

Cape Coral Entrepreneur Guide

Ten Steps to Starting Your Business in Cape Coral

The City of Cape Coral's Economic Development Office (EDO) has prepared this step-by-step Entrepreneur Guide to help with the business start-up process in Cape Coral. Existing businesses will find valuable resources for their business expansions or relocations to Cape Coral, Florida.

This guide presents an overview of many issues that are important in creating a successful business and in complying with licensing, tax, and permitting requirements. Our EDO takes pride in our business expansion assistance offerings and lends a helpful hand in business relocations to our beautiful city.

Each step provides important resources for starting and running your business in Cape Coral, including telephone numbers, email contacts and important links to Internet sites and further information. The following 10 Steps will help to make your transition as easy as possible:

1. Research and plan your business

Use these tools and resources to help prepare for your business venture and become a successful business owner. Take advantage of free business assistance, training, and counseling services.

2. Finance your business

Learn about financing options, loans, venture capital and government grants.

3. Investigate business incentives

Discover the benefits of government backed City, County, and State incentives, created to help you to grow.

4. Choose a business location

Get advice about choosing a customer-friendly location and complying with zoning laws.

5. Determine the legal structure of your business

Decide whether you are going to form a sole proprietorship, partnership, LLC, corporation, non-profit or cooperative.

6. Register for federal, state and local taxes

Register for a tax identification number from the IRS, your state revenue agency, and county tax collectors.

7. Obtain business licenses and permits

Read about federal, state and local licenses required for your business and get detailed information about the permit processes.

8. Comply with employer responsibilities

Learn the legal steps you need to take to hire and keep employees. Learn how to register for payroll liabilities, such as state and federal unemployment, social security, Medicare, and payroll taxes.

9. Take advantage of Workforce Resources

Find skilled workers and workforce training opportunities.

10. Business Resources and Contact Information

Take advantage of government and community resources created to make your business successful.

1. Research and Plan your Business

Use these tools and resources to help prepare for your business venture and become a successful business owner. Take advantage of free business assistance, training, and counseling services.

Research & Planning

Starting a business is one of the most exciting journeys an individual can take. Over ten million Americans consider starting a business each year. As a result, more than three million new small businesses are started annually in the U.S.

Several free counseling and training programs are available to help you get started and expand your business in Cape Coral. These services cover all aspects of starting and running a business, from developing business plans and marketing strategies to help with getting loans and business incentives.

Write a Business Plan

A well written business plan is essential to starting and running a business. Business plans are required when applying for business loans or seeking investors. A good business plan describes in detail a business' mission and goals, and how these goals will be achieved. The plan should provide a detailed description of the business, its product or service, marketing plan, financial statements, projections and management principles.

A business plan is a valuable tool for making quality business decisions, even when a formal plan is not required by others. It helps business owners define and focus on their strategic objectives and it is an important tool when managing and communicating with managers and staff.

Business Assistance & Training

Cape Coral Economic Development Office

The mission of the Cape Coral Economic Development Office (EDO) is to achieve a balanced economy in the Cape by encouraging the creation of new businesses, expanding existing businesses and attracting new firms from outside the area.

The EDO creates and administers financial incentives, promotes Cape Coral through advertising and public relations programs and serves as business ombudsman to assist with permitting, licensing, zoning and other government-related questions in the Cape.

Please use our office as a resource. We welcome your call or email.

City of Cape Coral Economic Development Office

City Manager's Office
1015 Cultural Park Blvd.
Cape Coral, FL 33990

Phone: (239) 574-0444
Fax: (239) 574-0452
E-mail: ecodev@capecoral.net
Web: www.bizcapecoral.com

EDO staff directory:

Karen Ramos, Business Development Specialist
Christy Vogt, Business Development Coordinator
Audie Lewis, Business Recruiting Specialist

Small Business Development Center

The EDO funds the Cape Coral satellite Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which is staffed by Florida Gulf Coast University. A free counseling service at the Small Business Development Center Office is available to individuals who have questions or need assistance in starting or growing their business. These sessions are conducted by State Certified Business Analysts.

The SBDC is a nonprofit organization affiliated with the Center for Leadership and Innovation, a division of FGCU's College of Business and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

The SBDC sponsors free and low-cost seminars on significant business development issues, from acquiring capital to marketing.

SBDC also provides free on-site counseling plus training and technical assistance in all aspects of small business management. Their trained staff can help you with developing a business plan, marketing or production issues, engineering and technical problems, or with feasibility studies. The SBDC can also provide assistance in obtaining contracts with government and federal agencies.

Please contact the SBDC for an individual appointment or register for one of their valuable seminars.

SBDC Cape Coral

Small Business Development Center
1020 Cultural Park Blvd. S. Unit #3
Cape Coral, FL 33990

Phone: (239) 573-2737
Fax: (239) 573-2797
E-mail: bsmoot@fgcu.edu
Web: www.fgcu.edu/sbdc

SCORE - Service Corps of Retired Executives Association

SCORE is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), offering free, confidential, business plan development and one-on-one consulting. The local SCORE chapter has more than 30 counselors. They are retired business owners and managers who volunteer their expertise in specific kinds of businesses. You can take advantage of their years of experience in everything from accounting, management and marketing, to manufacturing, insurance and the hospitality industry. SCORE serves both new and existing businesses with free mentoring, business counseling, and low-cost workshops.

SCORE SW Florida Chapter 219

Social Security Building
Suite 231
3650 Colonial Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33966

Phone: (239)489-2935
FAX: (239)489-1170
E-mail: score219@embarqmail.com
Web: www.score.com

Online Tools & Resources

The U.S. Small Business Administration offers numerous online tools and resources on their website to help new and aspiring business owners succeed:

www.sba.gov/training

The Small Business Administration's training network provides guides and resources on developing business plans and commonsense advice on starting a new business. Several free tools help prospective and existing entrepreneurs understand the basics about writing a business plan. Tools range from online video courses to business plan templates.

2. Finance your Business

Learn about financing options, loans, venture capital and government grants.

Small Business Loans & Grant Resources

Federal loans and grants are available for business start-ups, as well as business expansions and relocations. Federal, state and local governments offer a wide range of financing programs to help small businesses start and grow their operations. These programs include low-interest loans, venture capital, and scientific and economic development grants.

Use the Loans and Grants Search Tool on the federal government's website www.business.gov to get a list of financing programs for which you may qualify, or visit the resources below to learn more about small business financing programs.

On the www.business.gov/financing website, you will find the following resources about financing for your small business:

- **Government Grants**
Learn the truth about getting free money from the government.
- **Seed and Venture Capital**
How to get money for high tech start-ups.
- **Tax-Exempt Bonds**
Learn about revenue bond financing opportunities for small manufacturers and non-profits.

Small Business Administration Loans (SBA)

The SBA is the primary advocate of small businesses within the federal government. Although it provides many services to the small business community, the SBA is best known for its small business loan programs. These are typically loan guarantees of between 75% to 85%, depending on the SBA's credit and eligibility standards, the loan amount and the type of loan. The Small Business Administration will not guarantee long-term loans without a written, formal business plan and expects business borrowers to pledge their own funds to cover a portion of the financed purchase.

Small Business Administration

Phone: (800) 8-ASK-SBA (827-5722)

Web: www.sba.gov/financing

SBA - 7(a) Guaranty Loan Program

This is the most common program offered by the SBA, and it is the program with which most lenders are familiar. Loan proceeds may be used for the purchase of inventory, furniture and fixtures, machinery and equipment, land for construction, building construction, leasehold improvements, real property, and working capital.

The maximum amount the SBA typically will guarantee is \$1-million. Small loans up to \$150,000 offer a maximum guaranty of 85 percent. Loan amounts greater than \$150,000 offer a maximum guarantee of 75 percent.

SBA - Certified Development Company (504) Loan Program

These loans are made through non-profit Certified Development Companies (CDC), which raise funds by issuing government-guaranteed debentures within their geographical area. CDC's work with the SBA and private-sector lenders to provide financing to small businesses to

promote economic development and job creation, or other community development goals in the CDC's area. In our area, the CDC is the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, which serves the five-county area (Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades and Hendry) and Sarasota County.

To be eligible, businesses must be for-profit corporations, partnerships or proprietorships. Small businesses qualify if their net worth does not exceed \$7 million, and their average net income does not exceed \$2.5 million after taxes for the preceding two years. The maximum loan amount that is 100 percent backed by the SBA guaranteed debenture is \$1 million, limited to 40 percent of total project cost.

SBA - Low Doc Loan Program

This program offers small businesses a quick way to obtain a loan of no more than \$150,000 with an 85% guarantee. The streamlining of this loan allows the SBA to provide an answer within 36 hours from the time they receive the one-page application.

