

A smiling man with a beard and a black hat, wearing a grey t-shirt and a black leather apron with a brown pocket, leans on a wooden counter. He has a tattoo on his left arm. The background is a workshop with various tools and equipment. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS IN NEW YORK CITY

▶ **A Guide for
Immigrant
Entrepreneurs**

► **Dear Friends,**

New York was built by people like you. We are a global leader because of our immigrant entrepreneurs. This guide will help you launch your business, find success and make your mark on our city.

Immigrants make up half of all business owners and are creating thriving businesses of every type. That is why as your Mayor I want to do everything in my power to support your work. Through the NYC Department of Small

Business Services, we offer free services in six major foreign languages to help you start, operate, and increase the size of your businesses. This guide is another way we can help. It will take you step by step through the process of starting a business.

On behalf of 8.5 million New Yorkers, I want to wish you the best of luck.

Sincerely,



Bill de Blasio
Mayor

► **Dear Fellow New Yorkers,**

While I was growing up in Grenada, my grandmother supported our household by selling milk and produce at the local market. From a young age I saw first-hand how business ownership can empower a family for generations. This personal experience is fundamental to my vision for the NYC Department of Small Business Services.

As an immigrant and a resident of a growing city where half of the small businesses are owned by immigrant entrepreneurs, I know that it is critical to help all of our entrepreneurs. My team and I have launched an unprecedented outreach effort to the diverse communities that make up the vibrant fabric our city.

Through our Immigrant Business Initiative, we have extended our reach by working with on-the-ground partners

to provide one-on-one counseling and community outreach in six major languages. We are connecting immigrants to the multitude of services offered at our seven NYC Business Solutions Centers located across each borough. Our free courses on topics such as credit, marketing, legal aid, and entrepreneurship are now being offered in Spanish, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Russian, Korean, and Bengali. This guide is the next step to ensuring our services are readily accessible to all business owners.

Mayor Bill de Blasio has tasked City agencies with a singular charge — fighting inequality and creating a city where everyone has the opportunity to rise together. At the NYC Department of Small Business Services, we are committed to unlocking economic potential and creating economic security for all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,



Gregg Bishop
Commissioner
NYC Department of Small Business Services

NEW YORK CITY'S COMMITMENT TO IMMIGRANTS

The City of New York helps immigrant New Yorkers build more stable, secure, and successful lives in our city. The NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) provides services and resources targeted to immigrant entrepreneurs. This guide is one such resource. Learn more about all of SBS's immigrant entrepreneur services at nyc.gov/immigrantbusinesses.

TABLE

OF

CONTENTS

▶ WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE

This guide provides guidance and resources for immigrant entrepreneurs in New York City. Its content and exercises can help readers plan, launch, and grow a business. It includes additional resources in each section and an appendix of materials at the end. Readers can review the guide in full or by section depending on their needs.

01

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

07/ Know Your Rights

02

PREPARING TO BE A BUSINESS OWNER

11/ Assess Your Readiness

13/ Develop Your Business Concept

17/ Manage Your Personal Finances

03

PREPARING TO LAUNCH YOUR BUSINESS

22/ Business Financial Management

27/ Structuring Your Business

33/ Navigating Government: Permits & Licenses

04

PLANNING FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

37/ Marketing

46/ Technology

49/ Selling to Government: Certifications & Contracts

05

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

53/ 15 Key Points & Resources

01/

**BEFORE YOU
GET STARTED**





In New York City, all residents, including our diverse immigrant communities, should feel welcome. You have guaranteed rights and free resources from the City to support your life here.

Did You Know?



- ▶ Some people who appear to offer immigration help instead take advantage of their customers.
- ▶ You will never be asked your immigration status when interacting with the NYPD or City employees, except in narrow cases when you are applying for a federal benefit. The City maintains strict confidentiality policies to ensure the privacy of all New Yorkers' information, and only discloses information when required by law.
- ▶ Only licensed attorneys or people accredited by the government can provide immigration legal help.
- ▶ **Call 311** and say "immigration help" to find free, safe immigration help in your neighborhood.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- To learn more about:
- your guaranteed rights as a NYC resident, go to nyc.gov/humanrights.
 - all of the City's resources for immigrants, go to nyc.gov/immigrants, or call 311 and state your need.
 - your rights as a NYC business owner, go to nyc.gov/bizrights.
 - key City workplace laws such as paid sick leave and living wage, go to on.nyc.gov/workplacelaws.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Regardless of your immigration or legal status, religious beliefs, or accent, you:

Can... 	Cannot... 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ access City services that you are entitled to receive and be served in your language ✔ file a complaint if your rights have been violated by calling 311 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✘ be denied employment for many jobs if authorized to work, and cannot be denied housing ✘ be asked about your immigration status by government employees unless you are applying for a benefit or service that requires it

KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

- I need help with English**
 - WE ARE NEW YORK** is a TV show that helps immigrant New Yorkers practice English. Discussion groups meet for more practice. Learn more at nyc.gov/wearenewyork.
 - CUNY** www2.cuny.edu/academics/cpe
 - DYCD** 800.246.4646
 - LIBRARIES:**
 - New York Public Library** nypl.org
 - Brooklyn Public Library** bklynlibrary.org/
 - Queens Public Library** queenslibrary.org
- I need immigration legal help**
 - ACTIONNYC** is a program that provides free and safe legal immigration help for New Yorkers. Learn more at nyc.gov/actionnyc.
 - NYCITIZENSHIP** provides free help with citizenship applications and financial counseling at public libraries. Learn more by **calling 311** and saying "citizenship appointment."
- I need identification, but I am not documented**
 - IDNYC** is a free and official identification for all New York City residents. It provides access to NYC services, proof of identity to the police, access to a bank or credit union account at participating financial institutions, and more. Learn more at nyc.gov/IDNYC.



02 /

**PREPARING
TO BE A
BUSINESS
OWNER**

Launching a business is like going on a trip. Before you leave, you have to consider what you need, what you already have, and what you still must get. The better you plan, the better chance your trip will be successful.

No entrepreneur has everything he or she needs when starting. This section will help you identify these things — personally, professionally, and financially — and what you can do to develop them.

ASSESS YOUR READINESS

It is important to evaluate yourself as an entrepreneur before you plan a business. Consider the following questions:



1 Attitude
Do I have the energy and determination to succeed despite challenges? Am I willing to take a risk on a business that may not succeed?



2 Money
Do I have the necessary savings or financial help to afford starting a business?



3 Network
Do I have the support of family, friends or colleagues who can build upon my strengths and help me address challenges?



4 Skills
Do I have the necessary planning and management skills to launch and operate a business? Am I willing to invest in the time and effort to develop them?



5 Time
Am I willing to work longer hours than most employees do? Can I spend time doing research and planning for my business?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For free workshops that teach how to assess and improve your business preparedness, go to nyc.gov/immigrantbusinesses and look for a “10 Steps to Starting a Business” workshop near you.

Exercise 1

Self-Analysis Quick Quiz

There are qualities common to successful entrepreneurs. Evaluate the strength of your entrepreneurial traits using the chart below.

