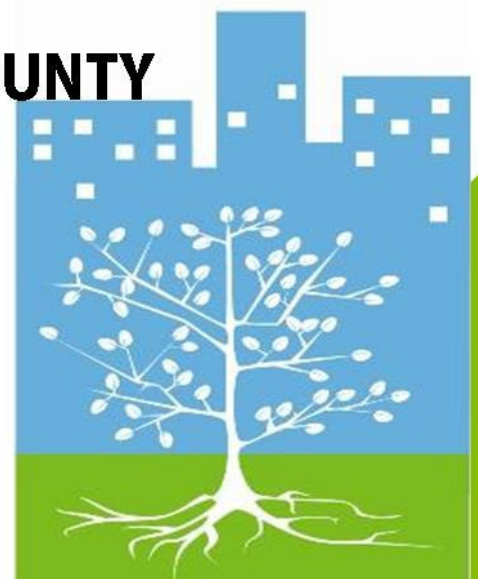




GUIDE
TO
STARTING A BUSINESS
IN
VALDOSTA-LOWNDES COUNTY

Visit our Web site www.seedscenterofsga.com

DEVELOPED & FUNDED BY:



S.E.E.D.S.
Center of South Georgia

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NOTICE: The contents of this publication are presented for informational purposes only and should not be considered in any way legal or professional assistance. We encourage you to seek the advice and counsel of a licensed professional when dealing with legal and financial matters. While care has been taken to provide accurate, up-to-date information, the information presented has been collected from numerous sources and is subject to errors and changes and should be further researched for updates and accuracy.

“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.”
-Alexander Graham Bell

Dear Entrepreneur:

A successful harvest begins with a seed and requires the proper tools, cultivation and lots of hard work. This is no different from growing a successful business. The Valdosta–Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce wants to help your business succeed by equipping you with the tools you need, connecting you to resources that can help and aid in promoting your business through various Chamber programs and events. The Chamber wants to help you plan properly and make informed decisions that will lead to a profitable business.

The Guide to Growing a Business in Valdosta-Lowndes County is intended to serve as a roadmap through the first steps of starting your own business. The material you find in the guide may lead to additional questions. Please, feel free to contact any of the appropriate resources we’ve included at the back of the booklet. Ask ANY question or for help with determining what questions you need to ask contact the S.E.E.D.S. Center at the Chamber.

Congratulations on your decision to open your own business. The Chamber wishes you the best as you embark on the journey of starting your own business. We wish you much success.



***This book would not have been possible without the dedication of many individuals and the cooperation of many organizations. We would like to thank all those who contributed in any way. Special thanks to A, T & T, Krista Tillman, Carl Swearingen, Phil Jacobs, Courtney Brinson, Michelle Frey, John Baker, Suzanne Barnett, Leigh Cato, Lee McArthur, Don Parks, Helen Penny, Mara Register, Maloch Spivey, Tabetha Peck and VSU Students In Free Enterprise members Eliza Radford, Meredith McLaughlin, without whose professional and financial assistance this booklet would not have been possible.



What is an Entrepreneur?

- An innovator. One who recognizes opportunities and organizes resources to take advantage of the opportunity.
- One who assumes the financial risk for the initiation, operation, and management of a specific business or undertaking.
- Someone who can attempt to profit by risk and initiative.
- A person who starts a business.

How can you become an entrepreneur? How can you start your own business?

The Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce and Valdosta State University's Students In Free Enterprise have designed this booklet to simplify the transition into the role of an entrepreneur. A Guide to Starting Your Business in Valdosta-Lowndes County will make establishing your own business easier by giving you "one-stop shopping" for the information you will need. The Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce is determined to promote economic growth and development. We believe this begins with you. By giving you the proper tools, we can help build a strong economic foundation. We hope this booklet will be of assistance. In order to receive the maximum benefits of the information contained in this booklet, we suggest you treat this booklet as you would a workbook. Start at the beginning and work through to the end, making notes along the way.



Before you go any further, determine your entrepreneur potential by taking the following entrepreneur challenge! (pages 5-8)

The Entrepreneur Test

An entrepreneur is a person with a business idea who is able to turn that idea into a successful business enterprise. Take the following test and see how entrepreneurial you are. Rate yourself with a 1-5 in the score column.

1 = Little agreement, 5 = Strong agreement

Statement	Score
1. Very Creative and innovative when it comes to business.	
2. Very risk tolerant and flexible in dealing with business challenges.	
3. Very resourceful in finding answers that enable the business to prosper.	
4. Very independent and able to move ahead without constant help from others.	
5. A very dynamic person who is able to perceive emerging business opportunities.	
6. Growth-oriented – very interested in growing the business.	
7. Has strong business skills or is able to find resources to meet business skill needs.	
8. Is very good at networking with others to find new markets, business inputs, or necessary business expertise.	
9. Is ready to work with investors and/or employees.	
10. Is open to business collaborations with other businesses.	
Total Score:	

Total Score:

What the score means...

40 to 50 Points = Very Entrepreneurial

30 to 39 Points = Somewhat Entrepreneurial

20 to 29 Points = Mixed Entrepreneurial Traits

10 to 19 Points = Limited "E" Traits

0 to 9 Points = Not Very Entrepreneurial

Do You Have What It Takes To Start a Business?

How do you figure out if you have what it takes to become a business owner? There is more to starting a business than just getting financing, a location, and a business license. The following is a personal inventory. It is designed to make you think seriously about your characteristics. Characteristics suited to entrepreneurship. When you answer these questions, think of an example of a past situation you have encountered.

- Am I a leader?
- Do I like to make my own decisions?
- Do others turn to me for decision-making help?
- Do I enjoy competition?
- Do I have will power and self-discipline?
- Do I plan ahead?
- Do I like people?
- Do I get along well with others?
- Am I confident and optimistic enough about my ability to overcome problems?
- Do I accept responsibility for my actions?
- Do I like being in charge?
- Am I comfortable in an uncertain environment?
- Can I be motivational and inspirational to others?
- Am I an effective salesperson?
- Do I negotiate fairly?
- Can I recognize my limitations and ask for help when I need it?
- Do I get discouraged easily?
- Have I been successful in the past in other commitments?

The next set of questions is very important to your entrepreneurial plans. These take into consideration the personal, financial, and physical strains of owning your own business. Answer these questions carefully. These issues may have far reaching effects on your life for years to come.

- Are you aware that owning your own business may require you to work 12-16 hour days, weekends, and holidays?
- Do you have the emotional strength to handle the various strains?
- Are you in good enough shape physically to deal with the heavy workload?
- Are you prepared to take a decrease in your standard of living until your business is established?
- Are your family and friends aware of the strains that they must bear as a result of your business?

Is Your Business Idea Feasible?

Answer the following questions regarding your idea. Give complete, well thought out answers to these questions. If you are unsure about or answer no to any of the following questions, then you should rethink your idea.

- What type of business do you plan to start?
- What kind of product do you plan to offer?
- Will your product satisfy a need yet unfilled?
- Will your product have a competitive edge based on price, location, quality or selection?

Researching Your Markets

It is recommended that you research your potential market demand for your product or service. First, determine what questions you need answered. The following are ideas on where to find the information you need. The S.E.E.D.S. Center can assist you with most of the research and contacts discussed below.

Primary Data:

- How much experience do you have in this business?
- Experiences of people you know
- Survey potential customers to determine their wants/needs
- Observe similar businesses
- Interview these business's owners
- Interview suppliers, vendors, bankers

Secondary Data:

- Visit your public library, use its resources
- Contact trade associations (i.e. trade shows and trade journals)
- Contact the SBDC, VSU, VTC, and the Valdosta–Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce. See the Resource Directory for contact information.
- Use various search engines on the Internet (i.e. Yahoo, Google, etc.)

More Market Research

In order to properly market your product, you need to answer the following questions. This information can be used to help you develop your marketing plan. The PCP's provide great assistance for constructing this plan.

- ❑ Who are my customers? (This determines your target market.)
- ❑ Where are they?
- ❑ How many are there? (This indicates your market size.)
- ❑ What are their needs?
- ❑ Who are my competitors?
- ❑ How does my competition do it? (One method of marketing/dealing with competition is the end-run strategy. In this strategy you adopt your competitors' strategy with the intention of making it better.)
- ❑ How can I reach them? (The distribution of your product is very important. Where your product is located can affect how well it sells.)
- ❑ How much will they pay? (The pricing of your product is also very important. You must take into consideration what your competitors charge.)
- ❑ What are the market trends? (What are people buying? It is important to be aware of what market trends are. This relates back to knowing your customers' needs. Try to distinguish between trends and fads.)
- ❑ What are the technological trends? (One obvious answer to this question is the Internet. Will you be using technology? How can it be used to help your business? Will you advertise on the Internet? Do you need a network of computers for your business? If you are in a business related to technology, it is imperative that you stay abreast of any changes.)
- ❑ What makes your business, product or service more unique than your competitors?

The following is the absolute most important step in starting a business!!!

Building a Business Plan

Business Plans Have Two Basic Functions

1. They are essential for obtaining a loan/grant from a bank or investor
2. Business Plans are the first “dry-run” at starting up a business *before* putting substantial money into it.

“While business plans serve somewhat as a guide, more importantly they serve as an understanding of relationships– i.e. what is dependent upon what and how they affect each other. In other words, business plans tell you what is the most important thing to watch and spend time on.”

Chris Gibbons – Littleton, CO

At the heart of all business plans are at least five common sections that address the core questions that face all new startups. We recommend proceeding through these sections in order, making sure that you can complete each step before proceeding to the next. For example, if the market feasibility proves to be negative then there is no need to proceed to developing financials.

The core sections (and the core business questions being answered) are:

I. Description of the business and industry (What is it we propose to do? Is it completely new or is it an organized industry?)

II. Market Feasibility Analysis (How many people want this? How many people are providing it? Is the market growing or shrinking? Why would customers pick my business over everyone else?)

III. Financials (What are my fixed and variable expenses? How much do I have to make to break even? Can I make a profit?)

IV. Marketing Plan (What is the profile of my customers? Where are they? Where do they congregate? What is the most cost effective way of reaching them? What is their motivation and how do I work that into my message?)

V. Documentation of Experience (What experience does the management team have in the industry? In business? In the specialized areas of sales, accounting, strategy, operations, organization building?)

What Goes into a Business Plan?

1. Cover sheet
2. Statement of purpose
3. Table of contents

I. The Business

- A. Description of business
- B. Marketing
- C. Competition
- D. Operating procedures
- E. Personnel
- F. Business insurance

II. Financial Data

- A. Loan applications
- B. Capital equipment and supply list
- C. Balance sheet
- D. Breakeven analysis
- E. Pro-forma income projections (profit & loss statements)
 1. Three-year summary
 2. Detail by month, first year
 3. Detail by quarters, second and third years
 4. Assumptions upon which projections were based
- F. Pro-forma cash flow

III. Supporting Documents

- A. Tax returns of principals for last three years Personal financial statement (all banks have these forms)
- B. For franchised businesses, a copy of franchise contract and all supporting documents provided by the franchisor
- C. Copy of proposed lease or purchase agreement for building space
- D. Copy of licenses and other legal documents
- E. Copy of resumes of all principals
- F. Copies of letters of intent from suppliers, etc.

Adapted from www.sba.gov

Determining Cash Needed to Start A Business

Fill in these blanks as you develop your business plan.

