[Your business name] — Business Plan

Dog walking and pet sitting in [Your city] · Startup plan

Executive summary

[Your business name] is a new dog walking and pet sitting business in [Your city] offering midday dog walks, 30 or 60 minutes; drop-in visits for feeding, medication and litter boxes; overnight house sitting while owners travel; and puppy visits and senior-dog check-ins. The model is one tight route, a signed service agreement before any key changes hands, standing weekly visits that renew themselves, and insurance a client can see.

Startup budget: $2,860 across 9 items, with funding still to be decided.

Twelve months from now, success looks like this: [What success looks like twelve months from now]

Products and services

[Your business name]'s core service is midday dog walks, 30 or 60 minutes. Every client starts with a meet-and-greet, every visit ends with a photo and a map sent to the owner's phone, and every key is labeled by code, logged and stored locked.

- Midday dog walks, 30 or 60 minutes
- Drop-in visits for feeding, medication and litter boxes
- Overnight house sitting while owners travel
- Puppy visits and senior-dog check-ins

Market analysis

The customers are households where nobody is home in the middle of the day, owners of puppies and senior dogs that cannot wait nine hours, and traveling owners who would rather their pets stayed at home than went to a kennel — all of them inside one small service area the owner can cross in ten minutes.

- Households where everyone works a full day and the dog is alone from morning to evening
- Owners of puppies and senior dogs that cannot wait nine hours for a break or their medication
- Traveling owners who would rather their pets stayed at home than went to a kennel
- Neighbors with a new rescue dog who need a routine built around it while they are at work

Marketing strategy

Most clients arrive by word of mouth — a neighbor who has seen the same person on the same street at noon every day — and Google confirms it when someone checks: a Google Business Profile with the service area and reviews that name real streets, and a website carrying the rates, the insurance, the certification and a face. The meet-and-greet closes it.

- Referrals from clients and their neighbors — the strongest source in a trade built on house keys
- Google Business Profile and Google searches for “dog walker” plus your neighborhood, with reviews that name real streets
- Vets, groomers, pet stores and apartment building managers, who get asked for a walker every week
- Neighborhood groups and building bulletin boards inside the streets you actually cover
- A website with your service area, rates, insurance, certification and a meet-and-greet request form

Operations plan

The owner walks the route in year one — midday walks through the middle of the day, drop-ins around them, house sitting on weekends — reviews the schedule every Sunday, and keeps a backup walker agreed in advance for the days when weather or illness makes the route impossible.

- One tight service area — a radius you can cross in ten minutes, named neighborhood by neighborhood, with work outside it turned down
- A meet-and-greet before every first booking, and a signed service agreement covering cancellations, key handling, vet authorization and which dogs may be walked together
- Keys labeled with a code rather than an address, logged, stored locked and returned in writing
- Pet care software that holds the schedule, sends a photo-and-map report after every visit and bills automatically
- A backup walker agreed before you need one — illness and weather do not cancel a dog's day
- Rates reviewed on the same date every year, with the increase put to clients in writing a month ahead

Startup costs

What it will take to open the doors, with funding still to be decided.

Startup costs

ITEM	AMOUNT
Working capital: a cushion for the slow first month	$1,100
General liability, animal bailee coverage and a bond (first year)	$500
Business registration, LLC filing and EIN	$330
City or county business license	$275
Pet first aid and CPR certification	$125
Pet care software: the schedule, visit reports and billing (first year)	$0
Website and Google Business Profile	$0
Leashes, slip leads, waste bags, treats and a pet first aid kit	$230
Logo, business cards and a proper photograph of you	$300
Total	**$2,860**

Typical range to start a dog walking and pet sitting business in the US: $520–$8,400. Your list is what you decided to spend — replace estimates with real quotes as you get them. Pet care software: the schedule, visit reports and billing (first year): Your Zarla plan includes invoicing, online booking and customer records — you'll still want pet care software for the route, the photo-and-map visit report and the recurring schedule. Website and Google Business Profile: Your Zarla plan includes the website carrying your neighborhoods, rates, insurance and certification, with a meet-and-greet request form, 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 dog walking and pet sitting business in the US. Overhead is unusually low, so what decides the income is how many billable visits fit in a day once travel time is counted, and how many of them are standing weekly bookings rather than one-offs.

Typical monthly operating costs for a dog walking and pet sitting business: $105–$2,840 a month, before the owner's own pay.

Add a monthly sales target and the plan will show how long it takes to recover the startup budget.

