

Nine Key Steps to Starting a Business in the City and County of Denver



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

Office of Economic Development

- Business Assistance Center -

Congratulations on the decision to embark upon a new business venture!!!

The City and County of Denver Office of Economic Development has created this quick resource guide to help you successfully start your own small business. The requirements may vary according to the type of business you intend to start, but the following nine steps are a good guide to what you will encounter.



John W. Hickenlooper
Mayor

Note: Many of the following steps can be researched and accomplished by first visiting the appropriate website before calling or visiting the office.

Step 1: Gather Information

Within the boundaries of the City and County of Denver, you will find many resources as you research the structure, location, and potential for your new company.

The Denver Business Assistance Center (BAC) is a one-stop information center that will assist you navigating through licensing, permitting, regulatory issues while offering research tools and community resources to help you successfully start, grow and manage a small business.

Business Assistance Center

201 West Colfax Ave, Denver, CO 80202

Atrium level

(720) 913-1715

www.milehigh.com/business

If you have a specific inquiry and you do not know which agency to contact for information, please refer to Denver's new **3-1-1 service** which provides an easy way for local residents and businesses to get information on any non-emergency City service: Simply dial 3-1-1.

The U.S. Small Business Administration provides on-site free counseling and low cost training for starting a business through its Counselors to America's Small Business (SCORE) program. For more information contact:

U.S. Small Business Administration

721 19th St., Suite 426, Denver, CO 80202

(303) 844-2607

www.sba.gov/co

The Denver Small Business Development Center (SDBC) provides free one-on-one counseling services in the areas of business research and marketing, business plan preparation, new business feasibility analysis, finance packaging and other small business topics. It offers low-cost workshops and seminars for business owners.

Denver Small Business Development Center

1445 Market St., Denver, CO 80202

(303) 620-8076

www.coloradosbdc.org

The Denver Office of Economic Development (OED) operates to create a local environment that stimulates balanced growth through job creation, business assistance, housing options and neighborhood redevelopment. Information on various programs such as certification, employment assistance, Enterprise Zone State tax credits, small business lending, and real estate search assistance can be requested via e-mail, telephone, online or by visiting the office.

Denver Office of Economic Development
201 West Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80202
(720) 913-1999
www.milehigh.com

The Denver Public Library houses a sophisticated collection of print and electronic tools to help customers find business-management resources including business-to-business contacts, demographics, consumer spending patterns, marketing, and more. To learn more about how the Denver Public Library can support your information-gathering needs, visit any of the 22 locations.

The Denver Public Library
10 West 14th Ave., Denver, CO 80204
(720) 865-1363
www.denver.lib.co.us

www.business.gov is the U.S. government's official business link and is an excellent online general resource for launching, managing, growing, or getting out of a business.

Step 2: Create a Business Plan

A business plan is like a roadmap; it shows you where you are in relation to where you want to be. Whether you believe in a business plan or not, starting a business involves many ideas that need to be documented and actions that need to be taken. Many businesses fail without a business plan, and furthermore, lending institutions require one prior to being considered for a loan. Assistance with your business plan can begin with the following:

Counselors to America's Small Business (SCORE)
721 19th St., Suite 426, Denver, CO 80202
(303) 844-3985, Ext. 213
www.scoredenver.org

Denver Small Business Development Center
1445 Market Street, Denver, CO 80202
(303) 620-8076
www.coloradosbdc.org

Step 3: Determine a Business Name

The name you choose for your business is very important. To insure that no business registered in Colorado is already operating under the name you would like to use for your business, search online for name availability with the Colorado Secretary of State Office.

Colorado Secretary of State Office
1700 Broadway St., Suite 200, Denver, CO 80202
(303) 894-2200
www.sos.state.co.us

Step 4: Determine the Legal Structure of the Business

When you start your business, you must decide what legal structure it will have. There are several choices of business formats in Colorado including: sole proprietorship, general partnership, limited partnership, corporation, limited liability company, registered limited liability partnership, registered limited liability limited partnership and limited partnership association. It is strongly advised to contact your own accountant or attorney for advise and assistance in determining the best legal structure for you and your business. Limited partnership, corporation, limited liability company, registered limited liability partnership, registered limited liability limited partnership, limited partnership association and non-for-profit organizations must register with the Secretary of State. If you are a sole proprietor or general partnership and will be doing business under a name other than your own legal name(s), you must register your trade name (DBA) with the Colorado Secretary of State. The trade name registrations are done online only.

Colorado Secretary of State Office
1700 Broadway St., Suite 200, Denver, CO 80202
(303) 894-2200
www.sos.state.co.us

Step 5: Select a Site and Determine Zoning and Site Permit Requirements

Determining zoning requirements prior to signing a lease or contract is imperative. You must acquire a zoning use permit for assurance that the type of business you plan to operate is legal in the desired location. A zone determination must be obtained in person on the second floor of the Webb Municipal Building (201 W Colfax Ave). You can receive information on the status of your location if you have the proposed business address and a description of the business by contacting:

**Denver Community Planning and Development Agency
Zoning**

201 West Colfax Ave., Suite 205, Denver, CO 80202
(720) 865-3000 (zoning permit counter)
www.denvergov.org/zoning

All construction projects must have a permit. Even if the business is an existing one an occupancy permit may be required.

