

THE STARTUP'S 10 Steps to Start Your Business

A guide to starting your business in San Diego with links to information that can help you with each step.



01. Research

Conduct market research to find a target audience for your business. Ask for feedback from potential customers.

- **Data Axle-Reference Solutions*** - Reference Solutions is a powerful online reference and research tool providing library cardholders instant, real-time access to accurate, in-depth information on U.S. businesses (59 million) and U.S. residents (310 million). *SDPL Library card required for access.
- **Gale Business: Insights*** - Research, analyze and compare companies and industries with industry rankings, profiles, market share data, company histories and more. *SDPL Library card required for access.
- **Demographics: San Diego** - Information on the region provided by San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).
- **U.S. Small Business Administration: Market Research and Competitive Analysis** - Provides information on finding customers for your business, as well as information on market data and trends.



02. Plan

Create your business plan. Outline your goals, and actions you need to take to start your business.

- **Gale: Business Plans Handbook*** - Collections of actual business plans compiled by, and aimed at, entrepreneurs seeking funding for small businesses in North America. *SDPL Library card required for access.
- **Gale Business: Entrepreneurship*** - Learn how to start, finance, or manage your small business. Resources include sample business plans, how-to guides, articles, and websites. *SDPL Library card required for access.
- **U.S. Small Business Administration: Write Your Business Plan** - Learn how to write your own business plan. They serve as the foundation for your own business. Sample business plan templates are given to help you get started.



03. Fund

Determine how much outside funding you need. Find investors or lending institutions to secure funding for your business.

- **San Diego Economic Development Financial Resources** - Financial resources for San Diego.
- **Want to get an online loan?** - Important questions to ask about online loans.
- **U.S. Small Business Administration: Fund Your Business** - Information to fund your small business, such as crowdsourcing, investing programs, or loans.



04. Location

Find out what zoning permits are needed. Starting a home or online business? See if there are special requirements.

- Review the San Diego **Zoning** map and reach out to the Economic Development Department sdbusiness@sandiego.gov to get started with support, zoning, and site permit needs.
- For business applications in San Diego, the **Business Activity** type determines location and startup requirements. Some types are regulated and need permits. Those can be found on the **Business Tax Certificate** application.
- **Home Occupation** - Regulations to follow for a home business in San Diego.



05. Legal Structure

Establish a legal structure for your business. Will it be a non-profit, for-profit, limited liability company, partnership, or sole proprietor?

- **California Office of Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA)** - CalOSBA provides information for new startups and established small business and helps them access capital, markets, and networks in California.
- **SCORE** - Face-to-face or online advice from volunteer business mentors that help small businesses with their goals.
- **U.S. Small Business Administration: Choose a Business Structure** - Review and compare common business structures.



06. Business Name

Determine if you will be using a Fictitious Business Name (FBN) for your business or an owner's name, e.g., Jake Smith Plumbing.

- File for a Fictitious Business Name in **San Diego County**.
- **U.S. Small Business Administration: Choose Your Business Name** - Information to help you choose the right name that fits your business.



07. Register

Registering your business name with the USPTO will protect it and give you legal rights to its trademark.

- If you want to trademark your business, brand or product, file with the **United States Patent and Trademark office (USPTO)**.
- **The Patent and Trademark Research Center (PTRC)** at the Central Library can help you start your search.



08. Tax IDs

Get state & federal tax IDs. An Employer Identification Number (EIN) identifies your business for tax purposes.

- **Employer Identification Number (EIN)** - Apply for an EIN on the Internal Revenue Service website.
- **California Business Taxes & Fees** - Information on the different tax & fee programs in California.



09. Licenses /Permits

Determine what specific business licenses and permits you need to open your business.

- **California Permits & Licenses** - Information on different permits & licenses in California
- **CalGold** - This website assists you in finding appropriate permit information for your business. It also provides contact information for the various agencies that administer & issue these permits.



10. Local License

Starting a business in San Diego requires a Business Tax Certificate, which is the same thing as a business license.

- **Apply for a Business Tax Certificate in San Diego** - The city issues these instead of business licenses.
- **Business License Information: San Diego County** - Includes information for cities and communities, in unincorporated areas, within San Diego County.
- **Apply for a Business License in California** - Information about license registration in California.