A Resource Guide for Creating or Launching a Small Business
Creative entrepreneurs enrich our communities through a wide range of artistic work, including music, performance, writing, visual art, print and digital design, film, television, and craft production. Maker entrepreneurs create, manufacture or assemble a product through a process involving intellectual property, raw materials or components. Creatives and makers play an integral part in Washington, DC’s business and cultural communities and cover a wide range of professionals in the art, food, beverage, digital and entertainment industries.

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Welcome to Washington, DC—a thriving city for makers and creatives. The District is a leading global city for some of the world’s most innovative artists, designers, chefs, photographers, and entrepreneurs. Local creators have helped mold the city into an epicenter for tech, art, music, culture and hospitality. DC’s inclusive mix of ‘small town vibe’ and ‘big city credibility’, make it an ideal place to start, grow, or expand your business.

Are you ready to turn your creative vision into a reality?

Your First Stop for Business

Looking to start, grow or expand your creative business? Take advantage of the free resources the Washington DC Economic Partnership (WDCEP) provides including introductions, information and programs to help your business thrive in the District. The ‘Makers & Creatives’ Toolkit is designed specifically to supplement the comprehensive and detailed DC Doing Business Guide available to download at wdcep.com. Find all the preliminary research you need to focus on bringing your business to life.
THE DC ADVANTAGE

This world-class city gives makers and creatives access to a wide audience and expanding opportunities across the innovative community. Washington, DC’s culture is highlighted by a growing ecosystem of museums, music, food, art and other “Made in DC” local products that attract visitors from near and far. Take advantage of all DC has to offer!

Why DC?

- The District of Columbia arts industries contribute $10.2 billion in value to the District’s economy, employing 52,096 arts workers who earned $7 billion (BEA, 2018).
- Washington, DC is listed as one of the most inspiring art cities in America (departures.com, 2017).
- Washington, DC is ranked #2 for the most educated city (Forbes, 2017).
- Washington, DC per capita income is 25 percent higher than the national average (WTOP, 2017).
- There are over 3,500 creative industries businesses per 100,000 people (USA Today, 2015).
- Washington, DC is one of the most innovative cities in the country and is ranked #3 for human capital (WalletHub, 2018).
- Washington, DC is a home for music lovers and to fantastic live music venues including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and 9:30 club (theculturetrip, 2017).

What’s Awaiting You in DC:

- Collaborative clusters
- The ability to carve out your own niche
- A highly skilled and educated workforce
- City-wide, unified initiatives that support and promote the creative economy (202Creates, InnoMAYtion, Made in DC, A Creative DC)
- Lots of eager customers
LOCAL FESTIVALS

- Adams Morgan Day
- Art All Night
- By the People Festival
- Capital Fringe Festival
- Crafty Bastards Arts & Crafts Fair
- DC JazzFest
- DC Independent Film Festival
- DC State Fair
- DC VegFest
- Farmers Markets
- Filmfest DC
- Funk Parade
- H Street Festival
- Smithsonian Folklike Festival
- Taste of DC
- WeDC Fest

“We chose to launch Bailiwick right here in DC because DC is a dynamic, growing city with a burgeoning creative scene and a wealth of resources for small businesses.”

JC Smith
Bailiwick Clothing
DO IT RIGHT REGULATIONS

1. Complete Business Registration—DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (business.dc.gov)
2. Apply for Employer Identification Number (bit.ly/EIN-IRS)
3. Register with the DC Office of Tax and Revenue and complete the FR-500 to receive your DC Business Tax Identification Number (mytax.dc.gov)
4. Receive Certificate of Registration from the Office of Tax and Revenue
5. Complete the Clean hands Certificate affidavit (ocfocleanhands.dc.gov/cch)
7. Food service business applicants are required to submit a final DOH inspection report. (bit.ly/DOHinspection2)
8. Apply for Basic Business License and/or other applicable licenses, according to your business activities. (dcra.dc.gov/node/539512 and business.dc.gov)
9. Register your Business Trade Name (dcra.dc.gov)

“I love doing business in DC. It is the city of opportunities for entrepreneurs. I can’t express enough how Made In DC, WDCEP, and others have opened so many doors for me. Thanks to Mayor Bowser for being such a great support to small businesses.”

