Orange County

Small Business Passport

Orange County Government Florida

**A Guide to
Starting a Business in
Orange County, Florida**

Welcome

Welcome to Orange County, where we proudly put customers first. We are excited to support you as you begin the rewarding journey of opening your own business. Entrepreneurship brings energy, innovation, and growth to our community, and we wish you every success in this endeavor.

This guide is designed to help you take your first steps, walk you through the permitting process, understand County requirements, and connect you with the tools and resources that can help your business thrive.

Whether you are a first-time business owner or a seasoned entrepreneur, this guide will make the process clearer and more manageable. Our goal is to help you save time, avoid common challenges, and feel confident as you move forward.

If you need additional help, stop by our newly opened Business Resource Office within the Planning, Environmental, and Development Services Department at 201 S. Rosalind Avenue, Orlando, FL, 32801.

Contact the Business Resource Office by emailing BusinessResourceOffice@ocfl.net or calling **407-836-2859**.

This guide was developed in partnership with Central FloridaBizLink.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

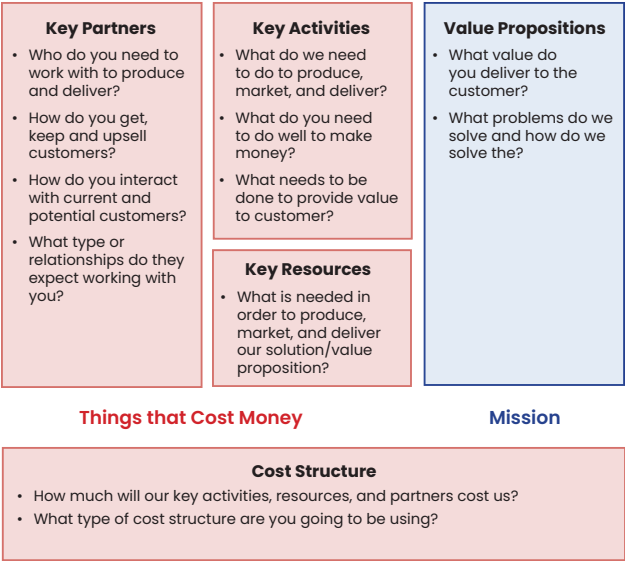# Steps to Launching a Business in Orange County

1. Research & Plan

It is important to research and understand the market you will be entering. Take the time to ensure your idea is viable while preparing your startup endeavor.

Don't start without a plan. **This is your model for success.**

National Entrepreneur Center
NationalEC.org

BUSINESS MO

Key Partners	Key Activities	Value Propositions
• Who do you need to work with to produce and deliver?	• What do we need to do to produce, market, and deliver?	• What value do you deliver to the customer?
• How do you get, keep and upsell customers?	• What do you need to do well to make money?	• What problems do we solve and how do we solve the?
• How do you interact with current and potential customers?	• What needs to be done to provide value to customer?	
• What type or relationships do they expect working with you?		

Key Resources

• What is needed in order to produce, market, and deliver our solution/value proposition?

Things that Cost Money **Mission**

Cost Structure

• How much will our key activities, resources, and partners cost us?
• What type of cost structure are you going to be using?

Once the research is done, the next step is a plan of action. A well-thought-out plan should outline your strategy, target market, financial projections and provide a clear roadmap for goals. The plan will be necessary to obtain loans and funding.

There's no right or wrong way to write a business plan. What's important is that your plan meets your needs. Most business plans fall into two common categories: traditional or lean startup. Traditional business plans are more common, use a standard structure, and encourage you to go into detail in each section. They tend to require more work upfront and can be dozens of pages long.

Lean startup business plans are less common but still use a standard structure. They focus on summarizing only the most important points of the key elements of your plan. They can take as little as one hour to make and are typically only one page.

ODEL CANVAS

Central Florida
BIZLINK.COM
CFLBizLink.com

Customer Relations
- How do we get / keep / upsell customers?
- How do we talk about our solution?
- How do you interact with / type of relationship is expected of current and protentional customers?

Channels
- How are our solutions delivered?
- Where can our solutions be found by customers?

Market & Customer Segments
- Who needs our solution?
- How many need now versus eventually?

Things that Make Money

Revenue Streams & Pricing Model
- How much will our key activities, resources, and partners cost us?
- How is the business earning revenue?
- How will we get paid / revenue stream?

2. Create your B.A.I.L team

OK, you trust your idea and have a plan. Now it's time to start putting together your team of professionals. To remember what you need, use the acronym B.A.I.L: Banker, Accountant, Insurance Agent, Lawyer/ Attorney.

