



Establish & Grow A Small Business

A checklist for entrepreneurs and business owners exploring how to start a business in the Muskego, Big Bend, Town of Norway, and Wind Lake areas.

[Visit the Small Business Administration \(SBA\) Website for more information.](#)

The Why: Define Your Purpose and Community Impact

- Clarify Your Motivation**
Ask yourself, "Why do I want to start a business?" Is it to fill a gap in your community, pursue a passion, or achieve financial independence?
- Define Your Unique Value**
What makes your business different? How will it serve your community or solve a problem? Test the idea. Gather opinions from consumers in the target market and feedback from friends/acquaintances.
- Consider Community Impact**
List the ways your business can contribute to local well-being by creating jobs, supporting local causes, or offering needed services.
- Create Brand Identity**
Your "why" should inform your mission statement and brand story while connecting you with customers and partners on a deeper level. Consider and select a business name. Search the [trademark site](#) to ensure yours is original. Create first drafts of mission statement, values, and branding (colors, logo, font).

The How: Identify Essential Resources

Business Plan

- Plan Your Purpose**
A business plan is your roadmap and is often required when applying for financial resources. Visit the Small Business Administration and learn how to [write a great plan](#).
- Organize Its Key Sections**
Consider these suggested topics as you write a business plan.

Company Description	Financial Projections	Organization & Management
Executive Summary	Market Analysis	Products & Services
Funding Requests	Marketing & Sales	
- Review and Update**
Treat this plan as a living document. Review and revise regularly as your business evolves.

Legal Needs

- Select Your Business Structure**
Choose the correct legal structure based on liability, tax, and management needs. Consult a legal expert for guidance. View the Informative Article ["Business Structure: How to Choose the Right One"](#). Visit www.sba.gov and search "Choose a Business Structure" for more details.
- Register Your Business**
Register your business name with the state. ([WI Department of Revenue's Online Registration Page](#)) Obtain an [Employer Identification Number \(EIN\)](#) from the IRS. Secure required local permits or licenses from your municipality: [Muskego](#) [Big Bend](#) [Town of Norway/Wind Lake](#)
- Understand Compliance Requirements**
Research and understand zoning laws, health and safety regulations, and industry-specific requirements.
- Prepare Contracts and Policies**
Draft contracts for clients, vendors, and employees. Establish internal policies for operations, privacy, and data protection.



Financial Needs

- Create Financial Accounts**
Open business banking accounts. Avoid mixing personal and business funds.
- Prepare A Budget**
Create a detailed budget that covers startup costs, ongoing expenses, and revenue projections.
- Research Funding Sources**
Explore funding options such as personal savings, community grants, small business loans, or investors.
- Select Systems for Accounting, Sales, and Merchant Services**
Chose systems to record and maintain business revenue and expenses, accounts payable, customer base, and credit card services. Select a CPA or financial advisor for direction with cash flow management, financial projections, tax planning, and optimizing your business structure for tax efficiency and long-term growth.

Protection

- Insurance**
Assess risks and purchase appropriate coverage such as general liability property, workers' comp, key person, Director's & Omissions, and cyber insurance.
- Protect Intellectual Property**
Protect your brand, inventions, and creative works with trademarks, copyrights, or patents as needed.
- Create Contingency Plans**
Build financial reserves. Have a plan for emergencies or unexpected expenses.
- Prepare Succession Plans**
Consider the consequences if you are unavailable for a time or need to sell the business. Small businesses need a succession plan to avoid future challenges.

The What & Where: Brand Exposure

Direct Ways

- Invest in Professional Branding and Signage**
Create and leverage a logo, business cards, and consistent visual identity across all marketing materials. Contact your municipality for details on signage. Install business signage per ordinances.
- Build an Online Presence**
Purchase a domain. Build a professional website that allows customers to see your mission statement, logo, business branding, and products/services. Your website is your Digital Front Door. Make it welcoming, easy to navigate, and provide a way to collect customer information.
Claim your Google Business Profile and Apple Business Connect. Set up social media accounts. Consider building a business app.
- Promote Your Business through Events**
Offer grand opening discounts. Host workshops. Participate in local markets to attract attention.
- Share Your Story**
Pitch your business to local media. Write guest articles for community newsletters. Use storytelling to connect with your audience.

