

A Guide to the  
**U.S. Small Business  
Administration**





# Helping Small Businesses Succeed

Businesses of all sizes rely on CPAs for their financial expertise and knowledge of how businesses can be managed successfully and positioned for growth.

For the small business owner, there is no such thing as too much help or information. That's why the AICPA has joined the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), an independent agency of the federal government dedicated to helping Americans start, build and grow their small businesses.

As CPAs and trusted advisers assisting your clients or employer through each stage of the business life cycle, the SBA library will prove to be a valuable asset. This guide will give you an overview of its many tools and resources.



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# Resources for Start-Up Businesses

## The Planning Phase

For many small business pioneers, getting started can be the most difficult challenge. Part of the rich value you provide as a CPA is your ability to turn the overwhelming into the digestible and actionable. You also understand that planning is valuable and critical to business success. As you guide your clients or employer through the planning process, you can leverage a variety of SBA resources including an interactive business readiness assessment; free online courses and podcasts on starting a business; and FAQs on strategic planning and identifying a successful market niche.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/plan/getready>

■ <http://www.sba.gov/assessmenttool>

## Writing a Powerful Business Plan

An effective business plan is a small business owner's blueprint to success. As a CPA, you have the tactical vision to translate a great idea into a clear and well-designed plan. Through the SBA, you'll find an abundance of information on writing and getting the most out of a business plan, including step-by-step tutorials, best-practices samples and online workshops.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/plan/writeabusinessplan>



# Online Training

Regardless of what stage they are at in their business plan, small business owners can enrich their business knowledge with SBA online courses and podcasts on topics such as starting a business, business planning, management, finance and accounting, marketing and advertising, risk management and more.



<http://www.sba.gov/services/training/onlinecourses>

<http://www.sba.gov/tools/resourcelibrary/Podcasts>



## General Finance and Accounting

Small business owners need a basic familiarity with accounting and finance to successfully manage their business. You can help them understand what they need to know and simplify complex information. The SBA's online library can complement the knowledge you bring to your client or organization. It covers topics like personal and business finance, funding options, credit and borrowing, breakeven analysis, equity capital and surety bonds. There is even a calculator to help small business owners accurately gauge start-up expenses.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/start/financestartup>



## Licensing and Permits

Organizations need to understand the city, state and federal requirements of licensing their business and obtaining the necessary permits or licenses. The SBA Web site is a centralized repository of information on state and federal requirements and application procedures for essentials like Employee ID Numbers or Federal Employer Identification Numbers. It also contains FAQs on specialty concerns like exporting and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/start/getlicensesandpermits>

## Loans and Funding

There are many funding possibilities available to small business owners. As you help them understand and select the right financing blend, you can utilize information on the SBA Web site explaining the pros and cons of myriad options, including private venture capital, loans and employee trusts. The site also contains information on industry-specific financing such as pollution control loans, farm loans, international trade loans and housing loans. On a tactical level, you'll find guidelines for developing powerful loan or grant applications and tips for correcting rejected applications.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/start/financestartup>



## SBA Loan Programs

The SBA offers numerous loan programs to assist small businesses. It is important to note, however, that the SBA is primarily a guarantor of loans made by private and other institutions and does not offer loans to small businesses.

Loans include:

- 7(a) Loans: The most basic and most used type loan among SBA's business loan programs.
  - Community Express: A pilot SBA loan program that was developed in collaboration with the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) and its member organizations. It is offered to small businesses in pre-designated geographic areas serving mostly low and moderate income areas.
  - Patriot Express: A loan program for small businesses with majority ownership by veterans, active duty personnel, reservists, National Guard, or their spouses.
- CDC/504 Loan: A long-term financing tool for economic development within a community. The 504 Program provides growing businesses with long-term, fixed-rate financing for major fixed assets, such as land and buildings.
- Microloans: The Microloan Program provides very small loans to start-up, newly established, or growing small businesses. Under this program, SBA makes funds available to nonprofit community-based lenders (intermediaries) which, in turn, make loans to eligible borrowers in amounts up to a maximum of \$35,000.
- [http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/start/financestartup/SERV\\_SBA\\_LOAN\\_TOPICS](http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/start/financestartup/SERV_SBA_LOAN_TOPICS)

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# Resources for Existing Businesses

## **Business Management, Leadership, and Human Resource Tools**

To successfully run a small business, owners need specific people-management skills as well as knowledge of key business practices, like marketing. You can help your client or employer enrich their leadership skills by directing them to SBA online tools, roundtables and resources on the basics of leadership, management and marketing.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/manage>

