

GUNSMITH GUIDE

A start guide for getting your own business off the ground

BUSINESS STARTUP GUIDE AND WORKBOOK

Veteran's Strategic Solutions LLC — Business Model Series

Before you read this

This guide works anywhere in the United States. Dollar figures are estimates from public sources, not quotes. Firearms law is federal, state and local at once, and it changes. Everything here is a starting point for a conversation with the ATF and your own state — not a substitute for one. Wherever there is a blank line, write in your own answer.

What this business actually is

People bring you firearms that do not work, do not fit, or do not shoot where they are pointed, and you fix that.

Trigger jobs. Barrel work. Sight and optic installation. Stock fitting and bedding. Refinishing. Cleaning and function checks on guns that have not been touched in thirty years. Restoring a rifle that belonged to somebody's father.

What this is not: a business you can ease into. Most trades in this series let you take one job and see how it goes. Here, doing this as a regular business without the right licence is a federal felony carrying up to five years.

Read this first

Compliance is not the paperwork around the business. Compliance is the business.

You will spend more time on your bound book than on any single repair. An inspector will eventually read that book, and what he finds determines whether you keep your licence.

Gunsmiths rarely lose their businesses because the work was bad. They lose them because a firearm stayed overnight and the record did not get made, or the zoning was never right, or a friend got a favour that should have been paperwork.

ATF has stated that, absent extraordinary circumstances, it will initiate proceedings to revoke the licence of any dealer that commits a wilful regulatory violation of the Gun Control Act for specified violations. That is the standard you are operating to.

Get the compliance right and this is a good trade with a real moat around it. There were approximately 128,690 active federal firearms licensees in the whole country as of FY2024, across every licence type combined. Very few people can legally do what you do.

Honest gut check

- Can you keep records precisely, every day, forever? If your instinct is "I'll write it up later," this trade will end badly.
 - Are you mechanically precise? This is machining and fine fitting, not parts swapping.
 - Are you comfortable with the ATF walking in and reading everything? That is normal here.
 - Can you tell a customer no? Some of them will be friends.
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What the odds actually are

Approximately three out of four new businesses make it through their first year. About half are still running at five years. About one in three make it to ten — broadly consistent with U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics business-survival data.

Two honest caveats. Those numbers barely move by trade, and they count businesses with payroll, so a man working alone is largely not in them.

The honest market picture: the firearm and ammunition industry supports approximately 383,000 jobs and over \$90 billion in total U.S. economic activity, per the National Shooting Sports Foundation's most recent economic impact report. But the recent trend is not up — firearm imports were down about 10 percent and national retail sales down roughly 13 percent through Q3 2024.

What that means for you: softening new-gun sales do not hurt a repair business the way they hurt a retailer. People fix what they already own when they are buying less. But do not build a plan that assumes a rising market.

What separates the ones who last:

Clean records. Everything else is downstream.

Turnaround. The most common complaint about gunsmiths is that the gun has been there four months.

Money that repeats. Transfers, law enforcement work, club relationships and annual maintenance.

Knowing your limits. The work you should not have taken is the work that ruins your reputation.

Snapshot

Money to start	\$8,000 to \$30,000 — training, licence, tools, security
Storefront needed	Home shop is legal in most states. Zoning decides.
Skill gate	High. Machining and fine fitting.
Licence	Federal FFL, plus state and local.
Time to first dollar	6 to 18 months — training plus licensing
Federal fee	Type 01: \$200, then \$90 every three years

Part 1 — When you actually need a licence

This is the first question every reader has, especially if you already work on your own guns and your friends' guns. Here is what the regulation actually says.

The definition

Federal regulation defines a gunsmith, for licensing purposes, as a person who — as a service performed on existing firearms not for sale or distribution — devotes time, attention and labour to repairing or customising firearms, or making or fitting special barrels, stocks or trigger mechanisms, as a regular course of trade or business with the principal objective of livelihood and profit.

And it explicitly excludes a person who occasionally repairs or customises firearms, or occasionally makes or fits special barrels, stocks or trigger mechanisms.

What that means in plain terms

The trigger is not the work. It is whether you are doing it as a business, for a living, for profit.