Quality	Strong 3	Average 2	Improvement Needed 1
1. Passionate I believe my business idea will succeed and have the drive to see that it will.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Self-disciplined I am willing to do the work, enjoyable or not, to be successful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Thrive on uncertainty I enjoy solving problems without clear directions or guidance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Persistent and resilient I expect there will be setbacks, and I will solve them when they arise.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Persuasive I can convince others of why they should invest time, energy, or money into my business.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Ethical People know me as someone who operates with honesty, integrity, and concern for others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Based on this quiz, where do you have room for improvement?

Use the table below to choose three of your qualities that you could improve. Then choose two ways you will do this for each.

Quality	How I Will Improve
	1. 2.
	1. 2.
	1. 2.

DEVELOP YOUR BUSINESS CONCEPT

It takes more than an idea to make a successful business. You must develop a business concept to explain the value of your idea to others and to begin translating your idea into a business plan.

Read the sample business concept statement below. How effective is it? How would you improve it?

Business Concept Statement—Dolores' Daycare

Near Nostrand Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, more young families are moving in who need reliable daycare. But there are few daycare businesses in the area, and fewer of high quality. Dolores' Daycare will offer safe and educational daycare every weekday from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M. for these working families. The business will set itself apart through experienced and trained staff. They will use the latest practices and resources in early childhood education.

Because the founders were born and raised in Bedford-Stuyvesant, both have many connections to community groups that work with young families. They will survey these families to learn what they want from a daycare business, and this information will inform how the business operates. This outreach will also help build a network of future customers.

Now try writing your own business concept statement. Use the questions above to guide you.

Your Business Concept Statement

Answer the following questions:

1

What is the product or service, and what is its purpose?

2

Where does your product or service fit in the market? What differentiates it from the competition?

3

Who is the target customer? How does your product fill one of his or her needs?

4

How will your product or service reach customers? Where and when will it be sold?





THE START TO YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

Your business concept is also the start of your business plan. A business plan describes in detail how a business will achieve its goals. It translates your business idea into a deliberate, detailed strategy for success.

The table below provides an outline for a business plan. Read the questions for each section to begin thinking about what you will need to build your own business plan. Continue through this toolkit for guidance on how to answer these questions.

BUSINESS PLAN OUTLINE

Section	Description
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	A brief overview of your entire business plan. It should include the owners' names, the product or service, the market, and the money needed.
BUSINESS DESCRIPTION	The key details about the business, including its name, purpose, legal structure, industry, and goals, and about you, including your experience, professional relationships, and contact information.
MANAGEMENT & EMPLOYEES	Who will manage the business, and what are their functions? How many employees do you need? How much will everyone's salaries and benefits cost?
OPERATION & LOCATION	How will the product be produced and sold? Who will supply the inventory? When will the business be open? What kind of space does your business need?
MARKETING	Who is your target customer? How will you reach them? Who are your competitors? What is your advantage over them?
FINANCIAL REQUEST	How much money will you need? How will the money be used? How and when will the money be repaid?
FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS	How will money come into and go out of the business? How will you produce a profit? When do you expect to produce a profit?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For reading materials on how to write a business plan, the SBA provides guidance at [sba.gov/startup-business/write-your-business-plan](https://www.sba.gov/startup-business/write-your-business-plan).

MANAGE YOUR PERSONAL FINANCES

To prove your readiness to manage a business' finances, you must first show you can manage your own. One way to establish relationships with lenders, landlords, and others is through your credit history and your credit score. Your credit history and score show your past behavior managing debt.

What steps can you take to start building your credit?

1

Get an ITIN

An ITIN is a number the government uses to process a person's taxes. It is an identification option for those without Social Security Numbers. People with ITINs can prove that they pay taxes and live in the United States. They can also access financial institutions. While an ITIN will not build your credit, it may be a good first step. You can apply for an ITIN at [irs.gov/individuals/general-itin-information](https://www.irs.gov/individuals/general-itin-information).

2

Open an account with a bank or credit union

A bank account establishes your financial history for lenders to review. It also protects your money from theft and makes bill payments easier. The City's NYC SafeStart Account offers all New Yorkers a starter savings account. It comes with a minimum balance requirement of \$25 and with no fees. Learn more by going to [nyc.gov/ofe](https://www.nyc.gov/ofe) and clicking "Innovative Programs."

3

Open a secured credit card or apply for a credit builder loan

Secured credit cards and credit builder loans are backed by the funds you put in the account. Paying off your purchases or the loan on time and in full can build credit quickly. See the **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** below to get help with a secured credit card.

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS HAVING A STRONG CREDIT SCORE MAY BENEFIT YOU:

- ▶ Pay lower interest rates on loans and credit card charges
- ▶ Borrow larger amounts of money
- ▶ Access better insurance rates for your car, house, and other
- ▶ Receive approval more easily to rent an apartment property

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The City offers free financial counseling to help you tackle debt, improve your credit, open a bank account, and more. For free financial counseling, call 311 and say, "Financial Counseling."



03 /

**PREPARING
TO LAUNCH
YOUR
BUSINESS**





BUSINESS FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Launching a business can require a significant financial investment. Before you invest your personal funds, you want to have a solid plan and be sure that the business will be profitable.

Projecting how much money you will spend and earn is important to predicting the success of your business. It will also increase your chances of accessing financing because lenders want to know that you will be able to pay them back on time.

$$\text{REVENUES} - \text{EXPENSES} = \text{PROFITS}$$



To get started, consider the following three questions:

1

What are my start-up costs?

Entrepreneurs commonly underestimate the many costs of starting a business. These costs include common expenses like a security deposit and first month’s rent. But they also include less obvious expenses like construction costs and permit fees. You can use Exercise 2 on the following page to begin thinking about your start-up costs.

2

How will I avoid cash shortages?

Your business must always have available money to pay expected and unexpected expenses. An example can illustrate the importance of this:

You opened a bakery shop three months ago, and sales have been excellent. With your profits, you decide to pay off a large part of your credit card debt. But one week later, rent and utility payments are due at the same time that your largest oven stops working. Your business may be profitable, but you don’t have the cash to pay your bills and keep the business open.

Your business will face expected and unexpected bills. You must be sure you always have the cash ready to pay them. Continue to Exercise 3 to complete your own cash flow statement.

3

How and when will I produce a profit?

A key goal of every business is to become profitable. Few businesses turn profits immediately, but there should be a plan to become profitable. Think about your business’s revenues and expenses, and build on the formula above to calculate your profits month by month.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For free workshops that offer guidance on business finances, go to nyc.gov/nycbusinesscourses, click “Financing and Accounting,” and find a “Business Financial Management” workshop near you.

Exercise 2

Estimating Start-Up Costs

Fill in the table below with what your estimated start-up costs will be. To create accurate estimations, research the start-up costs of businesses comparable to yours. Be sure to include costs you expect to incur only during the start-up phase.

Note: This table is not all-inclusive and is intended only as a starting point in your financial projections.