## **Using Information Technology**

Today's competitive business climate demands that small business owners understand and use the latest technology. Simplify the learning and adoption process by taking advantage of SBA online glossaries of key terms, instructions on registering a domain and tips for getting the most out of an online business property. For those looking to use the Web as a means of revenue generation, there are resources, FAQs and guidelines for developing effective e-Commerce and online advertising. There is even an online network for finding innovation and research grant opportunities.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/manage/technology>



## Finances, Revenue Growth, and Loans

Small businesses often need additional financing to grow their operations. As you talk to your client or employer about selecting the best financing package, you can further substantiate the conversation with SBA online resources. Sample budgets, strategic plans, reports and background information can help small business owners identify factors to consider before borrowing money. Additionally, there are easy-to-follow outlines of the unique benefits and application procedures for multiple financing options including equity financing, venture capital and small business investment company loans.

- <http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/manage/financegrowth>

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## Planning a Business Exit Strategy

When business owners are ready to exit their small businesses, whether through selling, merging, or simply closing their doors, they need help. The SBA Web site features procedural walkthroughs and best practices information for planning the exit, selling a business, transferring ownership, liquidating assets, filing bankruptcy and officially closing.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/exit/planyourexit>



## Contract Opportunities

Many small business owners may be unaware of contracting opportunities with the federal government. If they are looking for new ways to expand their business, you can point them to an online overview of regulations, policies, size standards and best practices in government contracts. Additionally, there is a step-by-step process on how to prepare bids and how to register a small business for various contracting programs, including business matchmaking events and small business certification programs.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/services/contractingopportunities>

## Disaster Assistance

In the unfortunate event of a disaster, small businesses need as much help as possible. The SBA provides various types of disaster assistance loans to help small business owners get back on their feet. These include physical disaster loans, economic injury loans, military reservists' loans and home and personal property loans. Online walkthroughs offer instructions on preparing for a disaster and applying for assistance if it is needed. There also is contact information for SBA field offices, customer service center and process and disbursement center.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance>

## Laws & Regulations

Through the SBA, the Offices of Advocacy, National Ombudsman and Hearings and Appeals represent small businesses concerns. You and your clients can stay up to date with SBA reports, statistics, records, studies, and information on the latest laws and regulations affecting small businesses.

■ <http://www.sba.gov/services/lawsandregulations>



# More Small Business Resources

## U.S. Small Business Administration

### Online

If you don't find the tool you need in the resources discussed, the SBA Web site offers many other articles and tools that may cover the specific category you, your client or organization may be seeking. Visit <http://www.sba.gov>.

### Development Centers

The Office of Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) provides current and prospective small business owners with information and guidance in central and easily accessible branch locations. Visit <http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/sbdc/index.html>

### District Offices

In addition to its resource partners, the SBA operates full service district offices in every state of the country. To locate the district office closest to you, visit <http://www.sba.gov/localresources/index.html>

## SCORE

Otherwise known as Counselors to America's Small Business, SCORE is a leading source of free and confidential small business advice for entrepreneurs and a resource partner with the SBA. Learn more at [www.score.org](http://www.score.org).

## Women's Business Centers

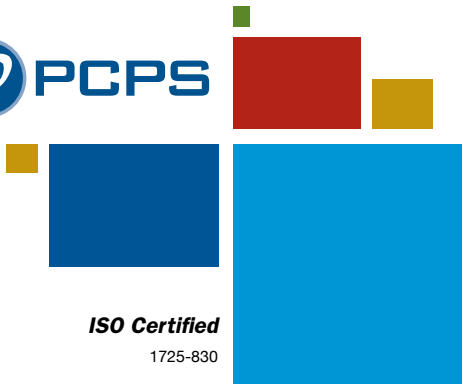
Women's Business Centers are designed to enable women to achieve their dreams and improve their communities by helping them start and run successful businesses, regardless of social or financial disadvantage, race, ethnicity or business background. To find a local center, visit [http://www.sba.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/sba\\_homepage/wbc.pdf](http://www.sba.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/sba_homepage/wbc.pdf).

## Share Your Knowledge with Us

If you encounter a great tool, article or presentation on the SBA site that you feel would benefit other CPAs, their firms or organizations, or clients, please contact us at 1-800-CPA-FIRM or e-mail us at [pcps@aicpa.org](mailto:pcps@aicpa.org).

## Small Business Owners' Frequently Asked Questions

How do I get a loan or grant? How do I get a tax identification number? What classifies a business as "small"? How can I get my business certified as woman- or minority-owned? How do I find an investor for my business? These are some of the SBA's most requested topics. For the full list, visit <http://www.sba.gov/mostrequesteditems/index.html>.



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