Deborah Brown
Sweetdele’s Sweet Treats
Permits & Licenses

Film
dfilm.dc.gov/service/apply-film-permit

Live Theater
dcra.dc.gov/service/get-theater-live-license

Restaurants
dcra.dc.gov/service/get-restaurant-license

Beverages (Retail, Tasting, Distilling, Brewing, etc.)
abra.dc.gov

Catering
dcra.dc.gov/service/get-caterers-license

Food Truck & Mobile Vending
dmvfta.org/washingtondc
dcra.dc.gov/service/get-vending-license

Prepackaged Food Products
dcra.dc.gov/service/get-food-product-license

Barber, Cosmetology, Body Artist
pearsonvue.com/dc/barbers_cosmo

Interior Design & Architecture
pearsonvue.com/dc/arch_intdes/

“We’re proud to be Made in DC. No other city offers opportunities and support as DC does. It’s amazing how much the people and the City root for you and your small business’ success the moment you start. Just incredible!”

Krishna Matturi
Sasya Foods

More information

Business Licensing & Registration (DCRA)
dcra.dc.gov/book/just-starting-your-business

Zoning Interactive Map
maps.dcoz.dc.gov/zr16
dcoz.dc.gov

Public Space Permits
bit.ly/DDOTpublicspace

Building Permits, Building Plats, Trade Permits, Inspections
dcra.dc.gov
FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

The District offers a variety of incentives for entrepreneurs who are looking to do business in DC. This section gives you an array of programs set up to help businesses succeed in DC.

**Great Streets Small Business Grants**

Great Streets Retail Small Business Grants are competitive grants for qualified small business owners who wish to improve their place of business.

**BENEFIT:** Up to $50,000

**MORE INFO:** Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED)
(202) 741-8905 · greatstreets.dc.gov

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**DC Film, Television, and Entertainment Rebate Fund**

Subject to funding. The Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and Entertainment (OCTFME) administers an incentive program that provides eligible production companies a rebate on qualifying media production expenditures or media industry infrastructure improvements within the District of Columbia.

**BENEFIT:** Rebates of between 10% and 50% of certain qualifying expenditures.

**MORE INFO:** OCTFME
(202) 727-6608 · filmdc.incentive@dc.gov bit.ly/2L5bAtl

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**Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking (DISB) Innovation Finance Program**

The program provides capital to investors that coinvest with the District in start-ups and emerging companies that seek financing alternatives to traditional commercial financing.

**BENEFIT:** The portion that the District invests cannot exceed 50% of the loan and is capped at $500,000.

**MORE INFO:** DISB (202) 442- 8428 disb.dc.gov/node/1020002
DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (DCCAH) Grants
(202) 724-5613  dcarts.dc.gov/service/grants

Arts and Humanities Fellowship Program (AHFP)
Supports individual artists, teaching artists and humanities professionals who significantly contribute to the arts and humanities and substantially impact the lives of DC residents through excellence in the arts and humanities.

BENEFIT: Up to $10,000/Individuals (No Required Match)

East of the River (EOR)
Supports access to high-quality arts and humanities experiences for residents living east of the Anacostia River in Wards 7 and 8.

BENEFIT: Up to $35,000/Organizations (No Required Match)

Upstart (UPS)
Supports capacity building projects for arts, humanities and arts education organizations through consulting and grants for strategic planning, programmatic evaluation, leadership development and operating reserves for organizations with at least one (1) FTE as demonstrated by W-2 and cash expenses between $250,000 and $1,249,999.

BENEFIT: Up to $50,000/Organizations
Up to 30% of total award can be matched for operational reserves.

Projects, Events and Festivals (PEF(I) or PEF(O)) Grants
Supports projects, events and festivals to promote arts and humanities activities to DC residents including the District’s international Sister Cities.

BENEFIT: Up to $10,000/Individuals (No Required Match) and Up to $20,000/Organizations (1:1 Match)

Public Art Building Communities (PABC) Grants
Supports the creation and installation of permanent or temporary public artwork that enhances District neighborhoods.

BENEFIT: Up to $50,000/Individuals (No Required Match) and Up to $125,000/Organizations (1:1 Match)

Facilities and Buildings (FAB) Grants
Supports capital projects to defray costs related to the improvement, expansion and rehabilitation of existing buildings owned/leased by nonprofit arts and humanities organizations and purchase of existing facility under certain considerations.