Start-Up Expenditures	Estimated Cost	Research Source
DEPOSITS/INSURANCE		
Rent Deposit		
Utility Deposit		
Other Deposits		
Casualty & Liability Insurance		
Other Insurance		
Deposits/Insurance Sub-Total		
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES		
Construction & Remodeling		
Equipment & Machinery		
Furniture & Fixtures		
Inventory		
Technology		
Other		
Expenditures Sub-Total		
EXPENSES		
Advertising		
Accounting & Legal Fees		
Corporate Fees, Permits, Taxes		
Federal Tax ID		
Office Supplies		
Payroll Expenses		
Salaries & Wages		
Payroll Taxes		
Benefits		
Permits and Licenses		
Rent		
Signage		
Website Maintenance		
Expenditures Sub-Total		
GRAND TOTAL		

Exercise 3

Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement shows money that comes into the business and what goes out. Being clear on this statement is essential because cash must be available to pay bills on time and for day-to-day activities.

Guidance:

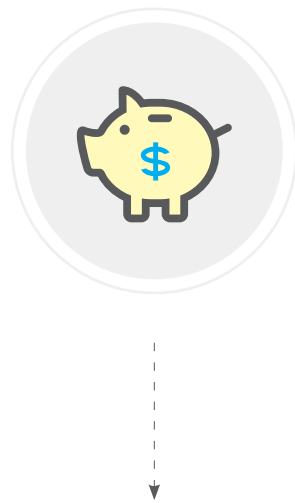
- ▶ Begin with income at the top, followed by expenses and repayment of loans.
- ▶ Base your numbers on research rather than presumption.
- ▶ Negative balances are common in year 1. They must be covered by providing more cash (e.g. loans) or by reducing expenses.
- ▶ Increased sales can cause a cash drain (due to increased costs or labor). Consider how you will overcome this.

Name of Business	Start-Up Costs	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3
A. CASH ON HAND (Beginning of month)				
B. CASH RECEIPTS				
1. Cash Sales				
2. Collections from Credit Accounts				
3. Loan or Other Cash Injection				
C. TOTAL CASH RECEIPT (B1+B2+B3)				
D. TOTAL CASH AVAILABLE (A+C)				
E. CASH PAID OUT:				
1. Purchases (Merchandise)				
2. Gross Wages				
3. Payroll Expenses				
4. Outside Services				
5. Supplies (Office is operating)				
6. Repair and maintenance				
7. Advertising				
8. Car, Delivery, and Travel				
9. Professional Services				
10. Rent (Real estate only)				
11. Telephone				
12. Utilities				
13. Insurance				
14. Taxes				
15. Interest on loans				
16. Miscellaneous (small expenses)				
G. TOTAL CASH PAID OUT				
H. CASH POSITION (D minus G) Cash on hand for following month				

BUSINESS FUNDING

Businesses may need outside funds to start, operate, and expand. If you need funding, you must first know how much you will need and why you need it. If it is a loan, also be clear on the repayment: How much will you have to repay? How long do you have to repay?

Below are some common funding sources and guidance on each:



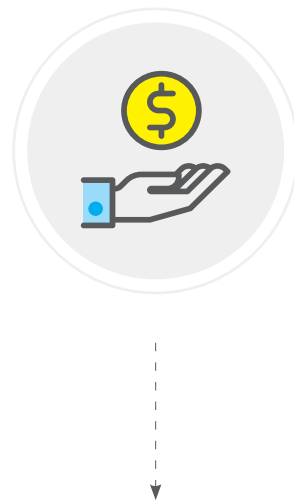
Personal Savings

Personal savings are the most popular funding source. But they also connect the business's finances to your own. Make sure to create a bank account for your business that is separate from your personal account.



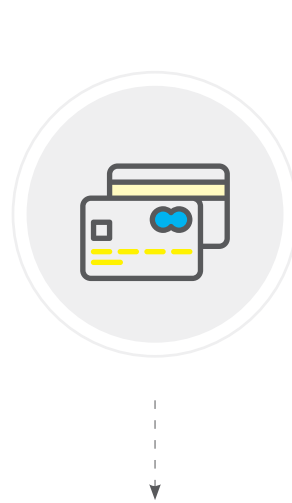
Friends and Family or Crowdfunding

Your network can pool funds and share in the risks and rewards of a business. Each person should agree to when repayments will happen and how much will be repaid.



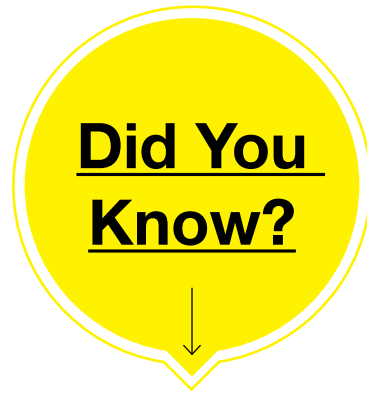
Nonprofit Lenders

Nonprofit lenders usually offer small loans with reasonable repayment terms. They also may offer business help. You will need a detailed business plan to get a loan.



Business Credit Cards

Business credit cards can allow quick and easy access to funds. It is important to learn about the credit card options available to you. Some repayment terms may be better than others.



Businesses sometimes under-report their cash revenue when filing taxes. Under-reporting hurts a business' ability to get financing because the business appears unprofitable. It may also lead to a government investigation.

Exercise 4

Exploring Funding Sources

Exercise 2 provided an estimate of your business's start-up costs. Now consider how you will pay for these costs. The table below includes a few potential funding sources. It also leaves space so you may add your own.

Consider the risks for each funding source available to you. Then choose and list the sources you plan to use, and enter the amount of money available from each. Then describe the next action you must take to get this funding. This action could be research on the Internet, calling a friend, or visiting a bank.

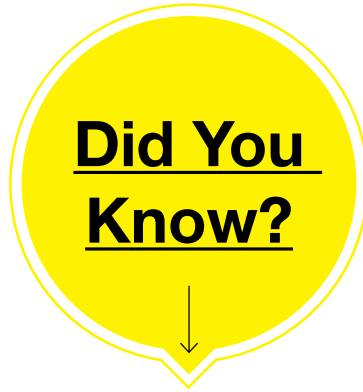
Source of Funding	\$ Amount	Action Needed
Entrepreneur		
Personal savings		
Personal credit cards		
Take on second job		
Withdrawal from retirement account		
Home equity loan		
Friends and Family Members		
Financial Institutions/Nonprofit Lenders		
Other Sources		
Total Estimated Funding Available		

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For help with accessing financing, contact a SBS Account Manager by going to nyc.gov/businesssolutions and clicking "CONTACT."

The Account Manager will guide you through every step of the loan process and connect you to the right funder.

STRUCTURING YOUR BUSINESS



An early decision every entrepreneur must make is how best to structure the business. Choosing a structure that suits your business depends on many factors:

- Your vision for the nature and size of the business
- Who you want the decision makers of your business to be
- Level of legal risk you are willing to bear
- How and when you wish to pay for the structure's costs in legal fees and/or taxes
- Expected profit or loss of the business, and planned use of earnings
- Amount of effort you're willing to spend to form and maintain the structure

Are you starting a business with a partner? Successful partnerships expect challenges and create **partnership agreements** in advance to help resolve them. Some questions a partnership agreement should answer are:

- ▶ What is each partner investing?
- ▶ What are each partner's duties?
- ▶ How will you resolve conflicts?
- ▶ What happens when a partner withdraws?

