ Certificate of Clean Hands - <https://otr.cfo.dc.gov/page/certificate-clean-hands>

All businesses applying for a Basic Business License in Washington, DC, must be in compliance with the DC Office of Tax and Revenue.

Per DC's "Clean Hands" mandate, [DC Code § 47-2862](#), a Clean Hands Certificate verifies that individuals and businesses do not owe more than \$100 for taxes, fines, fees, or penalties to the District of Columbia. Debts higher than \$100 warrant denial of City goods or services (including licenses, permits, grants, or contracts).

- ☐ DC Sales Tax Registration (Sales & Use Tax) - https://mytax.dc.gov/_/

Obtain your Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)

- ☐ Apply for a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) from the IRS. An EIN will be necessary to open a bank account or process payroll. <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online>.
- ☐ IMPORTANT: Save form CP575 to your desktop or print. It is hard to get another copy. See sample: https://static.wixstatic.com/media/8cf4f9_ace0b1770c3f46c683b0602eba52556c~mv2.jpg

Open the Company Bank Account

- ☐ Select a bank and open the company bank account.
 - ☐ Check out Found as business banking option - found.com/refer/VW9Y4H
Found, the banking and tax app created with small-business owners, freelancers, and the self-employed in mind. No account fees, no monthly minimums

Lease Office, Warehouse or Retail Space (if not home-based)

- ☐ Depending on your type of business (retail, office or warehouse), arrange for office space to be leased. Contacting a commercial realtor in your area can be helpful. Also, make sure to arrange for utilities and office furniture.
 - ☐ LoopNet is a great site to find commercial property for sale or lease - <https://www.loopnet.com/>
- ☐ If a home-based business, set up your home office.

Hire Employees Or Contractors (if applicable)

- ☐ Suppose you intend to hire yourself or others as a whole or part-time employee of your company. In that case, you may have to register with the appropriate State Agencies or obtain Worker's Compensation Insurance or Unemployment Insurance (or both).
- ☐ If you plan to hire a contractor, have them fill out a W9, so you report their 1099 income to the IRS. [/www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf](https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf)

Set up an Accounting and Record-Keeping System

- ☐ Setup your Accounting and Record-keeping system and learn about the taxes your new company is responsible for paying.
 - ☐ Check out as low cost option: Wave Accounting: <https://www.waveapps.com/>

Obtain Business Insurance

- ☐ There are many types of insurance for businesses but they are usually packaged as “General Business Insurance” or a “Business Owner’s Policy”. This can cover everything from product liability to company vehicles. A decent policy can run as little as \$300/year and offers a great extra level of protection.

Systemize and Organize

- ☐ Prepare the business as if someone needed to take it over and run it for you. This means have a method to process orders, pay bills, pay employees, pay taxes, maintain your permits, etc. Basically, try to make the operational aspect of the business as automated and efficient as possible so you can concentrate on growing your business.

Develop a Business Identity

- ☐ Get a domain and create a website for your business.
- ☐ Setup your social media accounts: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn, etc.
- ☐ Order business cards, letterhead and promotional materials for your business. A professionally created logo can make your business look professional and established.

Get the Word Out (Marketing)

- ☐ Now that you’ve set-up the company for success, you need to get the word out. Create a marketing plan for your products and services that targets your ideal customer.

Business Credit

- ☐ Get a DUNs number <https://www.dnb.com/duns-number/get-a-duns.html>
- ☐ Apply for at least 3 tradelines like Uline, Grainger, Crown Office Products, Quill, Summa Office Supplies, etc.

Federal Government Contracting and Grants

- ☐ Create a SAM’s (Systems for Award Management) Account <https://sam.gov/>
- ☐ Sign up for Grants.gov to apply for federal grants <https://www.grants.gov/>

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