Typical monthly operating costs

COST	TYPICAL RANGE
General liability, animal bailee coverage and the bond	$15–$70
Pet care software: schedule, visit reports, billing and client records (included with Zarla)	$0–$80
Fuel, parking and wear on the car the route needs	$30–$250
Waste bags, treats, wipes, and leashes and boots that wear out	$20–$80
Flyers, door hangers and the occasional local ad	$0–$150
Phone, internet and bookkeeping	$40–$150
Association membership and continuing education, spread over the year	$0–$60
A second walker on your busiest days (once you hire)	$0–$2,000

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 dog walking and pet sitting business plan should say out loud what can go wrong. For [Your business name], the real risks are:

- You hold keys to homes you enter alone — one lost keyring or one tag with an address on it ends the business
- A dog that slips a collar or bites someone is the claim that closes an uninsured walker, and general liability does not cover the dog itself
- Travel time, not walking, is what eats the day: a route spread across a city earns half what the same visits earn four minutes apart
- It is outdoor physical work in every weather with no sick pay, and the dogs still need walking on the day you cannot
- A solo route is capped by the hours in a day — the only way past the ceiling is hiring, training and insuring other walkers
- The apps can fill an empty first month, but the client stays theirs and the cut continues for as long as that client books

Licenses, permits and insurance

What [Your business name] 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.

- Business registration and EIN — Most walkers in the US start as a sole proprietor or a single-member LLC, and register a DBA if the business does business under another name. The EIN from the IRS is free. Open a business bank account that never touches your personal one — it is what makes the bookkeeping survive a year.
- General business license where your city or county requires one — The ordinary local license any US small business needs, not a pet-specific one: nothing in some cities, a few hundred dollars in others. Home-based businesses are usually covered by it, so ask even if you have no premises.
- A commercial dog-walking permit where the city or the park system requires one — In most of the US, walking dogs is not a licensed occupation the way plumbing or cosmetology is. A small number of places do license commercial walkers, and some of those cap how many dogs one person may handle at once — which changes your route arithmetic directly if you planned on group walks. Massachusetts, for one, requires a permit to walk dogs commercially in its state parks. One call to your city or county animal care and control office settles it before you plan a route.
- A boarding or pet-handler license once animals stay with you or ride in your car — This is the line where the answer usually flips. New York City requires a Small Animal Boarding Establishment Permit from its health department — an inspection, and a supervising manager holding an Animal Care and Handling Certificate — for any place where animals stay for a fee, daycare included, not only overnight stays. Colorado licenses pet animal facilities under its Pet Animal Care Facilities Act, which names boarding, training, grooming, sheltering and transporting pet animals; a walk at the client's own home is not in that list. Check your own state and city before you add overnights, daycare or transport, and check your zoning too.
- No pet care certification is required — No US state licenses dog walkers or pet sitters as a profession, and no certificate is needed to take your first client. Pet first aid and CPR, and the credentials the US pet sitting associations award, are optional — clients read them as proof, which is exactly why they earn their place on your website.

Milestones: the next 30 days

The first month's to-do list for [Your business name], in order:

- Choose your services and draw the route tight — walks and drop-ins first, boarding only after you have checked your city's rules
- Register the business, take the free EIN and open a business bank account
- Call your city or county animal care and control office: do commercial walkers need a permit, and are dogs per walker capped?
- Buy general liability with care, custody and control coverage before the first paid walk, and add a bond if you will hold keys
- Book a pet first aid and CPR class, and put the certificate on your website when it arrives
- Write the service agreement: cancellation window, key handling, vet authorization, and which dogs may be walked together
- Set your rates against your own day — count the visits that fit, add holiday and extra-pet surcharges, and put the month you will raise them in the calendar
- Put the website live with your neighborhoods, rates, insurance and a meet-and-greet form, and claim your Google Business Profile
- Introduce yourself to the vets, groomers and building managers inside the route, then ask for a Google review after the first good 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 built from visits per day, not from a revenue guess
- Your client list: standing visits a week, the rate for each and how long each client has stayed
- Proof of general liability, care, custody and control coverage and any bond, plus your business registration
- Your pet first aid certification, any association membership and your background check
- Vehicle costs if the route needs driving: the car, its insurance and a realistic monthly mileage
- Your credit report and anything you can offer as collateral

Template: replace every [bracketed] line and every estimate with your own figures. Written with Zarla's free business plan generator — zarla.com/business-plan-generator writes it from five questions.