To be eligible, existing businesses must employ fewer than 100 employees, have average annual sales not exceeding \$5 million for the preceding three years, and good personal and business credit.

SBA – Micro-Loan Program

Micro-Loans allow for up to a maximum of \$35,000 for start-ups, newly established or growing small businesses. SBA provides funds to non-profit community-based lenders, allowing for loans at the local level. Terms are a maximum of 6 years and rates are determined by the lender and their cost. Most lenders will require some form of collateral from the borrower.

SBA - Express Loan Program

The Express Loan allows lenders to use and process their own forms. This allows lenders to receive a rapid response from the SBA-within 36 hours of receiving the complete application. The SBA or commercial lender in your area can tell you if your business is eligible for a SBA - Express Loan. The maximum loan is \$250,000 with a 50% SBA guaranty.

SBA - CAPLines Loan Program

CAPLines loans help small businesses meet their short-term and cyclical working-capital needs. There are five types of CAPLines loans. The loan amount can reach \$1.3 million, with declining guarantees. To learn more about eligibility, contact a commercial lender or the SBA.

SBA - Other Loan Programs

Here are some additional loan programs available through the SBA:

- Export Express – Helps small businesses develop or expand their export markets. Provides exporters and lenders a streamlined method to obtain SBA-backed financing for loans and lines of credit up to \$250,000.
- Community Express – Allows approved SBA lenders to provide a unique combination of financial and technical assistance to borrowers located in the nation's underserved communities.
- Community Adjustment & Investment Program (CAIP)
- Export Working Capital Program (EWCP)
- International Trade Loans
- Defense Loan and Technical Assistance (DELTA) Program
- Pollution Control Program
- Surety Bond Program

Common Sources of Business Financing

Banks

Typically, banks are reluctant to lend money to start-up businesses. However, for over half of today's established small businesses, commercial lenders are the preferred source of long-term financing.

Small business owners often cite their bank as their most important partner in financial success, second only to their accountant. Small business owners are well advised to know their banker and encourage their banker to learn about their business, even before there is a need for funds. Invite your banker to visit the company, give them a tour of your operations; and share with them your business plan. Bankers are more likely to make loans to businesses they know, and with whom they have a track record. This may be especially important for small businesses that do not have a long credit history or are in an unusual business field that cannot easily be evaluated using traditional lending criteria.

Venture Capital

Financing with venture capital is different from borrowing from a lender. Instead of earning interest, the venture partner typically acquires a level of business ownership. The share of ownership may be substantial. Venture capital organizations consist of a variety of investors, such as individuals, partnerships and investment companies seeking to invest in fast growing small businesses and start-ups with excellent growth potential.

Venture capitalists expect two things when they invest: much higher returns than would be expected on a traditional business loan; an influence in how the company is managed. One advantage of venture financing is that this infusion of capital does not typically have to be repaid.

Leasing

Leasing is a fast-growing method of financing capital equipment. Under a lease agreement, a business can acquire immediate use of equipment without tying up capital. Leasing can be an attractive option for obtaining technology equipment, which becomes obsolete quickly. Since leasing can be more expensive than buying equipment outright, it should be researched carefully.

Credit Cards

Personal or business credit cards issued by a bank or other financial institution can be used to buy office supplies, computers, and other necessities for start-up costs, but the interest rates tend to be higher. Personal credit card debt should be considered a short-term loan to be paid back by the business, just as if the loan had come from a bank.

Equity Loans and Personal Funds

A common source of financing for small business start-ups is a home equity loan. Other options are personal funds from savings, trust accounts, or some form of personal equity of the business owner or owners. These are the easiest and least expensive methods of financing. The limitations are the amount of capital available and the willingness to put it at risk.

Personal funds also play a significant role in seeking other forms of financing. Just as a bank will usually not finance 100% for a new home purchase, bankers expect business borrowers to pledge their own funds to cover a portion of the financed purchase. Banks require this for two reasons: it limits the bank's exposure in the event of default, and it demonstrates the borrower's good faith and commitment to success of the business.

Commercial Credit

The most prevalent type of business financing is commercial credit. Commercial credit involves vendors delivering goods or performing services before payment is received. In many industries, buyers have up to 30 days after billing to pay for goods or services before the payment is considered past due, allowing businesses flexibility in managing cash flow.

3. Investigate Business Incentives

Get government backed City, County, and State business incentives, created to help you grow.

Location Cape Coral: Competitive Costs and Incentives

The City of Cape Coral supports the goal of attracting different types of businesses in order to strengthen our local economy, balance the tax base, and continue to improve the quality of life for our residents and visitors. We also encourage our existing businesses to grow and create additional jobs for today's workforce and that of future generations.

Incentives, resources, and personalized assistance are available from the Cape Coral EDO for businesses looking to relocate or expand into Southwest Florida. The Economic Development Office maintains a portfolio of **tools for assistance**, and routinely designs incentives to meet special situations and coordinates state and county incentive programs.

Lee County has **stimulus bond funding** available for economic development, training and education. These bonds are for the purpose of financing qualified major economic development projects and expenditures within the county.

Cape Coral is The Natural Fit for Your Business. The City offers numerous business relocation and expansion opportunities and incentives.

Florida offers a highly competitive cost-of-doing-business and is consistently ranked as one of the top pro-business states in the country for a number of good reasons. Florida is one of only a few right-to-work states in the U.S. and its tax system clearly provides a business-friendly environment. Our city has no public service tax and Florida has a low corporate income tax rate and no personal income tax. Florida's sales tax is only 6%.

Your business could qualify for up to \$25 million in incentives to relocate or expand in our growing area.

Incentives, resources, and personalized assistance are available from the City of Cape Coral and Lee County for businesses looking to relocate or expand into Southwest Florida. The Economic Development Office maintains a portfolio of tools for assistance, and routinely designs incentives to meet special situations and coordinates state and county incentive programs.

Competitive Costs

Cape Coral was created as a residential community, but as the city has grown, its local government has demonstrated commitment to encouraging business growth and diversifying the economy. One of the operational cost savings for businesses located within Cape Coral is that the city has no public service tax, therefore, it is less expensive to do business here than in other communities. Residents enjoy low taxes, affordable waterfront housing, and a competitive cost of living.

Commercial properties can be leased for as low as \$5 per square foot. The City offers three distinct investment zones. They include two industrial parks and two Foreign Trade Zones for a total of 3,844 acres for commercial/industrial development.

Tax Advantages for Corporations

Our city has no public service-tax, and Florida has a low corporate income tax rate and no personal income tax. In fact, Florida has the fifth most business-friendly tax system in the U.S., according to the Tax Foundation's 2010 State Business Tax Climate Index (September 2009). Businesses in Florida enjoy:

- No corporate income tax on limited partnerships
- No corporate income tax on subchapter S-corporations
- No corporate franchise on capital stock
- No state personal income tax
- No state-level property tax assessment
- No property tax on business inventories
- No property tax on goods manufactured or produced in Florida for export outside the state
- No sales tax on purchases of raw materials incorporated in a final product for resale, including non-reusable containers or packaging

Business Incentives

Please visit the Cape Coral Economic Development Office's website at www.bizcapecoral.com for detailed descriptions of benefits and qualification requirements for each program, as well as application contacts.

City of Cape Coral Incentives

Some of the City's **economic business incentives** include cash incentives for creation of higher-than-average wage jobs, land assembly and infrastructure assistance. Be sure to ask us about the \$25 million in federal bond incentives available to help grow businesses in Lee County. The Cape Coral Economic Development Office is your point of contact for city, county, and state business incentives.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

City Hall

1015 Cultural Park Blvd
Cape Coral, Florida 33990

Phone: (239) 574-0444

Toll Free: (866) 573-3089

Fax: (239) 574-0452

E-mail: ecodev@capecoral.net

Web: www.bizcapecoral.com

Cash Incentive Program

The Cash Incentive Program provides reimbursement to targeted businesses for certain expansion or relocation expenses. It provides incentives of up to \$1,500 per job created. The maximum payment to a business is One Hundred Thousand dollars (\$100,000), unless otherwise authorized by the City Council.

One requirement of the Cash Incentive Program is the creation of at least 10 new permanent full-time jobs at no less than the average salary in the area for each position. 75% of the new employees must be current or planned Cape Coral residents. Applications are available at the Economic Development Office. Cash incentives must be approved by the City Council.

Impact Fee Deferral Program

This incentive defers certain impact fees for target sectors for up to 10 years. Commercial and industrial shell buildings are also eligible for deferrals.

Under this program the City defers payment of road and utility capital improvement impact fees for new commercial or industrial building projects. Impact fees are charged to property owners to defray the incremental costs for public infrastructure.