Fixing your brother-in-law's shotgun once is not being engaged in the business. Running a repair operation is.

But understand this clearly: “occasional” is not defined with a number anywhere in the regulation. There is no “five guns a year” line. It is a fact-specific judgement about your pattern of activity, made by people who are not you.

Which leads to the only sensible advice: do not try to operate near that line.

If you intend to take money for firearms work with any regularity, get licensed. The licence is \$200 and typically takes about three months to process. Being wrong about “occasional” is a federal felony. That is not a close call.

Part 2 — The licence decision

Type 01 — Dealer in Firearms, includes gunsmiths

\$200 application, \$90 renewal every three years.

This is what most gunsmiths need. It authorises repairing firearms and making or fitting special barrels, stocks or trigger mechanisms — and buying and selling firearms as a dealer.

Type 07 — Manufacturer of Firearms

\$150 initial application, \$150 renewal every three years. Includes all gunsmithing authority.

The line between them, in ATF's own words

This is the cleanest statement of the distinction, and it is worth reading twice. From ATF's own published guidance:

“There is no difference between gunsmithing and manufacturing in terms of the physical operations performed on a firearm. What distinguishes them is the purpose for which the work is done.”

- Work on a customer's personal firearm, for that customer's personal use, returned to that customer — that is gunsmithing, lawful under a dealer licence.
- Work on firearms as a step in preparing them for subsequent sale — that is manufacturing, and it requires a manufacturer's licence.

So the question is never “is re-barrelling manufacturing?” The question is “whose gun is it and where is it going?”

What Type 07 adds

- Federal excise tax — 10 percent on pistols and revolvers, 11 percent on other firearms, filed with the Treasury's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB). There is a small-manufacturer exemption: a maker who manufactures, produces and imports fewer than 50 firearms in a calendar year owes no excise tax that year. Reach 50 or more and the tax applies to that full year's production, not just the units after the 50th — so track your count.
- Export control registration with the State Department's Directorate of Defense Trade Controls, with annual fees, if you export. Confirm the current position directly with DDTC — industry bodies have noted expected reform in this area and the details can change.

Also worth knowing

- A standard FFL covers Title I firearms only — ordinary pistols, rifles and shotguns. NFA items require a Special Occupational Tax (SOT) registration on top.
- The application fee is non-refundable even if you are denied.

My intended operations: _____ Licence type: 01 / 07

Write down exactly what you intend to do and ask the ATF in writing before you apply. A written answer from the agency that regulates you is worth more than any guide, including this one.

Part 3 — Getting licensed

Step 1. Resolve zoning before anything else

This is the most common reason FFL applications fail, and it is entirely avoidable.

- Many jurisdictions restrict home-based firearms businesses. Some ban them.
- ATF will not approve the licence if your business address and proposed operations do not comply with state and local law.
- If you rent, you need documentation from the landlord specifically permitting firearms activity. A general lease is not enough.
- You must be able to give ATF access during business hours.

Call your city or county planning department in week one. Get the answer and write down the name of the person who gave it to you.

My zoning answer: _____

Step 2. Check your state and locality separately

There is no clean fifty-state list, and you should be suspicious of anyone who hands you one — this is exactly the area where requirements change and vary by city as well as state.

The ATF's own Form 7 instructions warn that state laws or local ordinances may require additional licences or permits, and that other requirements such as cash bonds, liability insurance, zoning restrictions and sales tax collection may also apply.

States vary enormously. Some have no separate state dealer licence at all — you meet the federal requirements, comply with state business and zoning law, and the ATF can issue. Others layer on their own licensing, storage, reporting and inventory rules. A few make this business substantially harder.

Call your state's attorney general or state police licensing division and ask directly. That is a one-hour job and it determines whether this business is viable where you live.

Step 3. Apply on ATF Form 7

- Submitted to the Federal Firearms Licensing Center (FFLC) in Martinsburg, West Virginia.
- Fingerprints on an FD-258 card, photographs, and background checks on every Responsible Person — anyone with authority to direct the firearms side of the business.
- ATF's own guidance states it aims to act on a properly completed application within about 60 days — treat this as a service goal, not a guaranteed statutory deadline, and plan your timeline with a margin.

