

HOW TO START A BUSINESS IN HARRIS COUNTY

START ► RESEARCH



Determine the feasibility of YOUR business idea

PUT IT ON PAPER

- Create your business plan
- Details about your product/service, marketing, income & expense projections.
- Management team
- Financing

Completed business plan is the key document for starting

WHAT PROBLEM ARE YOU TRYING TO SOLVE?

- WHO is your market?
- WHO are the customers and suppliers?
- WHAT are the costs of start-up for the first 3 years?
- WHO will manage the daily operations?
- WHAT are your income requirements?
- WHAT capital is needed to open & stay in business?
 - WHERE will the capital come from?
 - HOW much will I be investing?

WHAT NEED ARE YOU GOING TO FILL?

Talk to Experts

- ☐ Economic Development
- ☐ SCORE
- ☐ SBDC

Small Business Loans

Equity Partners

Insurance

Accountant

Attorney

Banker

Templates Available

What Kind of Space?

Special Incentive Zone

- Check with local EDO's, or a local real estate agent for available properties.
- What kind of space do you need, does it need be accessible for customers?
- Are there any restrictions on operation or required permits?
- Do not assume that the existence of a similar business or past businesses at that site means your business will be acceptable.
- You may need to hire an engineering firm, architect, and secure building permits. Home-based businesses also may require permits.

Professional Engineer or Architect

Harris County Engineering Office *PERMITTING*

Special Permit?

What Does Your Business Do?

What is Your Legal Structure? Corp, LLC, Partnership...

- The best legal entity varies for each owner and each business.
- It is wise to consult with an attorney, an accountant, and/or a business advisor.
- Consider the type of business you are starting, your business and personal goals, and your personal finances when making this decision.
- For any legal structure other than sole proprietorship, register the appropriate documents with the Texas Secretary of State.

Legal & Tax Implications

Register with State

Consult Professionals

Business Type and Goals

SBA Website

Marketing

Customers & Suppliers

Revenue

Employees

Cash Flow

Review, Modify Your Business Plan

It has probably been awhile since you wrote your business plan. Has anything changed? Take time to review and make updates.

GOVERNMENT TO-DO'S

Texas State ID Number

Proposed Business Name

EIN Number

Sales Tax Permit & Exemption Certificate

Unemployment Tax

All businesses must register with the state and federal government. The Internal Revenue Service provides your Employer Identification Number (EIN), while the Texas Comptroller provides your sales tax permit.

If you are planning to have employees, you may also need to pay unemployment tax and other payroll taxes. Contact the Texas Workforce Commission.

Bring Copy of Proposed Business Name Registration

If foreign business, file Beneficial Ownership Information report to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network at U.S. Department of Treasury within 30 days of TX Secretary of State approval.

Food Services Harris County Public Health

Contractor Register with State first

Estimate Gross Sales

Double Check Deed Restrictions and Zoning

Harris County Permits, Approval, Licenses and Regulations

Contact Harris County Engineering Department to satisfy local floodplain management, on-site sewage facilities, driveways, and signs.

Property & Liability Insurance

Workers' Comp

Checking Account

Licenses

Register with Government

Lease or Buy a Building

Prepare To Open

Inventory Employees Equipment Marketing

Ribbon Cutting OPEN

FINISH THE PAPERWORK

Now is the time to finalize all documents from insurance, banking, real estate, government registrations, special licenses or permits, and look at training for you or your employees.

CHECK OUT FREE or low-cost training offered by SBDC, SCORE & others.

The State of Texas does not require a general business license, but you may be required to have a license or permit depending on the type of service, or products associated with your business. Specific professions that require state level licenses can be found at the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR).

