

[Your business name] — Business Plan

Nonprofit organization in [Your city] · Startup plan

Executive summary

[Your business name] is a new nonprofit in [Your city] offering a core program delivered in the community; volunteer recruitment and training; fundraising: individual donors, grants and events; and partnerships with schools, agencies and local businesses. The model is one program delivered well, results measured from the first session, an engaged board, and a funding mix that starts with individual donors and volunteers.

Startup budget: \$18,826 across 10 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 work is a core program delivered in the community. The program runs on a written schedule with trained volunteers, results are recorded every session, and nothing new is added until the first program is working.

- A core program delivered in the community
 - Volunteer recruitment and training
 - Fundraising: individual donors, grants and events
 - Partnerships with schools, agencies and local businesses
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Market analysis

The organization serves its program's participants, and it is sustained by the donors, funders and partners who want to see that work happen — each needs to see results in plain numbers.

- The people the mission serves — the program's participants
- Individual donors who care about the cause and want to see results
- Foundations and government programs that fund this kind of work
- Local businesses, schools and agencies that partner or sponsor

Marketing strategy

Most supporters will hear about [Your business name] through word of mouth — participants, volunteers and partner organizations — with Google confirming the organization is real when someone looks it up. A website with the mission, results, a donate button and volunteer sign-up, plus regular email updates, turn interest into gifts and hours.

- Word of mouth from participants, volunteers and partner organizations
- Google Business Profile and Google — your cause plus your city, and the nonprofit itself by name
- Email updates and social posts that show the program's results
- Grant databases, community foundations and local government funding notices
- A website with the mission, results, a donate button and volunteer sign-up

Operations plan

The founder runs the program and the fundraising in year one, the board meets on a schedule with minutes, every dollar is tracked by fund, and paid staff arrive only when recurring funding covers them.

- A board of at least three unrelated directors, meeting on a schedule with minutes
- One program done well before a second is added
- Every dollar tracked by fund and program — donors and grantmakers will ask
- Volunteers screened, trained and thanked; retention is cheaper than recruitment
- Impact measured simply from day one: people served, outcomes, cost per outcome

Startup costs

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

Startup costs

ITEM	AMOUNT
State incorporation as a nonprofit corporation	\$138
IRS 501(c)(3) application user fee	\$438
State charitable solicitation registration	\$200
Legal and accounting help with bylaws, policies and the application	\$1,500
General liability and directors-and-officers insurance (first year)	\$1,500
First program costs: materials, space and supplies	\$5,500
Website with donations and Google Business Profile	\$0
Donor database, email and volunteer tools (first year)	\$0
Logo, print materials and a bank account	\$550
Working capital (three months of program and admin costs)	\$9,000
Total	\$18,826

Typical range to start a nonprofit in the US: \$4,900–\$36,750. Your list is what you decided to spend — replace estimates with real quotes as you get them. Website with donations 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. Budget separately for a donation processor's fees. Donor database, email and volunteer tools (first year): Your Zarla plan includes a contact list and invoicing with your website; a dedicated donor database can wait until you have donors.

Financial plan

The numbers below come from your own startup list and typical monthly costs for a small nonprofit in the US. Formation is cheap; the program and the reserve are the real budget, and the funding target is what the program needs plus a cushion for late grants.

Typical monthly operating costs for a nonprofit: \$740–\$15,360 a month, before staff pay.

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

Typical monthly operating costs

COST	TYPICAL RANGE
Program delivery: materials, space, transport	\$500–\$5,000
Staff or stipends (many start all-volunteer)	\$0–\$8,000
Insurance	\$40–\$210
Donor, email and volunteer software (included with Zarla)	\$0–\$150
Fundraising and payment-processing costs	\$100–\$1,500
Bookkeeping, filings and phone	\$100–\$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 nonprofit plan should say out loud what can go wrong. For [Your business name], the real risks are:

- Founder burnout — most new nonprofits are one person doing everything unpaid
- Funding is lumpy and late; grants take months and events pay once a year
- The tax-exempt determination takes months, and donors can't deduct gifts until it arrives
- Mission creep — chasing funding for programs you didn't set out to run
- Compliance is unforgiving: missed filings can revoke the exemption and the trust that goes with it

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.

- State nonprofit incorporation — File articles of incorporation as a nonprofit corporation in your state, with bylaws and an initial board.
 - EIN and 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status — Get an EIN, then apply to the IRS (US) for federal tax exemption; donations are only tax-deductible once approved.
 - State charitable solicitation registration — Most US states require registration before soliciting donations, renewed yearly.
 - State tax exemptions — Sales and property tax exemptions are separate state applications where available.
 - Annual filings — The IRS Form 990 series every year, plus state annual reports — missing three years of 990s revokes the exemption.
 - Insurance and background checks — General liability and D&O cover; background checks are essential for anyone working with children or vulnerable adults.
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Milestones: the next 30 days

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

- Write the mission in one sentence and the first program in one page
 - Recruit at least three unrelated board members and draft bylaws
 - Incorporate in your state, get an EIN and open a bank account in the organization's name
 - File the 501(c)(3) application and the state charitable registration
 - Get liability and D&O insurance quotes
 - Set up a free Google Business Profile and put a website with a donate button and volunteer sign-up live
 - Run the first program session with volunteers and record what happened
 - Ask the first 20 supporters for a monthly gift and every volunteer for a Google review
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Appendix: what a funder will ask for

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

- Articles of incorporation, bylaws and the board roster
- The IRS determination letter or the status of the application
- A 12-month budget by program and month, with the funding plan beside it
- Financial statements or bank statements to date, and the most recent Form 990 if you have one
- Letters of support or partnership from schools, agencies or funders
- For a loan, the board resolution authorizing it and any 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.

Written with Zarla · zarla.com/business-plan-generator