Information on a few business structures follows below:

(For further details, or more info, consult with a lawyer)

SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP

A single person assumes all assets and liabilities of the business under his or her own name. The large majority of small businesses begin as sole proprietorships.

PROS: +
They are the easiest and least expensive to organize. No public filing or legal fee is required, and profits are only taxed as part of the owner's personal tax return.

CONS: -
They place unlimited and direct liability for the business on a single person, the owner. Proprietors may have trouble getting business funding as well.

LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY (LLC)

A business structure that limits liability like a corporation but offers the flexibility and tax benefits of a partnership. It was created to aid small businesses.

PROS: +
Liability is limited to each LLC member's investment in the company. Members have options to choose from on how they will be taxed and governed.

CONS: -
Establishing an LLC requires filing documentation and fees to New York State. Business owners may pay a lawyer for help with this documentation. LLCs often have more complex operating agreements and tax filing systems than corporations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For professional help with choosing a business structure, contact a SBS Account Manager. Go to nyc.gov/businesssolutions and click "CONTACT."





GENERAL PARTNERSHIP

Two or more people share ownership of a single business. Like sole proprietors, the law does not distinguish between the business and its owners.

PROS: +
They are the easiest and least expensive to organize. No public filing or legal fee is required, and profits are only taxed as part of the owner's personal tax return.

CONS: -
Both partners are personally liable for the business's debts. Partners often fail to expect personal or professional challenges that end their relationship. Drafting a partnership agreement that anticipates these challenges may require paying a lawyer.

LIMITED PARTNERSHIP

A legal entity created by two or more business owners who have limited liability to the amount each invests. At least one owner makes business decisions and is personally liable for business debts.

PROS: +
At least one partner has control over the business decisions and operations. Profits are only taxed as part of the partners' personal tax returns. The formal structure can add credibility to a business seeking a loan.

CONS: -
At least one partner is personally liable for the business's debts. Drafting both the formation documents and a partnership agreement may require paying a lawyer. Partners often fail to expect personal or professional challenges that end their relationship.

LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP

A legal entity created by two or more business owners who have limited liability to the amount each invests. None of the owners makes business decisions or is personally liable for business debts.

PROS: +
All of the owners are personally protected from the business's debts. Profits are only taxed as part of the partners' personal tax returns. The formal structure can add credibility to a business seeking a loan.

CONS: -
The owners have little control over business decisions and operations. Drafting both the formation documents and a partnership agreement may require paying a lawyer. Partners often fail to expect personal or professional challenges that end their relationship.

C CORPORATION

A legal entity that can be taxed, sued, and enter into contracts. Almost all large corporations with more than 100 shareholders are C corporations.

PROS: +
Each shareholder's liability is limited to the amount they invested. Venture capitalists often prefer C corporations because of their flexible ownership arrangements.

CONS: -
Forming a corporation requires significant paperwork filing and fees. Many business owners also pay a lawyer for help with the documentation. It places more restrictions on the ability of the founder(s) to make decisions. Profits are taxed both to the corporation and again to the shareholders.

S CORPORATION

A legal entity that can be taxed, sued, and enter into contracts. Unlike C corporations, the business cannot have more than 100 shareholders.

PROS: +
Each shareholder's liability is limited to the amount they invested. Profits are taxed only to the shareholders.

CONS: -
Forming a corporation requires significant paperwork filing and fees. Many business owners also pay a lawyer for help with the documentation. It places more restrictions on the ability of the founder(s) to make decisions.

WORKER COOPERATIVE

A business owned and operated by its employees. The worker-owners share the profits and earnings generated by the cooperative.

PROS: +
The democratic structure provides each employee a voice and ownership stake in the business. This can encourage higher productivity and less employee turn-over. Profits are only taxed as part of the worker-owners' personal tax returns.

CONS: -
Worker cooperatives can have trouble getting funding. Investors may be unfamiliar with the structure or concerned about repayment.



BUSINESS LOCATION

Your business's location is essential to its success. Before you choose a location, consider the following:

Pre-Planning

Create a list of what your business needs from a space, such as square footage, utilities, and fixtures. Order it by priority.

Examine the Neighborhood

Speak to tenants, brokers, and community development organizations.

- ▶ Will the community welcome your type of business?
- ▶ Are there competitors nearby?

Know the Regulations

Ensure the space has a Certificate of Occupancy. Learn the Zoning Restrictions.

- ▶ Is the space approved for commercial use by your type of business?
- ▶ Use the **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** at the end of this page to learn more about Certificates of Occupancy and Zoning Restrictions.

Visit the Space in Person

Confirm that the landlord's or broker's descriptions of the space are accurate.

- ▶ Does the space's condition and layout suit your business's needs?
- ▶ How many people pass by the business on an average day?

Confirm the Landlord

Is the person leasing the space the legitimate landlord? Is the person in good standing? You can confirm landlord identities and property information at nyc.gov/citymap.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To check a property's Certificate of Occupancy, go to nyc.gov/buildings and enter the address into "Buildings Information." You can also learn if a landlord or tenant has active violations.

To verify a property's zoning restrictions, go to nyc.gov/zoning, and enter the address into "Find Your Zoning."

Did You Know?

A "good guy guarantee" can release tenants from their responsibilities for a space if they choose to end the lease early.

It depends on the tenant fulfilling the obligations of the guarantee. This usually includes leaving the rented space in good condition.

COMMERCIAL LEASING

A commercial tenant's rights are decided by the lease, above all else. The small print in a lease can have big consequences, so take time to prepare before negotiating one. The following are a few "dos" and "don'ts" in this process:

DOS



- ✔ Work with a lawyer who has advised small business tenants in New York City. To check a lawyer's credential, go to nycourts.gov, or call 212.428.2800.
- ✔ Negotiate a lease term that guarantees the option to renew.
- ✔ Negotiate a "good guy guarantee" to reduce your liability in the event the business fails.
- ✔ Consider the complexity and timing of build-out when deciding the start date of a lease term.
- ✔ Be clear who is responsible for each expense and liability of the space.

DON'TS



- ✘ Rely on an oral agreement, a letter of intent, or a "standard lease." These can heavily favor the landlord.
- ✘ Sign the lease in your own name without conditions.
- ✘ Trust the landlord to know the space's permitted uses and restrictions.
- ✘ Expect that the landlord is required to make repairs or provide heat, water, electric, or other utilities free of charge.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about commercial leasing, attend SBS's free workshop, "Signing a Commercial Lease: What You Need to Know." Go to nyc.gov/nycbusinesscourses, click "Business Planning and Operations Courses" to find a workshop near you.

To review a commercial lease with a pro bono lawyer, contact a SBS Account Manager. Go to nyc.gov/businesssolutions and click "CONTACT."





