

The City of Alameda offers a vibrant business-friendly environment anchored by a diverse set of thriving small businesses. Starting a business can be both exciting and challenging. The City of Alameda Economic Development Division is available to help you get started, and has created this checklist to assist you. Have questions? Contact us at (510) 747-6890 or at [econdev@alamedaca.gov](mailto:econdev@alamedaca.gov).

## WHERE DO I START?

TASKS	RESOURCES	
<p><b>1. EVALUATE YOUR IDEA</b> <i>Is your idea a good one? Is it profitable, marketable, and bankable?</i></p>	<p>We have partnered with the Alameda County Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and East Bay SCORE to assist new businesses with basic business planning. The SBDC and East Bay SCORE have the tools and expertise to help you consider the viability of your idea, including general startup consultations. For more information, contact us, or sign up for a consultation by contacting SBDC at (510) 208-0410 or <a href="http://www.acsbdc.org">www.acsbdc.org</a>, or East Bay SCORE at (510)-273-6611 or <a href="http://www.eastbayscore.org">www.eastbayscore.org</a>.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>2. MARKET RESEARCH</b> <i>Make sure your idea will succeed in Alameda by researching the market, industry, and competition.</i></p>	<p>We have extensive local knowledge of Alameda and can help you understand our market dynamics and fundamentals. Demographic information and resources can be found on <a href="http://www.alamedaca.gov/business">www.alamedaca.gov/business</a>. SBDC can provide additional resources to perform formal regional market research.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>3. BUSINESS PLAN</b> <i>Prepare a written business plan.</i></p>	<p>Your Business Plan is your road map to success, and your key marketing tool for potential lenders and investors. SBDC has regularly scheduled workshops to teach you the fundamentals of writing a compelling business plan targeted to the right audience. To view upcoming seminars, visit <a href="http://www.acsbdc.org/events2">www.acsbdc.org/events2</a>.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>4. FINANCING</b> <i>Determine how you will finance your startup costs and meet your long term capital access needs.</i></p>	<p>City staff and SBDC can help you identify the right financial plan for your business. We have extensive local knowledge of Alameda-based banks and investors, and SBDC provides business financial planning and a wide range of information about financing sources.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>5. BUSINESS STRUCTURE</b> <i>Select the most appropriate legal structure for your business.</i></p>	<p>An attorney or tax accountant can best advise you on appropriate steps to establish the right business structure for you. Typically, you must select one of the following business entity types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporation (C or S type)</li> <li>• Limited Liability Company</li> <li>• Limited Partnership</li> <li>• General Partnership</li> <li>• Limited Liability Partnership</li> <li>• Sole Proprietorship</li> </ul> <p>If you are forming a corporation, limited liability company, or certain types of partnerships, you must file formation documents with the California Secretary of State's Office. For more information, contact the California Secretary of State at (916) 657-5448 or <a href="http://www.sos.ca.gov/business/be">www.sos.ca.gov/business/be</a>.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>6. BUSINESS NAME</b> <i>Select a compelling business name.</i></p>	<p>An attorney can best advise you on appropriate filing and notice requirements for your business name. This process may include checks of existing names in national, state and local databases, including existing trademarks, corporate names and fictitious names already in use. You may need to register a Fictitious Business Name with the County of Alameda. For more information, contact the County of Alameda Clerk-Recorder's Office at (888) 280-7708 or <a href="http://www.acgov.org/business/fictitious.htm">www.acgov.org/business/fictitious.htm</a>.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>7. LOCATION</b> <i>Identify the right location and type of space for your business.</i></p>	<p>We provide a full suite of site selection tools and assistance. We have in-depth local knowledge of available space, and connections with highly qualified local brokers. We will also let you know of any required approvals, permits, or fees for your location (<i>don't sign a lease or purchase property without this information</i>). Contact us for customized site selection assistance.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>8. BUSINESS LICENSE</b>  <i>Obtain a Business License and Zoning Clearance from the City of Alameda.</i></p>	<p>If you are conducting business in Alameda, including a home-based business or online businesses, residential and commercial real estate rentals, and vacation rentals, you are required to obtain and annually renew a Business License and pay a Business License Tax. Businesses located in Business Improvement Areas are required to pay an additional annual assessment. Obtaining Zoning Clearance is the first step in getting a business license. An additional Home Occupation Permit is required for businesses operating in a residence. Both Zoning Clearance and Home Occupation forms can be found at <a href="http://www.alamedaca.gov/permits/forms-and-handouts">www.alamedaca.gov/permits/forms-and-handouts</a>. To obtain a Business License, contact the City of Alameda Finance Department at (510) 747-4881 or <a href="http://www.alamedaca.gov/finance">www.alamedaca.gov/finance</a>.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>9. PLANNING, BUILDING &amp; OCCUPANCY PERMITS</b>  <i>Obtain all appropriate City of Alameda Permits and approvals.</i></p>	<p>A Certificate of Occupancy is required for all businesses. Most business-related construction or modifications to new or existing commercial buildings will also require a Building Permit. A Sign Permit is required if you would like to display a sign advertising your business. The City operates a Permit Center providing one-stop permit assistance. For larger commercial projects, the City offers a full-service permitting program called, "At Your Service." Permit Center staff are available to assist you. For more information, contact the Permit Center at (510) 747-6800 or <a href="http://www.alamedaca.gov/permits">www.alamedaca.gov/permits</a>.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>10. OTHER AGENCY PERMITS</b>  <i>Depending on the type of business, you may be required to obtain permits or licenses from other county, state, or federal agencies.</i></p>	<p>We can provide guidance and assistance obtaining other required permits and licenses you may need. The most common permits include:</p> <p><b>Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) License ("Liquor License")</b>          ABC Alameda County District Office   (510) 622-4970   <a href="http://www.abc.ca.gov">www.abc.ca.gov</a></p> <p><b>Child Care Center or Family Care Home License</b>          California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing   (916) 651-6040   <a href="http://www.cclcd.ca.gov">www.cclcd.ca.gov</a></p> <p><b>Restaurants, Food Vendors, Salons, Tattoo Parlors ("Health Permit")</b>          Alameda County Environmental Health Department   (510) 567-6700   <a href="http://www.acgov.org/aceh">www.acgov.org/aceh</a></p> <p><b>Retailer, Wholesaler and Manufacturer Seller's Permits</b>          State Board of Equalization, Oakland   (510) 622-4100   <a href="http://www.boe.ca.gov">www.boe.ca.gov</a></p> <p>For a list of permits that might be required for your business, search the CalGold database at <a href="http://www.calgold.ca.gov/">www.calgold.ca.gov/</a>.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>11. EMPLOYEES, INSURANCE, &amp; TAXES</b>  <i>If you have employees, there are additional state and federal requirements you must comply with.</i></p>	<p><b>Employees</b> – If you hire employees, you must obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service, and you will have to withhold certain federal taxes on behalf of your employees. Contact the IRS for specific guidance (<a href="http://www.irs.gov">www.irs.gov</a>) or to obtain an EIN.</p> <p><b>Insurance</b> – As an employer, you are required to carry Worker's Compensation Insurance through your own insurance agent or the State Compensation Insurance Fund (<a href="http://www.statefundca.com">www.statefundca.com</a>). In 2015, certain businesses are required to provide health care insurance to employees under the Affordable Care Act (<a href="http://www.coveredca.com/small-business">www.coveredca.com/small-business</a>).</p> <p><b>Taxes</b> – As an employer in the state of California, you must register with the Employment Development Department (EDD), and you will have to withhold certain state taxes on behalf of your employees. Contact the EDD for specific guidance (<a href="http://www.edd.ca.gov">www.edd.ca.gov</a>). Businesses may also need a Tax Identification Number (TIN) for tax, employment, and other purposes. Contact the state Franchise Tax Board (<a href="http://www.ftb.ca.gov">www.ftb.ca.gov</a>). Residential vacation rentals and hotels are required to pay a Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT). Consult an attorney or accountant for tax advice.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION****12. LOCAL UTILITIES & OTHER SERVICES**