	Estimate of monthly expenses based on sales of \$ _____ per year.	Estimate of cash needs To start (col. 1 is projected non-profit months)
Salary of owner/manager	_____	_____
All other salaries/wages	_____	_____
Rent (building/equipment)	_____	_____
Advertising	_____	_____
Office Expense	_____	_____
Supplies	_____	_____
Telephone and facsimile	_____	_____
Other utilities	_____	_____
Insurance	_____	_____
Taxes, including SSN	_____	_____
Maintenance/Repairs	_____	_____
Legal/Professional Fees	_____	_____
Loan Payments	_____	_____
Miscellaneous	_____	_____
SUBTOTAL:	_____	_____

One Time Start-Up Costs

Fixtures and equipment (get estimates from suppliers)	_____
Decorating and remodeling (get estimates from contractors)	_____
Installation of Fixtures/Equipment (get estimates from suppliers)	_____
Starting Inventory (vendors can advise as to amounts and cost)	_____
Deposit for utilities (contact providers for estimates)	_____
Legal/professional fees (get estimates from attorney/CPA, etc)	_____
Licenses & permits (contact government offices for amounts)	_____
Advertising and promotions for opening (get estimates from media)	_____
Total estimate of cash needed for start-up	\$ _____

How to Develop an Effective Marketing Plan

Getting the message out about your business is very important; Not only getting out the message, but planting the right message in your customers' minds. Whether your marketing budget is \$5 or \$5,000, this worksheet is designed to help you think through and develop an effective marketing strategy for your business.

1. Investigate the Market

To know whether or not your product or service will sell you must research your market. Below are some questions to consider in conducting market research:

1. Who are my customers?
2. Where are my customers?
3. What other choices do consumers have besides my product or service?
4. Why are they choosing the alternatives?
5. Why is my product/service better?
6. How is the competition reaching their customers?

2. Develop your communication strategy

After you have done some research, review the good and the bad. Be honest with yourself about the strengths and weaknesses of your product or service. Make sure you have a clear understanding of your short and long term goals...then develop your strategy:

I will market **my product** positioned **this way** to reach my **target audience** offering **these values** via **distribution channels** at **this price**, overcoming my competition with **these approaches**.

3. Use tools wisely

There are many tools to choose from when marketing your business. Remember to stick to your strategy, and be sure that each investment is the best for achieving the goal stated above. Here are some things to keep in mind as you develop your tools:

- Make yourself accessible to the customer. Always give contact information
- Tell the reader/listener/etc. What makes your product the one to purchase
- Keep your message consistent
- Be creative
- Always mean business: present professional quality materials
- Hire a professional to develop a campaign and tools if need

(If your budget does not allow it, add it to next years' budget)

***Do Not Discount the Power of the Press!

Public relations tools are free and an effective way to get your message out without spending lots of money.

- Submit a news release to the local paper about your new product.
- Develop a media kit to send to television stations about your unique service.

There is no guarantee that your spot will run, but a newsworthy event or product stands a chance!

How do I do that????
Pin down your customers with common methods for Market Research:

- Conduct a survey
- Hold a focus group
- Ask existing customers (comment cards)
- Internet: information on industry trends
- Mystery shoppers
- Demographic information



I.0 Legal Aspects of Starting a Business

Deciding what form of legal entity your business will take is one of the first decisions that must be made when starting a new business. This decision will have an impact on the future of your business including your protection under the law and the rules and regulations (for example, federal and state taxes) that will apply to you. It is recommended that when you enter into any of these four forms of business that you contact an attorney, CPA, or other qualified individual. Speaking with someone who is informed about the legal entities of business will reduce the risk of mistakes in the business setup. You may want to meet with a Professional Consultant or visit the SBDC, which conduct seminars concerning legal forms.

BASIC LEGAL FORMS FOR SETTING UP A NEW BUSINESS:

1. Sole proprietorship

Owned and operated by one person. Under the law, it is not actually considered a legal entity. It is instead considered an extension of the person who owns the business. This individual has sole ownership of assets, but is also solely liable for the debts of the business.

- + Simple and low cost
- + No liability protection
- + Little credibility
- + Can't have shareholders/can't issue shares in yourself
- + Use only if there will never be employees, no business risk, and no personal assets.

2. Partnership

- A **general partnership** is comprised of two or more individuals who join to start a business. Each person has proportional ownership of the business assets and proportional liability for business debts. Each person also has authority in running the business. A partnership agreement can be drawn up to alter each person's particular liability. However, despite this document, creditors may collect from each and every member of the partnership (this may include personal assets).
- A **limited partnership** is made up of one or more general partners as well as one or more limited partners. Limited partners contribute capital and share in profits/losses. These limited partners, however, take no part in the running of the business and are not held liable for the organization's debts.
 - + Preferred for smaller companies.
 - + Slightly higher cost initially and to maintain with Secretary of State.
 - + If only one owner ("member"), can avoid filing separate tax returns
 - + Liability protection essentially identical to corporation

- ✦ Tax advantage- “flow through treatment” (no separate tax on entity)

Whether taking part in a general or limited partnership, it is advisable that you draw up a partnership agreement. This document will detail each partner’s rights and responsibilities. Partnerships are required to file both federal and state income tax. While the partnership is not typically taxed, each partner reflects charges for the partnership on his/her personal tax returns.

3. Corporation

A **corporation** is an entity, which must be approved by the state of Georgia. A corporation must file federal, state, and local taxes on its operations. One advantage to a corporation is the protection from liability afforded to shareholders. However, when an organization is small, creditors may require personal guarantees of dominate owners. Another advantage to the corporation is the ease of raising capital through the sale of common or preferred stock. A disadvantage of the corporation is that the organization’s income will essentially be taxed twice (once for the business and again on the shareholders personal income tax after collecting dividends).

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF CORPORATIONS: C AND S

- The **C corporations** have their own tax identification numbers and pay their own taxes.
- The **S corporation** is not taxed as if it is a corporation at all; it is taxed similarly to a partnership.
 - Its gains and losses are reflected on the personal income tax of the shareholder.
 - The S corporation does not provide protection from liability to its shareholders.

(The distinctions between S and C corporations can be complicated. It is very important that you consult with someone who is knowledgeable on the subject before making a decision.)

An attorney can usually perform the necessary legal procedures for you for a few hundred dollars. How much it will cost is dependent on the attorney and your business.

Four Steps to Incorporate

1. Contact the Office of the Secretary of State
2. Reserve your corporation name
3. Complete all needed documents
4. Publish your intent to incorporate in the Valdosta Daily Times

In order to incorporate your business, you need to contact the Office of the Secretary of State. You will then reserve your corporation name. There is a \$100 filing fee and you may reserve your

corporation name on-line or by mail for a fee of \$25. The incorporation process must be completed within 90 days. The Office of the Secretary of State will instruct you in the completion of all documents needed. This incorporation process includes publishing your intent to incorporate in the *Valdosta Daily Times* (the local legal publication). You will be required to pay an incorporation fee of \$40 which runs the ad for two weeks.

4. Limited Liability Company (LLC)

- LLC is one that is owned by two or more persons known as members.
- It is a mixture of other forms of organization. This form combines some of the partnerships, corporations, and S corporation's best features.
- Similarly to a corporation, you must reserve a name and file the articles of organization. An operating agreement should be written to control the conduct of the business.

An LLC shields the personal assets of members as if they were shareholders in a corporation. It also eliminates double taxation.

A few types of businesses generally cannot be an LLC such as banks and insurance companies. Check your state's requirements and the federal tax regulations for further information. There are special rules for foreign LLCs.

To incorporate your business, contact:

The Office of the Secretary of State
Corporations Division
2 MLK Jr. Dr. S.E.
Suite 315, West Tower
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
(404) 656-2817
<http://www.sos.state.ga.us>

To publish your intent to incorporate, contact:

The Valdosta Daily Times
Classified Marketplace
201 North Troup Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 244-1880
<http://www.valdostadailytimes.com>

2.0 Licensing

2.1 Business License

If you plan to operate a business in the state of Georgia, you must obtain a city or county business license. In some cases such as home-based businesses and some county areas outside the incorporated city limits, no license is needed. You should discuss the details of your situation with the licensing department. The fee for a license is contingent on the location, type, and size of your business. Around Lowndes County, occupational taxes range from \$30 to \$60, or a percentage of estimated gross receipts. In addition, most license offices will impose an administrative fee ranging from \$10 to \$30.

Please keep in mind that these numbers are not concrete. They are completely dependent on what industry you will be in and where your business will be located.

If your business will be located within the Valdosta City limits:

City of Valdosta Business License Office
102 Lee Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 259-3520
See appendix 3 the back of this guide.

If your business will be located outside any city limits:

Lowndes County Occupational Tax office
Governmental Building
300 North Patterson Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 671-2534

If your business will be located within the Hahira City limits:

City of Hahira Clerk's Office
102 South Church Street
Hahira, Georgia 31632
(229) 794-2330

If your business will be located within the Lake Park City limits:

Office of the Clerk, City of Lake Park
120 North Essa St.
Lake Park, Georgia 31636
(229) 559-7470

If your business will be located within Remerton City limits:

Remerton City Hall, Office of the Clerk
1757 Poplar Street
Remerton, Georgia 31601
(229) 247-2320

2.2 Zoning

Once you have chosen a tentative location for your business, you should contact the zoning department to determine the permitted uses of that location. Special restrictions could apply to that area. **DO**

NOT INVEST ANY MONEY IN A LOCATION UNTIL THIS SECTION HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY RESEARCHED!!! The Business License office will normally forward all information that the Zoning Administration needs for you, but it is always useful to check and make sure. Helpful information on zoning ordinances for the city and the county entitled can be found via the internet at www.lowndescounty.com. You will be required to submit your business plans to the zoning office to determine if they comply/can be adapted to comply with the following:

- 1- Current zoning classification
- 2- Building setbacks
- 3- Off-street parking availability and service entrance requirements
- 4- Buffer yards or required screening
- 5- Lot area minimum
- 6- Sign regulations***

*** Sign permits are required for erecting and placing any mounted or free-standing signs. Applications are filed through the zoning office. For specific information about signage, call the Zoning Administrator at (229) 259-3563.

If your plans do not/cannot meet these specifications, you can discuss options with the zoning office. If you find that the current zoning classification of your potential location does not allow for your business, you may file an appeal for rezoning. In order to file this appeal, contact the Zoning Administrator's office. An answer on this appeal can usually be expected about 45 days after submission of your application packet.

For City of Valdosta zoning information:

Zoning Administrator
City Hall Annex
300 North Lee Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 259-3563
See Appendix 2 in the back of this guide.

For Starting a Business in Historic Downtown Valdosta

Main Street Office
306 North Lee Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31603
(229)259-3577

Lowndes County zoning information:

Zoning Administrator
Lowndes County Board of Commissioners
325 W. Savannah Ave.
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 671-2430

For City of Remerton zoning information:

Remerton City Hall
1757 Poplar Street
Remerton, Georgia 31601
(229) 247-2320

The City of Remerton has a separate zoning office. The same sort of specifications as Lowndes County and the city of Valdosta and county apply in Remerton. For details on the specifications, speak with the city clerk about the current zoning on your potential location when you apply for your Occupational Tax in Remerton. Due to the size of the city, you will get an answer shortly. If your potential location is not zoned to allow your type of business, you may file an appeal for rezoning. The application fee for this appeal petition is \$100. To rezone up to one acre there is an additional fee of \$25. To rezone up to ten acres there will be a \$50 additional fee. Also, \$5 will be charged for each adjacent property owner. Your appeal will go before the mayor and the city commission. It will then be publicized. If there are no objections to the rezoning, then it will be passed. If there are objections, then the mayor and city commission will conduct a hearing.