NAVIGATING GOVERNMENT: PERMITS & LICENSES

Following government rules for businesses can be difficult for many business owners. But with the right information, you can spend less time on addressing violations and more time on your business. The guidance and resources below can help you avoid violations before they happen.



PREPARING TO OPEN

- ▶ **Register your business**
Sole proprietors and general partnerships register with their County Clerk. LLCs, corporations, and limited partnerships register with New York State. Learn how to register in the **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** section below.
- ▶ **Get business identification**
Apply for a Sales Tax ID at on.nyc.gov/taxid in order to sell products and services. Learn whether you need to apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) at on.nyc.gov/ein.
- ▶ **Learn the requirements specific to your type of business**
Make sure you and your employees have all the permits and licenses your business needs. Go to the **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** section below to learn more.
- ▶ **Consult a licensed professional to review your location**
If the space needs construction, the City needs to know your plans. Only the licensed professional can submit these plans on your behalf. Learn more about the permitting process by going to nyc.gov/buildings and searching, “How to obtain a permit,” and clicking the link with that title.
- ▶ **Follow the labor laws**
Employers have many responsibilities to their employees besides the minimum wage. Learn more at on.nyc.gov/wages.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you plan to start a business, there are free resources on every part of the registration, permits, and licensing process. This includes a survey that will provide you a customized list of requirements for your particular business. Go to nyc.gov/business, and click “Start a Business” to learn more.

STAYING OPEN

- ▶ **Follow sanitation rules**
Set out your waste neatly and at the right time for hauling. Post your waste hauler’s decal. Learn more by going to nyc.gov/business and searching, “Recycling and waste removal,” and clicking the link with that title.
- ▶ **Keep the sidewalk clean and clear of items**
You must clean your sidewalk and the first 1.5 feet into the street. You cannot have sidewalk signs. Learn more by going to nyc.gov/business and searching, “Sidewalks.”
- ▶ **Post prices, payment methods, and refund policies**
Label all products with their price. Post signs that make clear your credit card and refund policies. Learn more about these rules and other things every business should know at on.nyc.gov/10things.
- ▶ **Resolve customer complaints**
The City will contact you if a customer submits a complaint. You should respond and work with the City to resolve it. Learn more by going to nyc.gov/business, searching, “Business Licensing and Complaint History,” and clicking the link with that title.
- ▶ **Handle violations and pay fines**
Don’t wait to resolve a violation. Not responding can result in additional fines. Go to the **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** section to learn how to receive a personal consultation on regulations and violations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For personal guidance with business regulations, SBS Client Managers can help you for free. Email businesshelp@sbs.nyc.gov, or call 212.618.8810 to schedule an appointment.

If you own an operating business, you can receive a personal consultation to avoid and resolve violations. The consultation is free and delivered at your business location. Go to nyc.gov/nbat, and click on “Schedule a Visit,” or email businesshelp@sbs.nyc.gov to request one.

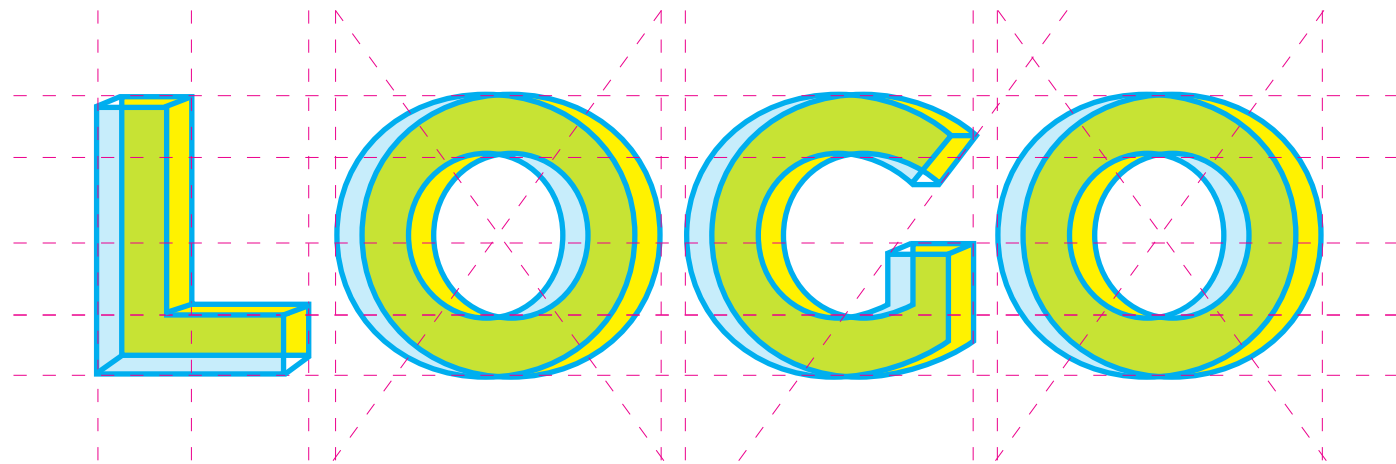
04 /

PLANNING

FOR BUSINESS

GROWTH





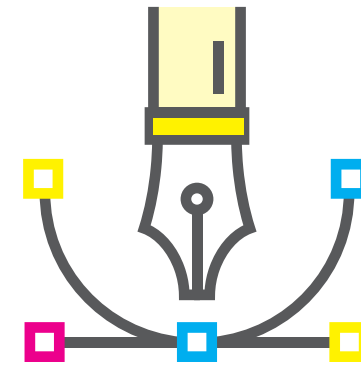
THE IMPORTANCE OF BRANDING FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Customers are more than consumers who need goods and services. They are people with values and beliefs, and they seek businesses who share their principles.

A good **brand** takes advantage of this. A brand is your business's public identity and communicates to customers your business's core values, not only its appearance. When

you define this identity with thought and purpose, you shape the stories that people tell about your business.

When you create a strong brand, you build better connections with your customers. Better connections mean more positive stories shared about your business.



Business Name

A business's name is how people will refer to your business. There are factors that make a successful name, including: →

Logo

Many customers first recognize a business by its logo. Successful logo designs are: →

BRAND BASICS

There are common parts to successful brands. A business name and logo that are clear and unique are essential. Consider the guidance below when exploring a name and logo for your business.

-
- ▶ **Descriptive**
Your name should reflect the nature of your business.
 - ▶ **Industry**
Your name should fit in the language of your industry but set your business apart from competitors.
 - ▶ **Image-Aligned**
Your name should reflect your business's core values.
 - ▶ **Accessible**
Your customers should find the name of your business inviting and memorable.
-
- ▶ **Representative**
Only include designs and colors that reflect a key part of your business.
 - ▶ **Simple**
Too many features can hide your logo's core message. Avoid designs that use passing trends.
 - ▶ **Unique**
Add distinctive features so that customers do not confuse yours with another logo.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For free workshops that offer an introduction to business marketing, go to nyc.gov/nycbusinesscourses, click "Marketing and Technology," and find a "Marketing 101" workshop near you.