**Denver Community Planning and Development Agency
Building Permits**

201 West Colfax Ave., Suite 205, Denver, CO 80202
(720) 865-2705
www.denvergov.org/building_permits

Step 6: Determine the Business Activity Type and Obtain any Special Permits or Licenses

There is a classification system for business activity types in Denver which identifies a business activity and determines whether a special permit or license is required. Determine the general business activity type at:

Denver Excise and Licensing

201 West Colfax Ave., Suite 201, Denver, CO 80202
(720) 865-2740
www.denvergov.org/business_licensing

Step 7: Get Tax Information

Several types of taxes may be levied on businesses including income tax, employment tax and the City's business taxes. Anyone doing business in the City and County of Denver is required to register with the Denver Treasury Division. A sales tax license is required for any retailer or vendor who is selling, leasing, or granting a license to use tangible personal property or taxable services within the City and County of Denver. A lodger's tax license is required for any vendor who provides lodging or accommodations in the City and County of Denver for a period of less than thirty (30) consecutive days. Anyone engaged in business in the City and County of Denver is required to register for and pay Denver Occupational Privilege Tax. Registration applications can be obtained and filed at the following location:

Denver Treasury Division

144 West Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80202
(720) 865-7075
www.denvergov.org/treasury

For state taxes and a Sales Tax ID number visit the Colorado Tax Information website.

Colorado Department of Revenue
1375 Sherman St., Room 112, Denver, CO 80261
(303) 238-7378
www.taxcolorado.com

All forms of legal structure, except sole proprietors with no employees, must obtain a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN). The FEIN is your federal tax ID number. Taxpayers can obtain an FEIN immediately by calling the Toll-Free Business & Specialty Tax Line (800) 829-4933. You may fax the completed Form SS-4 application to (215) 516-3990. If sender's fax number is provided, a fax will be sent back with the FEIN within four business days. You may mail form SS-4 to: IRS, Attn: EIN Operation, Philadelphia, PA 19255 or file online at www.irs.gov

For more federal tax information contact:

Internal Revenue Service
(800) 829-1040
www.irs.gov

Step 8: Employer Responsibilities

A new set of responsibilities arise when a business hires employees. Employers must register as an employer, pay additional taxes, withhold, match and submit employee withholdings, obtain worker's compensation insurance and adhere to employee eligibility regulations. Make sure to have obtained a FEIN number as described in step 7.

File Colorado Business Registration form CR 100 with the Colorado Department of Revenue to open your state wage withholding and unemployment insurance accounts.

Colorado Department of Revenue
1375 Sherman St., Room 112, Denver, CO 80261
(303) 238-7378
www.taxcolorado.com

The employer is required to pay state and federal unemployment insurance tax on wages paid to all employees. Employer accounts and liability are established once the employer has registered with the Unemployment Insurance Operations Tax Office. For the State of Colorado information contact:

Colorado Unemployment Insurance
Operations Tax Branch
(303) 318-9100
www.coworkforce.com/UIT

Worker's Compensation is required for all employers in Colorado if one or more full or part-time persons are hired.

Colorado Division of Worker's Compensation
633 17th St., Suite 400, Denver, CO 80202
(303) 318-8700
www.coworkforce.com/DWC

Submit copy of W-4 for a newly hired employees within 20 days of hire date to:

Colorado State Directory of New Hires
P.O. Box 2920, Denver, CO 80201
FAX: (303) 297-2595
www.newhire.state.co.us

Once you are ready to begin hiring a staff for your business, the Division of Workforce Development can help you find and prescreen qualified applicants at no cost.

Denver Division of Workforce Development
201 West Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80202
(720) 913-1999
www.milehigh.com/employment

Step 9: Obtain Financing for Your Business

Financing the initial expenditures (i.e. acquisition of real property, renovation, equipment and inventory purchases, working capital requirements, etc.) is one of the most important steps in starting a business venture. Financing can be obtained from private financial institutions such as banks and other private lenders; owner's equity, investor capital and economic development financing programs. Please see the attached list for organizations that provide business financing.

By completing these nine steps, you have built a solid foundation that, along with a lot of hard work and a little luck, enables you to cultivate your new company into the successful business of your dreams! The Denver Office of Economic Development is available to assist you each step of the way. Please contact our office if we can be of any assistance.

Good luck in your new endeavor!!!