BENEFIT: Up to 50% of budget

Arts and Humanities Education Projects (AHEP)
Supports in-school and out-of-school-time arts and humanities programs for children and youth in pre-school through high school settings. The grant also supports professional development opportunities in the arts and humanities for classroom educators.

BENEFIT: Up to $20,000/Organizations (1:1 match)
MADE IN DC

In 2016, the Department of Small and Local Business Development launched the official Made in DC program and Made in DC Fund to promote and support small business owners who are creating, manufacturing, or assembling products in DC.

Interested in becoming a member? DSLBD provides certification to businesses that locally produce products in the District and offer Made in DC members access to a suite of tools designed to help:

- Connect more powerfully with your customer base, including exclusive use of the Made in DC logo and brand collateral
- Listing in the Made in DC Member Directory and other shop local directories
- Exclusive selling opportunities at Made in DC hosted programming and through our local partners
- Opportunities to network, collaborate and learn from peer companies through meet-ups and our online communications platform
- Opportunity to participate in public awareness campaigns

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ENROLL YOUR BUSINESS, VISIT: THISISMADEINDC.COM

MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY

- Primary office/business located within the District of Columbia
- Possess a current and active DC business license
- The majority owners are District residents or 51% or more of your employees are District residents.
- 51% of your product is designed, produced, assembled, or manufactured through a process involving intellectual property, ingredients, raw materials, or other components derived from the District of Columbia.
Mayor Muriel Bowser launched 202Creates in September 2016 to amplify and celebrate DC’s creative culture. Through an array of events and activities, 202Creates consistently showcases the diversity of the artists, makers, and entrepreneurs who contribute to the District’s thriving creative industries. 202Creates has engaged residents through activities and conversations, curated by the District’s creative innovators that build community through all 8 Wards.

202Creates does three important things:

1. Promotes and amplifies The District’s Creative Economy through digital media marketing, social media promotion, and original television programming for the District’s creative residents.

2. Connects District residents with government resources and space to support their artistic work and creative businesses.

3. Builds community through an interdisciplinary approach. 202Creates connects creative District residents and entrepreneurs with each other to build community, encourage collaboration and freelance job opportunities.

The 202Creates portfolio includes

- A WEBSITE for the promotion and amplification and promotion of DC creative community.
- The 202Creates CREATIVE CO-WORKING DAYS providing co-working space and educational sessions, once a month for creatives to work, meet, build skills and connect with resource providers.
- The 202Creates RESIDENCY PROGRAM provides creative entrepreneurs space and business support services to build their creative businesses and grow the creative economy.
- Multiple original CONTENT SERIES to promote the creative culture of DC.
- The 202Creates PODCAST STUDIO provides creative entrepreneurs access to a new podcast recording studio, staff support, and media literacy opportunities to improve their audio and storytelling skills in the growing podcast industry.
- The 202Creates PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO provides creative entrepreneurs access to a photography studio for photo projects, along with media literacy opportunities to improve their photography skills for use in the growing media and content creation industry.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
- VISIT 202CREATES.COM
- ENGAGE WITH @202CREATES ON INSTAGRAM
- USE #202CREATES
NEED HELP?

GENERAL BUSINESS SUPPORT

**WDCEP**
wcep.com

**Commission on Fashion, Arts and Events**
bit.ly/cfae_dc

**Cre8tive Capacity**
cre8tivecapacity.com

**DCRA Small Business Resource Center**
business.dc.gov/sbrc

**DC Department of Small and Local Business Development**
dslbd.dc.gov

**DC Fashion Foundation**
dcfashionfoundation.org

**DC Small Business Development Centers**
dcsbdc.org

**DC Women's Business Center**
dcwbc.org

**DMV Food Truck Association**
dmvfta.org/washingtondc

**The HIVE 2.0**
thedchive.com

**Latino Economic Development Center**
ledcmetro.org

**Listen Local First**
listenlocalfirst.com

**Local Initiatives Support Corporation**
liscdc.org

**Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and Entertainment**
entertainment.dc.gov

**Project500**
project500.org

**Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington**
ramw.org

**SBA's SCORE Mentoring Program**
sba.gov

**Think Local First DC**
thinklocalfirstdc.org

**Washington Area Community Investment Fund Inc.**
wacif.org

LEGAL

**DC Bar Pro Bono Program**
dcbar.org

**AU Washington College of Law**
wcl.american.edu

**GWU Small Business & Community Economic Development Clinic**
bit.ly/gwusmallbiz

**UDC Law School**
law.udc.edu

**Washington Lawyers for the Arts**
waladc.org

FUNDING

**DC Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking**
disb.dc.gov/smallbusinfo

**Traditional Bank Loans**
bit.ly/Bank_Loan
Angel Investment, Venture Capital or Small Business Investment
mava.org
angelventureforum.com
nextgenvp.com

