Entrepreneurship Starter Mini Kit

Curated by Vanguard Impact

How to Use This Kit

Starting a business can feel overwhelming, but it doesn’t have to be. This kit breaks the journey into clear, actionable steps with tools, examples, and checklists. Use it to move from idea to action with confidence.

Clarify Your Business Idea

Step 1: Define the Problem You're Solving

- What gap or challenge are you addressing?
- Who experiences this problem most?

Prompt: "My business helps [audience] solve [problem] by [solution]."

Step 2: Identify Your Customer

- Who will pay for your product/service?
- What do they value most (price, convenience, quality, impact)?

Step 3: Validate Your Idea

- Talk to 5–10 potential customers.
- Ask:
  - "What's your biggest frustration with X?"
  - "How are you solving it now?"
  - "Would you pay for a solution like [your idea]?"

Draft a Simple Business Plan (One-Page)

Don’t get stuck on a 50-page plan. Start lean.

One-Page Business Plan Template

1. **Vision:** What change do you want to create?

2. **Customers:** Who are they? Where do they spend time?

3. **Offer:** What are you selling (product/service)?

4. **Revenue:** How will you make money (sales, subscriptions, services)?

5. **Marketing:** How will customers find you?

6. **Operations:** What do you need to deliver (tools, systems, suppliers)?

7. **Goals:** What does success look like in 12 months?

Funding Basics

Money is fuel for your business, know your options.

Bootstrapping

- Using personal savings, reinvesting profits.
- Best for: early-stage, low-cost businesses.

Loans & Credit

- Small Business Loans (banks, credit unions, Futurpreneur Canada, SBA in U.S.).
- Pro: quick access to funds.
- Con: repayment risk.

Grants & Competitions

- Government or private programs (see our Funding Directory resource).
- Non-dilutive (no repayment).
- Competitive.

Investors

- Angel investors or venture capital.
- Best for: high-growth startups.
- Pro: large capital.
- Con: give up equity/control.

Crowdfunding

- Platforms: Kickstarter, IFundWomen, GoFundMe.
- Great for validating demand.

Action: Calculate how much you actually need to start. Begin small, then scale.

Build Your Pitch

Whether talking to customers, investors, or a friend, your pitch matters.

Simple Pitch Formula:

1. Hook: A quick, relatable statement of the problem.
2. Solution: How your business solves it.
3. Credibility: Why you/your team can deliver.
4. Impact: Why it matters and what success looks like.
5. Ask: What you want (buy, invest, collaborate).

Example:
"Every year, millions of women leave the workforce because childcare costs are too high. At CareCo, we provide flexible, affordable childcare pods in local communities. I've spent 10 years in childcare management and am partnering with municipalities to launch pilot sites. With your support, we can expand to 3 new cities and support 2,000 families next year."

Marketing Essentials

Step 1: Define Your Brand

- What 3 words describe your business? (e.g., bold, trustworthy, innovative)
- What story do you want customers to tell about you?

Step 2: Identify Channels

- Social Media: Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok - where your customers hang out.
- Website/Email: Your digital home base - always own your list.
- Partnerships: Collaborate with complementary businesses.

Step 3: Test & Learn

- Post 2–3 times weekly.
- Track engagement (likes, comments, clicks).
- Double down on what works.

Operations & Systems

Business Basics to Set Up Early:

- Register your business (sole proprietorship, incorporation).
- Open a business bank account.
- Separate personal and business finances.
- Choose tools for bookkeeping (QuickBooks, Wave, Xero).
- Use productivity tools (Trello, Asana, Notion).

Simple Checklist:

- [ ] Legal structure decided
- [ ] Bank account opened
- [ ] Basic bookkeeping set up
- [ ] Website or landing page created
- [ ] Email set up (professional domain)

Growth Mindset & Resilience

Entrepreneurship is as much about mental resilience as strategy.

Daily Habits for Founders:

- Spend 15 min learning (podcast, article, video).
- Celebrate 1 small win every day.
- Keep a "failure log" → write what didn't work + what you learned.
- Surround yourself with supportive peers (mentorship, networking groups).

Action Plan

1. Write your one-page business plan.
2. Validate your idea with 5 customer conversations.
3. Open a business bank account.
4. Draft your simple pitch.
5. Post once about your idea (social, email, or to friends).

Closing Note

Entrepreneurship isn't about being ready, it's about starting. Use this kit as a guide, take one step at a time, and remember: momentum builds clarity. The world needs what you're building.