Step 4. The in-person interview and premises inspection

An Industry Operations Investigator (IOI) will contact you to schedule a mandatory in-person interview. During it, expect them to:

- Verify what you put on the application.
- Assess your knowledge of federal firearms laws and regulations.

- Review your recordkeeping procedures and your bound book.
- Inspect your premises and storage.
- Confirm compliance with state and local law.

Read that second item again. They are going to ask whether you actually understand your obligations. Know your A&D requirements, the Form 4473 process and the NICS process cold before that meeting.

Step 5. Form the LLC

Filing fees run \$35 to \$500 depending on state, about \$132 on average nationally. Do this — you are holding other people's property and working on machines that can kill.

Step 6. Get an EIN — it is free

irs.gov, five minutes.

Step 7. Business bank account, separate from personal

Step 8. Insurance

General liability, plus coverage for customer property in your care, custody and control — standard liability usually excludes it, and you will have other people's firearms in your safe. Ask about that coverage by name.

Step 9. Taxes

Self-employment tax of 15.3% plus income tax. Quarterly if you expect to owe \$1,000 or more federally — April 15, June 15, September 15, January 15. Set aside 25 to 30 percent of net.

Part 4 — The bound book, and staying licensed

The rule that governs your daily life

From ATF's own published guidance, and this is the single most useful compliance fact in this guide:

- If the owner waits while you work, or you return the firearm to the owner the same business day — no A&D entry is required.
- If you have possession from one business day to the next, or longer — it must be recorded as both an acquisition and a disposition.

Anything that stays overnight gets logged. That is the line, and it is clean.

The A&D book itself

- Record it when it happens. "I'll enter it tonight" is how books go wrong.
- Record the full serial number and, for a firearm received from or transferred to another licensee, that licensee's complete FFL number.
- Bound book or an ATF-approved electronic system. Systems built for FFLs reduce errors and shorten inspections.
- The inspector reads two things: your Form 4473s and your A&D book. They must agree with each other and with what is physically on your shelf.
- Records must be retained for as long as you hold the licence. Since ATF's 2022 rule change (Ruling 2021R-05F), A&D and Form 4473 retention is indefinite — there is no fixed number of years after which you may destroy them while you remain licensed. (ATF has proposed, but not finalized as of this guide's writing, a rule that would set a fixed 20- or 30-year retention period; until a final rule is published, plan on keeping records for the life of the licence.) If you close the business, records go to ATF's Out-of-Business Records Center or to a successor licensee within the required window.

The rest of the ongoing obligations

- NICS background checks on every transfer.
- Form 4473 completed correctly, every time.
- Report multiple handgun sales on ATF Form 3310.4 — required when you sell or otherwise dispose of two or more handguns to the same unlicensed person at the same time or within five consecutive business days. File with the National Tracing Center by close of business the day it happens, send a copy to the chief local law enforcement official, and keep your copy attached to the Form 4473s.
- Report theft or loss of any firearm.
- Secure storage.
- Respond to trace requests when ATF asks.
- Renew before expiry. File Form 8 Part II ahead of the expiration date — if it is postmarked before your licence expires, you can request a Letter of Authorization to keep operating while the renewal is pending.

Use ATF's own help — most new licensees never do

This is the resource nobody tells you about:

- ATF publishes a “Federal Firearms Licensee Quick Reference and Best Practices Guide.” It is free, it is written for exactly your situation, and it tells you what they expect.
- ATF publishes a Firearms Industry Newsletter. Subscribe to their ePubs list.
- ATF maintains a Firearms Questions and Answers resource covering the practical questions licensees actually ask.
- Industry Operations Investigators' stated role includes helping licensees understand and comply. Inspection is part of the job, and so is education.

Ask your IOI questions. That is not inviting scrutiny — it is using the system as designed.

The mindset that works

You already know how to maintain a property book, sign equipment in and out, and stand an inspection where somebody counts what you said you had.

This is that, with federal consequences. Treat the bound book like a sensitive-items inventory and you will be fine.

Part 5 — The work you have to refuse

You will get asked. Recognise it early and have your answer ready.