The maximum deferral period, including any supplemental deferrals, is 10 years. The length of the deferral is based on the number of jobs created by the business and whether those jobs employ Cape Coral residents. Apply through the Cape Coral Economic Development Office.

The Shell Building Impact Fee Deferral is also available to property owners of shell buildings, which are usually built as speculation. Shell building impact fees may be deferred for up to 36 months or until the issuance of permits for interior completion, whichever is earlier. The shell building deferral application can be made through the City of Cape Coral's Department of Community Development.

Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Incentive Programs

The Community Redevelopment Agency is working cooperatively with property owners to revitalize downtown Cape Coral – the South Cape. Technical and financial assistance is available for exterior commercial building renovations and new construction projects. This assistance is available to business and commercial properties located within the CRA district. The programs are designed to encourage financial reinvestment through financial incentives, to develop, redevelop, improve and lease out commercial property within the South Cape.

Please visit the Cape Coral Economic Development Office's website at www.bizcapecoral.com for detailed descriptions of benefits and qualification requirements for each program.

Business Development Assistance Programs

Facade Grants

Depending on your commercial property, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) can provide up to \$100,000 to assist you with updating the facade of your structure, and many other components of your site. Facade Grants are awarded by the Board of the Community Redevelopment Agency. Meeting with CRA staff to discuss the project and its potential eligibility requirements is the first step after reviewing the application.

Rental Incentive Program

The Rental Incentive Program is available to businesses starting, or moving into the South Cape. Through partnering with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the City of Cape Coral's Economic Development Department, the Community Redevelopment Agency can provide up to 1/3rd (maximum of \$500) of monthly rent.

Pedestrian-oriented businesses such as retail stores, restaurants, and other similar users likely qualify. Please see the targeted uses list in the application. Applications are taken at the CRA office.

Community Redevelopment Agency
1231 Cape Coral Parkway East
Cape Coral, FL 33904

Phone: (239) 549-5615
Email: info@southcape.net
Web: www.southcape.net

Lee County Business Incentives

Lee County's Economic Development Office offers several local and state business incentives to new, expanding and relocating businesses in the county.

Please visit the Cape Coral Economic Development Office's website at www.bizcapecoral.com for detailed descriptions of benefits and qualification requirements for each program.

Lee County Economic Development Office

12800 University Drive
Fort Myers, FL 33907

Phone: (239) 338-3161
Toll Free: (800) 330-3161
E-mail: edo@leegov.com
Web: www.leecountybusiness.com

LEE COUNTY FIRST - Performance Incentive with up to \$25 million in reserve

Lee County has set aside \$25 million to create a negotiated, performance-based incentive used to attract and grow high-value business projects that promote broad-based prosperity in our community. The incentive must be an inducement for the company to locate or expand in Lee County. To be considered for a Lee County FIRST incentive award, an applicant should operate within a target industry or high-impact sector as designated by Florida law. The EDO website provides a list of State of Florida and Lee County Targeted Industries.

Each year Lee County designates \$1.5 Million from general funds to be used for the purpose of business incentives. There are two incentives that utilize these funds: the Lee County Job Opportunity Program (LCJOP) and the State Qualified Targeted Industry Tax Refund Program (QTI) 20% local match.

LEE COUNTY JOB OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM (LCJOP) - Cash Incentive for targeted industry jobs, paying up to \$6,000 per full time job created

Lee County desires to provide an incentive for locating or expanding companies creating high wage employment in targeted industries. Qualified companies may be awarded up to \$6,000 for each full-time, permanent job created, subject to a maximum award amount of \$500,000. The incentives are paid in the form of reimbursements for the Eligible Uses of Funds and as new jobs are created. The EDO website provided a list of State of Florida and Lee County Targeted Industries.

FLORIDA QUALIFIED TARGETED INDUSTRIES TAX REFUND PROGRAM (QTI)

The Florida QTI program provides a tax refund incentive for new or existing businesses to create quality value-added jobs. Lee County will provide a 20% match of the total amount awarded. For instance, if the total amount awarded is \$100,000, Lee County will provide \$20,000 while the State of Florida will contribute \$80,000. Pre-approved applicants who create jobs in Florida receive tax refunds of \$3,000 per new job created.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT REVENUE BONDS (IDRB) - Tax exempt low rate financing for manufacturers, paying \$3M to \$10M

IDRBs are securities issued by the Lee County government agency, providing long-term, below-market rate financing of capital requirements for new and expanding manufacturing facilities. Minimum bond is \$3 million, and maximum bond is \$10 million per borrower. The borrower is solely responsible for principal and interest repayment.

Because the interest on IDRBs is exempt from federal tax, the interest rate on this type of financing is generally lower than conventional debt financing. Proceeds from the IDRB may be used to finance fixed assets and qualified costs associated with the bond-financed projects. The Lee County Industrial Development Authority serves as the initial entry point into the IDRB application process.

State of Florida Business Incentives

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TRANSPORTATION FUND

When a business' preferred building site has transportation deficiency, Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI) offers grants for funding up to \$2 million for projects that facilitate economic growth, job creation and retention.

Enterprise Florida, Inc.

Headquarters
800 N. Magnolia Avenue, Suite 1100
Orlando, FL 32803

Phone: (407) 956-5600
Web: www.eflorida.com

QUICK-RESPONSE TRAINING GRANT

Florida's Quick Response Training Program is a state grant. The average grant is \$600 per trainee. Businesses applying for funding must:

1. Create new, permanent, full-time jobs for Florida workers.
2. Provide customized training programs that are limited to training for specialized entry-level skills only, which are not available at the local level, and cannot be used to subsidize ongoing staff development.
3. Create high-quality jobs paying 15% above the Lee County or Florida average area wage, whichever is lower.
4. Produce an exportable good or service.
5. Expand their workforce resulting in a net increase in employment of not less than 10% or 100 employees, whichever is less.

Training services can be provided through Florida's community colleges, school districts, area vocational-technical centers, or state universities. Additionally, training can be delivered at the business facility. Instructors are typically professional educators or industrial trainers. In Cape Coral, many Quick Response Training Programs have been conducted at the Lee County High Tech Center North.

Workforce Florida, Inc.

Quick Response Training
9530 Marketplace Road, Suite 104
Fort Myers, FL 33912

Phone: (239) 225-2500
Toll Free: (866) 992-8463
Web: www.workforceflorida.com

INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING (IWT) - Worker training grant for existing companies and employees.

This program is available to current businesses and provides grant funding for customized training of existing employees. Under the worker training grant, offered through the Department of Workforce Innovation, the employer pays 50% of the training costs and the state pays 50%. The grant goes directly to the company; there are no restrictions on type of training and no minimum wage requirements.

Existing Florida businesses must meet the following requirements:

1. Have been in operation in Florida for at least one year prior to application date.
2. Have at least one full time employee.
3. Demonstrate financial viability.
4. Be current on all state tax obligations.

Workforce Florida, Inc.

Incumbent Worker Training
9530 Marketplace Road, Suite 104
Fort Myers, FL 33912

Phone: (239) 225-2500
Toll Free: (866) 992-8463
www.workforceflorida.com

4. Choose a business location.

Get advice about choosing a customer-friendly location and complying with zoning laws.

Choosing a Business Location

Selecting the right location involves basic considerations such as proximity to customers, ease of access, and leasing and zoning restrictions. Financial incentives and tax credits offered by our local government may also influence your decision.

The Cape Coral Economic Development Office has several resources available to help you locate commercial office space and property. Our resources will help you understand some basic legal and regulatory issues that you may encounter when selecting a business location, as well as practical advice for choosing the ideal business location.

Within its 120-square-mile landscape, Cape Coral has more than nine square miles of unimproved land with a future land use or zoning designation for commercial development. Commercial space can be leased for as little as \$5 per square foot. Extensive broadband provides an easy global reach, potable water is plentiful, and traffic flows easily on our established roadways. The city offers three distinct investment zones and two Foreign Trade Zones for a total of 3,844 acres for commercial/industrial development.

Online Resources for Locating Your Business in Cape Coral

You can access these business tools from our website www.bizcapecoral.com:

Investment Zones

- Download maps and information from our Data Center

Cape Coral Prospector:

- Online search tool for land and buildings for sale or lease
- Powerful demographic reports, business and workforce data and current zoning information
- www.capecoralprospector.com

Our Economic Development Team serves as a liaison between businesses and City departments when dealing with such issues as regulations, zoning, permitting, etc. We are working with other departments to define and map current and future land requirements for retail, office and industrial uses, as well as to define optimal density and intensity for industrial and business development. We track emerging industries and targets of opportunity to help businesses identify potential areas to consider for relocation or expansion. One such project is the new VA Clinic, which broke ground in 2010.

