

Pennsylvania

Business Formation Checklist

A practical, business-friendly guide for starting and organizing a real business

This checklist is designed for Pennsylvania founders who want a clear, practical roadmap to form and operate a business. It covers legal setup, banking, contracts, insurance, planning, and ongoing compliance. Not every item applies to every business —use this as a working document and revisit it as your business grows.

BUSINESS FOUNDATION + OWNERSHIP

1. Business Foundation

- Choose entity (LLC or C-Corp)
- File PA Certificate of Organization / Articles of Incorporation
- Set registered office / registered agent
- Obtain EIN from the IRS

2. Ownership, Control & Core Rules

- Operating Agreement (LLC) or Bylaws (Corp) finalized
- Founder equity allocation confirmed
- Decision-making authority defined
- Founder agreement(s) in place (if more than one founder)

3. Intellectual Property & Brand Assets

- Founder-created IP assigned to the company (if applicable)
- Contractor/employee IP assignment language in place
- Brand assets organized (logos, designs, content)
- Domains secured and key social handles reserved

MONEY, PLANNING, CONTRACTS

4. Banking, Money Handling & Accounting

- Open business bank account
- Choose payment systems (Stripe, Square, invoicing, ACH)
- Set up basic bookkeeping
- Accountant or tax advisor engaged (or plan to engage one)
- Decide how owners get paid (draws, payroll, reimbursements)

5. Business Planning & Financial Clarity (Situational)

- Business plan or financial model prepared (if seeking loans, grants, or investors)
- Pricing and revenue model defined

6. Contracts & People

- Independent contractor or employee agreements
- Confidentiality and IP protections
- Customer or client agreements
- Payment, scope, refund, and termination terms defined

WEBSITE, INSURANCE, FUNDING, COMPLIANCE

7. Website & Customer-Facing Basics

- Privacy Policy published
- Terms of Service published
- Marketing and product claims reviewed for accuracy

8. Insurance & Risk Management

- General liability insurance obtained
- Professional liability / E&O insurance (services, tech)
- Cyber insurance reviewed (if handling data)
- Workers' compensation insurance obtained (if applicable)

9. Funding & Capital (Only If You're Using It)

- Funding strategy selected (bootstrapped, loans, grants, investors)
- Loan or grant readiness (if applicable)
- SAFE or convertible note documents prepared (if raising investor money)

10. Pennsylvania Ongoing Compliance

- PA annual report compliance tracked (2025+)
- Licenses and permits reviewed (state and local)
- Compliance calendar created (taxes, renewals, filings)

Disclaimer

This checklist is provided for general informational and educational purposes only. It is intended to help founders think through common legal, financial, operational, and risk-management steps involved in starting and running a business in Pennsylvania.

This checklist:

- Is not legal advice
- Is not tax or accounting advice
- Does not create an attorney-client relationship
- Does not replace advice from qualified professionals familiar with your specific situation

Every business is different. Laws, regulations, tax rules, and best practices vary based on industry, business model, location, and timing. Some items on this checklist may not apply to your business, and additional steps may be required depending on your circumstances.

Before making legal, tax, or financial decisions—or if you have questions about how these items apply to your business—you should consult with a qualified attorney, accountant, or other professional advisor.

Optional closing line (lighter tone, optional)

Using a checklist helps you ask better questions. Getting tailored advice helps you answer them correctly.

Contact Us

Fischer Legal Services
Pennsylvania Business Counsel
robert@fischerlegalservices.com
(814) 449 - 9445