Crowdfunding & Equity Crowdfunding
disb.dc.gov/crowdfunding
kiva.org/dc
equity.indiegogo.com
venture.co

U.S. Small Business Administration Loan Programs
sba.gov/dc, sba.gov/sbic

Grants
greatstreets.dc.gov
arts.gov/grants
grants.gov
grantspace.org
grantwatch.com
opgs.dc.gov/service/funding-alert-information

GET NOTICED

DC is rich with resources and opportunities to expand your products reach and grow your consumer base. There are a variety of resources available to help makers and creatives gain additional exposure for people to notice it, contemplate and connect.

Stay in the Know:

- #aCreativeDC
  acreative.dc.com
  @aCreativeDC

- #202Creates
  bit.ly/OCTFMEnews
  @entertain_dc

- Made in DC
  thisismadeindc.com

- 730DC Newsletter
  730dc.com

- Washington City Paper’s District Line Daily
  legacy.washingtoncitypaper.com/notifications

- Brightest Young Things Agenda, Guides, Daily/Weekly Newsletters
  brightestyoungthings.com/agenda

- Creative Mornings DC Newsletter
  creativemornings.com/cities/DC

- DC Music Download Community Calendar + Local Resources
  dcmusicdownload.com

- Decent Workshop Newsletter
  decentworkshop.com/newsletter-signup

- East City Art Newsletter
  eastcityart.com

- Maketto Newsletter
  bit.ly/MakettoNewsletter

- Pink Line Project Newsletter
  pinklineproject.com/#join

- Rock Creek Social Club Newsletter
  rockcreeksocialclub.com
  @rockcreeksocial
FIND YOUR CREATIVE SPACE

Depending on the model, size, location and flexibility of a business operating in DC, finding creative space to start, grow or expand is essential to operating within the city.

**CULINARY INCUBATORS**

- Eatsplace  
  eatsplace.com
- Mess Hall  
  messhalldc.com
- Prequel  
  prequelrestaurant.com
- Taste Lab  
  tastelab.co
- Tastemakers  
  tastemakersdc.com
- Union Kitchen  
  unionkitchendc.com

**OTHER RESOURCES**

- WDCEP Resources  
  wdcep.com/resources
- SpaceFinderDC  
  dc.spacefinder.org
- Pop-up Opportunities  
  poppir.com

**COWORKING/ MAKER SPACES**

- DC’s Shared Office Space Map  
- Free & Shared Creative Spaces  
  acreativedc.com/coworking-and-maker-spaces
- Film  
  lookoutdc.com
- The Labs at DC Public Library  
  dclibrary.org/labsatdcpl
- DC Fashion Incubator  
  bit.ly/MacysIncubator
- FabLab  
  fablabdc.org
FIND OUT MORE

The Washington DC Economic Partnership (WDCEP) is a nonprofit, public-private organization that actively positions, promotes, and supports economic development and business opportunities in Washington, DC.

WDCEP is your first stop when doing business in the District.

Address
1495 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004
(202) 661-8670

Host your event in our space
WDCEP is located at the corner of 15th & F Streets, NW near the White House and provides ample event space for meetings, hiring events, menu tastings, workshops, board meetings, and more.

Learn more about renting out the conference room for an event.

Connect with us

🔗 wdcep.com
🔗 wdcep
🔗 wdcep
🔗 wdcep1495
🔗 wdcw.com

LinkedIn
Washington DC Economic Partnership
With the District expanding, residents have access to an innovative city full of opportunities for both new and established business enterprises.

The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs’ (DCRA) Small Business Resource Center (SBRC) is your premier one-stop-shop for information and services that can help you open, sustain and strengthen your business.

Conveniently located in DCRA’s Permitting and Licensing Center, SBRC offers access to free trainings, technical workshops, educational seminars, one-on-one sessions, and more.

Start Here!

If you are an aspiring entrepreneur or current small business owner, SBRC is an essential resource for your success! Learn more at dcra.dc.gov/sbrc.