

MOBILE COFFEE GUIDE

Business Startup Guide and Workbook

A start guide for getting your own business off the ground.

Veteran's Strategic Solutions LLC — Business Model Series

VETERAN'S STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS LLC

This guide works anywhere in the United States. Dollar figures are estimates from public sources, not quotes. Mobile food licensing is decided at county and city level and varies enormously — verify everything with your own health department. Wherever there is a blank line, write in your own answer.

You sell coffee from a cart, a trailer or a truck. Farmers markets, office plazas, festivals, weddings, job sites, corporate mornings. The margins are among the best in food service. Coffee costs cents and sells for dollars. A shop needs a lease and eight employees to make that math work. You do not.

What this is not: a coffee shop. No lease, no fixed hours, no lingering customers. You go where the people already are and you leave when they do.

Two decisions determine everything, and most people get both wrong by making them in the wrong order.

Decision one: cart, trailer, or truck. The same business — same coffee, same customers — costs \$3,800 or \$150,000 depending on which you pick. Here is an illustrative low-cost path, not a documented case: a \$1,500 used cart, a \$1,200 used espresso machine, a \$400 grinder, and \$700 in permits and inventory adds up to about \$3,800 total. At a steady farmers market Saturday (see Part 5, \$400 to \$900), that startup cost could realistically be recovered within a few months of consistent weekend markets.

Decision two, and this one costs people real money: your health department dictates the cart's design, not the seller.

Most jurisdictions require a hand-washing station, hot and cold running water, waste water containment, and food-safe surfaces. The gray water tank must usually meet or exceed your fresh water capacity. People buy an attractive cart online, then find out it cannot pass inspection.

Call the health department and ask what a mobile beverage unit must have. Then buy the cart. In that order.

- Can you pull consistent espresso and steam milk properly, fast, with a line waiting? No certificate is required, but the skill is real.
 - Are you willing to be up at four in the morning? Coffee is a morning business. All of it.
 - Can you be pleasant to a hundred strangers before you have had a good day yourself?
-

About 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.

Two honest caveats. Those numbers barely move by trade — federal data shows only a few points between the best and worst industries. And they count businesses with employees on a payroll, so a man working alone is largely not in them.

What is in your favour here: the product margin is exceptional and the entry cost can be genuinely small. Most mobile coffee operations reach profitability in twelve to eighteen months, and lean cart operations sometimes much sooner.

What separates the ones who last:

A cash cushion. Slow weeks happen. Weather cancels markets, and see Part 6 — the season is shorter than you think.
Charging enough. Coffee has great margins and people still underprice it because a gas station sells it for a dollar. You are not selling gas station coffee.

Money that repeats. A festival is a good day. A job site every Tuesday and Thursday is a business.

Locations, plural. One good spot is not a business. It is a spot that can be taken away.

Snapshot

Money to start	\$5,000 to \$20,000 cart · \$30,000+ trailer · \$51,000+ truck
Storefront needed	None. Commissary agreement in most places
Skill gate	Moderate — espresso craft, learnable in weeks
Licence	Mobile food permit, food handler, commissary, fire
Time to first dollar	Eight to sixteen weeks, mostly permitting
Daily revenue	\$300 to \$1,500 on a typical day · up to \$4,000 at a major festival

Part 1 — Making It a Real Business

Step 1. Call the county health department before you spend one dollar

Ask exactly these:

- What does a mobile beverage unit need to pass inspection here? Hand sink, water tanks, waste containment, surfaces — get the specifics in writing.
- How much fresh water and waste water capacity do you require? This number decides which cart you can buy.
- Do I need a commissary agreement for a coffee-only unit? Ask this specifically. Many jurisdictions require a commissary for all mobile food operators, but some exempt limited-menu units like espresso-only carts where there is no food prep. Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting. Do not assume either way — ask.
- Is a coffee-only unit treated differently from a food truck? Often yes, and more lightly.
- Do I need a separate permit for each city or county I operate in?

My county requires: _____ Fresh water capacity: _____ Commissary needed: yes / no

Step 2. Get your food handler certification

Ten to fifty dollars, quick, and required almost everywhere.