A trusted B.A.I.L team can help you avoid stumbling blocks while starting and growing your business.

3. Find your location

A successful business often starts with a good location. But selecting the perfect spot for your business is more than just finding a property or building you like. You also must know how to navigate local zoning requirements.

 Scan this QR code to learn what uses are allowed for the property.

Gaining a better understanding of zoning rules can set your business up for success from the start. More information about the County's approval and permitting process can be found on pages 10 and 11.

4. Determine your Legal Business Structure

One of the first decisions that you will make as a business owner is how the business will be legally structured. All businesses must adopt some legal configuration that defines the rights and liabilities of participants in the business's ownership, control, personal liability, life span, and financial structure. This decision will have long-term implications, so it is recommended you consult an accountant and attorney to help you select the form of ownership that is right for you.

Common Business Structures

Sole Proprietorship

Partnership

Corporation

C Corporation

S Corporation

Limited Liability Company (LLC)

Nonprofit Corporation

5. Register your Business and Get a Business License

You must be registered on **SunBiz.org** to operate legally in the state of Florida. Please note that if you operate your business under a fictitious name or a DBA (Doing Business As) you may be required to register the fictitious name.

All businesses in Orange County must obtain their Business Tax Receipt (BTR) from the Orange County Tax Collector's Office. However, the review process depends on which jurisdiction it's located in.

If it's located in unincorporated Orange County

1. Submit a Zoning Approval Form to the Orange County Zoning Division.

2. Complete Orange County permitting review process.

3. Once approved, take Approval Letter to the Orange County Tax Collector's Office to receive your BTR.

If it's located in another municipality (e.g., City of Orlando or Apopka)

4. Submit an approval application to the City.

5. Complete City review process.

6. Once approved by the City, go to the Orange County Tax Collector's Office to receive your BTR.

6. Consider Insurance Options

There are several types of insurance that should be considered or could be required:

- **Business / Property–** Protects you financially against a variety of losses to your business and property.
- **Life / Health / Casualty–** Available to you and team members for personal use.
- **Workers Compensation–** Required by some businesses.

Choose an experienced Insurance Company and Agent who:

- You are comfortable with.
- Is from a financially-sound company of high ratings.
- Protects you against risks to your company's property.
- Communicates on updating your coverage when changing needs occur.

Looking for training opportunities to help your business?

Be sure to check the Central Florida BizLink calendar of events for webinars and in-person workshops offered by nonprofit, government-funded, and business resources aimed at supporting your business development.

Learn & Grow - Central Florida BizLink

More info? There are a variety of free downloadable guides on Central Florida BizLink's website

The next section of this guide will go over how to navigate Orange County's approval and permitting process.

Create Online Account

Orange County uses an online system called Fast Track for permitting and development applications. To get started, register to create an account using the 'Zoning/BZA' category. You will receive a temporary password via email. Once you login and change this password, you are ready to use Fast Track and submit the applications for your new business.

Scan the QR code and register for Fast Track.

Apply for Zoning Approval

Download and complete a Business Tax Receipt Zoning Approval Form and apply for a Business Tax Receipt permit on Fast Track. Upload the completed form as part of the online permit application and pay the non-refundable fee. The Business Tax Receipt is issued by the Orange County Tax Collector. Please visit the Business Tax Receipt webpage for more information.

Application Review

Orange County's Zoning Division will review your application to ensure that the new business is appropriate for the zoning district. A building permit is required to make alterations to existing buildings while a use permit is required for existing buildings with no alterations. Home-based businesses without alterations do not require a building permit.

Associated Building and Fire Permits

Most projects require fire permits and inspections.

New construction: apply for a building permit and complete all inspections.

Existing structures without alterations or change of occupancy: a Use Permit will be created in Fast Track. Login and complete the required permit information.

Existing structures with changes: apply for an alteration permit and complete all inspections.

Complete Inspections, Pay Fees

Use Fast Track to schedule your inspections and pay for any additional fees. Use Fast Track to view your building inspector's progress on the way to your site and review the results of your inspections. Visit the Fast Track Video Resources page for more information.

Impact Fees: Impact fees are charges assessed on new development to help pay for public infrastructure required to accommodate the new development. Impact fees are generally charged at the issuance of a project's building permit. Orange County collects Impact Fees for schools, law enforcement, fire, parks and transportation, as well as water and sewer capital charges.

For a complete breakdown of impact fee rates, visit **Impact Fees At A Glance.**

Certificate of Occupancy

After final inspection, release of all holds, and payment of fees (additional impact fees may be due for a change of use), you will receive your 'C.O.' For a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy, please email buildingrecords@ocfl.net.

Contact The Business Tax Office

Contact the Business Tax Department to obtain your business tax receipt. Once this has been issued, you will be all set to open the doors to your new Orange County business.

Doing Business with Orange County

We're looking for the right balance of quality and cost, the same balance you seek in your own business operation. You may be interested in becoming one of the vendors we work with from our local and extended community!

Step 1 REGISTER Use our **e-Procurement Portal** to sign up your business as an active Orange County vendor.

Step 2 PARTICIPATE Update your Company Profile to subscribe to opportunities matching your category codes. Submit responses and offers to the County using a secure online platform.

Step 3 AWARD Follow public openings, recommendations and awards using vendor services online.

Get Certified with Orange County's Small Business Enterprise Program

The Small Business Enterprise Program helps small businesses compete more effectively in public contracting.

Why get certified through the program?

Increased Visibility – Be recognized by agencies and prime contractors actively seeking certified SBEs.

Access to Opportunities – Compete for contracts.

Capacity Building – Gain access to resources, workshops, and tools to help your business thrive.

Stronger Connections – Network with industry leaders, potential partners, and key decision-makers.

Call **407-836-7317** to learn more.

Avoiding Code Violations

It's important to maintain the upkeep on your property to avoid a code violation.

What if I get a code violation?

There are a few ways for a business owner to get more information about a code violation at the property and initiate the process to resolve it.

- Contact the code inspector who issued the violation (their contact information will be on the code violation notice).
- Contact the Neighborhood Services Division (**407-836-4200**) and ask to be connected to the code inspector for the case.
- Contact 311 and ask to be connected to the code inspector for the case.

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC, TRADE & TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Orange County is committed to fostering a business-friendly environment, encouraging growth and prosperity within the community. The Office of Economic, Trade & Tourism Development works to attract new businesses and support the growth and retention of existing ones. Additionally, the County focuses on providing a quality of life that attracts talented individuals and fosters the development of the next generation of skilled workers.

To learn more about Economic Development in Orange County, visit **www.orangecountyfl.net/EconomicDevelopment.aspx**

Office of Economic, Trade & Tourism Development
Orange County Government Administration Center
201 S Rosalind Ave., 5th Floor, Orlando, FL 32801
Email: EconomicDevelopment@ocfl.net
Phone: **407-836-7370**

Additional Resources

National Entrepreneur Center (NEC)
3201 E. Colonial Drive Suite A-20, Orlando, FL 32803
Phone: **407-420-4848**
info@nationalec.org
www.nationalec.org

**CentralFlorida BizLink
(The Virtual Program of the NEC)**
Request a ConNECtion Plan to receive recommended
business resources
https://cflbizlink.com

Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
Schedule a free consultation online at
https://sbdcorlando.com

Central Florida International Trade Office
Roger Colon
Program Director
3201 E. Colonial Drive Suite A-20, Orlando, FL 32803
Phone: **407-420-4860**
Roger@NationalEC.org
www.nationalec.org/cfito

**Looking to relocate your business?
Orlando Economic Partnership**
200 S. Orange Avenue, Suite 200
Orlando, FL 32801
Phone: **407-422-7159**

The IRS website offers basic federal tax information for
people who are starting a business.

**https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-
self-employed/starting-a-business**

Florida Department of Revenue
Provides information on state sales tax and state
withholding tax at **https://floridarevenue.com/**

State Regulated Professions and Occupations
Some professions are also required to register with the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. To find a list of regulated professions, businesses, and occupations, please visit **www2.myfloridalicense.com** or call **850-487-1395**.

Other state regulatory agencies include:

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
www.fdacs.gov
Phone: **1-800-435-7352**

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
floridadep.gov
E-mail: Public.Services@FloridaDEP.gov
Phone: **850-245-2118**

Office of Financial Regulation
www.flofr.gov
Phone: **850-487-9687**

Florida Department of Health
www.floridahealth.gov
E-mail: health@flhealth.gov
Phone: **850-245-4444**

Florida Department of Children and Families
www.myflfamilies.com
Phone: **850-487-1111**

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
myfwc.com
Phone: **850-488-4676**

Orange County Business Resource Office
Part of the Planning, Environmental, and
Development Services Department

201 S. Rosalind Ave., 1st floor
Email: **BusinessResourceOffice@ocfl.net**
Phone: 407-836-2859