You can check whether a business name is already registered with New York State by going to dos.ny.gov/corps/bus_entity_search.html.

Exercise 5

Knowing Your Audience & Defining Your Brand

Businesses can continue building their brand after they choose a name and logo. To gain the loyalty of customers, brands must convince customers that the business shares their values. This brand loyalty can drive higher sales and better brand differentiation.

The questions below can help you define your own brand. Sample answers are provided first to guide you. Then space is provided for you to fill in your own answers.

▶ THOUGHT EXERCISE

Think of a business whose brand you like. What do you appreciate about the business? How does it stand out from the competition? Consider the value, quality, uniqueness, and ease of use of their products.

Compare your answers to these questions and the questions below when defining your brand.

1/

Who are your target customers?

Consider the income, age, gender, ethnicity, spoken languages, marital status, occupations, and personal interests of your target community.

“For my daycare business, I want to reach working families who live near Nostrand Avenue north of Myrtle Avenue in Bedford Stuyvesant. More than 70% of households are families. More than 5% of all residents are of pre-school age. This is one of the highest percentages in all of Brooklyn. Median household income is between \$20,000 and \$30,000, and the neighborhood is majority Latino. A majority of households speak Spanish at home.”

2/

What is one of their key needs that your product or service fills?

“I have spoken with many of the families in this neighborhood. They have expressed a need for affordable, high-quality daycare in the community.”

1

2

3/

What does your target customer value most in this product or service?

“My target family values daycare that teaches the children essential language and math skills customized to the needs of their child. They want staff who communicate regularly about the progress of their child. Also, they want daycare that is open late and flexible to their working hours.”

3

DEFINING YOUR BRAND

4/

What are the core values that drive your business?

Consider value, quality, uniqueness, and ease of use of your product or service.

“My core values are reliability, quality, and value. First, I want families to trust all of my staff to care for their children. Second, I want to demonstrate to them that we use the latest developments in early childhood education. Third, I want to maintain a price that the community can afford.”

4

5/ How will you communicate these core values to your target customers?

“I will communicate these values by setting high expectations for what parents should expect. We will then deliver on each expectation with excellent resources and staff. I will serve as customers’ trusted guide for childcare resources outside the scope of my business, including reliable pediatricians and nannies. My employees and I will also take time each day to speak with parents. We will cater to the particular needs and concerns of each one, and we will explain how we make a positive impact on their child each time he or she arrives.”

5

6/ How will this message set you apart from your competition?

“We will set our business apart through educational resources tailored to each child’s needs, well-trained staff, and open communication with parent. We will use the latest resources and staff trainings in early childhood education and explain their value. We will hire bi-lingual staff who will teach the children language skills in both English and Spanish. We will guarantee a staff-to-child ratio no higher than 8-to-1. We will hold regular staff-parent check-ins to explain each child’s progress, learn concerns, and react to changing needs.”

6

Did You Know?

Average consumers need to hear or see a message at least seven times before they choose to use a product or service.

Advertising

Advertising is how most customers meet businesses for the first time. It should produce quick results and rapid sales. But it is expensive, so it is important to know who you are selling to and how you can reach them.

Consider the following advertising options: →

Publicity

Publicity refers to media stories about businesses at no cost to the businesses. This is a tool for both new and existing businesses.

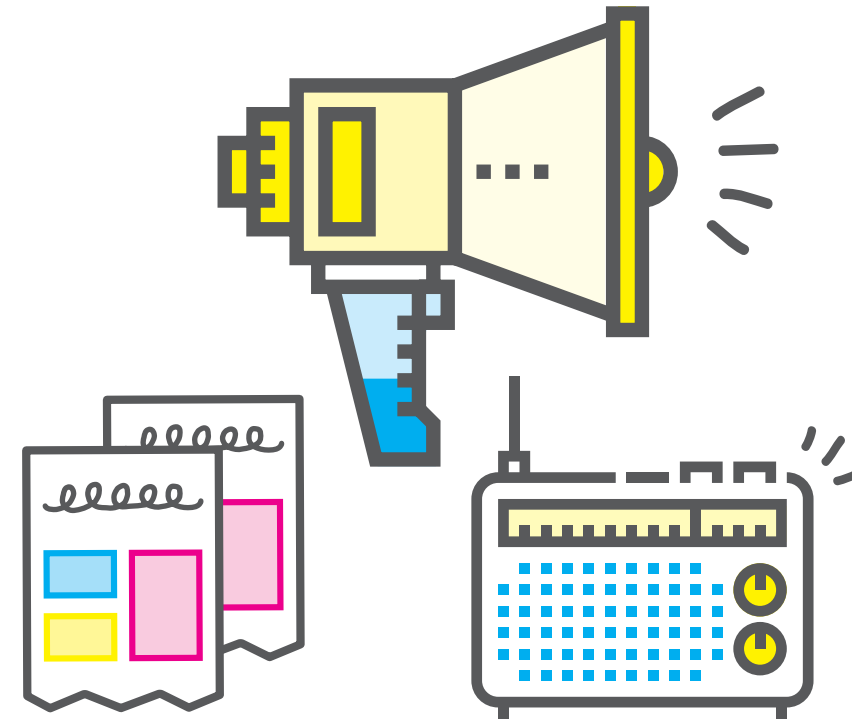
Consider the following advertising options: →

BUILDING YOUR MARKETING TOOLKIT

A name and logo establish your business's message, but you also need to get this message out. This requires marketing strategies. The strategies you use depend on your business's needs.

Every robust marketing toolkit includes a mix of advertising, publicity, and promotional strategies.

-
- ▶ **Flyers**
You can hand out flyers at networking events and trade shows. They are easy to create and not expensive.
 - ▶ **Newspapers**
Newspapers offer single-day advertising space for different budgets. They can help businesses reach certain neighborhoods and communities.
 - ▶ **Radio**
Radio stations reach large audiences and offer cheaper rates than print or TV ads. If your target customers listen to radio, radio ads may be an effective option.
 - ▶ **Internet and Social Media**
Using the internet and social media is a great, free way to advertise your business. Continue onto the next Section, **TECHNOLOGY**, to learn more about using these tools.
 - ▶ **Feature Story**
Newspapers, radio, and TV stations may feature a business if you have a unique role in the community.
 - ▶ **Press Release**
Media pick up press releases from businesses if they make for interesting news.
 - ▶ **Contests**
Businesses can use prizes to create their own events, which local media can turn into news.
 - ▶ **Community Recognition**
Community organizations often want local businesses to provide products or services for their events. This provides visibility to you and the organization.
-



Did You Know?

A small percentage of customers use printed coupons. On average, customers use coupons they see in newspapers 1-5% of the time. Customers use coupons packaged in magazines, mail, or business less than 10% of the time.

Promotions

Some businesses sell the same line of products or service to the same market for decades. How do they do it? Promotional activities are one way. They are cost-effective and flexible to the needs of a business.