Step 3. Secure a commissary, if yours requires one

Most health departments require mobile operators to work out of a licensed commercial kitchen for prep, cleaning, water refill and waste disposal. Budget \$300 to \$800 a month.

For coffee this is lighter than for catering — you are mainly washing equipment, filling water and dumping waste. Ask about hourly or reduced-use rates. Churches, VFW halls and restaurants with off-hours capacity all work.

Step 4. Buy the cart, now that you know what it must have

See Part 2.

Step 5. Get the permits

- Mobile food vendor permit: \$100 to \$800 a year, with inspection
- Fire department permit for propane and electrical: \$100 to \$500
- Business licence: \$50 to \$500 depending on the city
- Each additional city or county: \$100 to \$300. Budget for this if your route crosses lines
- Check zoning. Get a zoning map from city planning and confirm mobile vending is allowed where you intend to park. Operating hours are often restricted by ordinance

Step 6. Sole proprietor or LLC

Filing fees run \$35 to \$500 by state, about \$132 on average, plus annual fees from nothing to \$800. Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

Step 7. Get an EIN — it is free

Apply at irs.gov. Five minutes, no cost. Do not pay a service for it.

Step 8. Open a business bank account

Separate from personal, from day one.

Step 9. Insurance

General liability runs \$500 to \$1,200 a year for a basic policy. This is not optional in practice — most markets and event venues require proof of insurance before they will let you set up.

Many jurisdictions and venues specify a minimum, commonly \$500,000 to \$2 million in coverage. Check before you buy the cheapest policy you can find; a policy below the required limit is money spent for nothing.

Add commercial auto if you are towing, and equipment coverage on the machine. A trailer or truck also needs commercial registration and meets Department of Transportation standards.

Step 10. Understand what you owe

Self-employment tax of 15.3% on net business income plus income tax. Quarterly if you expect to owe \$1,000 or more federally — April 15, June 15, September 15 and January 15, moving to the next business day when one falls on a weekend or holiday. Set aside 25 to 30 percent of net.

Step 11. Sales tax

Prepared beverages are taxable in most states. Register before your first sale.

Part 2 — Cart, Trailer, or Truck

This is the decision. Make it deliberately.

Cart — \$5,000 to \$20,000

A pushable or towable unit. Sets up inside buildings, at markets, in office lobbies, at weddings.

- Cheapest entry by a wide margin. Used carts start around \$1,500
- Fits where trailers cannot — indoor events, tight plazas, building lobbies
- Limited water capacity, limited storage, weather-dependent
- Usually still needs a vehicle to tow or transport it

Best for: almost everyone starting out.

Trailer — \$30,000 used, \$40,000 to \$55,000 custom

More workspace, real plumbing, more equipment capacity.

- Fully plumbed fresh and waste water
- You need a tow vehicle rated for the loaded weight — add \$5,000 to \$15,000 if you do not own one
- Many cities restrict where trailers can park on public streets
- Setup and teardown is slower than a cart

Best for: somebody with proven demand and a route that justifies it.

Truck — \$51,000 to \$120,000, custom around \$65,000

Self-contained, fastest setup, most impressive.

- No towing. Arrive and open
- Highest cost, highest maintenance, and a mechanical failure closes the business
- Used trucks \$30,000 to \$80,000, but budget at least \$10,000 for repairs and paint on a used one

Best for: an established operation, not a first one.

The recommendation

Start with a cart. Buy it used.

The coffee does not taste better from a \$65,000 truck. What the truck buys you is capacity and speed, and neither matters until you have more customers than a cart can serve. Nothing about upgrading gets harder by waiting — and by then you will know exactly what you need, which you do not yet.

Part 3 — Power and Water, Which Stop More First Days Than Anything Else

This section exists because a cart that cannot get power is a cart that cannot open. Work through it before you buy a machine.

What an espresso machine actually draws

Machine	Typical draw
Cart-suitable machines	1,100 to 2,400 watts
Commercial machines generally	1,200 to 6,000 watts, depending on group count and boiler size
Single group head	About 15 amps — works on a 20-amp circuit
Two group heads	About 20 amps — should be on a 30-amp circuit
Three group heads	30-amp dedicated circuit

The voltage problem, and it is the big one. Most residential generators and shore power in the US supply 110 to 120 volts single phase. Many commercial espresso machines require 220 to 240 volts.