For the City of Lake Park zoning information:

Office of the Clerk, City of Lake Park
120 North Essa Street
Lake Park, Georgia 31636
(229) 559-7470

For the City of Hahira zoning information:

City of Hahira Clerk's Office
102 South Church Street
Hahira, Georgia 31632
(229) 794-233

2.3 Building Construction/Renovations/Occupancy

A building permit must be obtained for both new construction and renovations of and additions to existing buildings. Before you may construct a new facility or renovate an existing one, you must have this permit. Once you have obtained a building permit, complied with the regulations pertaining to the area you are in, and construction is complete, your facility will be inspected. You will then apply for a Certificate of Occupancy. Without this certificate, it is illegal for your business to reside in the facility. Ted Bilak is the Plan Reviewer for all commercial plans for additions, renovations, and new buildings in the city of Valdosta, the city of Hahira, and Lowndes County.

For information on Valdosta city, Lowndes County, and the city of Hahira permits:

Building Inspection Department
City Hall Annex
300 North Lee Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 259-3506 or (229) 259-3565

For information on the city of Remerton:

Remerton City Hall
1757 Poplar Street
Remerton, Georgia 31601
(229) 247-3320

For information on the city of Lake Park:

Lake Park City Clerk
120 North Essa Street
Lake Park, Georgia 31636
(229) 559-7470

2.4 Health Permits

If your business is to involve food processing, handling, storage, or distribution, you must obtain permits from the Lowndes County Health Department, which handles the permits for the entire county and city. If you are unsure if your business needs a permit, contact the Health Department. Visit <http://health.state.ga.us/> for further information about Georgia Public Health and programs and services offered here.

Lowndes County Health Department

Environmental Division
206 South Patterson Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 245-2314

2.5 Trade Name Registration

In the State of Georgia, every person, firm, or partnership that conducts business has two options regarding trade name registration: 1) The business name must include the last name of the individual owner of the business. 2) If using a fictitious name (one not including the last name of the individual owner), the fictitious name must be registered in the office of the clerk of the Superior Court of the county where the business is located. The fee for Trade Name registration is \$25. The Clerk's office will provide any paperwork that needs to be completed. Similar to publishing your intent to incorporate a business, you must publish a notice of your Trade Name registration in the local newspapers. You must also file the required affidavit. Notice of the filing of the Trade Name registration must be published once a week for two weeks in the legal section of the publication. (The price as of April 2005 is \$40 for two runs in the paper. The deadline is 12 noon on Wednesday for Friday's paper and 12 noon on Thursday for Saturday's paper.

In order to run your legal advertisement, contact:

The Valdosta Daily Times
Classified Marketplace
201 North Troup Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 244-1880

Failure to register a trade name will not nullify contracts signed by the unregistered entity. The court however, is authorized to assess court costs against the parties who have failed to register the trade name or partnership name at the time an action is filed. Thus the trade name registration prevents a company from having to pay all court costs in an action by or against a company. If you have a question as to whether your business needs to register a trade name, contact the Clerk's office. If you

need to know how to prepare a trade name, please contact an attorney assistance and necessary forms. As of April, 2005 the fee to register your trade name is \$25. The Real Estate Department has Trade Name Books on hand to look through and see which names have previously been registered.

To file your Trade Name registration, contact:

Real Estate Department
Clerk of the Superior Court
Lowndes County Courthouse
P.O. Box 1349
Valdosta, Georgia 31603
(229) 333-5125

2.6 Federal Licensing

Most new small businesses most likely will not require any type of federal licensing to conduct business, unless you will be engaged in one of the following activities:

- Rendering investment advice
- Making alcohol products
- Making tobacco products
- Preparing meat products
- Making or dealing in firearms

You would need a Federal permit also to start large operations such as a television station, radio station, common carrier, or producer of drugs or biological products. The aforementioned businesses are all heavily governmentally regulated. For information on federal licensing for these types of businesses, contact The U.S. Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. The Alcohol and Tobacco Division of the Georgia Department of Revenue can be helpful in this area as well. **The contact number for beer and wine is (404) 417-4490 and the number for liquor sales information is (912) 389-4094.**

For information on federal licensing for radio communications, contact:

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission-National Call Center
445 Twelfth Street SW
Washington D.C. 20554, (888) 225-5322 www.fcc.gov

For information on federal regulations for these types of businesses, contact:

The U.S. Federal Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857, (888) 463-6332 www.fda.gov

2.7 State Licensing

Many licensing regulations should be considered when establishing a business or practicing certain regulated occupations in Georgia. Contact the Secretary of State's office for a listing of all occupations that require state licensing. You can find a complete list of occupations requiring state licenses in Appendix I (Section X). Before applying, you would be well advised to check the current licensing regulations through the office of the Secretary of State, the county and the city.

For information, contact:

Georgia Secretary of State
Professional Licensing Boards
237 Coliseum Drive
Macon, Georgia 31217
Administration Office
(478) 207-1300

www.sos.state.ga.us

See Appendix I at the back of this guide.

To check status of a License call:

(478)207-2440

The Office of the Secretary of State offers a timesaving booklet entitled **Points of Contact for Small Business Entrepreneurs. This packet includes information on governmental departments and agencies that will be instrumental in starting your business. In addition this book contains important phone numbers, addresses, and Internet addresses of offices and departments essential to your business. **Points of Contact for Small Business Entrepreneurs** can be downloaded for free using Adobe Acrobat at the Georgia Secretary of State's website. The link directly to the book is <http://www.sos.state.ga.us/corporations/regforms.htm>. See the Resource Directory (Section IX) for the list of forms included in this booklet.

3.0 Tax Information

3.1 Sales and Use Taxes

Every business that sells tangible personal property, such as merchandise, to customers is required to obtain a seller's sales tax certificate. This is issued from the state sales tax agency (the Department of Revenue). A separate certificate must be obtained for every business in which property subject to sales tax is sold. If selling to a retailer, wholesalers and manufacturers usually do not have to collect sales tax on the goods they sell. This, however, is contingent on whether the retailer has a valid certificate, the type of business engaged in, and can provide you with a "resale certificate".

Similarly, retailers are not required to pay sales tax on items you purchase for resale. You may obtain blank resale certificates at office supply stores. If state law requires that your business collect sales and use tax, you must keep detailed records of your gross receipts from sales/rentals. These records must include all sales/rentals whether or not you believe them to be taxable. Your records must also include evidence of all deductions you claim on sales/use tax returns. In addition you must record the total purchase price of all tangible personal property acquired for sale, lease, or consumption.

Sales tax forms must be filed monthly. The taxes must also be paid on a monthly basis. You can contact the Georgia Department of Revenue to petition for special permission to pay/file quarterly.

Sales and Use Tax is a tax upon the consumption of tangible personal property and certain services. It is levied or imposed upon retail sales, rentals, leases, uses, or consumption of tangible personal property and certain services that are specifically taxed under the Georgia Retailer's and Consumer's Sales and Use Tax Act. Every person making a retail sale should collect and remit the applicable tax on all sales not otherwise supported as exempt. The sales tax rate ranges from four to seven percent of the purchase price or rental charge of tangible personal property sold or rented in Georgia. The tax rate varies among counties. The tax is paid to the seller by the purchaser in addition to the purchase price. The seller collects the sales tax from the retail purchaser, renter, lessor, user, or consumer of tangible personal property. Sales tax is paid at the time of purchase of tangible personal property. Georgia Sales and Use Tax is a point of delivery tax collected when the seller passes title or possession to the purchaser. (This information can be downloaded at www.gatax.org . Click on Business Taxes.)

***A common misconception is that churches and non-profit organizations are exempt from Sales and Use Tax. www.gatax.org provides information about this as well as the following topics: Internet, Mail Order and Out of State Purchases.

- Who Must File a Return?
- What are the Filing Requirements for Sales and Use Tax?
- What are the Exemptions?
- Who Must Register for Sales and Use Tax?
- What Should I Do With My Certificate of Registration?
- Should Contractors and Sub-Contractors Register for Sales Tax?

Contact:

Georgia Department of Revenue
Sales and Use Tax Division
1800 Century Blvd., N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30345
(404) 417-6601

Georgia Department of Revenue Regional Office
Douglas Regional Office
1214 N. Peterson Ave.
Douglas, GA 31533
(912) 389-4094

3.2 Federal Excise Taxes

There are some forms of business on which the U.S. government requires additional taxation. This will be a tax that you are responsible for collecting. This tax does not come out of your pocket. Typically it is added to the sale price of your product or service. Form 720, Quarterly Federal Excise Tax Return is used to file most federal excise taxes. Federal excise taxes can be broken into nine general categories of products and services.

They are:

1. Retailers tax (certain types of fuels)
2. Retail excise tax on the sales of the following: Heavy trucks/trailers, tires and tubes, recreation equipment (e.g. fishing/hunting supplies), firearms and ammunition.
3. Air transportation tax (if you are transporting people by air, you have to collect this tax)
4. Communications taxes (e.g. on telephone or teletype services)
5. Wagering taxes
6. Taxes on U.S. mined coal
7. Environmental taxes (imposed on petroleum products, various chemicals, and hazardous wastes)
8. Alcohol, firearms, ammunition, and tobacco taxes

The Heavy Vehicle Highway Use tax is filed using Form 2290.

Be sure to contact the IRS for complete information on federal excise taxes.

Internal Revenue Service
Albany, Georgia Office
235 Roosevelt Avenue
Albany, Georgia 31701
229-430-8401

The toll free business assistance number is (800) 829-4933. This is the number taxpayers should call for questions regarding business accounts, tax law questions regarding business returns including excise tax returns, etc.

3.3 State Excise Taxes

In addition to federal excise tax, you may be responsible for collecting state excise tax as well. The categories are comparable to the federal categories. Alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, motor carriers, and trucks with more than two axles are included in the taxed categories. You should contact the Georgia Department of Revenue for complete information. For information on state excise taxes, go to the Georgia Department of Revenue website at www.gatax.org for individual division's contact information pertaining to the department of interest to your business.

3.4 Federal Income Taxes

The amount and way you will pay federal income taxes will be dependent on the legal form in which your business is organized.

For a sole proprietor or a member of a partnership:

In either of these arrangements you will be required to make estimated federal income tax payments and federal self-employment tax payments **in advance**. These individual payments are due in four installments. These payment deadlines are April 15, June 15, September 15, and January 15 for one whose tax year is the calendar year. Any amount left unpaid will be due April 15th of the following year. The Form 1040-ES is used to file these taxes. Ninety percent of your estimated tax must be paid during the course of the year.

For a corporation:

The corporation is responsible for paying estimated corporate taxes if it has taxable income. These taxes can be due as soon as the fourth month of the corporation's first tax year. The proper form for filing these taxes is the Form 1120-W. You must deposit these payments in a bank licensed to accept

federal tax payments. The corporation will be issued a coupon book. These coupons will carry the corporations tax ID number and are to be used with all federal tax payment deposits.

All forms necessary to file any of the estimated taxes mentioned above are available at your local IRS office. A coupon book will be mailed to you upon receipt of your Form SS-4 (the form filed requesting a tax ID number). Taxes may also be electronically filed.

For more information, contact:

Internal Revenue Service
235 Roosevelt Avenue
Albany, Georgia 31701
(229) 430-8401 or toll free (800) 829-4933
www.irs.gov

3.5 Estimated State Income Taxes

The State of Georgia also requires that you pay estimated state income taxes. The payment dates for estimated state tax are the same as those for federal payments (See Section K. Federal Income Taxes above). The Form 500ES should be completed for sole proprietorships or partnerships. The fee for fraudulent underpayment is 50% of the underpayment. It is 5% for negligence.

3.6 Employer Taxes

As an employer, there are taxes that you are responsible for withholding from employee wages and taxes that you are responsible for paying yourself. For more complete information on employer taxes, see Labor and Safety Regulation Information in Section IV.

Withholding Tax

Employers are required to withhold Georgia income taxes from an employee's salary and it must be reflected on your payroll records. Employers issue the W-2 form (statement of wages and income taxes with-held) to employees for income tax preparation.

Withholding filing requirements include:

- **Annual Filers:** Each employer whose tax withheld or required to be withheld is \$800 or less per year can remit payment with Form G-7 on or before January 31 of the following year. Requests to file annually must be in writing and received prior to the first quarter due date. Employers can also voluntarily file electronically regardless of the payment amount.

- **Quarterly Filers:** Each employer whose tax withheld or required to be withheld is \$200 or less per month, but not more than \$800 per year, is required to file and remit payment with Form G-7 on or before the last day of the month following the end of the quarter. Employers can also voluntarily file electronically regardless of the payment amount
- **Monthly Filers:** Each employer whose tax withheld or required to be withheld exceeds \$200 or more per month is required to remit payment with Form GA-V Payment Voucher on or before the fifteenth day of the following month, unless they are required to remit such payment electronically. The employer is required to file a Form G-7 reconciling all payments made during the quarter on or before the last day of the month following the end of the quarter. Form GA-V is not required if there was no tax withheld for the quarter or if payment was made via EFT; however, Form G-7 must be filed on or before the statutory due date.

(This information can be downloaded at www.gatax.org . It is from the 2004 Employer Tax Guide.)

For more information contact:

Georgia Department of Revenue
 Withholding Department
 1800 Century Center Blvd.
 Atlanta, Georgia 30345
 (404) 417-2311

As to estimated taxes, both corporate and individual taxpayers can make payments using a system called Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS). It is available on the Internet at www.eftps.gov.

3.7 Federal Tax Identification Numbers

Your federal tax identification number is the number used to file your taxes. It acts in a similar capacity to your social security number on your personal income taxes. In fact, if you are a sole proprietorship you will probably use your social security number. If a sole proprietorship has employees, then a Federal Tax ID number is required. In partnerships and corporations you will need a Federal Tax ID number. To determine whether you need a Tax ID number, go the www.irs.gov . Click on *Businesses*, then click on *Employer ID Numbers* under the heading *Related Topics*. You may also apply for your number on-line.

4.0 Starting Utilities Services

4.1 Establishing Water, Sewer, and Garbage Service

To establish water, sewer, and garbage service in an existing location within the city of Valdosta, you must contact the Department of Utility Services. You will be required to sign a service contract and pay a \$50 deposit. This deposit is refundable at the closing of your final bill. You can also be charged a new service or transfer fee of \$18. To sign up for service you must present a copy of your lease agreement or closing statement and Drivers License or valid Georgia ID with Social Security number.

To establish service in a new facility in the City of Valdosta, you must contact the Department of Utility Services. You will speak to a customer service representative who will inform you as to the steps you must take.

While each provider in the county has specific policies and procedures, each system is similar. The minimum amount that you can expect to spend for a deposit is around \$50, and \$18 for the service fee. Please do not rely on this estimated figure. Commercial garbage collection rates vary according to type service requested. Contact the appropriate office for a better idea of a specific amount. For information about establishing water, sewers, and garbage service in Lowndes County, Hahira, Remerton, and Lake Park, see the appropriate contact information on the following page.

For Utility Services please contact the following:

City of Valdosta, contact:

Department of Utility Service
Customer Service
102 North Lee Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 259-3510
Water and Sewer Department
229-259-3592
M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Lowndes County, contact:

Governmental Building
Lowndes County Offices
300 North Patterson Street
Valdosta, Georgia
(229) 671-2500
5pm/Weekends/Holidays (229) 249-6130
M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

City of Hahira, contact:

City of Hahira Clerk's Office
102 South Church Street
Hahira, Georgia 31632
(229) 794-2330

City of Remerton, contact:

Remerton City Hall
Office of the Clerk
1757 Poplar Street
Remerton, Georgia 31601
(229) 247-2320

City of Lake Park, contact: **

Office of the Clerk, City of Lake Park
120 North Essa Street
Lake Park, Georgia 31636

** (Lake Park has no public sewer system. Contact the Health Department for alternatives. In some areas of Lake Park, Lowndes County offers sewer services. You may also check with the county office for information.)

4.2 Establishing Gas Service

Atlanta Gas Light Company
1559 Commerce Dr.
Valdosta, GA 31601
(229) 219-7044

Due to deregulation, Atlanta Gas Light only provides the gas lines and gas, and a Certified Marketer of your choosing will bill you. After choosing a natural gas marketer, the marketer will call to start your service. All phone numbers and websites for each of these natural gas marketers are listed on the next page and is available at Atlanta Gas Light Company's website www.aglc.com, and at Atlanta Gas Light Company's phone number (800) 427-5463. This website is also helpful in providing information about how to choose a marketer, questions that you should ask while deciding which marketer to use, and fixed and variable rate pricing information.

Scana Energy Regulated Division is a provider of regulated service to individuals who are not able to obtain service from any other marketer for any reason. This includes individuals who are of lower incomes, and are not able to establish gas service any other way. For more information contact Scana Energy Regulated Division at (866) 245-7742 or visit the company's website at <http://www.scana.com/scanaenergy/regulated.asp> and go to the marketer information link.

Your marketer will set up your gas service, answer questions about your bill, and provide information about consumer services provided. You will need to call Atlanta Gas Light only if there is a gas emergency or if you smell a gas leak. **The Atlanta Gas Light Company emergency line is (877) 427-4321.** To establish service you will need to provide the service address, the name of the person responsible for bill payment, and the name of your company. A deposit will be assessed for each business that begins service. A connection fee is also usually required and will vary depending on the marketer that you have chosen for your natural gas services. The amount you will pay for deposits and connection fees is contingent on your credit history and your location. Please call your chosen marketer for a specific amount.

If you are building a new facility for your business, contact Atlanta Gas Light Company and have them put you in touch with a local commercial representative, who will help you ensure that all gas fixtures in your new building are up to Atlanta Gas Light Company specifications. He/she will also help you address any other questions regarding your gas service.

If your business will be located within the city limits of Lake Park or within the county, you must seek an alternate gas provider. These areas have no underground gas lines. Contact local gas or propane providers for information.

The following marketers are certified by the Georgia Public Service Commission to sell natural gas services in the state of Georgia:

Marketer	Phone	Web Site E-mail
Commerce Energy	1-877-226-5389	www.commerceenergy.com
Coweta-Fayette EMC Natural Gas	770-502-0226 (inside metro Atlanta) 1-877-746-4362 (outside metro Atlanta)	www.cfemcnaturalgas.com
Direct Energy	1-888-305-3828	www.directenergy.com
MX Energy	(1-877-427-1539)	www.mxenergy.com
Georgia Natural Gas Services	770-850-6200 (inside metro Atlanta) 1-877-850-6200 (outside metro Atlanta)	www.georgianaturalgas.com
Infinite Energy Inc.	770-379-9963 (inside metro Atlanta) 1-877-342-5434 (outside metro Atlanta)	www.infiniteenergy.com customerservice@infiniteenergy.com
SCANA Energy Services	1-877-GO SCANA (1-877-467-2262)	www.scana.com
Regulated Provider:		
SCANA Energy Regulated Gas South	1-866-245-7742 1-866-762-6427	www.scana.com/scanaenergy/regulated.asp www.gassouth.com
Walton EMC Natural Gas	770-267-2505 1-866-936-2427	www.waltonemcgas.com

4.3 Establishing Electrical Service

Valdosta and Lowndes County have two providers of electrical service which are Georgia Power and Colquitt EMC. Each has its own application process. Which provider you will use is dependent on where your business is located.

If your business is located within the city limits of Valdosta, Remerton, Hahira or some areas of Lake Park, your service provider is most likely Georgia Power (GP). (However, this is not true in every case. You may also give the address of your business and Colquitt EMC will let you know if they are available to service your area.) To establish service, you can contact GP Commercial Customer Assistance at (888) 660-5890 or visit <http://customerservice.southerncompany.com>. If using the internet to set up an account click on the *My Business* Tab on the homepage. Next, click on *Business Accounts*, then click *Turn on Power* and next click on *Start Electric Service*. You can register for an account and turn on power at your business using this site. A connection fee of no more than \$40 will be required. If it is decided that a deposit is needed, you will be asked to take the deposit to the local GP office located at 509 North Patterson Street. The deposit amount for a business (unlike a residential deposit) varies from business to business and can run into hundreds of dollars.

Usually, if your business will be located outside of the city limits of Valdosta, Remerton, Hahira, and some areas of Lake Park, Colquitt EMC will most likely be your service provider. In order to establish service, call (229) 244-6893 or toll free (800)342-8694. Discuss the steps to getting service with a customer service representative. You can also set up service by going online to www.colquittemc.com. Go to *Apply for Service* on the *Jump Menu*. Colquitt EMC also assesses a deposit on new commercial service. Your required deposit, however, will be contingent on your location and type of business. Contact a customer service representative for a specific amount. In addition to the deposit, a \$5 membership fee is required.

4.4 Establishing Telephone Service

AT&T provides telephone service for businesses in areas within the city limits of Valdosta, Lake Park, and Remerton, as well as county areas located outside city limits. ALLTEL is the provider for any business within the city limits of Hahira. However, sometimes the areas are not divided up in this way. To find out which company will provide your service, call and give the address of your business, and a representative will be able to supply you with the proper information about who will supply

your service. Procedures and policies for establishing telephone service are dependent on your area and your provider.

To establish service with AT&T, contact a small business services representative at (877) 253-0009. An order for service can be taken here. A credit evaluation will most likely not be needed; however, a deposit may be assessed. Whether establishing service in a new or existing facility, a Small Business Services Representative should be consulted. Visit AT&T's web site at www.att.com and click on the *Small Business* tab for more information.

If Verizon will be your service provider, call (888) 428-2499. You will reach an automated attendant. Press 1 at the menu. If your business will be located in an existing facility, the order can be placed over the phone. The customer service representative will collect information from you including your Social Security number or your Federal Tax Identification number. After discussing your service options, the service order will be placed. Your service will be started as soon as possible. If your service will be in a new facility, you will need to discuss the proper steps for establishing service with the representative. Each facility requires special attention. If you have previously had a phone in your name, a deposit will usually not be required. The deposit is based on the credit of the business. This figure can range from \$0 to \$400. For more information and a list of frequently asked questions, go to www.verizon.com.

5.0 Labor and Safety Regulation Information

5.1 Educating Yourself on Labor/Safety Issues

The Georgia Department of Labor is available to provide consultation to new businesses in the state. The local and state departments offer educational seminars and presentations throughout the year. These classes cover a wide range of labor-related topics such as labor laws, labor issues, prevailing wages, unemployment insurance, benefits, and employment services. It would be advisable to contact the local Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) office regarding these classes. These seminars are intended to provide you with all the information you need to prepare you for the employment aspects of running a business. You should begin these classes up to one year before your intended start-up. At these seminars, you will be provided with a section of an instructional workbook. After attending a certain number of these seminars, you will have the entire workbook. The Georgia Department of Labor can help walk you through all of your employment and labor problems.

Georgia Department of Labor
Valdosta Office
221 S. Ashley St.
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 333-5211

5.2 OSHA

The issuing and enforcing of occupational and safety health regulations is handled by the United States Department of Labor. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is the federal agency that administers these policies. The requirements put forth by OSHA include posting notices to employees and maintaining accurate records of employee injuries. OSHA will provide you with information on all requirements as well as related publications. OSHA policies and regulations must be posted in the workspace where all employees may see. Go to the website www.osha.gov and click on "P" and "Publications" to find out about publications by OSHA to help small businesses. Publication number 2209 (OSHA handbook for small business) and number 3163 (Q and A for small business) are especially helpful. Both of these can be found at the website. In addition to OSHA, the US government also supports the Employment Standards Administration, Mine Safety and Health Administration, Veterans Employment and Training Service, and the Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration. Each of these departments is designed to protect both the employer and employee. Similar to OSHA, each issues and enforces a unique set of requirements and regulations.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210
(800) 321-6742
www.osha.gov

5.3 Employer Tax Responsibilities

The IRS website www.irs.gov is helpful with questions concerning taxes for employers.