One Stop Shop/Business Resources - Entrepreneur's Guide to Starting A Business

- **STEP 1:** Research your idea. Talk to your **local chamber of commerce, Houston Office of Business Opportunity (832-393-0600), US Small Business Administration (Houston Office) (713-773-6500)**, or your local EDC or EDO. For Harris County Partners [click here](#) or see below.
- **STEP 2:** If you determine that your business plan is viable, then look for a location. Would you qualify for special incentives? Will you need to hire a professional architect or engineer, submit a site plan to the zoning office or obtain special permits? For Harris County permits [click here](#) (713-274-3900). For city permits, please visit [their websites](#).
- **STEP 3:** Name your business. Research websites and phonebooks for other businesses that may have a similar name to the one you are considering. Check the availability of your name on the **U.S. Patent website (800-786-9199)** to see if it has been trademarked. If you plan on Incorporating, you'll need to file with the **Texas Secretary of State (512-463-5555)** to make sure that your name is not claimed already. For Harris County Assumed Business Names searches, click on **DBA** or call **713-274-8600**.
- **STEP 4:** Depending on what type of business entity you form, you may have to register with the **Texas Secretary of State**. Some of the more common forms are Sole Proprietorship, For Profit Corporation, Professional Corporation, Professional Association, General Partnership, Limited Partnership, Limited Liability Partnership and Limited Liability Company. Foreign and out of state entities also have to file an application for registration with the **Texas Secretary of State** in order to transact business in Texas. If approved by the Secretary of State, and are a foreign business, you have 30 days to file a Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) report with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network at the U.S. Department of Treasury. Determine whether your business is a reporting company at <https://www.fincen.gov/boi>. An Assumed Name or Doing Business As (DBA) Certificate with the County Clerk in the county in which the business is located and/or will conduct business must be filed. See **Harris County Clerk's Office (713-274-8600)** for details.
- **STEP 5:** **Texas Business Organization Code** requires every business to maintain a registered agent and office in Texas. File this information with the **Texas Secretary of State**.
- **STEP 6:** Determine federal, state, and local tax obligations for your business. Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) with the **IRS (800-829-4933)**. Determine sales, use and excise taxes. Apply for a Texas sales tax permit with the **Texas Comptroller (800-531-5441 x3-0925)**. Property taxes are assessed by the **Harris County Appraisal District (713-957-7800)** and collected by the **Harris County Tax Office (713-274-8000)**. The **Texas Workforce Commission (512-463-2222)** requires most employers to pay an Unemployment Insurance tax. More information can be found at the TWC website.
- **STEP 7:** The state of Texas does not require a general business license, but you may be required to have a license or permit depending on the type of service, or products associated with your business. Specific professions that require state level licenses can be found at the **Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) (512-463-6599)**. Also contact your county and city to determine if there are any additional requirements.

The list below is intended for your convenience. Other resources may be available in the region.

[Texas Secretary of State \(512-463-5555\)](#) (registering businesses formed in Texas or outside of Texas)
[Texas Comptroller's Office \(888-334-4112\)](#) (State Sales Tax ID and other useful information)
[Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation \(512-463-6599 or 800-803-9202\)](#) (licensing requirements)
[Texas Workforce Commission \(512-463-2222 or 800-939-6631\)](#) (workforce information & Employer's ID)
[Texas Workers' Compensation & Texas Department of Insurance \(800-578-4677 or 512-676-6000\)](#)
[Texas Commission on Environmental Quality \(512-239-1000 or 800-447-2827\)](#) (environmental & permitting)
[Texas.gov](#) (information about Texas and links to all State of Texas Departments)
[Office of the Texas Governor \(800-843-5789\)](#) - For more information on business resources in Texas, please visit <https://gov.texas.gov/business>
[US Export Assistance \(800-USA-TRAD \(872-8723\)\)](#) (trade counseling and information)
[US Small Business Administration, Houston District \(713-773-6500\)](#)
[US Patent and Trademark Office \(800-786-9199\)](#)
[Internal Revenue Service \(Businesses 800-829-4933\)](#) (Federal Tax ID and other tax matters)
[US Census Bureau \(800-923-8282\)](#)
[US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics \(202-691-5200 or 972-850-4800\)](#)
[US Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Houston Area \(936-760-3800\)](#)
[Greater Houston Partnership \(713-844-3600\)](#)
[Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership \(832-536-3255\)](#)
[Baytown-West Chambers County Economic Development Foundation \(281-420-2961\)](#)
[Economic Alliance-Houston Port Region \(281-476-9176\)](#)
[Katy Area Economic Development Council \(281-396-2200\)](#)
[Harris County \(713-755-5000\)](#)
[Harris County Office of the County Engineer \(713-274-3600\)](#) (permits)
[Harris County Tax Office \(713-274-8000\)](#)
[Harris County Clerk's Office \(713-274-8600\)](#)
[Harris Central Appraisal District \(713-957-7800\)](#)
[Harris County Industrial Development Corporation \(713-775-8971\)](#)
[Port of Houston \(713-670-2400\)](#)
[METRO - Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County \(713-635-4000\)](#)
[CenterPoint Energy, Business Programs \(713-659-2111 or 800-752-8036\)](#)
[Houston Office of Business Opportunity \(832-393-0600\)](#)
[Houston Airports](#) - <http://www.fly2houston.com/>

If the business is operated in a home, check the deed restrictions and contact the homeowners association.

If the business is located in a city or its jurisdiction, contact the city for possible permit requirements.

Contact the [Harris County Public Health Department \(713-439-6000\)](#) for a business involved in food preparation or handling.

Contact the [Harris County Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity, Economic Development Division](#) at 713-274-1400 or EconDev@harriscountytexas.gov or scan here:

