

## Checklist for Starting a Business in Humboldt County & Its Incorporated Cities

### □ **LOCATION.** Choose a physical address for your business

OK to have a post office box as well, but you will have to have a physical location. Contact the City Planning Department to check the zoning of a location before you sign a lease or buy a building. There is a variety of commercial zones and not all business types can be located in all zones. Be aware that realtors and leasing agents are often unaware or misunderstand zoning regulations. If you are proposing a home-based business, call the City Planning Department. Not all business types qualify and may require a commercial location.

### □ **LEGAL STRUCTURE.** Determine legal structure of business, work through legal issue

Sole Proprietorship/Partnership/LLC/Corporation/B Corporation

Have legal documents drawn up if necessary (usually for a Partnership Agreement)

Trademarks/Patents/Copyrights/other proprietary information

*! SBDC will help you figure out what to ask, but will not provide legal advice. Get a lawyer before you need one.*

### □ **PLAN.** Create a Business Plan

You increase your chance for success when you take time to first explore and evaluate your business and personal goals. Then use this information to build a comprehensive and well-thought-out business plan that will help you reach these goals. The process of developing one will help you think through some important issues that you may not have considered yet. Your plan will become a valuable tool as you set out to raise money for your business. It should also provide milestones to gauge your success. **The Small Business Development Center** offers business plan workshops throughout the county. You can reach them at (707) 445-9035 or check out our website.

### □ **NAME**

Your business name is one of your assets. Make sure you won't be forced to change it later by checking to see if anyone else in the same industry is using the same name. Look it up in the database of California corporation names at <http://www.sos.ca.gov/business-programs/business-entities/name-availability> If you're not ready to choose a brand name, yet, you can always register your business under your own name and change it later.



## ❑ **Fictitious Business Name Statement**

Humboldt County Recorder: 825 5<sup>th</sup> Street 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Eureka, (707) 445-7593. Under \$100.00 usually. You can pick up the forms or download them from the website: <http://www.humboldt.gov/1991/Fictitious-Business-Name-Statement>. Needed if the company name is different than your own. Required before you can open a business checking account. Filed copy of statement must be published in a local newspaper.

## ❑ **Business License**

See attached sheet for specific City/County licensing information. A business license is required when you conduct any business.

❑ **Permits:** Don't forget permits for signage at your place of business. If your business is based from a residence located within Humboldt County, then you will need to obtain a **Home Occupation Permit** from the Community Development Department. Special Events, Fairs and the Cottage Industry require permits.

## ❑ **Business Bank Account**

ALL business expenses and income go through the business account – not a personal account  
Choose a Business Accountant / Set up Basic Bookkeeping Procedures and Accounting Software

❑ **“Not My Money” Bank Account** – separate account solely for:

An account for Sales Tax. An account Self Employment Tax / Payroll Tax

❑ **Retail Seller's Permit:** 707-576-2100 / [www.boe.ca.gov](http://www.boe.ca.gov)

Needed to buy goods wholesale and needed for most sales in California, and many services

❑ Federal Self Employment and income tax: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

❑ State Income tax: <http://www.taxes.ca.gov>

❑ **If you are an employer:**

Federal Tax ID #, the “Social Security #” for your Business at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

Fill out form SS-4 or go on-line: <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=102767,00.html>

Call toll free (800) 829-4933 or Fax- (215) 516-3990



Employment Development Department (EDD) Registration: an employer is required to file a Registration Form within 15 days after paying more than \$100 in wages to one or more employees:

[http://www.edd.ca.gov/Payroll\\_Taxes/Am\\_I\\_Required\\_to\\_Register\\_as\\_an\\_Employer.htm#business\\_sub](http://www.edd.ca.gov/Payroll_Taxes/Am_I_Required_to_Register_as_an_Employer.htm#business_sub)

Get an "Employer Guide" from the EDD at <http://www.edd.ca.gov/taxind.htm> or call 707-445-6532

Workers Compensation Insurance – You MUST have it before hiring employees (call your insurance agent or State Fund (707) 443-9721).