Income Taxes

Businesses with employees must pay employer taxes and withhold employee taxes for both the State and Federal governments. These should be deposited in any Federal Reserve Bank. You will be given a coupon book to accompany your deposits. These deposits are required monthly or quarterly. The Georgia and US Departments of Revenue will determine your time of payment. You will also be required to withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes. In addition to this withholding, the employer must pay a matching amount. You should consult the current year tax calendar for present percentages.

Unemployment Insurance Taxes

Federal Unemployment Insurance Tax is the employer's responsibility. This is not withheld from employee wages. Consult the Employer's Tax Guide for more information on the various taxes that you will be required to pay. The Employer's Tax Guide is a booklet designed to help you with all aspects of taxation. Contact the Georgia and US Departments of Labor and Revenue to receive the Employer's Tax Guide and other relevant information. See contact information below.

If you are a sole proprietor, you are not required to pay withholding for unemployment insurance. You are however required to pay self-employment tax. Contact the Internal Revenue Service for complete details.

Workers' Compensation Insurance

Workers' Compensation insurance is required of any business with more than three employees. The rates vary with the business type and the risk level. Worker's Compensation Insurance should be purchased from an insurance agent of your choice. For example, this insurance could be purchased along with your liability and property insurance. For more information, contact the State Board of Workers' Compensation at (404) 656-3875 or visit their website at www.ganet.org/sbwc. This website has forms and various other resources helpful to a new business owner. Your business can become eligible for discounts on your Workers' Compensation Insurance Premiums. This is possible

through the DRUG FREE WORKPLACE PROGRAM (or DRUGS DON'T WORK PROGRAM). Contact the Chamber of Commerce for more information on this program. See the Resource Directory for contact information.

5.4 Application, Hiring, and Termination Process

There are basic ground rules to hiring and firing employees. There are also legal requirements to acquiring or terminating employees. If handled incorrectly, personnel issues can result in legal problems. These legal problems can be large enough to shut your business. It is important to make sure all your bases are covered. In addition to the do's and don'ts listed below, contact the Georgia Department of Labor, and/or an attorney for more on correct hiring and firing policies.

APPLICATION AND HIRING

DON'T:

- *Ask obvious questions.* Do not ask questions regarding sex, age, race, etc. or anything related to these areas. These are sensitive areas and cannot be used as discriminating factors. Some applicants may believe that all gathered information is used. It is for this reason that you should not ask these questions. It is best to avoid these topics so as to eliminate all possibility of legal problems.
- *Write on the job application form.* Any notes taken during interviews should be made on photocopies or other paper. This allows you to preserve the original application without marring it for your permanent records.

DO:

- *Limit your interview questions to job duties.* There is no reason to ask questions that do not apply to the responsibilities of the position. You may ask if an applicant has any barriers to completing the duties. Do **not** ask questions like "Do you have children?" or "Are you married?". Small talk is acceptable if the interviewer is careful. Do not venture into conversation that might produce seemingly discriminatory information.
- *Make sure all company procedures follow employment statutes.* Have your advisors or attorney review your system for application, hiring, and termination before you begin hiring and periodically thereafter.
- **EDUCATE YOURSELF!!!!** The best way to prevent problems is to be familiar with the law. When you are in doubt about any issue concerning labor or safety, contact the Georgia Department of Labor. See the Resource Directory for contact information.

Guidelines for Termination Procedures

Review company policies. If you have not yet developed company policies regarding application, hiring, and termination, call the GDOL. Make a checklist of your procedures. Make sure that you have followed the rules in the firing process. If you have not completed your checklist, **YOU SHOULD NOT TERMINATE THE EMPLOYEE YET.** Take care to finish all steps in the process to alleviate any questions and possible legal repercussions.

- *Have a stated code of expected employee behavior.* Many employers face problems due to unclear expectations of conduct. It is easier to prove reasons for termination if such a code is in place. This documentation will be helpful if you are faced with paying restitution because it will show that you had sufficient cause to terminate the employee.
- *Conduct an exit interview.* This allows you to tie up any loose ends. Final paychecks can be issued, and company property (e.g. keys, paperwork, and files) can be returned. Ask the employee what he/she liked or disliked about your company. Ask for feedback on aspects of your company of which this person has knowledge. This person might be a bit more forthcoming with problems or constructive criticisms than someone who still works there.
- *Keep termination of an employee between you (management) and the employee.* The fired employee will appreciate your discretion in this matter. Termination should not be discussed with other employees. Privacy can help you avoid harsh feelings and legal repercussions.
- *Have employees sign a release.* If you are offering the fired employee severance pay or anything else of value, have him/her sign a release of liability to the company. This may protect you in case of legal action.

5.5 Where to Find Your Labor Force

There are many resources through which employees can be found. You can place a classified ad in the local newspaper or on an on-line job listing source. You can place ads for week long and even month long periods. Contact the publication you wish to use for more specific information. The Georgia Department of Labor is an agency that can assist you in finding employees. For more information on how the GDOL can help you, call (229) 333-5211.

Other places you might contact are Valdosta State University and Valdosta Technical College. You can register your job opening with VSU's Cooperative Education or Career Planning and Placement office. Contact Career Services at VSU at 229-333-5942. Valdosta Technical College also offers a Job

Placement service for students. The Job Placement/Career Services Office has enjoyed an average job placement rate among graduates of more than 90% for more than ten years. The office is open from 8:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and from 8:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. on Friday. Contact Job Placement/Career Services at 229-333-2120 and 229-333-2121.

Private Staffing Agencies are an excellent source of finding specialized as well as hourly employees. For a list of staffing agencies in the Valdosta area contact the Chamber of Commerce at (229) 247-8100.

The South Georgia Regional Development Center (SGRDC) can be a resource of labor through the Job Training Partnership Act. Moody Air Force Base also posts jobs for military personnel that wish to make extra income. As in other cases regarding labor and safety issues, if in doubt contact the GDOL. See the Resource Directory for contact information.

6.0 Financing Information

When starting a business, one important consideration is where to obtain capital to back your venture. Most start-up businesses require a capital contribution by the entrepreneur, usually 20%. The remaining financing may be available from local banks or may require private investors. There are several Small Business Administration loan programs available to businesses, all of which require bank participation. These loans are all subject to change based on the SBA's budget.

- ❑ **SBA Low Doc** The maximum loan is \$150,000 and not more than an 85% guarantee. The loan is administered by the bank and is termed "Low Doc" because documentation has been greatly reduced and red tape is at a minimum. Eligible expenditures are for land and building, machinery and equipment, inventory, and working capital.
- ❑ **SBA Guaranteed Loan Program 7(A)** Eligible expenditures are for land and building, machinery and equipment, working capital, and some restructure of existing debt. The maximum SBA will guarantee is \$1,000,000 and not more than 75% of the total loan.
- ❑ **SBA 504 Loan Program** This program provides financing for small business through a low interest, fixed rate, long term loan. The Small Business Administration takes a second lien position behind the bank. Eligible expenditures are for land and building, long-life machinery and equipment. The minimum SBA will finance is \$125,000, and the maximum is \$1,000,000. Job creation is a requirement of the program.

While each of these programs has specific requirements for eligibility, there are certain standards, which must be met for all loan programs. A loan applicant must be of good character, show the ability to operate a small business successfully, and have a reasonable amount of his/her own resources to invest to withstand possible losses.

In addition, the following will likely be required:

- ❑ Credit Report
- ❑ Collateral adequate to secure the debt. List of collateral and its value.
- ❑ Appraisals required on real property used as collateral.
- ❑ Personal guarantees required of those persons (or companies with 20% ownership)
- ❑ Secondary collateral may be required.
- ❑ Personal financial statements and financial statements of business (if applicable).

How To Apply:

YOU MUST FIRST SEEK FINANCING FROM A BANK OR OTHER PRIVATE SOURCE.

Take your business plan to your banker and discuss your financial requirements with him/her. His/her involvement is essential. Then, call the Valdosta Small Business Development Center (229) 245-3738 or the South Georgia Regional Development Center (229) 333-5277 to discuss the project's eligibility for SBA assistance.

The Small Business Assistance Corporation

The Small Business Assistance Corporation is a private, non-profit corporation and is certified by the Small Business Administration to operate throughout 44 counties in Southeast Georgia. A Microloan program is available through this organization. The maximum loan amount is \$35,000 or \$105,000 with a participating bank.

You can use this money for:

- Working Capital
- Inventory and Supplies
- Furniture and Fixtures
- Machinery and Equipment
- Leasehold Improvements
- Purchase and Existing Business

For more information or to request an application for a Microloan, call (888) 287-2137 or go to the Small Business Assistance Corporation's website, www.sbacsav.com.

** This information is constantly changing. You can check for updated information on SBA's website, www.sba.gov. You can access the entire SBA publication as well as important forms from this site.

7.0 Business Service Providers

7.1 Downtown Valdosta

Valdosta's historic downtown area represents an interesting opportunity to the potential entrepreneur. Downtown is experiencing rejuvenation due to recent efforts to beautify and develop the area. If you are planning to open a full-service restaurant, you should be aware that special food service permitting will apply. Those intending to sell alcohol need to be aware of distance requirements from schools and churches. *Design Guidelines* is a book that is available for only \$10 about the guidelines of the Historic District of Downtown Valdosta. However, when developing downtown, one may qualify for tax incentives and grants. The Main Street Office can assist potential business owners with information regarding historic preservation requirements, building and zoning requirements, state and federal tax incentives, and other topics regarding development in the downtown area. The Main Street Office will be there to help you with questions about guidelines involved in starting a business downtown. Contact the Main Street Office for assistance.

Main Street Office
300 North Lee Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31603
(229) 259-3577

7.2 Agribusiness

Agribusiness makes up a large part of the economy of Lowndes County. This field of business also encounters special restrictions and opportunities. For more information on agribusiness ventures, contact your Lowndes County Extension Service. The Extension Service is a part of the University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, and provides research-based information and technical guidance to farmers and landowners about farming. The Extension Service has information on crop and livestock enterprise budgets and license/permits requirements of the Georgia Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Extension Service provides education about agriculture, horticulture, 4H, and family and consumer science and also holds workshops and seminars that are important to business owners in these fields. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) of the United States Department of Agriculture is located in the Federal building. The FSA has farm loan programs and land conservation assistance programs. Please see the Resource Directory for contact information.

University of Georgia Extension Service
Lowndes County Civic Center
2102 East Hill Avenue (Hwy.84)
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 333-5185

USDA Service Center
2108 East Hill Avenue (Hwy.84)
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
(229) 242-0575

7.3 International Trade

International trade can be difficult, but also can provide tremendous opportunities. Most start-up businesses will not be participating in international trade. However, if you choose to export or import goods, the following contacts may provide you with valuable information. The United States Export Assistance Center can provide you access to all federal exporting resources. See the Resource Directory for contact information.

