



[www.theenterprisecenter.com](http://www.theenterprisecenter.com)

**THE ENTERPRISE CENTER**  
BUSINESS | CAPITAL | COMMUNITY



*Creative*

# Mind Your Business

Entrepreneurial Toolkit



This toolkit was created thanks to generous funding from the  
PA Council on the Arts

# Let's get started!



As an artist, it's very likely that your passion to create inspired you to launch your business. Of course, operating a creative business brings with it different challenges than art for art's sake: licenses, taxes, fees, and business planning that has to factor in revenue generation in addition to your baseline goal of delighting and inspiring your audience and customers.

Here at The Enterprise Center, creativity and innovation are core values at the heart of everything we do, but so are sound business operations practices that position every entrepreneur and small business owner to grow and flourish. Not only can you create art, but you can create wealth and jobs: **the Arts sector generates over \$27 billion in economic impact in the state of Pennsylvania.**

We are excited to provide this Entrepreneurial Toolkit to Pennsylvania's Arts businesses. Ready to grow your slice of the \$27 billion? Then let's get started!

- The Enterprise Center Team

# CONTENTS



<b>Setting Up Your Business</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Funding Your Business</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Growing Your Business</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Marketing Your Business</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Accounting for Your Business</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Legal Considerations for Your Business</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Additional Resources for Creative Businesses</b>	<b>17</b>

# SETTING UP YOUR BUSINESS

Whether you've already leapt headfirst into the world of entrepreneurship or you're dipping your toes in the water, here's a checklist of administrative tasks you'll want to complete to set your business up for success, protect your intellectual property, and comply with local, state, and federal regulations.

## WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

Not only should you complete a **business plan** before you formally establish the business, but you should also periodically revisit it to make sure that the information is up to date and adjust goals and action steps as needed. [Click here](#) for a business planning resource.

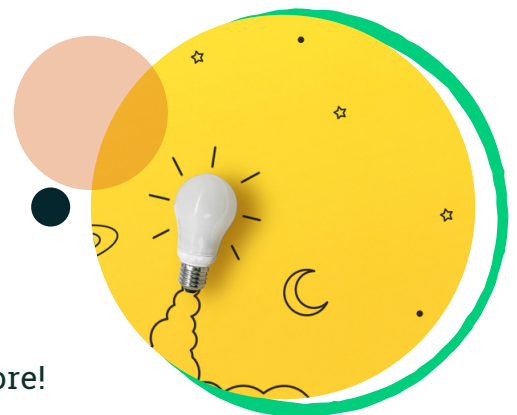
If this is your first time completing a business plan, you may also find it helpful to complete a [Business Model Canvas](#) prior to drafting the full plan.

## PREPARE FOR LAUNCH

[US SBA Guide to Launching Your Business](#)

Topics Include:

- Determining Your Business Structure
- Naming Your Business
- Overview for licenses you may need
- Registering Your Business as a Legal Entity, and more!



# SETTING UP YOUR BUSINESS (Continued)



## SPACE

If your creative business requires you to rent studio space, maker space, or your own retail space, you can use this free [US Census tool](#) to help determine the potential consumer market for your business.

Weigh the following factors when choosing a space:

- **Resources** - Does the space provide business incubation or acceleration support, or tools and equipment for tenants? Does the town or city that you are considering offer grants supports for artistic businesses?
- **Community** - Does the studio space or municipality have a community that can help you to reach your goals, either through networking, collaboration, or joining a thriving arts scene?
- **Rent & Utilities** - Before you sign a lease, examine your profit and loss statement to ensure that your savings and business revenue can cover the cost of rent, utilities, and any other fees that may be associated with the space, such as membership fees, business district fees, etc. [Click here](#) for a free profit and loss form template.

# FUNDING YOUR BUSINESS

While the starving artist ideal may sound romantic, it is not as fun in practice. Whether you need capital for startup, growth, equipment, or operating expenses, you have plenty of options!

## CROWDFUNDING

If you already have a large existing network of friends, family, customers, and supporters, crowdfunding can be a great option to raise funds for your business.

Here are three of the most popular business crowdfunding sites:

- [Kiva](#) - Interest-free crowdfunded loans
- [GoFundMe](#) - Platform is more geared to personal causes, but, unlike Kickstarter there is no platform fee
- [Kickstarter](#) - More tailored to creative projects than GoFundMe, but it has a 5% platform fee

## GRANTS

The biggest advantage of grants: you (generally) do not have to pay back the money. However, although we all love grants, it may not be feasible to fund your business solely with grants: they often require a lot of time and effort to complete the application, and they may be extremely competitive and infrequently available. Still, there are grant funding opportunities! Be sure to sign up for the mailing list for your local PA Council on the Arts Partner organization: they will keep you updated on grant funding for creative businesses in your region.