If you buy a 220V machine and own a household generator, you cannot run it. Confirm the machine's voltage and amperage before you buy, not after.

Sizing a generator

- Size the generator above your total connected load by at least 20 percent. Machine plus grinder plus milk fridge plus lights, then add the margin.
- A 220V, 20-amp machine peaks at roughly 4,400 watts. With the required 20 percent margin, that means a 5,300-watt-plus generator at minimum — commonly rounded up to a 5,500-watt unit, the next common size point.
- The machine only pulls full power warming up from cold. Once hot, the heating element cycles on and off. Size for peak anyway.
- A generator should not run at maximum output for extended periods. Headroom is not a luxury.

The practical answer for a first cart: buy a 110V machine. Output is lower, but you can plug into almost anything, and a smaller generator is cheaper, lighter and quieter. Upgrade when volume forces it.

Water

Tank-fed versus direct-connect. A tank-fed machine carries its own reservoir and works anywhere. A direct-connect machine plumbs into a fixed supply and suits a trailer with a built-in tank and pump.

Cart and pop-up operators should choose tank-fed. It is the difference between being able to work a field at a festival and needing a hookup.

Health department capacities. Your county sets minimum fresh water capacity, and the gray water tank must usually equal or exceed it. Get both numbers before you shop, because they eliminate most

carts on the market.

Water quality affects the coffee and the machine. A filtration setup runs \$200 to \$800 and prevents scale that will otherwise cost you a boiler.

Refrigeration

Every refrigeration unit on a mobile unit must be rated for mobile use. Consumer refrigerators are not built for road vibration or inconsistent power, and mobile refrigeration fails more often than stationary for exactly that reason. Budget for replacement.

Part 4 — The Equipment

The espresso machine

Tier	Roughly	What it is
Used commercial	\$1,200 to \$3,500	Where most carts should start
Entry two-group new	\$5,000 to \$6,000	Reliable workhorse
Mid	\$10,000 to \$20,000	The recognised names
High end	\$25,000	Not a first machine

Buy used, but never sight unseen. You cannot assess an espresso machine from a photograph. Pull shots on it, check the boiler, check for leaks. If you cannot test it, do not buy it.

A single group head serves roughly 60 to 80 drinks an hour. Two groups roughly doubles it. Match this to the crowd you expect, not the crowd you hope for.

Steam boiler capacity sets your milk-drink ceiling. The bigger the steam boiler, the more lattes you can pull before recovery slows and the line backs up.

The rest

Item	Roughly
Commercial grinder	\$500 to \$2,000 — do not economise here
Water filtration	\$200 to \$800
Mobile-rated refrigeration for milk	\$400 to \$1,500
Generator	\$500 to \$2,000, sized per Part 3
Fresh and waste tanks, pump	\$300 to \$800
Hand wash station	\$150 to \$400
Blender, for frozen drinks	\$200 to \$600
Point of sale and card reader	\$50 to \$400
Opening inventory — beans, milk, cups, lids, syrups	\$500 to \$2,000 for a cart
Tent, tables, signage	\$300 to \$800

The grinder matters more than people expect. A great machine with a bad grinder makes bad coffee. A modest machine with a good grinder makes good coffee.

What it costs to keep running

- Espresso machine service: \$150 to \$400 per visit, annually
- Grinder burrs: \$100 to \$300 every 12 to 24 months
- Unexpected repairs: budget \$200 to \$500 a year
- Reserve 5 to 10 percent of equipment value annually for maintenance

Part 5 — The Money Math

Cost per drink

The figures below are worked estimates from typical wholesale prices, not surveyed data. Price your own inputs before relying on them.

A twelve-ounce latte is roughly:

Coffee, about 18 grams of beans	\$0.30 to \$0.60
Milk	\$0.30 to \$0.50
Cup, lid, sleeve	\$0.20 to \$0.35
Syrup, if used	\$0.10 to \$0.20
Total product cost	roughly \$1.00 to \$1.60
Typical price	\$5.00 to \$7.00

That is why this business works. Product cost runs 15 to 25 percent of the sale, better than nearly any food business.

But product cost is not your cost. Permits, insurance, commissary, fuel, equipment reserve and your own time all come out of the difference. Track the real number, not the cup number.

