Infinite Opportunity

Perform Market Research

Create a Business Plan

Fund Your Business

Register with the Ohio Department of Taxation

Register with the Ohio Secretary of State

Find a Location

Obtain Licenses and Permits

Hire and Train Staff
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Market Research

I. Begin by choosing a product or service to be the focal point of your business.

II. Form a competitive analysis of SWOT – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

III. Compare options for location based on competitors, supply and demand, real estate, etc. and assess funding strategies.

IV. Conduct quantitative and qualitative research by asking possible consumers (face to face or through online resources) about their thoughts on your product/service.

V. Update your business and marketing plan with results.
A business plan is necessary when starting a business because it clearly outlines the objectives of the future company and effective strategies to achieve said objectives.

I. Take the general information from your market research and draft into a more specified plan that can be used as a guiding force in the startup journey. A business plan should include product development, sales and marketing, and financial planning. This will help you budget more effectively and bring in potential business partners.

II. Sell ideas, identify strengths and weaknesses, and diagnose possible concerns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Business Plan</th>
<th>Lean Business Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More detailed, longer plan. Includes executive summary, company description, market analysis, organization and management, service or product line, marketing and sales, funding request, financial projections, and an appendix.</td>
<td>This plan only includes the key elements. Includes key partnerships, key activities, key resources, value proposition, customer relationships, customer segments, channels, cost structure, and revenue streams.</td>
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The U.S. Small Business Administration and SCORE have sample business plans and help on forming a personalized business plan. See page 12 in Ohio’s SBDC Startup Guide for a startup questionnaire.
Fund Your Business

I. Before you can launch your business, you need to calculate your startup costs to estimate profits, prepare a breakeven analysis, secure loans, and attract investors.

II. Calculate startup costs by considering office space, equipment and supplies, utilities, licenses and permits, insurance, inventory, employee wages, etc.

III. Choosing how you fund your business will affect the structure and operation of your business.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Self-Funding</strong></th>
<th><strong>Venture Capital Investments</strong></th>
<th><strong>Crowd-Funding</strong></th>
<th><strong>Small Business Loan</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leverage own financial resources: capital from family/friends, savings accounts, or 401K. Retain complete control over business, but accept full risk.</td>
<td>Give up some portion of control or ownership for funding from investors. Investors focus on high-growth companies and have longer investment horizon than traditional financing.</td>
<td>Raise funds from a large number of people. Crowd-funders do not expect a return or share of ownership. Low risk and you maintain full control of the company.</td>
<td>Retain complete control of your business. You should have a business plan, expense sheet, and financial projections to increase your chance of receiving a loan. Contact banks and credit unions to compare offers.</td>
</tr>
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The U.S. Small Business Administration provides a full list of potential startup costs and a tool for quick calculations. Ohio Development Services Agency provides a list of bonds, grants, loans, and tax credits that growing businesses can apply for.
Find a Location

I. You should have an idea of where you would like your business to be located based off of research on costs and target customers. Here is a list of resources for finding available property for your business in Butler County:

I. City of Fairfield: Contact Development Services at 513-867-5238 or development@Fairfield-city.org.

II. City of Hamilton: Contact the Economic Development Department 513-785-7070 or econdev@Hamilton-oh.gov.

III. City of Middletown: Contact the Economic Development Department at 513-425-7847 or dept_economicdevelopment@cityofmiddletown.org.

IV. City of Oxford: Contact the Director of Economic Development at 513-524-5238 or akyger@cityofoxford.org.

V. Liberty Township: Contact the Director of Economic Development, Caroline McKinney, at 513-759-7510 or cmkinney@liberty-township.com.

VI. West Chester Township, Contact Director of Community Development, Aaron Weigand, at 513-777-4212.

VII. All Other Townships: Visit the Butler County Engineer’s Office’s website for contact information.

VIII. For state assistance, visit the JobsOhio website for more information: https://www.jobsohio.com/site-selection/
I. Decide which of six business structures is right for your business based on ownership and operation techniques.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sole Proprietorship</th>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>Limited Partnership</th>
<th>Limited Liability Partnership</th>
<th>Limited Liability Company</th>
<th>C-Corporation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Form 534A</td>
<td>Form 535</td>
<td>Form 531A</td>
<td>Form 536</td>
<td>Form 533A</td>
<td>Form 532</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Fill out the appropriate paperwork with the Ohio Secretary of State – necessary for all business structures.

III. When you register as a business, the chosen name of your company will also be secured.

I. Trade name: Filing prevents any other business from registering under the same name and new businesses must obtain permission of existing business to use the name.