The categories to decline:

- Anything that would produce an NFA item you are not licensed and taxed for. Your standard FFL covers Title I firearms — ordinary pistols, rifles and shotguns. Short-barrelled rifles and shotguns, suppressors and machine guns sit under the National Firearms Act and require separate registration and a Special Occupational Tax.
- Anything involving a removed, obliterated or altered serial number. Federal law and many state laws prohibit possession of firearms with altered serial numbers.
- Any work for somebody you have reason to believe cannot lawfully possess a firearm.
- Anything a customer asks you to keep off the books. The request itself tells you what it is.
- Manufacturing work under a dealer licence. If it is being prepared for sale rather than returned to its owner, you need Type 07.

How to say no, without drama:

“That’s not something I can do under my licence. I’m not able to take that one.”

Do not explain how it could be done. Do not refer them to somebody who might. Decline and move on.

If a request seems clearly unlawful rather than merely outside your licence, ask ATF what your obligations are. They would rather answer that call than investigate you later, and your IOI is the right person to ask.

One general principle worth internalising: the customer who wants you to bend a rule for them is not a customer worth having. The favour costs you a licence that took a year and thousands of dollars to get.

Part 6 — What it costs to set up

Training and licence fees below are verified against current ATF and TTB published rates. Everything in the tools and equipment section is an estimate from typical market ranges, not sourced figures — price your own list before budgeting.

Item	Roughly
Training	\$600 to \$31,000 depending on route — see Part 7
FFL application	\$200 Type 01 · \$150 Type 07 (verified)
Gun safe or approved storage	\$1,000 to \$4,000
Security — alarm, cameras, locks	\$500 to \$3,000
Hand tools, punches, gunsmith screwdrivers, vises	\$800 to \$2,500
Torque tools, headspace and go/no-go gauges	\$500 to \$1,500
Bench, lighting, ventilation	\$500 to \$2,000
Parts washer and solvent handling	\$300 to \$1,000
Lathe, used	\$2,000 to \$15,000+
Milling machine, used	\$3,000 to \$20,000+
Bluing or finishing setup	\$500 to \$5,000
Cerakote setup — oven, gun, compressor	\$2,000 to \$6,000
Insurance	\$1,000 to \$3,000/year
A&D and 4473 software	\$0 to \$150/month

A realistic start without machining capability is \$8,000 to \$15,000 including training and licensing. Add a lathe and mill and you are at \$20,000 to \$40,000.

You do not need a lathe on day one. A large share of profitable work is assembly, fitting, sights, optics, triggers, cleaning and finishing. Buy machining equipment used, and buy it when a paying job justifies it.

Ventilation and solvent handling are not optional. You will be using chemicals daily in an enclosed space.

Part 7 — Getting the trade

This is a machining trade and this guide cannot teach it.

If you were a small arms repairer in service — MOS 91F (Small Arms/Towed Artillery Repairer) in the Army, MOS 2111 (Small Arms Repairer/Technician) in the Marine Corps, or an equivalent role in another branch — you have a real head start on function checks, headspace, parts fitting and armorer work. What you probably lack is the machining side and the business side.

Route	Time	Cost
Certificate program, community college or trade school	3 to 12 months	Often under \$5,000
Online professional certification	90 days to 2 years	\$600 to \$15,000
Associate degree in firearms technology	About 2 years	Community college rates from about \$46/unit for residents
In-person degree program	2 years	Average around \$31,000 all-in
Manufacturer armorer courses	Days	From about \$40; specialty courses \$50 to \$1,300

Several gunsmithing programs are approved for the GI Bill and other military education benefits. Confirm with both the school and the VA before enrolling — this is the cheapest route available to you and most people never check.

Armorer certification deserves special mention. Short, cheap, and immediately marketable — it lets you advertise factory certification on the platforms people in your area actually own.

Specialisations worth adding later: Cerakote and metal finishing, precision machining, stock work, engraving, firearm appraisal.

Practical shop time is what makes you competent. Video teaches you what to do. It does not teach you the feel of a file.