Sunbelt U.S. Export Assistance Center
75 Fifth Street, N.W., Suite 1055
Atlanta, Georgia 30308
Tel: 404-897-6089
Fax: 404-897-6085
www.trade.gov

The U.S. Department of Commerce is also an incredible help to small businesses interested in international business. The Department of Commerce encourages small businesses to participate in exporting to other countries, and provides opportunities for these small businesses to connect with international companies searching for a particular product or service. One of many of these opportunities is BuyUSA.com, which can be reached through the Department of Commerce website at www.commerce.gov and click on the “Trade Opportunities for U.S. Business” under the Free Trade heading.

The SBDC holds discussions about International Trade and how small businesses can get involved. Contact the SBDC for more information about this and other discussions that are helpful for business owners.

7.4 Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center

Mission: To provide marketing and procurement technical assistance to Georgia businesses, large and small, operating in the government procurement markets at the federal, state, and local levels as a prime contractor or subcontractor.

The Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center (GTPAC) has offices conveniently located throughout the state of Georgia. Visit one of the offices in your area to obtain the necessary forms for government and prime contractors' bidder's lists that must be submitted in order to buy products and services.

This assistance is provided at no charge.

Contact: Bobby Rowe
Georgia Tech Enterprise
Innovation Institute
Albany Region Office
125 Pine Avenue, Suite 220
Albany, GA 31701
Phone: (229) 430-6195
www.edi.gatech.edu/gtpac

GTPAC also conducts seminars to help contractor personnel better understand the procurement process. GTPAC provides counseling and assistance in:

- Solicitation analysis
- Bid/proposal preparation
- Federal specifications/standards
- Cost accounting/quality systems
- Electronic commerce/electronic data interchange
- Pre-award surveys
- And more

7.5 Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Mission: To promote and support the domestic and international economic development of Hispanic businesses, and to serve as a link between non-Hispanic entities and the Hispanic market

The GHCC advances the interest of its members by advocating for the rights of the Hispanic business community, and by pursuing initiatives for shaping business-pertinent government policies at the local and national levels. Members have access to a variety of valuable resources, information, support services and networking opportunities. Other important components are the Grass Roots Seminars that the GHCC sponsors on “How to Open Your Own Business”, the Latino Law School, and Import/Export seminars, among others. If you are interested in the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce services contact:

Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
2801 Buford Highway
Suite 500
Atlanta, Georgia 30329
(404) 929-9998
Or visit www.ghcc.org

7.6 Georgia Tech’s Economic Development Institute

Georgia Tech's Economic Development Institute (EDI) offers an array of services with a common objective: to grow Georgia’s economy by providing technology-driven solutions to the state’s businesses and communities. Whether the goal is attracting new companies to Georgia, expanding existing enterprises, providing technical expertise to help Georgia business and industry be more competitive, or helping communities plan for growth, EDI helps keep the state’s economy moving forward. EDI assists company managers and business owners. For Georgia business and industry, EDI provides technical assistance, management training and other assistance designed to improve productivity and help companies become more competitive in world markets.

Georgia Tech's Economic Development Institute supports Georgia's economic development efforts by conducting specialized professional development courses, performing economic development research, helping Georgia communities prepare for growth and connecting relocating or expanding companies with resources at Georgia Tech. EDI economic development specialists help Georgia's economic and community development professionals expand their skills and keep current with new trends and technologies.

EDI provides its services through a statewide network of [regional offices](#), backed up by campus-based skill centers and the resources of Georgia Tech's nationally-ranked academic and research faculty.

Enterprise Innovation Institute
General Manager-Business Development
75 Fifth Street, NW, Suite 100
Atlanta, GA 30308
Phone: (404) 894-0050
www.edi.gatech.edu

7.7 The Georgia Entrepreneur & Small Business Coordinating Network

The Georgia Entrepreneur & Small Business Coordinating Network is a multi-agency group charged to coordinate the state's entrepreneur and small business program. These efforts include but are not limited to cross training, co-marketing, joint advocacy and service delivery efficiency. The Network also has two appointed entrepreneur representatives, a community representative and a variety of advisory groups comprised of private sector leaders.

To facilitate this important work, the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) Commissioner Kenneth C. Stewart oversees the Office of Entrepreneur & Small Business Development. This office is charged with elevating awareness of state resources, marketing and promoting these resources, cross training all the resource providers and overseeing a statewide, community-based entrepreneur and small business development program being delivered by GDEcD's Regional Managers.

To find out how the Georgia Entrepreneur and Small Business Network can help you start and maintain your small business visit their informational website.

Go to www.Georgia.org Click on Entrepreneur and Small Business Development

7.8 E-Commerce

On-line business is business. Getting started in E-Commerce can be confusing. If you are interested in starting an E-business visit www.entrepreneur.com/ebusiness

This website is recommended by the Georgia Entrepreneur & Small Business Coordinating Network. It can help you with start-up, design, marketing, operations and much more.

7.9 Minority Financial Assistance

There are several resources available to potential minority business owners. 100 Black Men of Valdosta Inc. is available to assist in contacts, networking, and workshops. The Minority Business

Development Agency is also available to offer resource information and support. Business and Professional Women offers support and recognition to those women in the business field. These groups can be contacted for further information regarding their support networks. The Small Business Administration has a web site providing additional information and support to female and minority business owners. It can be found at <http://www.sbaonline.sba.gov/>. Please see the Resource Directory for contact information. Information about financial and support assistance can be found in section VI page 2.

100 Black Men of Valdosta, Inc.
Willie Head, President
P.O. Box 1352
Valdosta, Georgia 31602
(229) 244-5899

Minority Business Development Agency
401 West Peachtree Street Room 1715
Atlanta, Georgia 30308
(404) 730-3300
<http://www.mbd.gov/>

The Business and Professional Women provides contact with professionals in the community, current Women's Advocacy Events, Information on News and Media Promotions, as well as a variety of other services helpful to working women including financial assistance through scholarships for working women interested in going to school. The "BPW" holds monthly meetings with topics of interest to working women. You can get a membership application and information from:

Business and Professional Women/USA
1900 M Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, D.C. 20036
PHONE: (202) 293-1100,
Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Eastern Time, excluding holidays

8.0 One Year Plan for Entrepreneurs

Starting your own business is not something that should be rushed into. Careful, advanced planning can ensure the success of your venture. Below is a one-year plan for starting a business.

ONE YEAR BEFORE START-UP

- ❑ Refine your ideas. Determine exactly where you want to go.
- ❑ Decide what business you want to start. Be specific in your business definition.
- ❑ Assess the impact on your family and personal life. How will this affect your relationships?
- ❑ Begin market research. You must determine if there is a need for your product. This research can be performed by students, professionals, or even on your own. See the Resource Directory for places to gather information.
- ❑ Build your skills by taking formal management/business courses. Contact VSU Continuing Education or Valdosta Technical College Business and Industry Services for options.
- ❑ Contact the VSU SBDC for assistance in writing a business plan. (See Resource Directory)
- ❑ Contact the GDOL for information on their educational seminars on labor/safety issues.

SIX MONTHS BEFORE START-UP

- ❑ Determine the focus of your business. What do you want to specialize in? It is easier to excel at one area than in many.
- ❑ Start writing your business plan.
- ❑ Define your target markets. Who is your intended clientele? Who should you aim your advertising towards?
- ❑ Research business and trade organizations. Most areas of business have agencies and organizations set up to facilitate business. Take advantage of what these groups have to offer.
- ❑ Seek the best location for your business. Do you need little or lots of space? Would your business be better suited downtown or in a rural part of the county? Location can make or break a business. You can conduct the search for on your own or you can contact a real estate agent.
- ❑ **WARNING:** Do not sign any leases or purchase documents at this time.

FOUR MONTHS BEFORE START-UP

- ❑ Name your business. What are you going to call your venture? Be careful in deciding on a name, and be aware that someone may already be using the name you choose. Have a few back-up ideas. You can check to see if a name is being used by contacting the Office of the Secretary of State. See the Resource Directory for contact information.
- ❑ Select business location. After seeking out several possible locations, now is the time to choose one. Make sure that the location you choose is within your budget.
- ❑ Select outside advisors. This will be a very hectic time. It will be beneficial to have people on which you can call to listen to your ideas, problems, and plans. These people will provide you with guidance, constructive criticism, and feedback. They should be people experienced and knowledgeable in business.
- ❑ Set up a network of mentors. Select people who can help you by giving you insights and ideas.
- ❑ Choose your business' legal form. Will you be a partnership, sole proprietorship, or corporation? Legal form should be chosen very carefully as it can impact your business in many ways.

- ❑ Set up bookkeeping, accounting and office systems. How are you going to operate your office? If you are going to keep your own books, then you need to learn or refresh your skills. Are you going to hire a bookkeeper/bookkeeping firm?
- ❑ Seek outside demographic information. Gather secondary information. (See Researching Your Markets)
- ❑ Work on your business plan.

THREE MONTHS BEFORE START-UP

- ❑ Determine your cash needs. How much money do you need for start-up? What will your monthly variable and fixed costs be? What is your break-even point? These are all questions that must be answered. You must estimate your cash flows. (See attached worksheet)
- ❑ Review preliminary financial objectives. How much profit do you expect to make? Are you planning on making investments? What is your intended cash flow?
- ❑ Decide on your pricing strategy. After determining your variable and fixed costs, decide what your markup rate will be. You will also need to consider demand and competitive factors in setting your price.
- ❑ Forecast sales. Contact the SBDC or others in your field to help you forecast accurately.
- ❑ Determine your company's employee needs. How many people do you need on your staff? This is important to decide as it affects your requirements for insurance, etc.
- ❑ Project your cash flow. You should write out an estimated statement of all revenues and expenditures. This statement should cover one calendar year. Also project your net cash flow for the entire year.
- ❑ Work on your business plan.

TWO MONTHS BEFORE START-UP

- ❑ Prepare your marketing plan. How are you going to market your product? Are you going to use publicity? Are you going to use paid advertisement? You must decide how you will go about introducing your business to the public.
- ❑ Get your business license. (See occupational tax)
- ❑ Review non-financial objectives (Image, legal questions). How do you want the public to see your business? Are you a family establishment or geared more toward adults? What form is your business taking? Do you have all legal documents needed?
- ❑ Prepare a preliminary balance sheet. Contact the SBDC for assistance.
- ❑ Secure necessary financing. Whether through a private lender or through other sources, you must obtain the necessary amount of start-up capital.
- ❑ Secure insurance coverage if applicable. (See Labor/Safety)
- ❑ Determine advertising, promotion, and public relations strategies
- ❑ Order opening inventories. Talk to your suppliers for estimated opening needs.
- ❑ Complete improvements to your facility.
- ❑ Start your hiring process. (See Labor/Safety)
- ❑ Refine your business plan.

ONE MONTH BEFORE START-UP

- ❑ Fine tune your cash flow budget
- ❑ Prepare for your grand opening. Join the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce and set up your ribbon cutting.
- ❑ Set up your office, display areas, etc. Have everything exactly as you want it. The last few days before opening are not the time to do this. The look of your store or office sets the tone for your business. You should put thought and time into it.
- ❑ Review your final checklist.
- ❑ Hire your staff. (See Labor/Safety)
- ❑ Make sure everything works. It is better to find out that your equipment does not work in advance. In that case, you can make any necessary repairs and be ready to open your doors on time.
- ❑ Implement marketing, promotion, and opening plans. This will be a good time to start advertising in local newspapers, radio, and television if your budget permits. Remember: Word of mouth is your most powerful publicity! It's also the least expensive. Spread the word.