Daily revenue, honestly

Published figures put a mobile coffee operation at \$300 to \$1,500 on a typical day — farmers markets, office plazas, job sites — and that range holds for routine locations. Festivals are the outlier and go well past it:

- A slow morning at an office plaza: \$200
- A steady farmers market Saturday: \$400 to \$900
- A good festival weekend: \$3,000 to \$8,000 across two days

Location is the whole variable. Same cart, same coffee, same barista, five times the revenue depending on where you parked.

Worked example — why one bad location kills the week

The daily figures below are illustrative, built to show the method. They are not observed data from a real operator. Run the same arithmetic on your own numbers.

Five days, same cart, same costs.

Day	Location	Hours on site	Revenue
Mon	Office plaza	5	\$270
Tue	Job site, 7am	2	\$440
Wed	Office plaza	5	\$240
Thu	Job site, 7am	2	\$470
Sat	Farmers market	6	\$780

Week total: \$2,200, which looks fine.

Now the same week per hour on site. The plaza days ran five hours for \$270 — \$54 an hour. The job site mornings ran two hours for \$440 — \$220 an hour. The market ran six hours for \$780 — \$130 an hour.

The office plaza is costing you. Not because it loses money on the day, but because those ten hours could have been two more job site mornings. Drop the plaza, add a second site, and the same week is worth more in fewer hours.

Track revenue per hour on site, not revenue per day. It is the number that tells you which locations to keep.

Part 6 — Weather and the Season, Which Decide Your Year

This is an outdoor business, and that is the risk nobody plans for.

Rain cancels markets. Not “reduces attendance” — cancels. You will lose scheduled days with no notice and no revenue, and you cannot get them back.

Cold shortens the year. In a northern state an outdoor cart season may run April to October, and the other five months are indoor events, offices and weddings or nothing at all. In a southern state the pattern inverts and August is the month people will not stand outside.

What that means for your plan:

- Work out your realistic operating weeks before you buy anything. Twenty-eight good weeks is a very different business from fifty.
- Divide your annual income target by your actual season, not by fifty-two. If you need \$40,000 and you have twenty-eight weeks, that is about \$1,430 a week, not \$770.
- Build the off-season into the plan from day one. Indoor venues, office lobbies, corporate catering, weddings and holiday markets are how operators in cold states stay working.
- Coffee has a weather advantage most food carts do not: cold weather sells hot coffee. A crisp October morning at a job site is your best day of the month. It is the ice and the wind that stop you, not the temperature.
- Have a rain rule and tell your locations. Decide in advance at what point you do not set up, so a property manager is not left wondering.

My realistic season: _____ weeks · My weekly target in season: \$_____

Part 7 — Finding Locations, Which Is the Actual Business

The coffee is not the hard part. Finding places where a hundred people want coffee at the same time is the hard part.

Where the money is

Office parks with no café. Not downtown — the suburban business park where the nearest coffee is a ten-minute drive.

Farmers markets. Reliable, weekly, built-in traffic. Booth fees \$30 to \$75. Most markets allow only one coffee vendor, so apply early.

Hospitals, plants and distribution centres at shift change. Three shift changes a day, hundreds of people, and nothing open.

Weddings and corporate events. Booked in advance, paid a flat rate, and you know your revenue before you arrive. Flat-rate event work is the most predictable money in this business.

Construction sites. Fifty people at 6:30am with nowhere to get coffee is a genuine opportunity, and it is under-served. But I could not verify how straightforward access is, and it is not as simple as pulling up. Expect to need written permission from the general contractor rather than the on-site foreman, a certificate of insurance, and compliance with the site's safety rules — which may include high-visibility clothing, hard hat, and staying outside the work area. Ask the GC's office, not the gate. Treat it as worth pursuing and not as a sure thing.

Also worth trying: schools on teacher in-service days, car dealerships at weekends, trade shows, gyms on Saturday mornings, church parking lots after service.

How to get a spot

On private property you need the property owner's permission, not the customers'. Ask the property manager, the site superintendent, the building manager. Get it in writing — inspectors may ask for proof of authorisation. Offer them something: free coffee for staff, a cut, or simply the amenity.

