

Small Business Resource Guide

This guide is aimed at small businesses interested in starting or expanding a business. A number of decisions must be made to insure that the newly developed business starts properly and has the maximum opportunity for success. The guide offers information on how to approach these decisions.

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Considerations Before Launching a Business

Louisiana Economic Development has developed five steps to consider in starting a business. They are as follows:

Determining Experience - Do you have the desire to start and operate a business and do you have the experience in marketing, management, technical competence, and financial know-how necessary to succeed?

Evaluating the Risk - Can you take the risk associated with starting a business? Do you have the financial resources to undertake an entrepreneurial venture and leave your present employment?

Initial Financing - Do you have the financial resources or can you raise the capital required to fund the business? Are you willing to give up a percentage of the company to raise equity capital for the business?

Devising a Business Plan - Do you have a business plan or are you willing to write and follow one? Business plans are critical in the development and operation of a successful business.

Registering Your Business – Do you know what form you want the business to take? Once the business plan is complete, it is important to choose the proper legal structure for the business and register the business with all necessary governmental entities.

Starting a New Business in Louisiana

I. Defining Your Business

Whether you want to open a manufacturing facility, retail outlet or high-tech firm, you must have very specific ideas about what you want to offer. Developing a business plan will help to insure you clearly define your business, products or services, potential customers, financial needs, sales projections and more.

As part of your process, make contact with the LED Regional Directors. They can put you in touch with entities within the state such as the Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) at your local university, which can work with you in developing a solid plan. The LED Regional Director, nearest SBDC and numerous other support services can be found in the [Additional Resources section](#) of the LED Web site.

II. Legal Considerations

Once a clear description and vision of your new business has been defined, you must decide on the corporate or legal structure of the business. In making this decision, it is wise to contact an attorney and accountant to provide advice on the most effective structure based on your business idea and current financial situation. Each type of business structure has advantages and disadvantages, and it is the expertise of good practitioners that will benefit you in the long run. Business Structures as defined by the Secretary of State's Web site:

- Individual or Sole Proprietorship - A business where only you, or your spouse, own the business even though you may have employees.
- Partnership – A business where two or more people own the business jointly.
- Corporation – A business which is treated by law as an entity. It has a life separate from its owners or stockholders. Many corporations begin as a sole proprietor or partnership.
- Limited Liability Company – An entity that is an unincorporated association having one or more members organized and filing articles with the Secretary of State.

III. New Business Registration and Licensing & Permitting

Louisiana Secretary of State can make starting a business in Louisiana easy. It has streamlined the registration, licensing, permitting and tax process. Use this contact information to find out what is required of you as a new business operator in Louisiana:

Louisiana Secretary of State Phone:

225.922.1000

Fax: 225.922.0433

<http://www.sos.louisiana.gov>

Business Registration

Many businesses and professionals are required to register with the state before they can operate in Louisiana. Information on the requirements and the forms that need to be submitted can be found on the Secretary of State's Web site at <http://www.sos.louisiana.gov/>. This office will also assist in obtaining an Employer Tax Identification Number.

Examples of forms that can be found on the site include:

- Articles of Incorporation
- Initial Report for Louisiana Businesses
- Application of a Foreign Corporation
- Articles of Incorporation - Limited Liability Company
- Trade Name, Trade Mark and Service Mark - Registration
- Partnership Registration
- Name Reservation for LLC

Permits and Licensing

The proper federal, state and local business license permits allowing a legal entity to operate in Louisiana must be obtained before the start of a business. The Secretary of State maintains a database of local contacts that can be helpful in starting and operating a business in Louisiana. Visit <http://www.sos.louisiana.gov/>.

Depending on the type of business, the following licenses and permits may be required:

Certificate of occupancy - This permit is issued by the local or parish government upon determination that your particular type of business is located in the proper zone.

State occupational license - This license is often required for many professions and occupations in Louisiana.

Local occupational license - City and/or parish government issues this license, which is determined by type of business.