II. Fictitious name: Registered with the Ohio Secretary of State, but anyone may use it.

For help choosing a business structure, refer to page six of Ohio Business Gateway’s Business Startup Guide.
Licensing

I. Any person or business that makes retail sales of tangible property or taxable services should purchase a Vendor’s License from the Butler County Auditor’s Office or through Ohio Business Gateway.

II. There are two types of Vendor’s Licenses:
   I. Regular County Vendor’s License: Required when selling a product at a permanent location.
   II. Transient Vendor’s License: Required for any vendor that does not maintain a fixed business location.

III. Ohio Business Gateway has a comprehensive list of specific licenses and permits for many business types.
   I. Any business that is a food service or food product preparation business must obtain a license from the Butler County Health Department.
Taxes

I. Federal: There are five general types of federal business taxes: income tax, estimated taxes, self-employment tax, employment taxes, and excise tax. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provides further details for how and when to file these taxes, and which of the five are applicable to your business.

   I. Once registered with the IRS, you will receive your Federal Employment Identification Number (EIN).

II. Ohio: Register with the Ohio Department of Taxation

   I. Sole proprietors must pay Ohio income tax on their Ohio net earnings (income after expenses), partners must pay Ohio income tax on their share of the partnership’s net earnings, and corporations must pay Ohio income tax on their net earnings (the shareholders must pay Ohio income tax on their dividends).

   II. Ohio provides a Small Business Tax Training Program that provides step-by-step instructions for complying with state tax laws.

III. Commercial Activities Tax (CAT): If your business makes $150,000 or greater in taxable gross receipts within a calendar year, you must file a Commercial Activities Tax.
Employees and Zoning

I. Employers with one or more employees must obtain an Employee Identification Number (EIN) through the IRS.
   I. The EIN is for tax administration purposes and is required in the process of withholding taxes.
   II. Employers must have an EIN to open a company bank account.

II. Employers with one or more employees must apply for Worker’s Compensation Coverage as well as register as an employer with the Ohio Job and Family Services Office.
   I. If you make an employer account through the Ohio Business Gateway when registering with the Ohio Department of Taxation, you can apply for Worker’s Compensation and file all Ohio taxes at once with them.

III. Businesses should contact the Butler County Department of Development to obtain commercial permits. Townships require separate zoning permits.
   I. After receiving zoning approval, a business must obtain a driveway permit, address or parcel slip, building permit, health release, electric, HVAC, and fire permit, water and sewer permit, soil and water conversation permit, and a certificate of occupancy.
   II. See the Butler County Commercial Permit Procedures for permits contact information.
Specific Location Assistance

I. Fairfield: Fairfield Chamber of Commerce provides many tools to help Fairfield businesses grow – from free advertising to leadership classes to bimonthly networking events.

II. Hamilton: The City of Hamilton provides design assistance for small businesses in Hamilton and the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce provides microloans up to $10,000 with low interest to businesses in the City of Hamilton.

III. Middletown: Downtown Middletown Inc. is a nonprofit organization that offers a microloan of up to $10,000 for new and existing businesses in Middletown. The Chamber of Commerce serving Middletown, Monroe, and Trenton created the Regional Business Catalyst to act as a resource for small business challenges.

IV. Oxford: The City of Oxford works with the state of Ohio to provide entrepreneurs in the Oxford area a Business Revolving Loan Fund of up to $50,000. The Oxford Chamber of Commerce provides steps to create a business in Oxford and a platform to market and promote businesses.
Nonprofit Considerations

I. Nonprofits are organizations formed for charitable, educational, religious, scientific, community development, or other socially beneficial purposes.

II. When opening a nonprofit corporation, there are additional steps:
   I. Fill out Form 532B with the Ohio Secretary of State.
   II. Visit IRS.gov to apply to become a tax exempt organization.
   III. Register with the Ohio Attorney General's Office if the entity is a charitable organization.
   IV. Apply for a nonprofit postal permit.

III. Ohio Secretary of State created a guide specifically for starting nonprofit organizations in Ohio.
Extra Resources

National:

I. **Small Business Administration (SBA):** SBA is a U.S. government agency that gives small business owners free business counseling and access to a wide array of business loans.

II. **SCORE:** An official partner of SBA, SCORE will pair small business owners with a “mentor” to begin or grow a business. SCORE also holds free workshops geared toward new entrepreneurs.

Ohio:

I. **Jobs Ohio:** Browse available land sites in Ohio, explore Ohio’s workforce, discover incentives for new and existing businesses in Ohio, and find new available hires.

II. **Business Ohio Gateway:** View the extensive startup guide and financial guide, with topics like how to choose a business structure, the correct tax form procedure, and guides to hiring employees.
   - Get information on types of filings/payments required by the State of Ohio.

Butler County:

I. **SBDC Butler County:** Register to receive counseling and attend training courses. With SBDC Butler County, you may also submit a business plan to get live feedback.