START-UP AND AFTER

- ❑ Budget your time. As a new business owner your time will be precious. Schedule your time wisely. It is important to get the maximum out of time you have available. You might consider reading some time management materials or speaking with someone who you think manages time wisely.
- ❑ Continuously update your product/service. What is good about your product? Make it better. What doesn't work with your product? Eliminate the problem as much as possible. If people patronize your business for the original product, an improved product can only increase that.
- ❑ LISTEN to your customers, advisors, and vendors. The customers are your cash flow. It is important to gather their opinions and put them to use. Their ideas can be helpful in updating your product. LISTEN to your advisors. You asked them to advise you for a reason. Let them guide you. LISTEN to your vendors. These vendors have been in the business much longer than you have. They can possibly provide you with money-saving or moneymaking ideas.
- ❑ Check cash flow budget against actual performance
- ❑ Maintain good communications with your bankers and vendors. By keeping the lines of communication open you are helping yourself. Should you need their help in the future, you will be more likely to receive it.
- ❑ Continue to improve the 5c's of credit (Character, Collateral, Capacity, Capital, and Condition)
- ❑ Work with investors. Make sure that you are in contact with them. Also, make sure that you understand the conditions of your repayment. When are your payments due? Make sure that you fulfill all obligations to investors. You may need to call upon them again someday.
- ❑ Check cost of living budget. If you are drawing money from the company for living expenses, be sure to take only what is necessary. Stick tightly to your budget.
- ❑ YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER DELAYING YOUR OFFICIAL GRAND OPENING/RIBBON CUTTING UNTIL YOU'VE BEEN IN BUSINESS FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS. If you do, you can make sure that you've worked the "bugs" out and that things are running smoothly.

9.0 Resource Directory

When starting a business it is important to have a diverse base of information sources. One way to insure success is through education. The more you know about your field, the better off your business will be. The following is a list of potential resources for information.

- ❑ **I 00 Black Men of Valdosta, Inc.:** Promotes development of minority owned businesses and sponsors programs to assist/encourage minority youth. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1352, Valdosta, GA, 31603, Phone Number: (229) 244-5899
- ❑ **AT&T:** Small Business Services: Phone Number 780-2800. Internet Address: www.att.com
- ❑ **Better Business Bureau:** This agency's regional office is based in Savannah. Located at 6606 Abercorn Street 108 C, Savannah, Georgia 31405-5817. The phone number is: (912) 354-7521. Internet address: www.bbbsoutheastatlantic.org
- ❑ **Business and Professional Women:** This group is dedicated to supporting local women in business oriented and professional occupations. The President, Pam Griffin can be contacted at 110 East Main Street in Hahira, Georgia 31632.
- ❑ **Downtown Valdosta:** Valdosta's downtown represents an interesting opportunity to potential entrepreneurs. The Main Street Office will be there to help you with questions about guidelines involved in starting a business downtown. Located at 300 North Lee Street. Phone Number (229) 259-3577.
- ❑ **Drugs Don't Work Program:** This program is administered locally by the Valdosta/Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce. Located at: 416 N. Ashley Street. Phone Number (229) 247-8100
- ❑ **USDA Service Center:** Located at 2108 East Hill Avenue (Hwy. 84) in Valdosta, Georgia 31601. Phone Number (229) 242-0575
- ❑ **Georgia Department of Labor:** Valdosta Office- Located at 2808 North Oak Street, Phone Number(229) 333-5211. Internet address: www.dol.state.ga.us
- ❑ **Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce:** Promotes and supports the economic development of Hispanic businesses. Located at 2801 Buford Highway Suite 500, Atlanta, Georgia 30389. Phone Number (404) 929-9998.
- ❑ **Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center:** It's mission is to provide marketing and procurement assistance to Georgia businesses, operating in the government procurement market as a prime contractor or subcontractor. Contact 125 Pine Ave. Ste. 220, Albany Georgia. Phone Number (229)430-4189.

- ❑ **Internal Revenue Service:** Located in the Valdosta Federal Building at 401 N. Patterson Street. Phone Number (800) 829-1040
- ❑ **Occupational Tax:** (Utility payments and alcohol and beverage license) Located at 300 North Patterson Street Phone Number (229) 671-2534
- ❑ **Minority Business Development Agency Regional Office:** Located at 401 W. Peachtree Street Room 1715, Atlanta, Georgia 30308. Phone Number (404) 730-3300. Internet address: www.mbda.gov
- ❑ **Small Business Administration:** District Office Phone Number (404) 331-0100 Internet address: www.sba.gov
- ❑ **Small Business Development Center:** Offers a wide range of free business consulting services for potential business owners including assistance in starting a business, obtaining financing, and developing marketing and managerial plans. The SBDC is located in VSU's College of Business Administration, Thaxton Hall Room 100. Phone Number (229) 245-3738. Internet address: www.valdosta.edu/sbdc
- ❑ **Southern Georgia Regional Commission Center:** Promotes economic development throughout a ten county area including Lowndes County. The SGRDC works in conjunction with private lenders to provide financing for small businesses. Located at 325 W. Savannah Avenue, Valdosta, Phone Number (229) 333-5277
- ❑ **US Labor Department:** This office can provide you with information on OSHA. Macon Office located at 4885 Riverside Drive Street 303 Macon, Georgia 31210 Phone number (478) 475-0772
- ❑ **University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service:** Located at the Lowndes County Civic Center, 2102 East Hill Avenue (Hwy. 84) Valdosta, Georgia 31601. Phone Number (229) 333-5185
- ❑ **Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce:** Promotes assistance to entrepreneurs through the SEEDS Center. Can serve as your connection to the existing economic and political community. Located at 416 North Ashley Street. Phone Number (229) 247-8100. Internet address: www.valdostachamber.com
- ❑ **South Georgia Regional Library:** Located at 300 Woodrow Wilson Drive Valdosta, Georgia 31602 Phone Number (229) 333-0086. SGRL's website is www.sgri.org
- ❑ **Secretary of State Office:** Located at 315 West Tower 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive., Atlanta, Georgia 30334 Phone Number (404) 656-2817. Corp Divisions.

10.0 Glossary of Terms

<u>Assets</u>	Resources, owned or controlled by a company, that have future benefits. These benefits must be quantifiable in monetary terms.
<u>Balance Sheet</u>	A list of a company's assets, liabilities, and owner's equity at a particular point in time.
<u>Break Even</u>	The unit volume where total revenue equals total cost; there is neither profit nor loss.
<u>Capacity</u>	The amount of goods or work that can be produced by a company given its level of equipment, labor, and facilities.
<u>Capital</u>	The funds necessary to establish or operate a business.
<u>Cash Flow</u>	The movement of money into and out of a company; actual income received and actual payments made out.
<u>Cash Flow Statement</u>	A presentation of the cash inflows and outflows for a particular period of time. These flows are grouped into major categories of cash from operations, cash-investing activities, and cash-financing activities.
<u>Collateral</u>	Assets pledged in return for loans.
<u>Conventional Financing</u>	Financing from established lenders, such as banks, rather than from investors; debt financing.
<u>Debt Financing</u>	Raising money for a business by borrowing, often in the form of bank loans. (See Conventional Financing above)
<u>Debt Service</u>	Money being paid out on a loan; the amount necessary to keep a loan from going into default.
<u>Disbursements</u>	Money paid out.
<u>Equity</u>	Shares of stock in a company; ownership interest in a company.
<u>Expenses</u>	Outflows of resources to generate revenues.
<u>Fixed Costs</u>	Those costs that are not responsive to changes in volume over the relevant range of time.

<u>Income Statement</u>	A matching of a company's accomplishments (i.e. sales) with effort (expenses from operations) during a particular period of time. (Revenues – Expenses = Net Income)
<u>Leasehold Improvements</u>	The changes made to a rented store, office or plant, to suit the tenant and make the location more appropriate for the conduct of the tenant's business.
<u>Letter of Intent</u>	A letter or other document by a customer indicating the customer's intention to buy from a company.
<u>Liabilities</u>	Commitments to pay out assets (typically cash) to or render services for creditors
<u>Licensing</u>	The granting or permission by one company to another to use its products, trademark, or name in a limited, particular manner.
<u>Liquidity</u>	The ability to turn assets into cash quickly and easily.
<u>Market Share</u>	The percentage of the total available customer base captured by a company.
<u>Net Worth</u>	The total ownership interest in a company, represented by the excess of the total amount of assets minus the total amount of liabilities.
<u>Partnership</u>	A legal relationship of two or more individuals to run a company.
<u>Profit Margin</u>	The amount of money earned after the cost of goods or all operating expenses are deducted; usually expressed in percentage terms.
<u>Pro Forma Statements</u>	A financial statement detailing management's predictions.
<u>Receipts</u>	Funds coming into the company; the actual money paid to the company for its products or services; not necessarily the same as a company's actual receipts.
<u>Sole Proprietorship</u>	Company owned and managed by one person.
<u>Variable Costs</u>	Those costs that are directly responsive to changes in volume over the relevant range of time.

<u>Venture Capitalists</u>	Individuals or firms who invest money in new enterprises.
<u>Working Capital</u>	The cash available to the company for the ongoing operations of the business.

Appendix I

Occupations Requiring State Licensing

Visit the Secretary of State website for information: www.sos.state.ga.

State Board of Accountancy

Certified Public Accountant
Registered Public Accountant
Foreign Accountant
Accounting Firms

State Boards of Architects

Architects
Interior Designers

Georgia Athlete Agent Commission

Athlete Agents

Board of Athletic Trainers

Athletic Trainers

Georgia Auctioneer Commission

Auctioneers
Auctioneer Corporations
Non-resident auctioneers
Non-resident corporations

State Board of Barbers

Master Barbers
Teachers
Apprentice
Schools
Shops

State Board of Chiropractic Examiners

Chiropractors

Construction Industry Licensing Boards

Conditioned Air Contractors
Electrical Contractors
Low Voltage Contractors
Master Plumbers

Journeyman Plumbers
Utility Contractors
Utility Manager
Utility Foreman

State Board of Cosmetology

Master Cosmetology
Apprentice
Teachers
Schools

Shops
Esthetician
Manicurists
Instructor Trainee

Composite Board of Prof. Counselors, Social Workers and Marriage Therapists

Professional Counselor
Associate Professional Counselor
Master Social Worker
Clinical Social Worker
Marriage and Family Therapist
Assoc. Marriage and Family Therapist

Board of Examiners of Licensed Dieticians

Dieticians

State Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors

Professional Engineer
Engineer-In-Training
Land Surveyor
Land Surveyor-In-Training

State Board of Registration for Foresters

Foresters

State Board of Funeral Service

Funeral Director Embalmer
Establishment
Apprenticeship

State Board of Registration for Professional Geologists

Professional Geologist

State Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Dispensers

Hearing Aid Dealer
Hearing Aid Dispenser

State Board of Landscape Architects

Landscape Architects

State Board for the Certification of Librarians

Librarians

Composite State Board of Medical Examiners

Acupuncture
Paramedic
Cardiac Technician
Teacher
Institutional & Provisional
Physician (MD & OD)
Osteopath
Respiratory Therapist

State Board of Nursing Home Administrators

Nursing Home Administrator
Nursing Home Administrator-In-Training

State Board of Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapist
Occupational Therapist Assistant

State Board of Dispensing Opticians

Opticians

State Board of Examiners in Optometry

Optometrists

State Board of Pharmacy

Pharmacists
Intern
Retail Pharmacy
Hospital pharmacy
Wholesaler
Manufacturer
Research Approvals
Pharmacy Schools
Nuclear Pharmacists
Pharmacy Clinics
Nuclear Pharmacies

State Board of Physical Therapy

Physical Therapists
Physical Therapy Assistants

Georgia Board of Dentistry

Dentists
Dental Hygienists

State Board of Podiatry Examiners

Podiatrists

Board of Examiners of Licensed Practical Nurses

Licensed Practical Nurses

Board of Private Detectives and Security

Agents
Private Detectives
Employees
Private Security Guards
Private Detective Businesses
Private Security Businesses
Weapon Permits
Training Instructors
Classroom
Firearms

State Board of Examiners of Psychologists
Psychologists

Georgia Board of Nurses
Registered Nurses
Licensed Undergraduate Nurses
Advanced Practice

State Board of Examiners for Speech
Language Pathology and Audiology
Speech Language Pathologists
Audiologists
Speech Language Pathology Aide
Paid Clinical Experience Fellow

**State Board of Registration of Used Motor Vehicle
Dealers and Used Motor Vehicle Parts Dealers**
Used Motor Vehicle Dealers
Used Motor Vehicle Parts Dealers
Used Motor Vehicle Dismantlers
Salvage Yard Dealers Rebuilders
Salvage Pool Operators

State Board of Veterinary Medicine
Veterinarians
Faculty Licenses
Animal Technicians

State Board of Water and Wastewater
Treatment Plant and Operator and Laboratory Analysis
Public Water Supply System Operator (Class I, II, III, IV)
Biological Wastewater Treatment System Operator (Class I,II,III,IV)
Industrial Wastewater or Treatment System Operator
Water or Wastewater Lab. Operator
Wastewater Collection System Operation

Appendix 2

City of Valdosta First Step & Pre-Application Meetings

First Step Meetings

As a service to our customers, the City of Valdosta hosts First Step meetings **every Thursday morning**. These meetings provide **potential developers** the opportunity to meet with **all** City departments including Fire, Landscape, Utilities, Engineering, Public Works, Planning and Zoning, and Plan Review. If necessary, the Health Department is also in attendance. Individuals are encouraged to bring any site plans, development plans, or general information regarding their request.