Consider the following advertising options: →

-
- ▶ **Premiums**
Premiums are added services or products that customers may not expect to receive from your business. Choose items of clear value to your customers.
 - ▶ **Coupons**
Coupons reduce the prices of goods and services to encourage customers to buy more.
 - ▶ **Demonstrations**
Demonstrations allow customers to try a product or service before they purchase it. Many customers need to see the value of a product.
 - ▶ **Networking**
The cheapest and fastest option is for people to encourage their friends and family to shop at your business. You can actively encourage this. Visit chambers of commerce, merchant associations, and community events to speak about your business.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more help with marketing strategies, attend SBS's free workshop, "Mastering Marketing." Go to nyc.gov/nycbusinesscourses, and click "Marketing and Technology" to find a workshop near you.

Exercise 6

Prioritizing Marketing Strategies

Step: 1 →

Rank each marketing option according to its level of priority for your business (**1 represents highest priority, and 4 represents lowest priority**).

Use the following questions to help you determine their priority.

- ▶ Will this method reach and impact my target customers?
- ▶ How many people will this reach, and how many sales will it create?
- ▶ Are its benefits worth its costs?

Step: 2 →

Choose one marketing option from each category, and create an idea for it.

- ▶ What do you want this marketing strategy to accomplish?
- ▶ What does the strategy tell potential customers?

Advertising Options	Priority (1 4)	Advertising Idea
1. Internet/Social Media		
2. Flyers		
3. Newspapers		
4. Radio		
Publicity Options	Priority (1 4)	Advertising Idea
1. Feature Story		
2. Press Release		
3. Community Recognition		
4. Contests		
Promotions Options	Priority (1 4)	Advertising Idea
1. Premiums		
2. Coupons		
3. Demonstrations		
4. Networking		





TECHNOLOGY

Technology is an essential tool for small businesses to increase sales and reduce costs. There are a growing number of low-cost tools available to any small business. Becoming familiar with each requires time and effort, but it can pay off. It may set you apart from your competition.

Getting Started

To start, make sure you are familiar with the following technologies. These are the essentials →

▶ Internet Navigation

The Internet allows computers across the world to share information. People use the Internet for email, news, shopping, socializing, researching products/ services and more.

▶ Email

Email is a way to send messages using the Internet. Anyone can create an email address at no cost to send and receive emails.

▶ Microsoft Office

Microsoft Office is a set of computer programs that allow users to record and share information. You can type documents, do calculations, create presentations, and more.

▶ Social Media

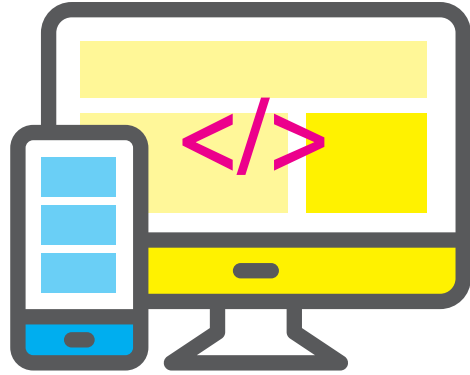
Many computer and cell phone users spend a lot of time on the Internet using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Social media users share texts, photos, videos, and more with the public or their specific “friends”.

▶ Cloud Computing

Cloud computing records documents, photos, videos, and more on the Internet rather than on a computer. You can protect and easily share this information on the cloud.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more help with any of these technologies, the public library offers classes. Go to nypl.org/events/classes/other-orgs and find an organization hosting a computer class near you.

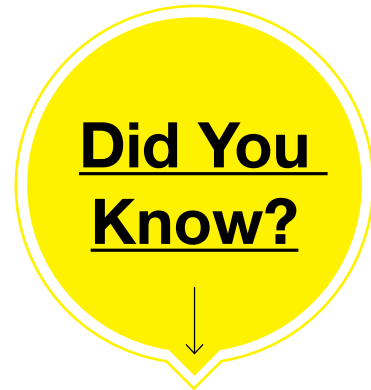


BUILDING YOUR WEBSITE

Websites are a standard channel for business in the United States today. If customers do not see a website for your business, they may question if it exists or if it is legitimate.

Consider your business website to be another part of your marketing toolkit. Everything you include on your website should have a purpose. It should also be clear and easy to navigate.

Consider the following with your business website:



Many Internet users find business websites through search engines such as Google. There are two common ways to market through them.

- ▶ One option is to hire someone who can design your website to appear more often in search results.
- ▶ An easier but more expensive option is to pay the search engine to prioritize your website in search results.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn how to create a business website or use social media, attend SBS's free workshops, "Website Fundamentals" or "Social Media Fundamentals." Go to nyc.gov/businesscourses, and click "Marketing and Technology Courses" to find workshops near you.

To get started learning about email marketing, social media, and other technologies for small businesses, SBS has an online Business Library at nyc.gov/html/sbs/nycbiz/html/library/library.shtml.

▶ Brand

Make sure its designs and colors fit into the overall brand of your business.

▶ Current Content

Create content that will remain accurate over time. Regularly review the site to ensure it is up-to-date and welcoming to visitors.

▶ Comparable Sites

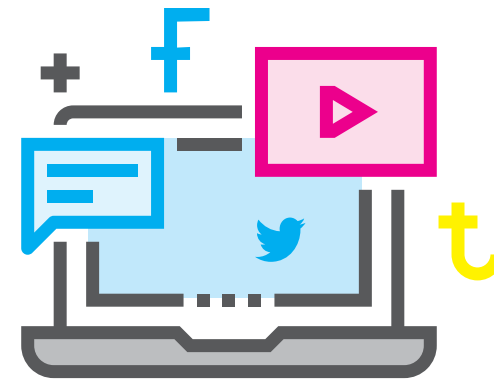
Look at websites of similar businesses to consider how your website can be better and stand out.

▶ Hiring Help

It may be worth hiring a professional to design your website if you do not have the experience. Look for professionals who your network or independent reviews recommend. It can be an upfront cost with long-term value.

▶ Do-It-Yourself

If you are comfortable with a computer, you can use a "website builder" to create a website yourself.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has transformed marketing for small businesses. It offers many ways to target and reach customers. Find out what social media your target customers use and set up an account for your business. Three of the best known social media websites are:



Facebook

A website that allows users to share information with friends, family and colleagues. Companies can create webpages on Facebook and share media that customers can view and share with friends.



Twitter

A website on which users send out short messages in real time. Companies can send promotional messages to market their goods or services.



LinkedIn

A website for business professionals to connect. Companies can create accounts for their businesses and join interest groups for industries and professions.



SELLING TO GOVERNMENT: CERTIFICATIONS & CONTRACTS

Each year, the City of New York turns to private companies to provide billions of dollars of supplies, construction and other services.

Businesses can grow by becoming vendors for New York City, the state, and/or the federal government. But it takes the right experience, training, and certifications.

Below are a few key guidelines and resources on government contracting and certification.

VENDOR REGISTRATION

To sell to New York City, businesses must first register as a vendor. Go to the City’s Payee Information **Portal (PIP)** at nyc.gov/pip, and click the “**Activate**” button to get started.