A Sampling of Financial Resources

Non-Profit and Government Loan Programs

**Denver Office of Economic
Development, Small Business
Lending**

201 West Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (720) 913-1999
www.milehigh.com/business/financing

**Colorado Alliance for Micro
Enterprise Initiatives (CAMI)**

1625 Broadway St., Suite 950
Denver, Colorado 80202
Tel: (303) 592-4064
www.coloradoalliance.org

**Micro Business Development
Corporation**

700 Kalamath St.
Denver, Colorado 80204
Tel: (303) 308-8121
www.microbusiness.org

**Colorado Housing and Finance
Authority (CHFA)**

1981 Blake St.
Denver, Colorado 80202
Tel: (303) 297-2432
www.colohfa.org

Colorado Enterprise Fund (CEF)

1888 Sherman St., Suite 530
Denver, Colorado 80203
Tel: (303) 860-0242
www.coloradoenterprisefund.org

Colorado Lending Source (CLS)

518 17th St., Suite 1800
Denver, Colorado 80202
Tel: (303) 657-0010
www.coloradolendingsource.org

Preferred Lending Partners (PLP)

140 East 19th Ave., Suite 206
Denver, Colorado 80203
Tel: (303) 861-4100
www.preferredlendingpartners.org

City and County of Denver Resources

Denver Purchasing Department

201 West Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (720) 913-8100
www.denvergov.org/purchasing

Denver Office of Economic Development, Division of Small Business Opportunities

201 West Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (720) 913-1999
www.milehigh.com/business

Denver Office of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development

201 West Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (720) 913-1999
www.milehigh.com/employment

Denver Office of Economic Development, Division of Housing and Neighborhood Development

201 West Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (720) 913-1999
www.milehigh.com/neighborhood

Denver Excise and Licensing

201 West Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (720) 865-2740
www.denvergov.org/business_licensing

Denver Community Planning and Development Agency

201 West Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (720) 865-2915
www.denvergov.org/planning

Denver Office of Economic Development, Division of Business Development

201 West Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (720) 913-1999
www.milehigh.com/business

State of Colorado Resources

Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade

1625 Broadway St., Suite 2700
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (303) 892-3840
www.state.co.us/oed

Colorado Payroll Taxes

Denver Service Center
1375 Sherman St.
Denver, CO 80261
www.revenue.state.co.us

Colorado Worker's Compensation

633 17th St., Suite 400
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (303) 318-8700
www.coworkforce.com/DWC/

Market Research, Technical Assistance, and International Trade Assistance

Information, Research, Technical Assistance and Networking

Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation
1445 Market St.
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (303) 620-8092
www.metrodenveredc.org

Demographics

Colorado Demography Office
1313 Sherman St., Room 521
Denver, CO 80203
Tel: (303) 866-4147
www.dola.colorado.gov/demog/demog.cfm

Health Care Program Information

Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing
1570 Grant St.
Denver, CO 80203
www.chcpf.state.co.us/

Small Business Training & Consulting

Denver Small Business Development Center
1445 Market St.
Denver, CO 80202
www.coloradosbdc.org

Denver Enterprise Zone

Denver Office of Economic Development, Business Assistance Center
201 West Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (720) 913-1715
www.milehigh.com/business

International Trade

Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade
1625 Broadway St., Suite 2700
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (303) 892-3840
www.state.co.us/oed

Export

U.S. Department of Commerce
1625 Broadway St., Suite 680
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (303) 844-6623
www.export.gov

Import

U.S. Customs & Border Protection
24735 E 75th Ave, Suite 100
Denver, CO 80249
Tel: (303) 342-8400
www.cbp.gov



DENVER OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

201 West Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80202
720-913-1999
www.milehigh.com

Enterprise Zone Tax Credits Provide Dollars and Sense for your Business



Enterprise Zone Tax Credits

Enterprise Zone Tax Credits offer businesses located within the Denver Enterprise Zone up to nine special state tax credit incentives. Businesses are eligible for the tax credits if they are located in the Zone and have a state tax liability. The credits that are available in the Enterprise Zone are the following:

- New jobs tax credit of \$500 for each new employee
- Health insurance tax credit of \$200 for each employee sponsored on a 50% paid health insurance plan
- Investment tax credit of 3% for all expenditures on business personal property
- Job training tax credit of 10% for expenditure to train employees
- Exemption from the state sales tax on manufacturing equipment
- Agricultural new jobs credit of \$500 for each new employee
- Investment tax credit of 3% on research and development expenditures
- A 25% tax credit on the hard costs to rehabilitate a vacant building
- A 25% tax credit for a donation to a Zone certified non-profit

To determine whether a business is located within the Denver Enterprise Zone, you may use our searchable map at: www.milehigh.com/business/financing/tax-credits or contact our Enterprise Zone Administrator at: (720) 913-1623 or ez.admin@ci.denver.co.us.

For more in-depth information on the individual credits, sample calculations, and downloadable forms, check out the state's website at: <http://www.state.co.us/oed/enterprise-zone/index.cfm>.