Part 8 — What you actually sell

The bread and butter

Cleaning and function checks · sight and optic mounting and zeroing · trigger work · recoil pad fitting · stock fitting and bedding · scope base and ring installation · spring and small parts replacement · muzzle devices · troubleshooting guns that will not cycle.

None of this needs a lathe. All of it is steady work.

Higher-value work

Barrel work and re-crowning · accuracy work and bedding · Cerakote and refinishing · restoration of inherited firearms · custom fitting · engraving.

The revenue line most new gunsmiths overlook

FFL transfers. When somebody buys a firearm online, it must ship to a local licensee for the transfer. A Type 01 lets you charge for that, it takes about twenty minutes, and it brings a customer physically into your shop who then asks whether you do trigger jobs.

In a small town with few FFLs, transfers alone can carry the overhead.

The accounts worth having

- Local law enforcement and sheriff's departments — annual armorer work and duty weapon maintenance.
- Private security firms.
- Gun clubs and ranges.
- Hunting outfitters and guides.
- Pawn shops — they take in guns needing work and need somebody to assess them.
- Estate attorneys and auctioneers — appraisal and lawful disposition of inherited collections. Almost nobody markets to them.

Part 9 — Pricing

There is no reliable published rate data for independent gunsmith services, so this guide is not going to invent a rate card. Build a real one instead.

Call three shops within driving distance as a customer. Ask what they charge for mounting and boresighting a scope, a trigger job on a common platform, a full clean and function check, and a Cerakote on a handgun slide. Write down the price and the quoted turnaround. That is your market, in an afternoon.

Then set your structure:

- A shop hourly rate for diagnostic and non-standard work.
- Flat rates for common jobs — customers want a number, and flat rates protect you from your own slow days.
- A bench minimum. Otherwise you will spend an hour on a \$15 job.
- Charge for diagnosis. Free assessment attracts people who want a free answer.

Local rate for a scope mount: _____ · Trigger job: _____ · Their turnaround: _____

On what you might earn

Published wage figures for this trade are inconsistent across sources. Different surveys citing federal data put the median anywhere from approximately \$38,000 to nearly \$69,000 a year.

More importantly, those describe employed gunsmiths, not shop owners. They tell you what the trade pays somebody else's employee. They tell you very little about what your own shop earns, which depends on your rate, your utilisation and whether you have accounts.

Part 10 — Turnaround, your competitive advantage

The most common complaint about gunsmiths, everywhere, is that the work takes months.

Some of that is real — parts backorder. Much of it is a shop that took in more than it could do.

- Quote a date you can beat. If you think three weeks, say five.
- Call the customer when something slips. People forgive delays they were warned about.
- Cap your work in progress. Better to say “I can start it in two weeks.”
- Separate quick jobs from long jobs. Same-day sight mounting is a different queue from a bedding job.

A gunsmith who returns work when promised will have more work than he can handle inside a year.

Part 11 — Money help for veterans

VR&E, Chapter 31 — what is actually true.

The self-employment track is widely advertised as VA funding to start a business. The regulation requires that your service-connected disabilities be severe enough that self-employment is the only reasonably feasible career path for you. It is not a track you simply choose. As of August 2022, approximately 164 veterans nationwide were enrolled in the self-employment track, against more than 125,000 veterans using VR&E overall that year, per congressional testimony — it is a genuinely small slice of the program.

The long-term services track is different and far more commonly used. It covers vocational school, technical certificates and trade programs with no tuition cap, and can cover tools, equipment and certification exam fees.

The catch: VR&E is an employment program, not an education program. If a counselor determines you can reasonably obtain suitable work with the training you already have, it gets denied. Anything funded must sit inside an approved individualised employment plan.

Apply with VA Form 28-1900 and put the question to your counselor. Do not plan around a yes.

Free and reliable to everyone, no rating required: Small Business Development Centers, SCORE mentoring, Veterans Business Outreach Centers.

Two things specific to this trade:

Gunsmithing programs are commonly GI Bill approved. That is an entitlement rather than a discretionary decision, and it covers exactly the training this business requires. Confirm with the specific school before enrolling.

If you were a small arms repairer, say so everywhere. You maintained weapons to a standard under conditions most civilian gunsmiths have never worked in, and you already think in serial numbers, accountability and inspections. That last part is most of what keeps an FFL alive.