Find your local partner [here](#).

You can find the latest PA Council on the Arts Grant Opportunities [here](#).



# FUNDING YOUR BUSINESS (Continued)

## LOANS



You may also be able to borrow money with interest through a bank, community-based lender, or online lender.

Generally, borrowers with existing business revenue, a solid business plan, sound financial practices, good credit, and collateral have the easiest time accessing loan capital from a **traditional financial institution** such as a bank. Consider developing a banking relationship with a lender close to you to facilitate ongoing access to loan capital as you grow your business.

If you do not have all of those pieces in place, a **loan from a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)** may be an option for you. CDFIs are mission-based lenders that are often able to offer more flexible lending options, and there are CDFIs across our state that specialize in serving underrepresented entrepreneurs, such as BIPOC-owned and women-owned businesses. Learn more about the PA-CDFI Network [here](#). Additionally, PA-CDFI Network members Bridgeway Capital & Community First Fund [offer a loan fund](#) tailored to PA's Creative Businesses.

Finally, online-only lenders such as Kabbage are an option to obtain a loan quickly and easily. However, one major downside to accessing capital from online lenders is the inability to build a long relationship with a lender to cater to your ongoing business needs.

## BUSINESS CREDIT CARD



Assuming that you can pay it off in full every month, a business credit card is a great option to help you build your business credit and potentially access rewards to save your business money. Beware carrying a balance, though: credit card interest rates can be high and quickly cancel out the benefits of rewards.

# GROWING YOUR BUSINESS

You can't buy food and pay the rent with exposure! Investing time in your sales and business development strategies will pay dividends (with actual money).

## CUSTOMERS

A lot of small business owners think that their products or art is for everyone, but targeting everyone is not only difficult, it is also likely to be ineffective. Different customers are motivated in different ways, so reserve some time to think strategically about your current and target customers: a thorough understanding of your customers will help to inform the rest of your sales strategy.

Some example questions to ask yourself:

- What is your [customer value proposition](#) that differentiates you from competitors?
- Who is currently buying your product or service or attending your performances: Where do customers live? What are some demographic characteristics? What do they do for fun? Why are they currently attending, or purchasing your product or service? What do you think would motivate them to purchase or attend more?
- Are there other groups (demographic, geographic, economic, hobby) you would like to reach to grow your revenue? Why do you think these groups are not currently customers? What do you think would prompt them to purchase or attend?
- How would you like your art or service to make customers feel?

## PRICING

Know your worth! ...But also research what your target customers are able and willing to pay. Your pricing should reflect your experience, pricing of competitors in your marketplace, and the amount of time that creating the product or performing the service requires.





# GROWING YOUR BUSINESS (Continued)

## SET SMART GOALS

Before deciding how and where you would like to sell your products, performances, or services, be sure to set sustainable sales and profit goals that take costs such as overhead, commissions, and materials into account. A SMART goal is **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely**.

## SELL, SELL, SELL!

Once you've established who your target customers are, how much you would like to charge them for your art, and how much money you need to make to grow and sustain your business, the next step is to get out in front of potential customers.

### Physical products:

- **E-Commerce**- Selling online using your own website or an existing marketplace such as [Society6](#), Etsy, or Amazon is one relatively inexpensive way to sell your art without the overhead of a brick-and-mortar.
- **Vendor fairs**- Research vendor fairs and vending opportunities in your area.
- **Consignment**- You may be able to sell in local galleries, boutiques, or other physical spaces on a consignment basis
- **Brick and mortar** - Options for brick-and-mortar, as previously-discussed, include renting space in a marketplace or vending hall or renting or purchasing a physical storefront. Before committing to rent or purchase space, be sure to do a financial analysis to make sure it is the right move for your business.



# GROWING YOUR BUSINESS (Continued)

## Services & Performance-based businesses:

- **Website**- A website that showcases your services or performances, pricing, and customer testimonials is a great way to reach potential customers.
- **Service Marketplaces**- Sites such as Fiverr and Upwork will allow customers to find you when you are just starting out
- **Local vendor registries**- If relevant, register as a vendor with local, regional, and national government entities, organizations, and universities

## POWER IN NUMBERS

Joining professional organizations can introduce you to potential customers and collaborators through networking events and network directories as well as signal dedication to your craft when you list your membership on your resume. Professional organizations will also keep you informed on industry trends and potential opportunities for you to access funding, increase your expertise, and grow your business.