On public property that means the city, usually a specific vending permit tied to a location, and often restricted hours.

For markets and events there is an application and often a waiting list.

My three best location candidates: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

The counterintuitive part: the busiest street corner is often the worst spot. High foot traffic means high permit costs and probably three cafés already. The good spots are places with captive people and no alternative — a job site, a plant at shift change, a business park. Nobody competes for those because they do not look glamorous.

Part 8 — Your First Customers

- Do one farmers market. Apply, pay the booth fee, show up. You will learn your throughput, your prices and your workflow in one day.
- Ask one office park or job site about a weekday morning. Bring a free coffee when you ask.
- Get a punch card going from day one. Coffee is a habit business, and the tenth-one-free card is what turns a customer into a route.
- Book one event. A wedding or corporate morning at a flat rate proves the highest-margin version of this business.

What to actually say

Property or site manager: “I run a coffee cart. I'd like to set up in your lot a couple of mornings a week — costs you nothing, your people just buy what they want. Here's one on me. Can I try it Thursday?”

Free coffee in his hand while you ask. It changes the answer.

When somebody says your price is high: “It's a real double shot and steamed whole milk — same as you'd pay downtown, without the drive.” Say it once, cheerfully, and move on. Never apologise for the price of good coffee.

When you sell out early: “I'm out — I underestimated you all. I'll bring double on Thursday.” Selling out is good news. Say it like good news.

When somebody asks if you do events: stop what you are doing and get their number. Event bookings are the best money in this business and they come from people who saw you working.

Part 9 — Pricing

Item	Typical
Drip coffee	\$3.00 to \$4.00
Americano	\$3.50 to \$4.50
Latte or cappuccino, 12oz	\$5.00 to \$6.50
Speciality and flavoured	\$6.00 to \$7.50
Cold brew or iced	\$4.50 to \$6.00
Event flat rate	\$500 to \$1,500 for two hours of unlimited service

Recommendation: price at local café rates, not below them. You are not the cheap option. You are the one that came to them. Undercutting a café by a dollar wins you nothing and costs you twenty percent of your margin.

Push flat-rate event work hard. A two-hour wedding at \$800 beats a six-hour market day, and you know the number before you leave the house.

Keep the menu short. Six drinks you can make fast beats twenty you can make slowly. Line speed is revenue.

Part 10 — 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. In 2021, 162 veterans were in it out of more than 80,000 using VR&E overall.

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 developed with your counselor.

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.

Part 11 — The Three Places People Get Stuck, and How to Get Past Them

1. Buying the cart before calling the health department

The cart is the exciting purchase and it is the one everybody makes first. Then the inspector explains that it needs a hand sink, hot running water and a gray water tank it does not have, and the money is already spent.

The fix: one phone call, week one. Get the requirements in writing, then shop.

2. Buying a machine your power cannot run

A commercial two-group machine is a beautiful thing, and a 220-volt one is unusable on the generator in your garage. People discover this on the morning of their first market.

The fix: confirm voltage and amperage before you buy the machine, and size the generator at least twenty percent above total load. For a first cart, a 110-volt machine removes the problem entirely.

3. Staying at one location because it is comfortable

You find a spot that works, you settle in, and the routine feels like stability. Then the property changes hands, or a café opens next door, or the market moves — and the whole business was one relationship.

The fix: three locations minimum by month six. Always be trying a fourth.

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 12 — Your First 90 Days

Days	What you do
1 to 14	Call the health department. Get requirements and water capacities in writing. Food handler certification.
15 to 30	Sort the commissary question. Shop for a used cart that meets the spec. Confirm your power plan.
31 to 45	Buy cart and machine. Permits, fire inspection, insurance at the required limit. Form the LLC.
46 to 60	Practice. Pull two hundred shots before you sell one. Build a six-drink menu.
61 to 75	First farmers market. Track drinks per hour and revenue per hour.
76 to 90	Land one recurring weekday location and book one event. Work out your real season.

The One Number to Track

Revenue per hour on site.

Not per day, and not total. Per hour actually parked and serving.

A five-hour plaza morning at \$270 is \$54 an hour. A two-hour job site stop at \$440 is \$220 an hour. Both look fine on a daily total. Only one is worth your time.