Part 12 — The three places people get stuck, and how to get past them

1. Not resolving zoning before applying

The licence feels like the hard part, so people focus on it. Then the application is denied — fee non-refundable — because the city does not permit a home-based firearms business, or the lease does not specifically allow it.

The fix: one call to planning in week one, before you spend anything.

2. Letting the bound book fall behind

It starts small. A busy Saturday, three guns in, and you will enter them tonight. Then tonight becomes next week. Then an inspector asks about a serial number on your shelf that is not in the book.

The fix: the entry gets made before the gun goes on the shelf. Every time, including for friends. Remember the rule: same day, no entry needed. Overnight, it must be logged.

3. Taking work you cannot finish on time

You want the job, so you say four weeks. A part backorders, another customer walks in, and the bench fills. Three months later you have twelve guns you are embarrassed about.

The fix: cap your work in progress, quote long, deliver early, and call people when something slips. Being the gunsmith who returns work on time is a business strategy in this trade.

None of these are reasons not to start. They are the three potholes in the road, and every one of them is avoidable if you know it is coming.

Part 13 — Your first 90 days

Days	What you do
1 to 14	Call planning about zoning. Call your state licensing authority. Confirm GI Bill approval on a program.
15 to 30	Enrol in training. Write down your intended operations and ask ATF in writing whether they need 01 or 07.
31 to 45	Submit Form 7. Form the LLC. Get insurance quotes including care, custody and control coverage.
46 to 60	Download ATF's Quick Reference and Best Practices Guide. Subscribe to the industry newsletter. Learn A&D, 4473 and NICS cold before your IOI interview.
61 to 75	Set up shop and safe. Hand tools, not machines. Set up your A&D system.
76 to 90	Licence in hand: start with transfers and simple work. Introduce yourself to the sheriff's department, two clubs and a pawn shop.

The one number to track

Days from drop-off to pickup, per job.

Not revenue, not job count. How long the customer waited.

Turnaround is the most common complaint in this trade, which makes it the easiest thing to win on — and the number tells you when you have taken on more than you can handle, well before your customers tell you.

If your average is climbing month over month, stop accepting work until it comes down.

Month 1 average: ____ days Month 2: ____ Month 3: ____

After year one, add: percentage of revenue from accounts and transfers rather than walk-in repairs. Walk-ins are weather. Accounts are a business.

Where this goes if it works

A one-man home shop. Low overhead, repair and fitting, no machining. Genuinely good money in a town without a good gunsmith.

A specialty. Cerakote, precision rifle work, restoration, or one platform you know better than anybody locally. Specialists do not compete on price.

Transfers and retail alongside the bench. The Type 01 already permits it, and it turns foot traffic into repair work.

Law enforcement and institutional contracts. Annual, budgeted, predictable, and you are one of very few who can bid.

The one-page version, if you read nothing else

- “Occasional” repairs are outside the licence requirement, but “occasional” is not defined anywhere. Do not operate near that line — get licensed.
- Type 01 is \$200 then \$90 every three years. Type 07 is \$150 initial and \$150 renewal.
- The 01/07 line is PURPOSE, not operation. Customer’s gun back to the customer is gunsmithing. Prepared for sale is manufacturing.
- Call zoning first. It is the most common reason applications fail and the fee is non-refundable.
- Check your state separately. There is no clean fifty-state list and requirements vary by city too.
- Same day, no A&D entry. Overnight, it must be logged. That is the rule you will use daily.
- Keep A&D and 4473 records for as long as you hold the licence — retention is indefinite under current ATF rules, not a fixed number of years. The inspector reads your 4473s and your bound book, and they must match your shelf.
- Your IOI interview will test whether you know the rules. Learn A&D, 4473 and NICS before it.
- Download ATF’s Quick Reference and Best Practices Guide and subscribe to their newsletter. Free, official, and most licensees never do.
- Track turnaround days. Being on time is a business strategy in this trade.

A last word

You already understand serial numbers, accountability, inspections, and maintaining a weapon to a standard where somebody's life depends on it being right.