However, be strategic when deciding which networks to join: if possible, reach out to existing network members to gauge if a given organization is the right fit, as memberships can be costly.



# MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS



To cut through the noise and distractions of everyday life, an in-depth marketing strategy is critical. Before you embark on building out any marketing components, we highly recommend that you complete a marketing plan to serve as a foundation to guide your marketing strategy. (This [Free Marketing Plan Template from Hubspot](#) is one option.) Next, we'll provide a brief overview of some resources and tools that you can access implement that strategy. With your brand and digital presence in place and a solid game plan for reaching your potential customers, you'll be well on your way to generating additional leads and customers for your business.

# MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS (Continued)

## BRAND YOURSELF

To stay top of mind for your clients/customers, you need to have a strong, memorable brand.

Core components to your brand identity are: who you are, what inspires you to create, and what your business offers, as well as what makes you special as a creative. Refer to [this article](#) on branding components if you need help thinking through your brand.

### Brand Kit:

Your brand should have a cohesive, consistent visual identity: be sure that colors and fonts are consistent throughout your marketing materials.

When designing a logo (or working with a designer to create one), remember that bold and simple logos are easier to incorporate into other visual assets that you produce. Be sure to have greyscale, white, and different orientations of your logo so that you can use it in a variety of contexts.

This [free brand kit generator from Hubspot](#) is helpful for experimenting with different palettes and logo styles.



# MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS (Continued)

## DIGITAL MARKETING



### Website:

While social media is a great, low-barrier-to-entry place to potentially reach your audience, you should first start with a clean, professional looking website based on your brand kit. In addition to serving as a platform to showcase your portfolio/services, the website should also include your bio as well as your business' mission and brand promise.

For creatives who do not have a budget to hire a professional web designer, [Wix](#) has free/low cost site hosting options for a website without e-commerce, and [Shopify](#) and [Squarespace](#) have relatively easy to use e-commerce site templates. [Eventbrite](#) can be used inexpensively for ticketed performances and provides the option to pay to promote your event within the site.

If you do hire a developer to create a more robust site hosted on a platform such as Wordpress, be sure to budget money for maintaining the site and updating security plug-ins on an ongoing basis: you do not want to lose your investment to cyberattacks!

Once your site is built, be sure to update it frequently with content that may be of interest to your audience:

- New products/services
- Events where you will be vending or performing
- A blog

Keeping your site fresh and updated helps to boost your rankings in Google search results and is one facet of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) [Here is a quick primer](#) on other ways to improve your SEO.



# MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS (Continued)

## Google Analytics:

If generating web traffic is one of the goals of your marketing plan, you should definitely utilize Google analytics to track the effectiveness of your efforts. At its most basic, Google analytics will give you a wealth of insights into your website visitors, including: traffic trends over time, the geographic location of your visitors, and the source of your traffic (organic traffic, ads, referred from social media, news articles, etc. ) [Click here](#) for step-by-step instructions for adding Google Analytics tracking to your website!

## Google Ads:

Google is the most widely used search engine: 93% of all searches are done via Google search. With paid Google ads, you can market your business through sponsored search results as well as on Youtube & across Google web partners. Google offers more simplistic ad options for novices as well as more complex customization for advanced users.

If you are a non-profit, you can also access \$10,000 in free monthly ad spend via [Google Ad Grants](#).

## Google Business Profile:

If you have a brick-and-mortar business, [claiming your Google Business profile](#) allows you to make sure that your listing is accurate, add product or performance photos & videos, and moderate inappropriate reviews. Home-based businesses can also [claim your Google Business Profile without sharing your home address](#).

# MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS (Continued)

## Social Media:

According to Pew Research, over 72% of the public uses a social media site. However, there are **many** social media sites: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, Tiktok, Snap Chat, BeReal (if you have never heard of BeReal, you're just now grasping the gravity of the situation...) If you will be creating your social media content yourself ([Canva](#) has beautiful free templates), then we recommend that you maintain an active presence (ideally, posting at least once per day) on one or two sites where your potential customers are most likely to be found. Are they watching Tiktoks all day? Glued to Instagram? Maybe they're active Facebook Group users? [Click here](#) for a high level overview of social site user demographics. If you don't already have social accounts, then create one and look around before building out your business profile. Your main objective is to see where businesses similar to yours are getting the most engagement, because that means you have plenty of potential customers on that site!