Know the difference between employees and contractors, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

## **Business Insurance:**

Comprehensive Liability is a must; Property coverage is necessary for any business assets and inventory, and maybe others such as Auto, Workers Compensation, Umbrella, etc. Ask your insurance agent, or find one via our referral list.

## **Contacts:**

North Coast SBDC: Business advising and business skills workshops: 445-9720

Small Business Administration: Great site for business information: [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

CalGold: A comprehensive listing of every permit you may need: [www.calgold.ca.gov](http://www.calgold.ca.gov)

Go Biz: A one-stop shop to start or grow a business in California: [www.business.ca.gov/Business-Portal](http://www.business.ca.gov/Business-Portal)

Humboldt County Website: [www.co.humboldt.ca.us](http://www.co.humboldt.ca.us)

Community Development Department: 441-4160

Humboldt County Environmental Health: 445-6215

For Business Lenders, please consult or ask for our referral list.

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North Coast Small Business Development Center | [www.northcoastsbdc.org](http://www.northcoastsbdc.org) | [biznet@northcoastsbdc.org](mailto:biznet@northcoastsbdc.org) | (707) 445-9035

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Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance. Contact BizNet at (707) 445-9035 or email [biznet@northcoastsbdc.org](mailto:biznet@northcoastsbdc.org).



County / City	Where to go to get your business license:
<b>Humboldt County</b>	<p><u>Tax Collector, County Courthouse:</u> 707-476-2450 / 825 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Eureka, CA  <a href="http://www.humboldt.gov/265/Business-Licenses">www.humboldt.gov/265/Business-Licenses</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needed as soon as you begin trade in your new business</li> <li>• Cost dependent on your business specifics; range is \$37.00 - up</li> </ul>
<b>Arcata</b>	<p><u>Arcata City Hall:</u> 707-822-5951 / 736 F Street, Arcata. CA  <a href="http://www.arcatacityhall.org/345/Business-License-Tax">www.arcatacityhall.org/345/Business-License-Tax</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needed as soon as you begin trade in your new business</li> <li>• Cost dependent on your business specifics; will range from \$40.00 – up</li> </ul>
<b>Blue Lake</b>	<p><u>Blue Lake City Hall:</u> 707-668-5655 / 111 Greenwood Ave, Blue Lake, CA  <a href="http://www.BlueLake.ca.gov/business/licenses">www.BlueLake.ca.gov/business/licenses</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needed as soon as you begin trade in your business</li> <li>• Cost dependent on your business specifics; range \$20.00 - up</li> </ul>
<b>Eureka</b>	<p><u>Eureka City Hall:</u> 707-441-4120 / 531 K Street. Eureka, CA  <a href="http://www.ci.eureka.ca.gov/depts/finance/business.asp">www.ci.eureka.ca.gov/depts/finance/business.asp</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needed before you reach \$500 per quarter in sales</li> <li>• Cost dependent on your business specifics; range \$55.00 - up</li> </ul>
<b>Fortuna</b>	<p><u>Fortuna City Hall:</u> 707-725-7600 / City Hall 621 11<sup>th</sup> Street Fortuna</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost dependent on your business specifics; range \$20 - up</li> <li>• Needed before you reach \$500 per fiscal year in sales.</li> <li>• Occupancy Permit/Building Permit - Check with City of Fortuna Building and Planning Departments before occupying or building in any commercial location. The City department will help you determine if a location is zoned for your business type and help keep any additions legal and safe.</li> <li>• Business Improvement District Assessment - Paid with Your Business License; Amount of assessment fee depends on business gross sales and location. Call the FBID office for an appointment early in the course of starting your business at 707-725-9261.  <a href="http://www.fortunabusiness.com">www.fortunabusiness.com</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Rio Dell</b>	<p><u>Rio Dell City Hall:</u> 707-764-3532 / 675 Wildwood Avenue, Rio Dell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs dependent on your business specifics; range. \$30.00- up</li> <li>• Needed before you reach \$500 per fiscal year in sales</li> </ul>

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