Our EDO team welcomes your call or email. Please feel free to contact us directly with your questions. We're here to help you!

5. Determine the legal structure of your business.

Decide whether you are going to form a sole proprietorship, partnership, LLC, corporation, non-profit or cooperative.

Legal Business Structure

When beginning a business, you must decide what form of business entity to establish. Establishing the legal structure is a first step to obtaining the required government permits and licenses. Your form of business determines the amount of regulatory paperwork you have to file, your personal liability regarding investments into your business, and the taxes you have to pay. It is recommended that you consult with an accountant or attorney when deciding on your business's legal structure.

The most common business structures include:

Sole Proprietorship - A business owned and managed by one individual who is personally liable for all business debts and obligations

This is the simplest to set-up and dissolve, and generally the least costly. However, sole proprietors have unlimited liability and are responsible for all business debts. No state filing is required for sole proprietorships, however if you choose to assume a fictitious name for your business, then you must register with the Florida Secretary of State.

Partnership - Two or more people share ownership of a single business

Each partner contributes money, labor, and/or property; and each partner shares the profits and losses on their individual tax returns. Partnerships can be either general or limited. In a general partnership, at least one partner has unlimited liability. In a limited partnership, there are limits to the personal liability of each partner.

Corporation - A legal entity owned by shareholders, also called C-Corporation

Corporations can provide their owners greater protection from personal liability. Articles of Incorporation must comply with the "Florida Business Corporation Act" (Chapter 607, Florida Statutes). Required fees and taxes must be paid. There are two major types of corporations: "C" corporations and "S" corporations. The "C" Corporation can be owned by an unlimited number of shareholders, either as individuals, partnerships, trusts or other corporations. As the legal entity, the corporation pays tax on net earnings, and the shareholders pay personal tax on any dividends. Shareholders cannot deduct corporate losses from their personal returns.

S Corporation - A special type of corporation created through a tax election

The "S" Corporation provides the same protection from personal liability as the C Corporation, but it has elected to treat corporate profits as personal income, taxable to the individual shareholders. This avoids the double taxation that exists in the "C" Corporation. S Corporation election forms have to be filed with the Department of State.

Limited Liability Company (LLC) - A relatively new, hybrid-type of legal structure

The LLC provides the limited liability features of a corporation and the tax efficiencies and operational flexibility of a partnership. The LLC articles of incorporation (LLC Chapter 608, Florida Statutes) must comply with the "Florida Limited Liability Company Act."

Non-Profit - An organization engaged in activities of public or private interest that is not motivated by making a profit. Some non-profits are exempt from paying federal taxes.

Cooperative - A business or organization owned by and operated for the benefit of those using its services. Cooperatives are not a legal structure.

Visit our website www.bizcapecoral.com for links to resources to learn more about which business structure is right for you:

- **Guide to Choosing a Business Structure**
The U.S. Small Business Administration provides this clear and concise guide covering the most popular business structures. It outlines the advantages and disadvantages of each type of business structure as well as tax requirements.
- **Tax Information - Business Structures**
The Internal Revenue Services provides information on the tax implications of the most common business structures.

Registering Your Business

If you decided to create a corporation, a non-profit, a limited liability company or a partnership (limited, or limited liability), you will have to register your business and file certain documents with the state government. If your business is a sole proprietorship, you do not need to register your business with the state. Out-of-state corporations moving into Florida are considered foreign corporations and need to file incorporation documents to do business in Florida.

You can file your incorporation documents electronically at: www.sunbiz.org

Fictitious Name Registration

The legal name of a business is the name of the person or entity that owns a business. Your business' legal name is required on all government forms and applications, including your application for employer tax IDs, licenses and permits. However, if you want to open a shop or sell your products under a different name (assumed name, trade name, or DBA name, short for "doing business as"), then you have to file a "fictitious name" registration form with the Florida Department of State Division of Corporations. Fictitious name registration for a sole proprietorship or partnership does not protect the name from use by others. However, corporation names are protected when the articles of incorporation are filed.

Fictitious name registration is valid for five years. The fee for registering a fictitious name is \$50. For information regarding fictitious names on file you may search the Division's records online or call (850) 245-6058. Effective July 1, 2009, the intention to register a fictitious name must be advertised at least once in a newspaper in the county in which the principal place of business will be located. Contact your newspaper for advertising information.

Online Fictitious Name Registration is available on the Department of State' website:

Online Application: <https://efile.sunbiz.org/ficregintro.html>

Business owners can also download the form: http://form.sunbiz.org/fic_form.html

Send completed application with appropriate fees to:

Fictitious Name Registration

PO Box 1300
Tallahassee, FL 32302-1300

Phone: (850) 245-6052
Web: www.sunbiz.org

6. Register for federal, state and local taxes.

Register for a tax identification number from the IRS, your state revenue agency, and city and county tax collectors.

Tax Requirements

All businesses are required to pay federal, state, and in some cases, local taxes. Most businesses will need to register with the IRS and state and local revenue agencies, and receive a tax ID number or permit. The following resources will help determine your federal tax registration requirements.

Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN)

An EIN is also known as a federal tax identification number, and is used to identify a business entity. Business partnerships, corporations, non-profit organizations and some other types of businesses, must obtain an EIN from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, even if they don't have employees. The EIN is also known as an Employer Tax ID and Form SS-4.

Application for a FEIN is completed on form SS-4, which is available at local IRS offices or online. Applications by fax will take about a week; by mail as much as five weeks. Immediate FEIN application is available by telephone.

EIN by phone: (800) 829-4933

Apply for an EIN Online: www.irs.gov/businesses

U.S. Internal Revenue Service
2891 Center Pointe Drive
Fort Myers, FL 33907

Phone: (239) 938-7601
Toll free: (800) 829-4933
Web: www.irs.gov

State Tax Registration

In addition to business taxes required by the federal government, you will have to pay state and local taxes. Businesses that operate within the state of Florida are required to register for the tax permits below.

Detailed information about how to register and pay state taxes can be found on the Florida Department of Revenue Website: www.myflorida.com/dor

You can register for all of the above taxes electronically online at:
<http://dor.myflorida.com/dor/eservices/apps/register>

Florida Department of Revenue
2295 Victoria Avenue, Suite 270
Fort Myers, FL 33901-3871
(239) 338-2400

Taxpayer Services: (850) 488-6800 or
Florida only: (800) 352-3671
Web: www.myflorida.com/dor
www.fcn.state.fl.us/dor

State Tax Requirements

Florida Corporate Income Tax

Corporations or Limited Liability Companies classified as corporations for federal tax purposes are subject to a 5.5% Florida Corporate Income Tax.

Most Corporations, Limited Liability Companies and other artificial entities doing business or earning or receiving income in Florida must file a Florida Corporate Income Tax return (Form 1120), even if no tax is due. Some legal entities – including sole proprietorships, individuals, estates and testamentary trusts – are exempt from Florida income tax. Other entities, such as S Corporations, partnerships and some LLCs may also be exempt. To be certain, consult your tax advisor or attorney.

Florida Sales and Use Tax

Florida businesses must collect a 6% sales tax for many products and services and must have a Sales Tax Number. The business is responsible for collecting sales tax at the time of each sale and remitting the tax each month to the Department of Revenue (DOR).

The Department of Revenue can assist you in determining whether you are subject to sales tax. If so, before you open for business, you must register with the state and obtain your sales tax ID number. You can register online using form DR-1 at the Department of Revenue website. For in-person registration, visit your local DOR office. You may apply by mail, but this often takes more than two weeks.

After your registration application is approved, you will receive a Certificate of Registration (Form DR-11), an Annual Resale Certificate (Form DR-13), and your tax return forms. You will collect the current Lee County sales tax (6%) from customers for products and services and then pay those taxes to the Florida's DOR.

Discretionary Sales Surtax

Florida counties are authorized to levy a discretionary sales surtax on most transactions subject to sales and use tax. Currently Lee County does not impose Discretionary Sales Surtax.

Florida Intangible Personal Property Tax

Florida corporations and individuals who control intangible personal property must file this annual tax based on the current market value as of January first. The most common types of taxable assets are stocks, shares, mutual funds, bonds, notes, and loans. Accounts receivable not arising from a company's normal course of trade or business are also taxable.

Filing is required if the tax due is \$60 or more, before any discount for early filing. The Intangible Personal Property Tax Return (For DR-601C for corporations and DR-601I for individuals) is due by June 30.

