The Copper Lantern — Business Plan

Bar in Nashville, TN · Startup plan

Executive summary

The Copper Lantern is a new bar in Nashville, TN offering craft cocktails, beer and wine; a small bar-food menu; weekly events: trivia, live music, watch parties; and private bookings and group reservations. The model is a neighborhood room people return to weekly, a short drinks list poured consistently, and pour costs watched every week.

Startup budget: $229,250 across 12 items, funded from savings. Target: $55,000 in monthly sales.

Twelve months from now, success looks like this: Thursday-to-Saturday nights full, a weekly event that regulars plan around, and beverage cost under 25%

Products and services

The Copper Lantern's core offer is craft cocktails, beer and wine. The drinks list is short enough to be fast and consistent on a busy night, the food menu is small and easy to execute, and weekly events give regulars a reason to plan around the place.

- Craft cocktails, beer and wine
- A small bar-food menu
- Weekly events: trivia, live music, watch parties
- Private bookings and group reservations

Market analysis

The customers are neighbors who want a regular spot, after-work groups on weeknights, and the weekend crowd out for the evening. Regulars are the business: a guest who comes weekly is worth more than any single packed night.

- Neighbors within walking or short-ride distance who want a regular spot
- After-work groups from nearby offices on weeknights
- Weekend crowds out for the evening, often before or after dinner elsewhere
- Groups booking birthdays, work drinks and private events

Marketing strategy

Most first visits will come from Google Maps, walking past, and word of mouth from friends who already come. Reviews on the Google Business Profile, an Instagram feed of events and the room, and a website with hours, the menu and private-booking enquiries turn curiosity into a visit.

- Google Business Profile and Google Maps — “bars near me” plus your neighborhood
- Word of mouth and regulars — the base of every good bar
- Instagram for events, specials and the room itself
- Partnerships with nearby restaurants, hotels and venues
- A website with hours, the drinks menu, events and private-booking enquiries

Operations plan

The bar runs on weekly rhythms: inventory counted, pour cost checked against sales, staff scheduled to the real peaks, and security on the busiest nights. The owner is behind or beside the bar in year one, because the room's character is the product.

- A tight drinks list — a dozen cocktails plus beer and wine — that bartenders can make fast and consistently
- Pour costs tracked weekly against a target of 18–25% of drink sales
- Inventory counted weekly; over-pouring and shrinkage are where bar profit disappears
- Staff scheduled to the week's real peaks, with security on the busiest nights
- ID checks, responsible-service training and incident logs as routine

Startup costs

What it will take to open the doors, funded from savings.

Startup costs

ITEM	AMOUNT
Liquor license	$25,500
Lease deposit and first months' rent	$19,000
Build-out: bar, seating, restrooms and finishes	$85,000
Bar equipment: coolers, ice machine, glassware, taps	$30,000
Opening liquor, beer and wine inventory	$10,000
POS system and payment hardware	$3,250
Insurance (first year)	$8,000
Business license, health permit and inspections	$2,750
Sound, lighting and TVs	$8,500
Website and Google Business Profile	$0
Signage, menus and branding	$4,750
Working capital (first three months)	$32,500
Total	**$229,250**

Typical range to start a bar in the US: $68,500–$392,500. Your list is what you decided to spend — replace estimates with real quotes as you get them. Website and Google Business Profile: Your Zarla plan includes the website and walks you through your Google Business Profile — a designer typically charges $2,000 or more to build one.

Financial plan

The numbers below come from your own startup list and typical monthly costs for a small bar in the US. Drinks carry strong margins; the license, the lease and the slow opening months are what the capital has to cover.

Typical monthly operating costs for a bar: $18,400–$69,200 a month, before the owner's own pay.

At $55,000 in monthly sales, The Copper Lantern would clear up to $36,600 a month before owner pay and tax if costs stay near the low end of the typical range, and recover the $229,250 startup budget in roughly 7 months. At the high end of typical costs ($69,200) that target doesn't cover them — so the cost list, not the sales target, is the number to pin down first.

Typical monthly operating costs

COST	TYPICAL RANGE
Rent and utilities	$3,000–$12,000
Liquor, beer and wine (18–25% of drink sales)	$6,000–$20,000
Bartenders, servers, security and payroll taxes	$8,000–$30,000
Insurance including liquor liability	$400–$1,200
POS, reservations and booking software (included with Zarla)	$100–$500
Entertainment, events and marketing	$500–$4,000
Ice, garnish, glassware and cleaning supplies	$400–$1,500

US ranges for a small operation; replace with your own figures as you learn them. Lines marked (included with Zarla) are what those tools cost separately — with Zarla they are part of one monthly plan.

Risks and honest downsides

Every bar plan should say out loud what can go wrong. For The Copper Lantern, the real risks are:

- The liquor license can cost more and take longer than the entire build-out
- Bars build a following slowly, and the fixed costs arrive from day one
- Shrinkage and over-pouring quietly erase the drink margin unless inventory is counted weekly
- Late nights bring liability — fights, over-service and DUI claims are why liquor liability is priced the way it is
- Neighborhood and licensing rules can change; noise complaints are a real threat to the license

Licenses, permits and insurance

What The Copper Lantern needs before it can legally trade in the US. Rules vary by state and city — confirm each item with your local licensing office and an accountant.

- Liquor license — State-issued in the US, often with local approval too; costs and wait times vary enormously and some states cap the number of licenses. Start here.
- Business license and food permits — From your city or county; a health permit and inspection if you serve food.
- Responsible beverage service training — Required or strongly expected in most states for anyone serving alcohol.
- Sales tax permit and EIN — Register for sales tax with your state and get an EIN before your first hire.
- Building, fire, occupancy and signage permits — Occupancy limits and fire inspections are strict for bars; music may need a license too.
- Insurance — General liability plus liquor liability; workers' compensation once you have employees.

Milestones: the next 30 days

The first month's to-do list for The Copper Lantern, in order:

- Find out exactly what a liquor license costs and takes in your state and city before signing a lease
- Walk existing bar spaces — a second-generation space cuts the build-out dramatically
- Register the business, get an EIN and open a business bank account
- Get insurance quotes including liquor liability from two or three brokers
- Write the opening drinks list and cost every pour
- Set up a free Google Business Profile and put a website with hours, the menu and events live
- Line up the first month of events so the opening has a reason to come back
- Ask happy guests for Google reviews from the first week

Appendix: what a lender will ask for

This plan tells the story and shows the numbers. If you take it to a bank, expect to be asked for these documents as well:

- Two years of personal tax returns and a personal financial statement
- A month-by-month 12-month cash-flow projection that includes the license timeline
- The signed lease or a letter of intent, and the status of the liquor license application
- Quotes for the build-out and equipment, and a costed drinks menu
- Your hospitality experience and the experience of your bar manager
- Your credit report and anything you can offer as collateral