Track it for every location for a month, then cut the bottom one and replace it. Do that three times and you have a route.

Location A: \$___/hr · Location B: \$___/hr · Location C: \$___/hr

After the first year, switch to: percentage of revenue from booked events and recurring stops. Walk-up traffic is weather and luck. Bookings are a business.

Where This Goes If It Works

One cart, one route. Three or four recurring stops, one market, the occasional event. No employees. Genuinely good money for a morning's work.

Events only. Drop the daily grind and do weddings and corporate bookings at flat rates. Fewer days, higher margin, booked months ahead, and weather matters far less.

A second cart. Hire a barista, run two routes. Your income roughly doubles and you become a manager.

A permanent kiosk or shop. The cart proved the demand and the location. This is the version where a lease finally makes sense — after you know, not before.

The One-Page Version, If You Read Nothing Else

- Call the county health department first. Ask what a mobile beverage unit needs, the fresh and gray water capacities, and whether a coffee-only cart needs a commissary. Get it in writing.
 - Then buy the cart. Used, and built to that spec. Not before.
 - Confirm voltage before you buy the machine. A 220-volt machine will not run on a household generator. For a first cart, buy 110-volt.
 - Size the generator twenty percent above your total load.
 - Buy a used machine and a good grinder. The grinder matters more than the machine.
 - Work out your real season in weeks, and divide your income target by that, not by fifty-two.
 - Get three locations, not one. Captive people with no alternative beat busy corners.
 - Track revenue per hour on site. Cut the worst location every month.
 - Chase flat-rate event bookings. Best money in the business and weather-proof.
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A Last Word

This is the cheapest real food business in this series to start and the fastest to find out about. A used cart, a used machine and a farmers market booth is under five thousand dollars and one Saturday.

You will be up before everyone else. You will need to be pleasant to strangers at an hour when nobody is pleasant. And you will know by the end of the first market day whether this is yours.

This guide is a starting framework, not legal, tax or financial advice. Licensing, permit, insurance and tax requirements vary by state, county and city and change over time — verify every regulatory item with your local health department before you operate. Tax figures reflect federal rules current as of August 2026. Equipment prices, cost-per-drink figures, revenue ranges and the worked example are estimates and illustrations gathered from public sources, not quotes or observed operator data.

Startup Checklist

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

Done	Startup action	Owner	Target date
■	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

Budget summary	Amount
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 inventory		
Labor hours and rate		
Equipment or venue		
Travel or delivery		
Subcontractors		
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:
Tax ID:	Email:

Invoice number	Invoice date	Due date	Project or job
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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
Period	Leads	Estimates sent	Jobs won	Revenue	Follow-ups due	

Compliance and Safety Page

Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

Review	Requirement or safety point from the core guide
■	Most jurisdictions require a hand-washing station, hot and cold running water, waste water containment, and food-safe surfaces. The gray water tank must usually meet or exceed your fresh water capacity. People buy an attractive cart online, then find out it cannot pass inspection.
■	What does a mobile beverage unit need to pass inspection here? Hand sink, water tanks, waste containment, surfaces — get the specifics in writing.
■	How much fresh water and waste water capacity do you require? This number decides which cart you can buy.
■	Do I need a commissary agreement for a coffee-only unit? Ask this specifically. Many jurisdictions require a commissary for all mobile food operators, but some exempt limited-menu units like espresso-only carts where there is no food prep. Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting. Do not assume either way — ask.
■	Do I need a separate permit for each city or county I operate in?
■	My county requires: _____ Fresh water capacity: _____ Commissary needed: yes / no
■	Most health departments require mobile operators to work out of a licensed commercial kitchen for prep, cleaning, water refill and waste disposal. Budget \$300 to \$800 a month.
■	For coffee this is lighter than for catering — you are mainly washing equipment, filling water and dumping waste. Ask about hourly or reduced-use rates. Churches, VFW halls and restaurants with off-hours capacity all work.
■	Mobile food vendor permit: \$100 to \$800 a year, with inspection
■	Fire department permit for propane and electrical: \$100 to \$500
■	Agency or authority contacted: _____
■	Written confirmation or permit saved at: _____
■	Review date: _____ Renewal or recheck date: _____

Launch Readiness

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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