

# BUSINESS START-UP **QUICK GUIDE**

CITY OF LAKELAND • BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



## AVOID THESE COMMON MISTAKES:

### UNDERCAPITALIZATION

Not having enough start-up money and operating without a budget.

### PICKING THE WRONG TEAM

Choosing a partner, an accountant, an engineer, a contractor or an employee is often the most important decision you can make for your business. Choosing the wrong team is the single costliest error an entrepreneur can make.

### JUMPING AHEAD

Never sign a lease or agree to purchase a property without fully understanding the scope of work needed to complete your project.

### DEVIATING FROM YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

Develop a business plan and stick to it, a well-developed business plan should be the backbone of every new business.

### AVOIDING NEW TECHNOLOGY

As small business owners, technology can provide new opportunities, help us do our work more efficiently and even help us save money.

### BEING AFRAID OF MARKETING

There are no set rules when it comes to marketing; the best type of marketing for you depends on your business and your target audience. The mistake is assuming you don't need to market and that business will come to you.

## CONTACT US

Lakeland Planning and Zoning:  
863-834-6011

Lakeland Building Inspection Division:  
863-834-6012

Lakeland Business Tax Office:  
863-834-6227

[www.lakelandgov.net](http://www.lakelandgov.net)

FOR TRAINING AND  
ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE:

**Catapult**<sup>TM</sup>

863-940-9660

[www.catapultlakeland.com](http://www.catapultlakeland.com)  
[catapultlakeland@gmail.com](mailto:catapultlakeland@gmail.com)

**SCORE**

FOR THE LIFE OF YOUR BUSINESS

863-284-5607

[www.centralflorida.score.org](http://www.centralflorida.score.org)

## SEVEN STEPS TO SUCCESS:

### WRITE A BUSINESS PLAN

- How to incorporate, securing start-up financing, marketing plans, pricing strategies, budgets and money management are just a few of the areas you'll want to have figured out before committing to a business idea.
- SCORE can help guide you through the entire process from "what is a business plan" through "crafting a business plan."
- Already have a comprehensive Business plan? Great! Catapult and/or Small Business Development Council can assist you in implementing your plan further!

### IDENTIFYING THE PERFECT LOCATION FOR YOUR BUSINESS

- There are many factors to consider such as proximity to customers, similar business clusters, parking needs, proper zoning, and tenant buildout to name a few.
- Before signing a lease or purchasing a property we strongly urge you to contact a City of Lakeland Planner at 834-6011 to discuss your potential location and business type.
- All Businesses are unique and each potential location may have different needs based on zoning, previous use, scope of work and the improvements you are proposing.

### CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE TEAM TO COMPLETE YOUR SCOPE OF WORK

- Once you've identified the best location and consulted with the City, pick your team of professionals to complete any necessary work.
- Time is money, and it is often better to hire the appropriate professionals from the start. Picking a qualified team can get your work done right, the first time.

### FINANCE YOUR BUSINESS

- Debt & Equity Financing
- Small Business Grants & Development Incentives
- First Time small Business loan
- Small Business Administration Loans

### DETERMINE YOUR LEGAL STRUCTURE

- Sole Proprietorship
- Limited Liability Company
- Partnership
- Corporation

### REGISTER YOUR BUSINESS FOR STATE AND LOCAL TAXES AND GET YOUR FEDERAL TAX ID NUMBER

- Register Business name- [Sunbiz.org](http://Sunbiz.org)
- Tax ID#- [irs.gov](http://irs.gov)
- State Tax- [dor.myflorida.com](http://dor.myflorida.com)

### Obtain Business Licenses & Permits

- Alcohol & Tobacco License
- Building Permits
- Sign Permits
- Business Tax License

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

### WHAT REQUIRES A BUILDING PERMIT?

A building permit is required if you plan to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, demolish or change the occupancy or use of a building or structure.

### WHAT IS A CHANGE OF USE?

If your business differs from the previous occupant, it may trigger a change of use. More information on changes of use can be found from the City's Planning Department.

### WHY IS THE ZONING CLASSIFICATION SO IMPORTANT?

Zoning determines such things as the specific land uses that are permitted, and dimensional standards such as the minimum lot size, minimum building setback and maximum building height.

### DO I NEED A SIGN PERMIT?

Yes, your business will need a sign permit for new permanent signs or for changing the face of existing signs