Local utilities and service providers for Alameda include:

**Electricity — Alameda Municipal Power (AMP)** | (510) 748-5000 | [www.alamedamp.com](http://www.alamedamp.com)

**Gas — Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E)** | (800) 468-4743 | [www.pge.com](http://www.pge.com)

**Water & Sewer — East Bay Municipal Utility District** | (866) 403-2683 | [www.ebmud.com](http://www.ebmud.com)

**Waste & Recycling — Alameda County Industries, Inc. (ACI)** | (510) 483-1400 | [www.alamedacountyindustries.com](http://www.alamedacountyindustries.com)

**Internet Service Providers —**

**AT&T Business Services** | (888) 944-0447 | [www.att.com/smallbusiness/index.jsp](http://www.att.com/smallbusiness/index.jsp)

**Comcast Business** | (855) 609-3736 | [www.business.comcast.com](http://www.business.comcast.com)

**Verizon Business Internet** | 888-804-0875 | [www.verizon.com/smallbusiness/products/business-internet](http://www.verizon.com/smallbusiness/products/business-internet)

**13. RECRUIT, HIRE, AND TRAIN EMPLOYEES**

The City of Alameda has partnered with the Alameda One-Stop Career Center, located at the College of Alameda, to help local businesses at no cost with training employees, pre-screening and interviewing of applicants, and with referrals of pre-qualified candidates. The City of Alameda and the One-Stop Center can also assist larger employers with developing job training curricula, hiring fairs, and job readiness events. For more information, contact us or the Alameda One-Step Career Center at (510) 522-7221 or [www.alameda.peralta.edu](http://www.alameda.peralta.edu).

**GET INVOLVED IN THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY****14. BECOME A MEMBER**

The Alameda Chamber of Commerce and the local business associations offer numerous benefits and keep business owners on top of important, ever-changing issues and trends in the community and local marketplace.

**The Alameda Chamber of Commerce** | (510) 522-0414 | [www.alamedachamber.com](http://www.alamedachamber.com)

**Greater Alameda Business Association** | [www.gabaonline.org](http://www.gabaonline.org)

**Park Street Business Association** | (510) 523-1392 | [www.shopparkstreet.com](http://www.shopparkstreet.com)

**West Alameda Business Association** | (510) 523-5955 | [www.westalamedabusiness.com](http://www.westalamedabusiness.com)

**CONTACT**

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