To schedule a First Step meeting, please contact the Planning and Zoning Office at 229.259.3563 or email Alexandra Parrish at aparrish@valdostacity.com. First Step meetings must be scheduled by **12:00 Noon on the Tuesday** prior to the Thursday on which the meeting will be held.

Pre-Application Meetings

Individuals submitting an annexation, rezoning, special exception or variance application are *required* to attend a Pre-Application meeting prior to application submittal. These meetings are held every Thursday afternoon. The **purpose** of the Pre-Application meeting is **to identify any possible hurdles** during the application process and to thoroughly explain the application timeline. Applicants are encouraged to bring any additional materials they may have regarding their request.

To schedule a Pre-Application meeting, please contact the Planning and Zoning Office at 229.259.3563 or email Alexandra Parrish at aparrish@valdostacity.com. Pre-Application meetings must be scheduled by **12:00 Noon on the Tuesday** prior to the Thursday on which the meeting will be held.

Appendix 3

City of Valdosta Occupational Tax Certificate; Also known as Business License.

You may visit the Licensing office at the City of Valdosta Customer Service building located at 102 N Lee St, Valdosta, Ga. to complete the required forms.

For additional information that you need, directions to the office or assistance in completing your application, contact the Licensing Office at 229-259-3520 or e-mail Tina Matchett, citybusinesslicense@valdostacity.com.

The business license certificate is to be purchased before beginning operations; therefore, we recommend that you apply 2 weeks before you plan to open. No money is due at the time you submit the application. Once the application has been approved your fee is based on anticipated gross sales (click here for tax schedule2) until December 31 of that calendar year. Any additional licensing or documentation must be completed. Your fee will be calculated and collected; your business license certificate will be issued at that time. The certificate must be posted in some conspicuous place at your business establishment. Business licenses are non-transferable, site and owner specific.

Who needs a business license?

- A. Each person, firm, partnership or corporation engaged in any business, trade, profession or occupation in the City of Valdosta shall pay the license occupational tax based on gross receipts, unless your business meets the requirements for professional or regulatory business.
- B. Businesses that have no physical location in the City of Valdosta, but are located inside the state of Georgia, will need to first obtain a license from the county or municipality where your business office is located. The City of Valdosta will issue complimentary license upon completion of our application and a copy of your current business license and copy of state license if required by the State of Georgia.
- C. Businesses who are located outside the state of Georgia, with no physical location in Georgia, should obtain first a business license in the Georgia jurisdiction in which they conduct the most business. If that is Valdosta, you will need to complete the application and submit copy of the GA state license if required. Processing time is approx 72 business hours; the fee is due at the time license is issued. Now if you have a current business license from another county or municipality in Georgia, we would issue a complimentary license with the completion of our application, copy of the business license certificate and state license if required by state of Georgia.

Expiration and renewal

The business license certificates expire December 31 of each year and the deadline for renewal is January 31 the following year. All payments received after that date will be assessed 10% penalty of amount due and 10% interest of amount due. Your business Federal Tax Return or a letter from your CPA stating gross income is required to renew your business license. Please contact the Licensing office 229-259-3520 if your business closes, moves to another address or this was a one time construction job in which the job is completed and do not wish to renew your certificate.

Additional required licenses or documents per state or local code.

Business Type	Document Required & Contact Office
Day Care Centers (home or commercial)	State Daycare License-Bright from the Start Emma Taylor: 404-657-5594
Grocery & Convenience Stores	Inspection form—GA Dept of Agriculture Brad Bush-800-282-5852
Pest Control & Lawn Spraying Including Round up applications	Pesticide Applicator License—GA Dept of Agriculture Pesticide Division-800-282-5852
Taxicabs	Taxicabs permit from Valdosta Police Dept. 229-242-2606
Chauffers, other than Taxicab	Chauffers Permit from Valdosta Police Dept. 229-242-2606
GA State Regulated Businesses Trades/Professionals	GA Sec of State Licensing Board - 478-207-2440 Website: www.sos.state.ga.us/plb Current GA license for each specific Profession
Pawnshop	Pawnshop permit for Purchase or Trade of Precious metals, jewelry or gems. Approved by the City of Valdosta Chief of Police \$5000.00 Surety Bond
Restaurants & other eating places	Food Service Permit—Lowndes County Health Dept—229-245-2314, 229-333-5255

Change of address for business license.

If moving from city address to another city address, with the same business type, you can fill out at our office on located at 102 N. Lee St., here in Valdosta. If moving outside of City of Valdosta, contact the Business license office at 229-259-3520 for instructions.

ALCOHOL LICENSING

Businesses who need an alcohol license may visit by the City of Valdosta Customer Service Building, Licensing office located at 102 N Lee St, Valdosta GA to pick up application or the application may be mailed to you by calling 229-259-3520 or email at citybusinesslicense@valdostacity.com. The original application must either be mailed or brought back into my office for processing. Please make sure the application is complete, as partially completed applications can not be accepted. If your business is a Corporation, LLC or Partnership, include the “Articles of Incorporation” from the GA Secretary of State. There is a \$50.00 application fee due at the time of submission. Review time of the application takes approximately 2 weeks.

On the first issuance of the alcohol license certificates the fees will be pro-rated if purchased after the month of January.

Alcohol License Fees	
Liquor- Retail	\$1075.00
Club or Organization making sales to members only	750.00
Veterans Organization making sales to members only	450.00
Wine	500.00
Beer	500.00
Consumption on Premises	
Consumption of Wine only on premises	165.00
Consumption of Beer only on premises	165.00
Consumption of Liquor only on premises	2475.00
Consumption of Wine, Liquor and Beer on Premises	2475.00
Non-retail beer, wine, liquor—this does not include restaurants (includes hotels that offer complimentary drinks)	
Fee and consumption included	1000.00
Beer	
Wine	
Liquor	
Off premise services (alcohol caterer)	1000.00

Once you have been issued the City of Valdosta Alcohol License Certificates, you must contact the Georgia Dept of Revenue, Alcohol Division, Steve Jaramillo 912-389-4423 to apply for the state license. You must have the local and the state alcohol license to be able to sell, serve or distribute alcohol. All certificates must be posted in some conspicuous place at the business establishment.

Alcohol certificates expire December 31 of each year and must be renewed by January 31 of the following year. All payments received after this date will be assessed 10 % penalty of amount due and 10% interest penalty of amount due.

A new application must be submitted for change of ownership, business entity type change, i.e., corporation, partnership, sole proprietor, also change of location and change of manager. All licenses are non-transferable.

OFF SITE ALCOHOL EVENT PERMITS

To apply for the off-site event permit you must already be licensed in the City of Valdosta for Alcohol with Consumption on Premise and the Off-premise alcohol catering license. For the Off site event permit application stop by our office at 102 N. Lee St.

1. There is a \$50.00 fee for each event, which is due at the time of the application submission.
2. You must apply at least 10 in advance of the event. A permit is required for each off site event.
3. Once approved you will be issued a permit for the event.

You will want to contact GA State Revenue Dept, Steve Jaramillo 229-389-4423 for all the state regulations regarding off premise events before you apply for the off premise alcohol catering license.

Tina Matchett

License Clerk

Phone: 229-259-3520

Fax: 229-333-1865

citybusinesslicense@valdostacity.com

Adapted from <http://www.valdostacity.com>

Appendix 4

Lowndes County Planning & Zoning

The Office of the County Planner is responsible for assisting the Board of Commissioners and the County Manager with the implementation and coordination of issues related to planning and decision making. Most commonly, these responsibilities involve land use. From a policy standpoint, most responsibilities of the Planning Office involve the interpretation and administration of the Lowndes County [Unified Land Development Code](#) (ULDC) and the Lowndes County Comprehensive Plan. Regular roles of the County Planner include serving as Chairman of the Lowndes County Technical Review Committee and presenting land use cases to the Greater Lowndes Planning Commission and the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners. Other responsibilities of the Planning Office include responsibility for the management of the Lowndes County Special Tax Lighting Districts and serving as Secretary for the Valdosta-Lowndes Utility Council.

Jason Davenport

County Planner

325 W. Savannah Ave.

Valdosta, GA 31601

Phone: 229-671-2424

jdavenport@lowndescounty.com

Zoning Administration Services

Mission Statement: To effectively administer the Lowndes County [Unified Land Development Code](#) (ULDC) as it relates to zoning administration services. To provide technical assistance to the public and private sector as it pertains to the development and use of land within the unincorporated areas of Lowndes County. Provisions within the ULDC include:

- General Provisions
- Zoning Districts
- Protection of Natural Features and Resources
- Site Design Standards
- Standards for Accessory and Temporary Uses
- Infrastructure Improvements
- Boards and Agencies
- Variations
- Administrative Procedures

Carmella Braswell

Zoning Administrator

325 W. Savannah Ave.

Valdosta, GA 31601

Phone: 229-671-2430 Fax: 229-245-5299

cbraswell@lowndescounty.com

Housing Opportunities

Mission Statement: To address the need of affordable housing within the unincorporated areas of Lowndes County by improving the quality of life through housing opportunities. The citizenry of Lowndes County has been afforded a housing grant to assist low-to-moderate income households with down payment assistance and housing rehabilitation. The Zoning office is responsible for administering the 2009 Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP) Grant. This statewide grant is awarded by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to local governments that can demonstrate a need for affordable housing opportunities in their community. Because of Lowndes County's competitive application and their ability to demonstrate a need for affordable housing assistance within the unincorporated areas of the county, a \$300,000 grant was presented to our community to assist income-eligible families with down payment assistance and housing rehabilitation. For more information on the CHIP Grant, please contact either of the following:

Varnadoe & Associates, Inc.
281 Primrose Lane
Nicholls, GA 31554
Phone: 912-345-0922
Fax: 912-345-0923
Jenell Varnadoe: varnadoegrant@atc.cc

Lowndes County Zoning Office
325 W. Savannah Avenue
Valdosta, GA 31601
Phone: 229-671-2430
Fax: 229-245-5299
Carmella Braswell: cbraswell@lowndescounty.com
Debra Lewis: dlewis@lowndescounty.com