Local food permit - This permit is required by the local governing authority for businesses dealing with food, so it is normally obtained through the local health office.

State beverage or tobacco permit - This permit is required of businesses selling beer, liquor, soft drinks or tobacco.

Taxes and Insurance

Local Taxes

Most parishes and many municipalities have taxes in support of local government's efforts to provide services to residents and businesses. Visit the Web site of your local parish or municipality to learn more.

State Taxes

Louisiana law defines several types of taxes that must be either paid or collected by businesses operating in the state. Any business that engages in sale of any kind must register with the Louisiana Department of Revenue. Information on state taxes, forms and filing can be found on the Louisiana Department of Revenue Web site at www.rev.state.la.us. The main office is located at 617 North Third Street, LaSalle Building, Baton Rouge, LA 70802. For additional information, call 225.925.7318.

Corporate Income and Franchise Tax information can be obtained at the above Web site or by calling the Income and Corporate Franchise Tax section at 225.925.4611.

Federal Tax Identification Numbers

Call toll free at 1.866.816.2065 to get an Employer Identification Number (EIN). Employers can also fax EIN requests to the IRS at 1.859.669.5760.

To order a business tax kit, write IRS, P.O. Box 30529, New Orleans, LA 70190-0529 or call 1.800.829.1040.

To get a copy of the IRS's free "Small Business Resource Guide" CD go to <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=101169,00.html> or call 1.800.829.3676.

Insurance

Depending on the type and nature of your business, there are many insurance options for both your company and your employees. You will need to be familiar with the following options if operating a business in Louisiana:

- Workmen's Compensation
- Liability
- Property
- Owner Personal (Life, Key Employee, Retirement, etc.)

Louisiana's Department of Insurance can answer your questions about insurance liability in the state. Many frequently asked questions, forms and publications are posted at www.ldi.state.la.us.

Checklist of Requirements for Louisiana Businesses

1. Select a corporate or legal structure for your business.
2. Complete a new entity filing with the Secretary of State's Commercial Division.
3. Apply for a federal tax identification number on Form SS-4 (800.829.1040).
4. Check on all local zoning ordinances and other restrictions affecting your business.
5. Determine if your business requires a local, state or federal permit or license.
6. Register for sales and use tax permits with the appropriate local agencies.
7. File initial report and articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State.
8. Establish procedures to ensure timely payment of payroll and sales taxes.

Important Contacts

Business Start-Up, Expansion and Retention Information

- Louisiana Small Business Development Centers, universities and consultants in Louisiana's rural and urban areas: see the [Additional Resources section](#) of the LED Web site.
- Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE): Visit www.score.org to view sample business plans and access an interactive financial forecast model.
- Baton Rouge SCORE Web site: www.scorebr.org, or 225.381.7130
- Small Business Administration: Visit www.sba.gov/la to download a start-up kit or www.bplans.com/samples/sba.cfm to access sample business plans for various industries. Call 504.589.6685 for additional assistance.
- LSU AgCenter: www.lsuagcenter.com

Licensing & Permits

- Starting a Business in Louisiana: www.GeauxBiz.com (formerly First Stop Shop)
- Day Care Center: contact Bureau of Licensing at 225.922.0015
- Articles of Incorporation forms and information on existing corporations: www.sos.louisiana.gov or 225.925.4704
- Baton Rouge Area Chamber: www.brac.org
- Federal Tax ID: 800.829.3676; State Tax ID: www.revenue.louisiana.gov, click online business registration, then click [Start the Online Application Process](#)

Minority-owned & Women-owned Businesses

NOTE: The state does not certify businesses as minority/woman owned

- Minority Certification: Louisiana Minority Business Council Inc.: www.lambc.org or Phala Mire, 504.523.7110
- Department of Transportation & Development: DOTD-DBE Certification (Minority & Women-owned Businesses) Staci Messina, 225.379.1382 or www.dotd.la.gov
- SBA's Minority Enterprise Development - 8(a) Certification Program: 504.589.6688 (Louisiana District Office)
- NewCorp Business Assistance Center: Assists minority & women-owned businesses to grow and prosper; Call 504.945.5345.
- Woman-owned Certification: Call the Women's Business Council at 504.680.1886 or visit www.wbcgulfcoast.org

Financing & Grant Information

NOTE: There are no LED grants to start up a business.