M/WBE CERTIFICATION

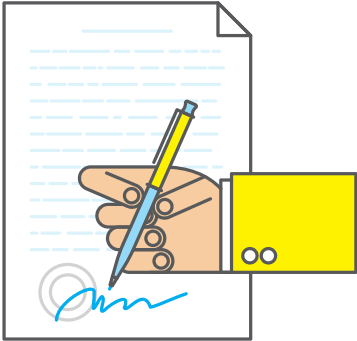
Are you a minority or woman business owner? You may be eligible for the NYC Minority and/or Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Certification Program. NYC M/WBE Certification helps firms compete for potential contracts with the City. Certified M/WBEs connect with government buyers, other contractors, and each other through classes and workshops, networking events, capacity-building programs and targeted calls for contract bids and RFPs. To be eligible for NYC M/WBE Certification, a business must be

at least 51% owned, operated and controlled by U.S. citizens or permanent residents who are members of a designated minority group, including Black, Hispanic, Asian Pacific, and Asian-Indian, or a woman or women. They must have been in operation for at least one year and have at least one paid client who is not a friend or family member. And they should sell something government buys; otherwise, it might not be worth the time and effort it takes to get certified. More information and complete eligibility criteria can be found at nyc.gov/getcertified.

LBE & EBE CERTIFICATIONS

Businesses operating in historically underutilized business zones, as defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration, may be eligible for

Locally-Based Enterprises (LBE) certification. Businesses owned, operated, and controlled by individuals who are socially or economically disadvantaged may be eligible for an Emerging Business Enterprises (EBEs) certification. Like NYC M/WBE Certification, these certifications provide greater access to and information about potential contracts with the City. Learn more about LBE and EBE certification at nyc.gov/getcertified



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SBS offers free **Selling to Government** and **M/WBE Certification** workshops every month. Go to nyc.gov/nycbusinesscourses, and click, “**Selling to Government**,” to find and register for a workshop near you.

Need help becoming or working as a government contractor? The Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) at SBS’s office can assist you. Email bizhelp@sbs.nyc.gov or techassist@sbs.nyc.gov or call 311 and say, “**Selling to Government**” to connect.

05/

**PUTTING
IT ALL
TOGETHER**



Launching and growing a business requires significant time and work. But the success of so many immigrant entrepreneurs in New York City makes clear its promise and possibility. In our city, immigrants make up half of all business owners and are finding success in every sector, from retail to technology. For these entrepreneurs, the opportunities of owning a business were greater than the risks.

This guide is a resource to help you create your business opportunity and make it successful. It is also a starting point. Each step in these pages requires your vision and effort to accomplish. But no step must be taken alone. **The NYC Department of Small Business Services is here to help with free services at any step in your journey.**

REMEMBER THESE 15 KEY POINTS & RESOURCES FROM THIS GUIDE.

1/ You have defined rights as an immigrant New Yorker.

Resource: Learn more about free legal assistance in your language at nyc.gov/immigrants.

2/ Evaluate your skills, abilities, and available resources before you start a business. Set a plan to address challenges.

Resource: For guidance on this evaluation, SBS provides a free workshop, "10 Steps to Starting a Business." Go to nyc.gov/businesscourses, and click "Business Planning and Operations Courses" to find a workshop near you.

3/ Research your market and target customer. Be sure where your business fits in the market today and into the future. A good business idea is only as successful as the demand for it.

Resource: If you are serious about opening a small business, SBS offers a workshop series that will help you understand your market, target customer, and much more. Go to nyc.gov/fasttrac, and apply to SBS's **FastTrac® New Venture program**.

4/ Build a detailed Business Plan that can guide your business development at every step. It should also make the claim with evidence that your business will succeed.

Resource: Review the questions on pg.16 to consider what you will need for your business plan. For free help with business planning, visit a Small Business Development Center near you by going to nyssbdc.org/locations.html.

5/ Get your personal finances in order, especially your credit, before considering your business finances.

Resource: The City offers free counseling to help you tackle debt, improve your credit, open a bank account, and more. Call 311 and say, "**Financial Counseling**," for assistance.

6/ If you need business funding, first know exactly how much money you need, why you need it, and how you will pay it back.

Resource: Use Exercise 2 (pg.23) in this toolkit to calculate your start-up costs and consider how you will justify them and pay them back.

7/ Create a plan to avoid cash shortages, a key failure that leads to closing.

Resource: Use Exercise 3 (pg.24) in this toolkit to create a Cash Flow Statement.

8/ Each funding source for businesses comes with its own risks and rewards. Research and plan for each option, especially if it is your personal savings.

Resource: For help with getting business funding, SBS offers free "Business Finance Roadmap" workshops. Go to nyc.gov/businesscourses, and click "**Financing and Accounting Courses**" to find a workshop near you.

9/ There is no single best legal structure for every business. Be clear on how much risk you can bear and how much flexibility you want with your business.

Resource: For free legal help with business structure, contact a SBS Account Manager. Go to nyc.gov/businesssolutions, and click "**CONTACT**." Or call 311 and ask for "**NYC Business Solutions**."

10/ Learn about and visit the commercial space you are interested in before reviewing a lease. When you are ready, review your lease with a lawyer before signing it. Do not trust the lease to be standard or fair.

Resource: To learn more about commercial leasing, attend SBS's free workshop, "Signing a Commercial Lease: What You Need to Know." Go to nyc.gov/nycbusinesscourses, click "**Business Planning and Operations Courses**" to find a workshop near you.

11/ Be clear on all government regulations for your business before you start, and regularly review them to ensure you are not in violation.

Resource: For resources on business regulations, go to nyc.gov/business. For personal guidance from a SBS Client Manager, email businesshelp@sbs.nyc.gov, or call 212.618.8810 to schedule an appointment.

12/ Create a deliberate brand for your business that meets your customers' needs. Make it distinctive so that it sets you apart from the competition.

Resource: To get started with your marketing strategy, SBS offers free "Marketing 101" workshops. Go to nyc.gov/businesscourses, and click "Marketing and Technology Courses" to find a workshop near you.

13/ Find out how your target customers learn about businesses like yours. Prioritize the marketing strategies you will use to reach them. Consider the reach and expense of each strategy.

Resource: To refine your marketing strategy, SBS offers free "Mastering Marketing" workshops. Go to nyc.gov/businesscourses, and click "Marketing and Technology Courses" to find a workshop near you.

14/ Build a website and social media presence for your business. The Internet is essential to how customers find and choose businesses at which to shop.

Resource: To learn how to create a business website or use social media, attend SBS's free "Website Fundamentals" and "Social Media Fundamentals" workshops. Go to nyc.gov/businesscourses, and click "Marketing and Technology Courses" to find a workshop near you.

15/ Determine if your business would benefit from selling to the government. There are certifications available for business owners that can provide greater access to and information about government contract opportunities

Resource: SBS offers free Selling to Government and M/WBE Certification workshops every month. Go to nyc.gov/selltogovt to register for a workshop near you.



NYC
Office of the
Mayor

Small Business
Services

Gregg Bishop
Commissioner

citi[®]

CitiCommunityDevelopment.com

nyc.gov/immigrantbusinesses