Indirect Ways

- Engage with Community**
Attend, sponsor, or volunteer at local fairs, festivals, and charity events to meet potential customers. Hire and build a strong team who focuses on customer relationships.
- Join Your Local Chamber of Commerce**
Leverage the Chamber's credibility, directories, events, networking, promotions, and resources to put your business in front of the community.
- Partner with Other Businesses**
Cross-promote with complementary businesses to expand your reach.
- Support Local Initiatives**
Sponsor youth sports. Donate to local causes. Participate in community projects to build goodwill and brand awareness.

The Who & When: Knowing Your Business Needs

- Participate in Business Education**
Employers and Employees should attend workshops, webinars, and training sessions on business topics.
- Find Mentors**
Seek experienced business owners who are willing mentors. Join a formal mentorship program through the local Chamber of Commerce or SCORE chapter.
- Peer Learning**
Join business roundtables, industry associations, or networking groups to share experiences and learn from other business people.
- Stay Informed**
Know when important business topics are the buzz. Subscribe to news groups to learn when local regulations, industry trends, or customer expectations are affecting the business climate.

What Next? Steps for Growing Your Business

Congratulations on starting your business! Now explore ways to grow your business.

- Connect with a Business Advisor**
Find an experienced advisor or join a business network such as your local Chamber of Commerce. Advisors provide guidance, introduce resources, and help you avoid common pitfalls.
- Establish Ongoing Financial and Strategic Management**
 - Connect with a financial advisor to optimize investments, manage risks, and plan for growth.
 - Regularly review your budget, cash flow, and financial projections.
 - Prepare for tax season and ensure compliance with all regulations.
 - Consider succession planning and exit strategies. Do this early in your business venture as most small business lack a documented plan.
- Grow through Community Engagement**
 - Continue building your brand through community involvement and partnerships.
 - Attend local workshops and stay informed on industry trends.
 - Use customer feedback for product and service improvement strategies.
- Apply the Top 10 Local Action Steps**
See opposite page for these local action steps. Use consistently to guide and drive growth in your business activities.
- Visit the Muskego Chamber's Small Business Toolkit Website**
Scan the QR code or visit www.muskego.org/SBCToolkit for up-to-date resource links, a downloadable version of this toolkit, and area information.

Thank you for allowing the Muskego Chamber's Small Business Council help your business!



Disclaimer: The Muskego Chamber of Commerce offers this checklist to guide entrepreneurs and business owners through the key steps of starting and growing a business. We encourage you to consult with appropriate legal, financial, and industry-specific professionals to make informed decisions. This resource is for informational purposes only and not intended as legal or financial advice.



Top 10 Local Action Steps for A New Business

Are you an entrepreneur who recently started a new business?
Consider these ten actions steps to help your business grow.

- 1. Engage with Local Business Directories and Networking Groups**
 Use available opportunities through online business groups, the local Chamber of Commerce, and industry specific associations to leverage engagement and networking with potential clients.
- 2. Establish and Grow Relationships with Local Suppliers**
 Use your networking contacts to explore partnerships and to collaborate with local businesses who may offer products or services used by your business.
- 3. Participate in Local Marketing Campaigns**
 Explore joint marketing opportunities with local entities such as other businesses, local school district, Chamber of Commerce, and nonprofit service organizations.
- 4. Use Social Media Marketing for Business Awareness**
 - Research and create industry-specific social media marketing campaigns.
 - Consider hiring a social media marketing employee or firm to handle business marketing.
 - Schedule marketing posts and campaigns across your business social media platforms.
 - Use social media analytics to track marketing efforts. Adjust marketing as needed.
- 5. Volunteer in the Community**
 Volunteer through community or business organizations. Use volunteerism as a business awareness effort and to give back to the community rather than a revenue driver.
- 6. Participate in Community Events**
 Explore opportunities to sponsor, serve on committees, or participate as a vendor at community events, fairs, and festivals.
- 7. Solicit and Review Feedback**
 - Select feedback tools such as online reviews, customer surveys, and coupon tracking.
 - Solicit feedback from initial customer and vendor base. Use this to refine your business activities.
 - Promote ongoing feedback through in person and online methods.
- 8. Be Active on Local Social Media Groups**
 Join local social media groups and actively engage through posts, shares, and comments. Become a community leader that drives positive and complimentary conversations across social media.
- 9. Embrace and Adapt Challenges**
 Learn from and adjust your business activities as you encounter growth and challenges. Use such moments to assess what areas are important versus those to shed.
- 10. Review and Update Your Business Activities**
 - Plan monthly, quarterly, and annual reviews across all business activities.
 - Consider customer and vendor feedback to refine your products and services.
 - Adjust and fine tune your activities.