- Federal grant information: available at a local library or online, www.cfda.gov, www.grants.gov and www.sba.gov/expanding/grants.htm
- Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) Grant: Assists small businesses in developing technological potential and facilitating commercialization. Call Roy Keller or Bryan Greenwood at 225.578.7555. In Northwest Louisiana, contact Diana Simek, 318.671.1050.
- SBA's Loan Guaranty Programs: Visit www.sba.gov/la or call 504.589.6685 - *Available through banks only.*
- LEDC Loan Guarantee Programs: see the [Programs & Incentives section](#) of the LED Web site.
- USDA Rural Development: Visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs or call 318.473.7960. Provides financial backing for businesses in rural areas.
- Federal government loans: www.govloans.gov

State Business Programs & Incentives

- Louisiana Economic Development State Business Programs & Incentives: www.ledlouisiana.com/opportunities/incentives--programs.aspx
- Incumbent Worker Small Business Employee Training Program: www.laworks.net
- U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration: www.doleta.gov

Government Contracts

- State Purchasing (LaPAC) Procurement: www.doa.louisiana.gov/osp for vendor certification, or contact Rosemary Jackson, 225.342.8012
- Dept. of Transportation & Development (DOTD): Carla Parent, 225.379.1444, www.dotd.louisiana.gov and DOTD-DBE certification (Minority & Women-owned Businesses) Contractors (DOTD): Staci Messina, 225.379.1382
- Louisiana Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC): Visit <http://www.la-ptac.org> or call 800.206.3545 or 337.482.6422 for more information on government contracts and bid lists
- Division of Administration: http://www.stimulus.la.gov/SB_Main.htm

Inventions, Patents And Licensing

- LBTC: Visit www.lib.lsu.edu/sci/ptdl/index.htm or call Roy Keller or Bryan Greenwood, 225.578.7555. In Northwest Louisiana call Diana Simek at the Metro/Regional Business Incubator, 318.671.1050.
- Louisiana Partnership for Technology and Innovation: www.louisianapartnership.com or 225.922.9189
- LSU Library: Government Documents section conducts a patent-searching class, 225.578.4019
- U.S. Patent and Trademark Office: www.uspto.gov

Manufacturing Assistance

- Manufacturing Extension Partnership of LA (MEPOL): Visit www.mepol.org or call 800.433.6965 for assistance with increased productivity and business and technical needs.

Local Library

- Visit www.statelib.la.us or call 225.342.4913 for assistance with business resources and research.

Department of Environmental Quality

- Small Business Assistance Program: Visit www.deq.state.la.us or call 800.259.2890 for assistance with understanding and complying with environmental regulations.

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

- Governor's Office of Disability Affairs: 877.668.2722 (toll free) or 225.219.7550.

Governor's Office of Indian Affairs

- Governor's Office of Indian Affairs: Pat Arnould, 800.863.0098 or 225.219.7556.

Veterans Business Development

- Veterans Business Development (SBA): 504.589.2847, Federal Veterans' Business Web site: www.vetbiz.gov

Nonprofit Organization Information

- Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations (LANO): 225/343-5266
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation Mid South Delta: www.lisc.org or 662.335.3318
- TEEM Research & Community Development: 504.208.9114, ejreilly@teemedu.org, www.teemedu.org

Construction Industry Information

- Louisiana Contractors Licensing Information: 225.342.7097
 - Louisiana Associated General Contractors (LAGC): www.lagc.org
 - Louisiana Contractor's Accreditation Institute: OpportunityLouisiana.com/LCAI

See Louisiana Economic Development's Web site for [additional resources online](#).