

Running a successful business requires many different skills and traits. Thinking about your business goals and skills will help you figure out if self-employment is a good fit at this time.

1. Why Self-Employment?

Why do you want to be self-employed?

There are many reasons why people want to be self-employed. Here are some examples:

- Needing flexible work hours
- Limited job opportunities in your area
- Demand or need for your product or skills
- Workplace attitudes that prevent you from working at your full potential

2. Your Business Idea

How did you come up with your business idea?

Business ideas are likely to be more successful if they are based on:

Experience

- Having been in the same or a similar business for a number of years
- Having the skills to deliver your product or service

Interest

- Passion for the product or service
- Willingness to take time to learn about the product or service

Demand

- Customers wanting or needing your product or service

3. Your Experience

What previous experience or training has prepared you to run this business?

- In what ways does this experience apply to making your product or delivering your service?
- How might this experience contribute to other aspects of business success?
 - For example, do you have experience with things like:
 - Bookkeeping
 - Ordering supplies
 - Customer Service
 - Advertising or marketing
 - Other skills needed to run your business

4. Past Self-Employment

Have you ever owned a business? If yes:

- What did the business do?
 - How does the product or service of your previous business relate to your proposed business?
- How long was the business open?
- Why did you close the business?
- In what ways was the business successful?
- What will you do the same in your proposed business?
- What will you do differently in your proposed business?

5. Disability Accommodations

Are there any accommodations you need? How will you set up your business to accommodate your disability?

Some people need accommodations to run their business. Examples are things like:

- Flexible work hours or part-time work
- Breaks throughout the day
- Limited pressure or stress
- Limited walking, standing, reaching, or lifting
- Need for specially-designed equipment or assistive technology
- Personal assistance with some parts of business operations

Think about things like business location, office equipment, office set-up, and ways of communicating with customers. **Are there any accommodations you need? How will you set up your business to accommodate your disability?**

6. Skills and Knowledge

Do you need to gain more knowledge to run your business?

- Would improving your skills, or learning more about your product or service, help you?

6. Skills and Knowledge (continued)

What are your ideas for gaining these additional skills and knowledge?

- Shadowing another business owner?
- Finding a business mentor?
- Volunteering at a similar business?
- On-the-job training?
- Working with a friend or family member to increase your skills in an area?
- Other?

7. Education and Training

Do you need any formal education, training, or credentials, such as a professional license, certification, or degree to operate your business?

- What educational degree, training, or credentials do you need?
 - What are your plans to get them?
 - How long do you think it will take?
- If you need an educational degree, how can business management knowledge be included in the degree?
- Does your proposed business require an apprenticeship? If so, what are your plans for finding one?

8. Bookkeeping

Every business needs a system to keep track of things like purchases, sales, and expenses.

- How will you do your bookkeeping?
 - Will it be with a notebook and a special file cabinet? Or will you use a computer with bookkeeping software?
- If needed, who will help you set up your system?
- If needed, who will help you maintain this system?
- How will you keep your personal and business expenses separate?

9. Business Activities

Keeping in mind that a typical full-time job is 40 hours per week, how many hours per week do you think you will have to spend on the following activities related to your proposed business?

| Activity | Hours per week doing this activity |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Reaching out to potential customers through advertising and marketing activities | |
| Serving current customers | |
| Making products | |
| Maintaining financial records | |
| Purchasing supplies | |
| Planning and managing the business | |
| Traveling | |
| Other business activities | |
| Total | |

VR _____
Self-Employment
_____ Guide

Check with another small business owner to see if your estimates are realistic and similar to theirs.