You may find that your posts on social media do not generate the traffic, leads, and customers that you would like to see. You have the option of paying to boost a post (Facebook, Instagram) or paying for traditional ads (all platforms). Additionally, influencer marketing may be an option. Before you go out and hire one of the Kardashians, we recommend looking into local [nano-influencers and micro influencers](#). Their followings are smaller, but it's likely that they have a lot of passionate, engaged users in your community, and their services are much cheaper than influencers with a larger following.

Regardless of the platforms you choose, remember to [try to stick to the 80/20 rule](#): 80% of your posts should be useful or entertaining to your audience. If you are constantly posting ads, engagement will plummet and your audience may unfollow!



# MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS (Continued)

## Email:

Email marketing allows you to reliably reach many of your customers and help build a relationship with them. If you do not already have emails for your existing clients and leads, email marketing software companies like [Mailchimp](#) and [Constant Contact](#) have code that you can cut and paste to add email subscription forms and pop-ups your website. Mailchimp is also free for up to 500 contacts. Using email marketing software has several advantages over manually emailing clients: easy scheduling, professional templates and formatting (using your brand kit, naturally), and analytics so you can see how frequently contacts are opening and clicking on your content. As most people get a large amount of email spam, we recommend that you **email clients two to three times per week** with newsletters and/or promotions: keep in touch, but not too much!

## Podcasts:

Do you love talking about your creative process, or your field or industry? Hosting your own podcast or appearing as a guest on an existing podcast is another potential way to gain exposure for your business and showcase your expertise. Here is a [quick start guide](#) if this piques your interest.

## Online Directories:

There are local, regional, and national directories where you can have your business listed, sometimes for free, sometimes at a cost. If possible, reach out to other businesses on paid directories to see if they are getting a good return on their investments.





# ACCOUNTING FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Carefully tracking your expenses and income are critical to maximizing your business profits! Even if you have or will hire a bookkeeper or CPA, a solid grasp of your business financials will aid in stewarding a healthy business as well as potentially accessing working capital, growth capital, and funding for equipment and supplies.

## ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE



The most popular accounting software is Quickbooks: we recommend the cloud-based [Quickbooks Online](#): you can access your data anywhere, and the desktop versions can be phased out over time. If Quickbooks is not in your budget just yet, there is also free online accounting software: [Wave](#).

## TRACK YOUR MARGINS



Keep those profit margins healthy! This [calculator](#) will help you calculate your margin percentages. When determining cost of goods or services, **be sure to value your time**. Something with inexpensive or free materials that requires a lot of your time may net you lower profits in the long term.

## PAY YOUR TAXES



We understand that paying taxes is probably not the most fun part about making money, but not only is it legally the right thing to do but it is also required to access most types of funding to grow your business! If you have been tracking expenses and saving your receipts, you may be able to access deductions to help you offset tax expenses. Taxes owed vary by situation: be sure to consult the [IRS guidelines](#) and consult with a tax professional.



# LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Nobody wants to wind up in court, but sometimes conflicts do arise for small business owners. Be sure to protect yourself with contracts, copyrights and trademarks.

## CONTRACTS

Although there is an up-front cost to working with a contract lawyer, if your business has employees or if it involves creating art on commission or providing services, it is wise to have a contract to protect you in case any legal disputes occur regarding the scope of work, payment terms, and timeline. Connect with your [local SBDC \(Small Business Development Center\)](#) for consultation and workshops.

## COPYRIGHTS & TRADEMARKS

We also recommend that you consult with a lawyer to ensure that your product names and slogans and unique creative works are protected from imitation, and to help you navigate any licensing agreements, should you decide to license your works to a third party for usage. Likewise, be sure to go through the proper licensing channels if you will be using another artist's copyrighted works in your own production!



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



[PA Council on the Arts](#)

[PA Council on the Arts Directory of Arts Partners: Find a Partner Near You!](#)

[PA Department of Community and Economic Development Small Business Assistance](#)

[US Small Business Administration](#)

[PA Small Business Development Centers](#)

[SCORE \(Free mentorship & workshops for entrepreneurs\)](#)

[Bridgeway Capital Creative Business Accelerator](#)

[New Kensington CDC Resource Guide](#)

[PA CDFI Network: Find a Community Lender Near You](#)

[WWW.THEENTERPRISECENTER.COM](http://WWW.THEENTERPRISECENTER.COM)



# THANK YOU!



**THE ENTERPRISE CENTER**  
BUSINESS | CAPITAL | COMMUNITY

QUESTIONS?  
BROKEN LINKS?  
PLEASE CONTACT US AT:

[INFO@THEENTERPRISECENTER.COM](mailto:INFO@THEENTERPRISECENTER.COM)



**This toolkit was created thanks to generous funding from the  
PA Council on the Arts**