Lee County Tax Requirements

Tangible Personal Property Tax

All businesses are subject to tangible personal property taxes and must report annually as outlined in Florida Statute 193.052. Tangible personal property tax is assessed on assets used in the business or rental activity, even if they are leased or personally owned, such as tools, equipment, furniture, fixtures, machinery, signs, supplies, computers and phones. In addition, businesses that lease, loan or rent property, must also file. A Tangible Personal Property Return (Form DR-405) is mailed to Tangible Personal Property owners on January 1st. You are responsible for filing even if you do not receive the form.

Lee County Property Appraiser's Office

2480 Thompson Street, Fourth Floor
Fort Myers, FL 33901

Phone: (239) 533-6100

Web: www.leepa.org

7. Obtain business licenses and permits.

Read about federal, state and local licenses required for your business and get detailed information about Cape Coral permitting processes.

Every business needs one or more federal, state or local licenses or permits to operate. Licenses can range from a basic operating license to very specific permits, such as environmental permits.

Regulations vary by industry, state and locality, so it's very important to understand the licensing rules. Not complying with licensing and permitting regulations can lead to expensive fines and put your business at serious risk.

Permitting and Licensing Requirements

As do most communities, Cape Coral has established a system of licenses and certificates to ensure that businesses comply with building codes and land use, zoning and life safety regulations. Two City departments are primarily responsible for licenses and permits: the City Clerk and the Department of Community Development (DCD).

- The **Certificate of Occupancy (CO)** indicates that the structure in which the business is housed is habitable. The CO is issued by the Permitting/Building Services Division.
- The **Certificate of Use (CU)** indicates that the business location is consistent with zoning regulations and that inspections have been completed. The CU is issued by City Clerk after approval by the zoning section of the DCD Planning Division.
- The **Business Tax Receipt (BTR)**, formerly Occupational License, is an annual tax for exercising the privilege of engaging in business. The BTR is issued by the City Clerk.

Typically, eligible home-based businesses may be granted a Business Tax Receipt by the City Clerk without consideration of Certificates of Occupancy or Use.

However, when businesses intend to locate in leased or purchased facilities, the Business Tax Receipt will not be granted until the CO and CU inspections are completed. Therefore, businesses may wish to apply for all at the same time.

To facilitate cost-effective decisions about selecting locations, businesses are advised to consult with the zoning section of the DCD Planning Division to determine whether there are any issues, before entering into a lease or purchase agreement on the property.

In addition, one of the significant factors in considering applications for Certificates of Use is the business classification used by the City. An incorrect or incomplete classification may result in confusion or delay. Therefore, businesses may wish to pay particular attention in working with City staff to ensure that their business classification accurately represents the nature and extent of their services or products.

In all events, the City administration wants to facilitate accurate and rapid processing of business applications.

**Cape Coral Department of
Community Development**
City Hall
1015 Cultural Park Blvd.
Cape Coral, FL 33990
Web: www.capecoral.net

Business Tax Receipt / Licensing:
Phone: (239) 574-0430
Certificate of Use/Zoning:
Phone: (239) 574-0553
Department of Community Development:
Phone: (239) 573-3172

Department of Community Development

Zoning, Permitting, Inspections and Planning

For many businesses, the first contact is with the zoning section of the Department of Community Development (DCD) Planning Division to determine whether a business location is consistent with zoning and land use regulations. The EDO team recommends that business owners check with the Cape Coral Zoning Department before signing leases or purchase agreements.

As a business expands, changing circumstances may trigger new DCD requirements:

- Permits for general construction: plumbing, electrical, mechanical, roofing, and related projects
- Construction plan reviews for code compliance, prior to issuance of building permits
- On-site building inspections
- Zoning and setback requirements; variance request
- Alleged violations of City ordinances relating to zoning and building construction
- Site plan applications review for conformance with Land Use and Development Regulations (LDR)
- Development Order reviews, subdivision plats and inspections
- Applications for rezoning, variances, deviations, special exceptions and plat vacations
- Zoning and development proposals involving wetlands, protected plant and animal species, preserve areas, and landscaping
- Applications and inspections for dock and shoreline structures
- Permits for signs
- Street naming and addressing

Opening a new business location may involve a variety of permits and inspections. To guide the business through the process, the City provides direct assistance.

Call (239) 573-3172 to request information or schedule an appointment.

Zoning and Land Use Issues

Rezoning

Every piece of property has been given a specific zoning category. Zoning maps can be reviewed and/or purchased from the City Clerk's Office, (239) 574-0411. A rezoning may be requested if a person desires to use property for a use that is not currently allowed.

Special Exceptions

A special exception allows uses that are not normally permitted in a particular zoning district, upon demonstration that the use will comply with special conditions and standards for location and operation.

Variance Requests

A zoning variance is a departure from the provisions of the Land Use and Development Regulations (LDR) and does not change the allowable use of the property, building or structures; or change procedural requirements or definitions. A zoning variance may be granted when the enforcement of the LDR, as it applies to a specific lot, would cause an undue hardship. The applicant must demonstrate that the hardship is peculiar to the property and is not a result of an action by the property owner.

Vacation of Plats, Right-Of-Way and Easements

In order to abandon or close any portion of a plat, right-of-way or publicly dedicated easement, a vacation must be granted.

The application process for rezoning, special exceptions, variances and vacations includes a notice to affected property owners and a public hearing before the Planning and Zoning Commission and/or the City Council, which decides whether to approve the vacation.

General information and submittal requirements may be obtained from the Planning Division at (239) 574-0553.

Florida ADA Accessibility Implementation Act

The Florida Americans with Disabilities Accessibility Act, which parallels the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) under Title III regulations issued by the Department of Justice, applies to places of public accommodation and commercial facilities with respect to accessibility requirements and compliance. Business owners are responsible for compliance with these accessibility requirements when renovating or building a new building, with respect to structural barriers and other obstacles faced by persons with disabilities. You will need to consult with an Architect or Engineer to find out how your business may be affected.

US Dept. of Justice: www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm

The Access Board: www.access-board.gov/index.htm

Florida Building Code: www.sbcci.org/floridacodes.htm

Cape Coral Permitting Process

Please visit our website www.bizcapecoral.com for a download of our brochures *Opening a Business in Cape Coral* and *Licensing a Home Based Business in Cape Coral*.

- **Business:** Permit Application to DCD Building Division
 - Building Permit for new building
 - Remodeling Permit for existing building
- **City:** Application Review by DCD Building Division
 - Code Compliance (2007 Florida Building Code)
 - Florida Fire Prevention Code
 - Proper zoning/use
 - Drainage requirements
- **City:** Building Inspections
 - Building/zoning inspections (DCD Building Division)
 - Fire inspections (Fire Department)
 - Stormwater inspections (Public Works)
 - Health Department inspection (if applicable)
- **City:** Issue Certificate of Occupancy (DCD Building Division)

- **Business:** Certificate of Use Application to Planning Division
- **Business:** Sign Permit Application to Planning Division
- **Business:** Business Tax Receipt Application to Licensing
 - Zoning inspection
 - Fire inspection
- **City:** Issue Certificate of Use (Zoning-DCD)
- **City:** Issue Sign Permit (DCD Planning Division)
- **City:** Issue Business Tax Receipt (Licensing- DCD)

Business can check the status of their Building Permit application online on the City of Cape Coral's website www.capecoral.net, using the Permit Search feature.

Local, State, and Federal Licenses

Cape Coral Licensing Office (DCD) - Business Tax Receipt

All businesses – including home-based businesses – as well as some individual professional employees, require a City of Cape Coral Business Tax Receipt (BTR). The Licensing Office in the Department of Community Development (DCD) can advise you about licensing requirements for specific occupations or professions. Many application forms and other information are available at www.capecoral.net online.

Here are some situations that arise frequently:

- If your business is operating under a fictitious name or as a corporation, you will need to have a copy of your registration with the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations.
- If you hold a state license, such as attorney, accountant, or physician, proof is required at the time of application. Business Tax Receipts are renewed yearly.
- State Certified Contractors doing business in Cape Coral must register in person with the City Clerk's office to obtain a competency license and Business Tax Receipt (if applicable).
- Home-based businesses are not permitted to have employees except family members that reside at the home-based business location.

License fees vary depending upon the type of business, but the majority range from \$22 to \$110.

**Cape Coral Department of
Community Development**
City Hall
1015 Cultural Park Blvd.
Cape Coral, FL 33990

Business Tax Receipt / Licensing:
Phone: (239) 574-0430
Web: www.capecoral.net

Lee County Business Tax Receipt

Lee County also requires that businesses obtain a County Business Tax Receipt (BTR) after obtaining the City BTR. Fees for the County tax receipt are \$50.00. As with the City of Cape Coral Business Tax Receipt, if your business is operating under a fictitious name or as a

corporation, a copy of your papers as filed with the Florida Secretary of State is needed upon application. Contractors must provide proof of state licensing or a competency license.