That is the entire foundation of this business. The machining you can learn.

This guide is a starting framework, not legal advice. Federal, state and local firearms law is complex, varies by jurisdiction and changes over time — verify every regulatory item with the ATF and your own state before you operate, and consider counsel experienced in firearms regulation. Federal licence fees, the regulatory definitions, the A&D retention and overnight rules, and the application process described here reflect ATF and TTB published material current as of September 2026, including a proposed (not yet finalized) ATF rule on records retention. Tool, equipment and setup costs are estimates from typical market ranges, not sourced figures or quotes. Wage figures cited describe employed gunsmiths, not business owners.

Startup Checklist

Use this checklist to turn the guide into a sequence of actions for your own market and circumstances.

- Choose the business structure you will use.
- Get an EIN and open a separate business bank account.
- Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.
- Confirm insurance needs before accepting work or inventory.
- Complete the local market test described in the core guide.
- Build the startup budget and record actual costs.
- Set pricing using your own costs and required margin.
- Prepare customer terms, estimate and invoice forms.
- Launch outreach and record every lead and result.

Equipment and Budget Worksheet

List only the tools, equipment, supplies, software and services required for the version of the business you plan to launch.

Item	Required or optional	Estimated cost	Actual cost	Supplier or source
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Budget summary	Amount
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Startup total

Monthly fixed costs

Working cash reserve

Total funding needed

Pricing and Estimate Template

Complete the cost fields with your own numbers. Use the pricing guidance in the core guide for the business-specific method.

Estimate field	Details or calculation	Amount
Customer and project		
Materials or replacement parts		
Labor hours and rate		
Equipment or shop time		
Travel or shipping		
Subcontractors or outside machining		
Overhead allocation		
Contingency or risk allowance		
Subtotal		
Applicable tax		
Estimated total		
Deposit and payment schedule		
Estimate expiration date		

Invoice Template

Business information

Customer information

Business name:

Customer name:

Address:

Company:

Phone:

Billing address:

Email:

Phone:

FFL / Tax ID:

Email:

Invoice number

Invoice date

Due date

Firearm / job

Description

Quantity

Rate

Amount

Subtotal

Tax

Payments or deposits

Balance due

Payment method and terms:

Job Log and Lead Tracker

Record every inquiry, estimate, job and follow-up so the business can be managed from actual results.

Date	Lead or customer	Source	Need or job	Estimate	Status	Next action
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Period	Leads	Estimates sent	Jobs won	Revenue	Follow-ups due
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Compliance and Safety Page

This page is a working checklist, not a substitute for the guidance in Parts 1–5. Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting, and revisit this page before every licence renewal.

- Confirm zoning or local ordinance allows a firearms business at your address — call planning before you spend anything.
- If renting, get written landlord authorization specifically permitting firearms business activity.
- Confirm which licence you need — Type 01 (dealer/gunsmith) or Type 07 (manufacturer) — based on whether firearms return to their owner or are prepared for sale. Get it in writing from ATF if unsure.
- Check state and local licensing separately from federal — there is no single fifty-state list.
- Complete ATF Form 7: fingerprints (FD-258), photographs, and background checks for every Responsible Person.
- Prepare for the in-person interview and premises inspection — know A&D, Form 4473 and NICS procedures cold.
- Set up your A&D bound book (paper or ATF-approved electronic system) before the first firearm arrives.
- Know the same-day vs. overnight A&D rule and apply it without exception, including for friends.
- Know when Form 3310.4 is required (two or more handguns to the same buyer within five consecutive business days) and file it correctly.
- Plan to retain A&D and 4473 records for as long as the licence is active — retention is indefinite under current ATF rules, not a fixed number of years.
- Confirm secure storage for firearms left in your care, and general liability insurance plus coverage for customer property in your care, custody and control.
- Calendar the licence renewal date and file Form 8 Part II before expiration.
- Agency or authority contacted: _____
- Written confirmation or permit saved at: _____
- Review date: _____ Renewal or recheck date: _____

Launch Readiness

Gunsmith Guide

PLAN	SET UP	PRICE	SELL	TRACK
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Use the worksheets in this guide to record your own numbers, decisions and results.

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