

Before You Start, Issues to Consider

Creating a nonprofit is like creating a business. You need to engage in some serious planning before you start the filing incorporation papers, and applying for your tax exemption from the Internal Revenue Services.

Today there are more than 1.4-million nonprofits nationwide, with thousands being formed everyday. Competition for resources (money, volunteers, etc.) is fierce. More than having compassion, and commitment, it takes some research and planning to ensure the successful launch of your cause.

First, you need to identify the niche your nonprofit will fill by asking yourself these questions:

- What nonprofit am I interested in starting?
- What services or products will my organization provide?
- Is my idea practical, and does it fill an unmet need in the community?
- What is my competition? (You'd be surprised who provides what kind of services in the community.)
- What is my nonprofit's advantage over existing nonprofit organizations?
- Can I deliver a better quality service?
- How will I sustain my operation, and can I create a demand for my organization? (Don't think you can rely solely on donations, virtually every nonprofit generates some type of income.)

The final step before developing your nonprofit organization you should answer these questions:

- What skills and experience do I bring to the nonprofit business?
- What insurance coverage will be needed?
- What equipment or supplies will I need?
- How will I compensate myself?
- What are my resources?
- What financing will I need?
- Where will my organization be located?
- What will I name my nonprofit?

Your answers will help you create a focused, well-researched operational plan that should serve as a blueprint for raising prospective funds, and better determine the likely success of your venture.

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