Lee County Tax Collector

Government Center
1039 SE 9th Place
Cape Coral, FL 33990

Phone: (239) 339-6000
Web: www.leetc.com

Businesses that do not produce hazardous waste have the option to apply for a hazardous waste fee exemption. Businesses must apply for this hazardous waste fee exemption prior to applying for a county Business Tax Receipt. To learn more about this exemption, contact the Lee County Natural Resource Department.

Lee County Natural Resources

1500 Monroe Street
Fort Myers, Florida 33901

Phone: 239-533-8109
Fax: 239-485-8408

State of Florida Licensing

The State of Florida, through the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR), requires a license for a number of industries and occupations.

The DBPR licenses a wide variety of industries, but no longer regulates the medical professions or Professional Engineers. Medical professions are regulated by the Department of Health; Professional Engineers are regulated by the Florida Board of Professional Engineers.

Department of Business and Professional Regulation

1940 North Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1027

Phone: (850) 487-1395
www.myflorida.com/dbpr

Florida Board of Professional Engineers

Phone: (850) 521-0500
Web: www.fbpe.org

Florida Department of Health

Phone: (850) 245-4444
Web: www.doh.state.fl.us

Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR)

The list of businesses licensed by the Department of Business and Professional Regulation is exhaustive. Even though your business might not listed here, it is still possible that a state license may be required. The EDO Team recommends that businesses check the DBPR website to verify specific requirements or to determine the appropriate licensing department for your business.

Florida Dep. of Business and Professional Regulation Website: www.myfloridalicense.com

Highlights of licensing divisions for selected industries:

Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco

The Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco issues licenses for businesses that sell or distribute alcoholic beverages or tobacco. Fees are paid yearly and are determined by the type of business. Applicants must be at least 21 years of age. A temporary license can be issued in about two weeks; the permanent license may be issued within six weeks. The Fort Myers area office serves a five-county area.

Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco
4100 Center Pointe Drive, Suite 101
Fort Myers, FL 33916
(239) 278-7195
www.myflorida.com/dpbr/abt

Certified Public Accountants

This Division regulates Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) by processing applications for the CPA certification exam and issuing licenses.

Florida Board of Accountancy
240 NW 76th Drive, Suite A
Gainesville, FL 32607
(850) 487-1395
www.myflorida.com/dbpr/cpa

Hotels and Restaurants

The Division of Hotels and Restaurants provides sanitation and safety inspections for hotels, restaurants, lodging facilities and transient rentals. State law requires an initial inspection for new businesses, and a minimum of two unannounced inspections per year. The division attempts to conduct at least three annual inspections, depending on the type of business.

It should be noted that hotel and restaurant inspections are administered by this division, and not the state Health Department. However, the Health Department does provide sanitation and safety inspections for fraternal organizations, schools, hospitals and churches.

Division of Hotels and Restaurants
4100 Center Pointe Drive, Suite 104
Fort Myers, FL 33916
(850) 487-1395
www.myflorida.com/dbpr/hr

Florida Land Sales, Condominiums & Mobile Homes

The Division is responsible for licensing and regulation of laws dealing with subdivided lands, condominiums, mobile home parks and timeshare plans. Timeshare businesses can contact the Bureau of Customer Service. Others can contact the specific bureau for their industry.

1. Bureau of Land Sales Registration

The Bureau of Land Sales Registration administers the Florida Uniform Land Sales Practices Act, affecting businesses that sell subdivided lands to the public.

2. Bureau of Condominiums

The Bureau of Condominiums enforces the Condominium Act (Florida Statutes Chapter 718) and the Cooperative Act (Florida Statutes Chapter 719) which affects businesses involved in condominium management, sales or leasing.

3. Bureau of Mobile Homes

The Bureau of Mobile Homes regulates mobile home park owners and enforces the Florida Mobile Home Act (Florida Statutes Chapter 723).

Division of Florida Land Sales, Condominiums, Timeshares & Mobile Homes

Bureau of Customer Service
1940 N. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1032
(850) 488-1122
www.myflorida.com/dbpr

Division of Real Estate

This Division is responsible for examination, licensing and enforcement of more than 300,000 individuals, corporations, real estate schools and instructors. It provides administrative support to two other agencies: the Florida Real Estate Commission and the Florida Real Estate Appraisal Board.

Division of Real Estate
400 West Robinson Street, N801
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0783
(850) 487-1395
www.myflorida.com/dbpr/re

Division of Professions

The Division's mission is to protect the health, safety and welfare of Florida residents and visitors, by regulating professional licenses, education and compliance. The Division licenses more than 315,000 professionals.

Architecture and Interior Design	Electrical Contractors' Licensing Board
Asbestos Consultants	Employee Leasing
Athlete Agents	Farm and Child Labor Program
Auctioneers	Funeral Directors and Embalmers
Barbers	Landscape Architecture
Building Code Administrators & Inspectors	Pilot Commissioners
Bureau of Education & Testing	Professional Geologists
Community Association Managers	Pilotage Rate Review Board
Construction Industry Licensing Board	Surveyors and Mappers
Cosmetology	Talent Agencies
	Veterinary Medicine

Division of Professions
1940 North Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0760
(850) 487-1395
www.myflorida.com/dbpr

Federal Licenses and Permits

If your business is involved in activities supervised and regulated by a federal agency, you may need to obtain a federal license. Visit the website www.business.gov for a description of types of business activities licensed by the federal government and help with federal licensing.

Our EDO team welcomes your call or email. If you can't find the information you need among the links above, please feel free to contact us directly with your questions. We're here to help you!

8. Employer responsibilities

Learn the legal steps you need to take to hire and keep employees. Learn how to pay payroll liabilities, such as federal withholding, state and federal unemployment, social security, and Medicare.

Steps to Hiring Your First Employee

There are many good sources of information about finding the right people, writing job descriptions, interviewing candidates, and managing people once they are on board. While those are all important issues, understanding your regulatory requirements as an employer is crucial to the success of your business. This guide lays out ten easy steps for new employers to follow to ensure compliance with key federal, state, and local regulations.

Step 1: Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN)

One of the first steps to establish and register your business is the application for a Federal Tax ID from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. In addition to reporting taxes, the EIN is necessary when reporting information about your employees to state agencies. To obtain an EIN, you can apply online or contact the IRS directly. The IRS provides the following resources and services on its website www.irs.gov. Direct links are provided on our website www.bizcapecoral.com.

- [Guide to the Employer Identification Number](#)
- [Apply for an EIN Online](#)

U.S. Internal Revenue Service **(800) 829-4933** www.irs.gov

Step 2: Set up Records for Withholding Taxes

The IRS states that you must keep payroll records and file employment taxes for at least four years. Therefore it is important to establish a good record-keeping system from the beginning. Also, keep good records for your business to help you monitor the progress of your business, prepare your financial statements, identify source of receipts, keep track of deductible expenses, prepare your tax returns, and support items reported on tax returns.

Step 3: Florida Unemployment Tax Registration

Businesses with employees are required to pay unemployment insurance taxes under certain conditions.

The Unemployment Compensation tax funds the unemployment insurance benefit. Your business most likely will be liable for unemployment compensation tax if you paid \$1,500 in wages in any calendar quarter, or if you employed at least one worker during any 20 weeks in a calendar year. The Department of Revenue will determine whether you are liable, when you file form DR-1.

If your business is required to pay these taxes, you must register your business with the Florida Department of Revenue.

Employers pay a quarterly tax based on the gross quarterly payroll of their employees. Information and forms are available from the Department of Revenue's website.

Florida Department of Revenue Distribution Center

(850) 488-8422 www.myflorida.com/dor

Step 4: Workers' Compensation Insurance

Workers' Compensation coverage is required for some businesses. Businesses with more than three employees and construction-related businesses with any number of employees are required to carry Workers' Compensation Insurance coverage through a commercial carrier, on a self-insured basis, or through the state Workers' Compensation Insurance program. It provides benefits to workers who are injured on the job.

Non-construction businesses that are sole proprietors or partnerships are automatically exempt from Workers' Compensation; and officers may apply for exemption by filing the Notice to be Exempt (Form DWC 250).

Businesses in both non-construction and construction industries should remember that if those eligible choose to be exempt from Workers' Compensation coverage, and they are injured on the job, they will not receive benefits.

To find out more about Workers' Compensation requirements and how to obtain proper coverage and rates, contact the Division of Workers' Compensation.

