Business Launch Checklist

This checklist lists the legal requirements for establishing a business. In addition to the items on this list, we always suggest having a business plan, consulting an attorney and/or an accountant regarding the best legal structure for you, and consulting an insurance agent regarding liability coverage. Come to our JumpStart or FastTrac classes to learn more!

- Confirm your business name is available
  - PA: Search your exact business name on corporations.pa.gov
  - NJ: Visit the State of NJ Business Name Search
- Confirm your professional licensure is current
- Apply for a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)
  - Often called an EIN, this is sort of like the Social Security Number for your business. You’ll use this same number as your Tax ID
  - Free to apply at irs.gov (look out for fake sites; if there’s a fee, it’s not the IRS!)
  - Though we recommend it for every business owner, not everyone needs an EIN; you need one if you plan to have employees or operate as a corporation or partnership. Consult the IRS website for details
- Register your business structure with your state
  - Sole proprietorships (and, in NJ, general partnerships) are exempt
  - PA: go to corporations.pa.gov. There is a filing fee.
  - NJ: Go to the State of NJ Business Formation site and follow prompts based on your legal structure. The filing fee will be $125.
- Register your fictitious name with the state
  - Unnecessary if you are operating under your legal name (either the legal business name you registered or your first and last name)
  - You register your fictitious on the same state system you used to confirm your legal name’s availability
- Register your business with your city or county
  - Requirements will depend on where you’re located; check our resources page for links to other counties.
  - In Philadelphia, every business owner needs a Business Income and Receipts Tax (BIRT) ID and a Commercial Activity License; additional licenses may apply. Consult business.phila.gov for details
- Register for state tax and employer accounts
  - PA: Go to pa100.state.pa.us to register for a PA business tax account
  - NJ: You must file Form NJ-REG to be registered for tax and employer purposes. Online registration is available.
- Check for any special registrations that may apply
  - Research on your state, county and city websites for any additional steps specific to your industry or business type
- Check with your local municipality concerning taxes, local licenses and permits, zoning requirements, and any other regulations
  - In Philadelphia, go to business.phila.gov and click “Launch” for a guide to specific licenses.

Websites to know:

- Business.Phila.gov
  - Philadelphia’s business page
- Business.PA.gov
  - Pennsylvania’s business page
- Corporations.PA.gov
  - Pennsylvania filing site
- Dos.pa.gov
  - PA Dept. of State site
- irs.gov
  - Official IRS Website
- NJ.gov/njbusiness/registration
  - Guide to registering your business in New Jersey
- Pa100.state.pa.us
  - In PA, use this site to register for business tax accounts
- Wbecast.com
  - Our website’s “Resources” page has links to all of the above, as well as links for surrounding counties. If you need more guidance, call us!