



Private Companies
Practice Section

A guide to the U.S. Small Business Administration



Helping small businesses succeed

For the small business owner, there is no such thing as too much help or information. Businesses of all sizes rely on CPAs for their financial expertise and knowledge of how businesses can be managed successfully and positioned for growth. Businesses can also turn to 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. The SBA is a valuable asset and this guide will give you an overview of its many tools and resources.

Plan and launch your business.

Research and plan.

For many small business pioneers, getting started can be the most difficult challenge. However, proper planning is valuable and critical to business success. Your CPA can help you turn the overwhelming into the digestible and actionable. You can leverage a variety of SBA resources during the planning process as well, including [this 10-step guide to starting a business](#).

Write a business plan.

An effective business plan is a small business owner's roadmap to success. Your CPA can help you translate a great idea into a clear and well-designed plan. In addition, 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 guidance and sample plans](#).

Calculate startup costs.

It's imperative that small business owners estimate how much money will be needed to start their business before investing. Your CPA can help with these projections and can develop a break-even analysis. The SBA's website also offers [a spreadsheet-based calculator](#) to help small business owners accurately gauge start-up expenses.

Find the right funding.

There are many funding possibilities available to small business owners. Your CPA can help you navigate and select the right financing blend. Additionally, you can use the SBA website to [read about funding options](#), including investment programs, SBA-guaranteed loans, crowdfunding, and venture capital from investors.

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 the actual funds to assist small businesses.

Loans include:

- **7(a) Loans:** The 7(a) program is the SBA's leading tool for providing funding for small businesses. The 7(a) program includes:
 - **Standard 7(a):** Support small businesses that need capital to make short- and long-term investments with up to \$5 million in funding.
 - **7(a) Small Loan:** Is any 7a loan \$350,000 and under.
 - **SBA Express:** Provides funds to eligible borrowers in an accelerated turnaround time.
 - **Export Express:** Gives exporters and lenders a streamlined method to obtain SBA-backed financing.
 - **Export Working Capital:** Gives exporters access to working capital to support sales.
 - **International trade:** Long-term financing for exporters to purchase fixed assets, equipment, and working capital.
 - **Veterans Advantage:** Loans made to veteran-owned small businesses come with reduced fees.
 - **CAPLines:** Designed to help small businesses meet their short-term and cyclical working capital needs.
- **CDC/504 Loan:** A loan program that provides growing businesses with long-term, fixed-rate financing to acquire major fixed assets for expansion or modernization.
- **Microloan:** A loan program that provides very small, short-term loans to startup, newly established or growing small businesses.

Buy an existing business or franchise.

Starting a business from scratch can be challenging. Franchising or buying an existing business can simplify the initial planning process. Before deciding, consult your CPA to see if one of these options is right for you. It's vital that you know the [basics of franchising and buying an existing business](#) before taking the leap.

Obtain insurance, permits, licenses and register your business.

Businesses must understand the city, state and federal requirements of registering and licensing. Before opening, you should first obtain the necessary insurance, permits or licenses. Use [SBA guidance](#) and your CPA to help develop a plan to ensure you don't miss any necessary steps.

Launch your business.

Turn your business idea into reality by using your CPA's insight from the beginning. Their knowledge will guide you through the critical initial steps to finally opening doors to clients and customers. Furthermore, the SBA website walks you through [launching and early days of a new business](#), with detailed information on structuring, federal and state tax ID numbers, opening bank accounts and more.



Manage your business.

Managing finances

Small business owners need a basic familiarity with accounting and finance to successfully manage their business. Your CPA can simplify complex information to help you understand what you need to know and can offer tailored services for your specific business needs.

Hiring and managing employees

To successfully run a small business, owners need specific people management skills as well as general understanding of payroll, benefits and labor laws. Review [the SBA's guidance](#) and turn to your CPA for specific questions and payroll processing assistance.

Taxes and legal compliance

New and existing businesses need to meet federal, state and local tax obligations to stay in good legal standing. Your business structure and location will influence which taxes you have to pay. Be sure to have these crucial and necessary conversations with your CPA about compliance and supplement these conversations by using the [SBA's resources](#).

Marketing and sales

Your business plan should contain the central elements of a dynamic and thorough marketing strategy. A marketing plan is necessary to persuade consumers and clients to buy products or services and should also include how you will accept payment. Use the [SBA's sample marketing plan](#) to get started and have your CPA review.

Technology and cybersecurity

Today's competitive business climate demands that small business owners understand and use the latest technology. The SBA has resources for [understanding cybersecurity threats specific to small businesses](#) including cyber training and events. Your CPA is also prepared to help your business protect your most sensitive information.

Disaster planning and assistance

You'll want to take the right steps to prevent and prepare for disaster and know where to get aid if disaster strikes. The SBA provides various types of disaster assistance loans to help small business owners get back on their feet. These include the home and property, economic injury, military reservist economic injury disaster, and farm emergency loans. Your CPA can help you [properly plan and apply](#) for applicable SBA loans.



Grow your business.

Additional funding

When your business is running but needs more capital, there are familiar and reliable options available. However, funding an existing business requires slightly different preparation than for a new business. Your CPA can help you prepare a business case and financial statements to [convince lenders to invest](#) in your small business.

Mergers and acquisitions

Many small businesses choose to grow by buying or merging with other smaller businesses. The process is like starting a new business, but you need to take extra steps to protect your existing business. Once your business is ready to expand, your CPA can assist with business valuation and the [SBA provides additional guidance](#) on compliance with laws, rules and regulations during the transition.

Federal contracts

Many small business owners may be unaware of [contracting opportunities with the federal government](#). If you are looking for new ways to expand your business, review the SBA's overview of regulations, policies, size standards and best practices in government contracts and turn to your CPA with any questions.

Additional resources

Oversight and advocacy

The SBA and the Offices of Advocacy, Hearings and Appeals, Inspector General, and Ombudsman [promote and defend small business interests](#).

District offices

The SBA operates full-service district offices in every state of the country. Visit the SBA's [interactive map](#) to locate the district office closest to you.

Specific opportunities

The SBA also offers opportunities to specifically assist businesses owned by [women](#), [Native Americans](#), [veterans](#), and [members of the LGBT community](#).

Business advising with 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 [score.org](#).





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