Florida Department of Financial Services Division of Workers' Compensation Bureau of Compliance

Fort Myers, FL 33916
4415 Metro Parkway, #300
Phone: (239) 938-1840
(850) 413-1601
Web: www.fldfs.com/wc

Step 5: Federal Income Tax Withholding (Form W-4)

At time of hiring, every employee must receive and return a withholding exemption certificate (Form W-4). The form specifies the amount of income tax to withhold from the employee's pay and to submit to the IRS. When requested by the IRS, you must make original Forms W-4 available for inspection by an IRS employee. You may also get directed to send certain Forms W-4 to the IRS. For specific information on employer responsibilities regarding withholding of federal taxes, read the IRS' [Employer's Tax Guide](#) on our website www.bizcapecoral.com.

Step 6: Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9)

Federal law requires employers to verify an employee's eligibility to work in the United States. Within three days of hire employers must complete an Employment Eligibility Verification Form, commonly referred to as an I-9 form. All U.S. employers are responsible for completion and retention of Form I-9 for each individual they hire for employment in the United States; citizens and non-citizens.

Link for Form I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification) Download:
www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-9.pdf

Employers do not file the I-9 with the federal government. Rather, an employer is required to keep an I-9 form on file for 3 years after the date of hire or 1 year after the date the employee's employment is terminated, whichever is later. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency conducts routine workplace audits to ensure that employers are properly completing and retaining I-9 forms, and that employee information on I-9 forms matches government records.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) www.uscis.gov

Step 7: Register with the Florida New Hire Reporting Office

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 requires all employers to report newly hired, rehired, and temporary (full-time and part-time) employees to a state directory within 20 days of their hire or rehire date.

To report new hires employers can use online reporting, mail, or fax. Online reporting at www.fl-newhire.com provides employers with a printable confirmation report within 24 hours of reporting.

Florida New Hire Reporting Center
P.O. Box 6500
Tallahassee, FL 32314-6500

Phone: (888) 854-4791
Web: www.fl-newhire.com

Step 8: Safety and Health Regulations

All businesses with employees are required to comply with State and federal regulations regarding the protection of employees. OSHA outlines specific health and safety standards adopted by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration

Phone: (813) 626-1177 (Tampa Office) www.osha.gov/dcps/smallbusiness

Step 9: Post Required Notices

Employers are required by state and federal laws to prominently display certain posters in the workplace that inform employees of their rights and employer responsibilities under labor laws. These posters are available free from federal and state labor agencies. Visit the federal government's website www.business.gov for a page with information about specific federal and state posters you'll need for your business.

Website: <http://www.business.gov/business-law/employment/posters/>

Step 10: File Your Taxes

Monthly and Quarterly Liability Payments

As an employer, there are several federal and state tax filing requirements that apply to you. Businesses need to ensure the proper calculation of taxes and liabilities. While this can be done through software, such as QuickBooks, it is advisable to hire an accountant or payroll processing company.

Generally, all businesses with more than \$1,600 in payroll liabilities per quarter must pay their federal payroll liabilities and tax withholdings monthly. These include federal withholding, social security, and Medicare.

Each quarter, employers who pay wages subject to income tax withholding, social security, and Medicare taxes must file IRS Form 941, Employer's Quarterly Tax Return. Small businesses with an annual income tax liability of \$1,000 or less may file IRS Form 944, Employer's Annual Federal Tax Return instead of Form 941.

You must also file IRS Form 940, Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment (FUTA) Tax Return, if you paid wages of \$1,500 or more in any calendar quarter or you had one or more employees work for you in any 20 or more different weeks of the year.

New and existing employers should consult the IRS' **Employer's Guide** to understand all their federal tax filing requirements. A download is provided on our website www.bizcapecoral.com.

With your quarterly taxes, you will also file your Florida Unemployment Tax. The Florida Department of Revenue will send out the necessary reporting form to all employers.

You can also register to file the tax electronically online at:

<http://dor.myflorida.com/dor/eservices/apps/enroll/>

Federal Wage and Tax Statement (Form W-2)

On an annual basis, employers must report to the federal government wages paid and taxes withheld for each employee. This report is filed using Form W-2, Wage and Tax Statement. Employers must complete a Form W-2 for each employee to whom they pay a salary, wage, or other compensation.

Employers must send Copy A of Forms W-2 (Wage and Tax Statement) to the Social Security Administration (SSA) by the last day of February (or last day of March if you file electronically) to report the wages and taxes of your employees for the previous calendar year. In addition, employers should send copies of Form W-2 to their employees by January 31 of the year following the reporting period.

Visit the Social Security Administration's website www.socialsecurity.gov/employer for Employer W-2 Filing Instructions and Information and further guidance and assistance. In Cape Coral and all of Florida, we don't have state personal income taxes.

Get Organized and Keep Yourself Informed

Being a good employer doesn't stop with fulfilling your various tax and reporting obligations. Maintaining a healthy and fair workplace, providing benefits, and keeping employees informed about your company's policies are key to your business success. Here are some additional steps you should take after you've hired your employees:

Set up Recordkeeping

In addition to requirements for keeping payroll records of your employees for tax purposes, certain federal employment laws also require you to keep records about your employees. You may be subject to state recordkeeping requirements as well. Therefore, it's good practice to set up a sound, organized system for maintaining all personnel records. Employment laws such as the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), have certain recordkeeping and/or reporting requirements.

Understand Employee Benefit Plans

If you will be providing benefits to your employees, you should become familiar with the uniform minimum standards required by federal law to ensure that employee benefit plans are established and maintained in a fair and financially sound manner.

Learn Management Best Practices

While you aren't legally required to be a good manager, it sure helps when trying to recruit and retain good employees. The U.S. Small Business Administration's Guide to Managing Employees provides sound guidance on hiring, motivating, and directing employees. Visit the SBA website www.sba.gov to download the guide.

Apply Standards that Protect Employee Rights

Complying with standards for employee rights in regards to equal opportunity and fair labor standards is a requirement. Following statutes and regulations for minimum wage, overtime, and child labor will help to avoid errors and potential lawsuits.

9. Take advantage of Workforce Resources

Find skilled workers and workforce training opportunities for your business.

Workforce Resources

Business and Industry Services (BIS)

This agency is part of the Lee County School District. It works with employers in Southwest Florida to provide economical employee training programs. BIS meets with the employer and designs individualized training programs for the specific needs of the business. The training is either at the employer's site or one of the BIS training sites. Training schedules are flexible to accommodate work schedules.

Lee County BIS

High Tech North Campus
360 Santa Barbara Blvd. N.
Cape Coral, FL 33993

Phone: 239-939-6320
E-mail: nancyds@leeschools.net
Web: www.leecountybis.com

Career and Service Center of Lee County - One-Stop Center

The Florida Agency of Workforce Innovation oversees One Stop Centers that implement state workforce programs, match employees with employers (Employers Service Center), and recruit trained and qualified workers for high-tech and other short-staffed programs.

Through the One-Stop Center, employers in the community can find employees with the appropriate training, skills and motivation. Employers are also provided hiring information, job postings that can be processed within one business day, and local area statistics. Also available are onsite executive facilities and employer incentive programs.

Job Seekers are provided with job search assistance, employment workshops, employment counseling, skills training, resume writing, job matching and assistance filing for temporary public assistance or unemployment benefits.

Career and Service Center of Lee County

1020 Cultural Park Blvd Unit #2
Cape Coral, FL 33990

Phone: (239) 673-8591
Employers Service: (866) 294-4473
Claims & Benefits: (800) 204-2418

Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board www.swflworks.org

Agency for Workforce Innovation
www.employflorida.com

Workforce Florida, Inc.
www.workforceflorida.com

10. Community and Government Resources for Businesses

Take advantage of these resources created to make your business successful.

Business Resources

Cape Coral Economic Development Office

Cape Coral's Economic Development Office (EDO) is staffed with marketing and business development professionals who focus on providing the information that businesses need for development and growth, and who promote the City as a preferred destination for business and tourism. The office maintains data on demographics, communications and utilities infrastructure, transportation and workforce. In addition, the EDO creates and administers economic development incentives, including loans, fee deferrals and cash payments.

The EDO is focused on continuous improvement of the business climate in Cape Coral, with a vision that looks decades into the future. Cape Coral is the largest city in Southwest Florida, and, because of its mass, is destined to be the dominant marketplace in the region. The Economic Development Office is implementing strategies for business growth, creating a balanced economy in an environment that supports expansion, diversification and job creation.

City of Cape Coral Economic Development Office

City Hall
1015 Cultural Park Blvd.
Cape Coral, FL 33990

Phone: (239) 574-0444
E-mail: ecodev@capecoral.net
Web: www.bizcapecoral.com

Cape Coral Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)

The CRA was created by the City Council in 1993 to enable compact, mixed and compound use, pedestrian-oriented development and redevelopment in the central downtown district, consistent with the City's Community Redevelopment Plan and Comprehensive Plan. The CRA Board has the administrative power to implement Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and to offer additional incentives for renovation and development. Assistance is available to business and commercial properties located within the CRA district – the South Cape.

Community Redevelopment Agency

1231 Cape Coral Parkway East
Cape Coral, FL 33904

Phone: (239) 549-5615
E-mail: info@southcape.net
Web: www.southcape.net

Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber is a not-for-profit membership organization with more than 600 business members. Its office is the Visitor Information Center at the foot of the Cape Coral Parkway Bridge. The Chamber provides local business networking, small business counseling, education, special events, visitor information and relocation, city and county government and business advocacy.

Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce

Physical Address:
2051 Cape Coral Parkway
Cape Coral, FL 33904

Toll Free: (800) 226-9609
Phone: (239) 549-6900
E-Mail: info@capecoralchamber.com
Web: www.capecoralchamber.com

Chamber of Southwest Florida

This organization's focus is regional, serving Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades and Hendry counties. It provides community information and conducts business development events, such as the Regional Economic Outlook Conference and the Business-to-Business Trade Fair.

Chamber of Southwest Florida
5237 Summerlin Commons Blvd.
Suite 114
Fort Myers, FL 33919

Phone: (239) 278-4001
Fax: (239) 275-2103
E-mail: chamberswf@gmail.com
Web: www.chamber-swflorida.com

Christian Chamber of Southwest Florida

The Christian Chamber of SW Florida, Inc. is a membership forum where Christian business people, non-profit organizations and individuals can be involved in a Chamber of Commerce without in any way suppressing their faith. Members of the Christian Chamber enjoy membership in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, and Polk counties.

The Christian Chamber holds monthly luncheons in three counties at which members and non-members are welcome to attend. The Christian Chamber Community Weekly Update reaches over 3,000 people via e-mail. Other member activities include a FREE Business Card Exchange, FREE Small Group Networking and their Facebook social media group.

The goal of the Christian Chamber is to inform, educate and motivate Christian business people to be better at what they do, growing their businesses, and allowing those businesses, churches, organizations, and individuals more opportunity to be generous with their time, talents and resources.

Christian Chamber of SW Florida, Inc.
2714 Oak Ridge Court, Suite 601
Fort Myers, FL 33901

Phone: 239.481.1411
Fax: 239.415.2005
christianchamber@embargmail.com
Web: www.hischamber.org

Cape Coral Construction Industry Association

The Cape Coral Construction Industry Association is serving the Cape Coral Community since 1971. CCCIA is here for the benefit of those engaged in construction-related industries in the City of Cape Coral.

Cape Coral contractors, realtors, financiers, electricians, plumbers, roofers - virtually any business related to the construction industry, will enjoy many benefits with a membership to the CCCIA. Members represent the finest business leaders in the Cape Coral area - leaders that care about our community and work proactively to promote and protect it. CCCIA can help you to connect with local business partners.

CCCIA
611 Southeast 11th Street Suite B
Cape Coral, FL 33990-2809

Phone: (239) 772-0027
E-Mail: information@cccia.org
Web: www.ccia.org

Enterprise Florida

This is a not-for-profit, government-business partnership established to guide the development of Florida's economy. Its mission is to increase economic opportunities for all Floridians by supporting the creation of quality jobs, a well-trained workforce and globally competitive businesses. While not a state agency, Enterprise Florida is funded by the State of Florida and by donations from the private sector.

Enterprise Florida operates as a single point of contact for information about business assistance programs available in Florida. Enterprise Florida focuses on companies that are created in Florida and coordinates efforts in partnership with existing local and regional economic development organizations.

Enterprise Florida's main office is located in Orlando, Florida. It also has offices in Tallahassee and Miami, several field offices, plus 12 offices worldwide.

Enterprise Florida, Inc.

Headquarters
800 N. Magnolia Avenue, Suite 1100
Orlando, FL 32803

Phone: (407) 956-5600
Web: www.eflorida.com

Lee County Economic Development Office

The mission of the Lee County Economic Development Office is to serve the citizens of Lee County by marketing the county as the preferred location for targeted industries, resulting in diversification of the economic base. The office administers a number of economic development incentive programs and serves as staff to the Horizon Council and the Industrial Development Authority.

The Horizon Council is an advisory board to the Lee County Commission comprised of leaders from business, government, education and community organizations. Its mission is to develop policy that will support retention and expansion of existing businesses, improve the business environment in Lee County, and attract new and diversified employment to the area.

The Industrial Development Authority (IDA) administers the Industrial Bond Program, through which qualified industries use revenue bonds to finance capital projects. Established by Florida Statute in 1975, the IDA issues both taxable and tax-exempt bonds, subject to approval by the Lee County Commission.

Lee County Economic Development Office

12800 University Drive
Fort Myers, FL 33907

Phone: (239) 338-3161
E-Mail: edo@leegov.com
Web: www.leecountybusiness.com

Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau

The Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau is devoted to maintaining and building year-round tourism in Lee County. To achieve this goal, the VCB works closely with the local industry to increase domestic and international visitation through integrated programs targeting key markets. Local tourism businesses are encouraged to actively participate in all of the programs and grassroots outreach efforts, such as marketing meetings, booking engine participation, media initiatives and trade/consumer shows.

Among many others programs and activities, the VCB offers the *Guests First* Customer Service Training Program for frontline support and management employees. *Guests First* provides training workshops complimentary to hospitality and allied industries.

In addition to the VBC's website www.fortmyers-sanibel.com, the VCB has four off-site sales offices (Washington, D.C.; Minneapolis, Minn.; United Kingdom and Germany) and media/public relations representation in France. Domestic and international efforts are supplemented by contracted representatives.

Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau

12800 University Drive, Suite 550
Fort Myers, FL 33907

Phone: (239)338-3500
Toll Free: 800-237-6444
Fax: (239)334-1106
Web: www.leevcb.com

Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council

The regional planning council is recognized as Florida's only multi-purpose regional entity that plans for and coordinates intergovernmental solutions to growth-related problems on greater-than-local issues, provides technical assistance to local governments, and meets other needs of the communities in each region.

Since its designation as an Economic Development District in 1992, the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council has worked to promote economic development in the six-county region (Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee and Sarasota) it serves. The Council has accomplished this by working closely with the cities and counties in the region and by implementing its work program that is submitted annually in the application to the Economic Development Administration.

These efforts will continue and are expected to increase based on the range of projects identified in this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The Council created and maintains a website where most of this information is available.

SW Florida Regional Planning Council

1926 Victoria Avenue
Fort Myers, FL 33901
Phone: (239) 338-2550

Fax: (239) 338-2560
Web: www.swflrpc.org

Southwest Regional Manufacturing Association (SRMA)

SRMA is a non-profit membership organization comprised of corporations, partnerships and individuals engaged in manufacturing in Southwest Florida: in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades and Hendry counties. The association encourages the cooperative exchange of information and assistance among its members to help them manage more effectively, efficiently and profitably.

Southwest Regional Manufacturers Association

12800 University Drive, Suite 300
Fort Myers, FL 33907

Phone: (239) 472-7257
Fax: (239) 472-7256
E-mail: chet@srma.net

SW Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (SWFLHCC)

The Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (SWFLHCC) is a non-profit, non-sectarian, and non-partisan organization for the purpose of promoting, advocating, and facilitating the economic advancement of its members and the Hispanic community of Southwest Florida. The SWFLHCC has developed a central database of business information and acts as a contact center for businesses interested in the local, national and international Hispanic and non-Hispanic markets.

The SWFLHCC strives to promote the development of the Hispanic community by assisting in the development of Hispanic-owned businesses and markets and serving as the central information source for the general business community regarding Hispanic trends in Southwest Florida. The SWFLHCC is a network of Hispanic business associations and firms that are committed to expanding business opportunities, encouraging mutually beneficial ties with the public and private sectors, serving as an active and visible advocate in the Hispanic business arena, and promoting trade between the Hispanic-American business community and their Latin American counterparts.

Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

10051 McGregor Boulevard Suite 204
Fort Myers, Florida 33919

Phone: (239) 418-1441

Fax: (239) 418-1475

E-Mail: info@hispanicchamberflorida.org

Web: www.hispanicchamberflorida.org

Please visit the Cape Coral Economic Development Office website at www.bizcapecoral.com for additional tools and resources that help you to become a successful business owner in Cape Coral.

Our EDO team welcomes your call or email. Please feel free to contact us directly with any questions not answered within our Entrepreneur Guide.

We're here to help you!

**City of Cape Coral
Economic Development Office**

City Hall
1015 Cultural Park Blvd.
Cape Coral, FL 33990

Phone: (239) 574-0444

E-mail: ecodev@capecoral.net

Web: www.bizcapecoral.com

