

# SelfInformed

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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Liberated Leader





Best Places

# TO LIVE

AS A SELF-EMPLOYED  
BUSINESS OWNER IN 2025

One of the top perks of self-employment is the ability to choose where you live. There's no question that **finding the right location to start or grow your business is key for entrepreneurs**. Choosing an affordable, business-friendly city makes it easier to build a thriving business and enjoy a high quality of life.

We've searched the country to uncover some of the top states and cities for small business owners. We looked for a strong local economy, solid infrastructure, moderate to low cost of living, good weather and an abundance of fun things to do. Read on to discover some of the **best places to live as a small business owner in the United States**.



## Top States For Small Business Owners

### Texas

They say everything's bigger in Texas — and that includes the opportunities! With a booming economy, no corporate or income taxes, beautiful weather and an independent, do-it-yourself culture, the Lone Star State is a prime destination for business builders.

From sprawling cities to quirky small towns, from the wildflower-speckled Hill Country to the Gulf Coast beaches, Texas has something for almost everyone. One potential downside is that property taxes are on the high end — an important consideration for those who own brick-and-mortar businesses.

### North Carolina

The Tar Heel State consistently ranks near the top of the list of business-friendly states. North Carolina offers strong economic growth, moderate living costs and a culture of innovation. Outside of business hours, enjoy mild winters and sunny summers (but watch out for the humidity!). North Carolina is rich in both history and scenic diversity. Take some time to explore the Blue Ridge Mountains, Atlantic beaches, and the rolling hills of the Piedmont region.

### Washington

Home to corporate behemoths Amazon and Microsoft, Washington is famous for its high-tech scene. But the Evergreen State is a great home base for small and micro business owners in all niches. Washington is welcoming and open to new people, products and ideas... whether it's an innovative app or a different style of coffee. (Starbucks was founded in Seattle!)

The state's workforce is educated, highly skilled and has one of the highest disposable incomes in the nation. Unfortunately, this comes at a cost—according to [Forbes](#), Washington has the 8th highest cost of living in the United States. But prices tend to drop as one moves away from Seattle, and the natural beauty of the state speaks for itself.

### Tennessee

Whether you prefer country or blues, Tennessee is a great place to grow a business. The Volunteer State boasts solid infrastructure, a robust economy, and affordable prices on everything from housing to taxes. Up-and-coming cities Memphis and Nashville are popular with business owners, with tons of networking opportunities and a low cost of living. Another perk? Tennessee is centrally located near 75% of the U.S. population, making it easy to host events or ship products directly to consumers.





## Top Small to Midsize Cities For Small Business Owners

(Pop. Under 500,000)

### Bend, Oregon

**Population:** 104,906

**Median Home Price:** \$712,500

**Crime Rate:** 17.7 per 1,000 residents

If you love small towns and big adventures, Bend might be an ideal location! This laid-back mountain town offers nearly unlimited opportunities for outdoor recreation, a hopping craft brewery scene and 300 days of sunshine a year. It became a magnet for remote workers during the pandemic and remains an excellent choice for online business owners. (Due to the city's small size, most in-person businesses focus on healthcare, tourism or hospitality.)

Bend is an affluent town with a good economy and higher than average cost of living. With its gorgeous parks, mountain views and friendly vibes, it's easy to see why people are drawn to this Central Oregon gem. The downsides? Bend's infrastructure is struggling to keep up with the recent population growth and the nearest big city, Portland, is a 3-hour drive away.

### Corpus Christi, Texas

**Population:** 313,061

**Median Home Price:** \$256,000

**Crime Rate:** 39.6 per 1,000 residents

One of the most affordable coastal towns in the United States, Corpus Christi offers pristine beaches, fascinating museums and an abundance of wildlife. (Don't miss the baby sea turtle releases on North Padre Island!) Another huge plus is the weather, with warm winters and plenty of sunshine year-round. Hurricanes can be a concern in the Gulf Coast region, although Corpus Christi rarely suffers a direct hit.

Corpus Christi has excellent infrastructure for a small city, with the fifth-largest port in the U.S., a large naval air base, an international airport, and several highways that connect the city to the rest of Texas. Local residents tend to be friendly, welcoming and supportive of small businesses. Entrepreneurs can take advantage of the pro-business Texas climate and enjoy a lower cost of living compared to cities like Austin or Dallas.

### Provo, Utah

**Population:** 110,763

**Median Home Price:** \$461,250

**Crime Rate:** 15.55 per 1,000 residents

Nestled up against the Wasatch Mountains, Provo is a charming ski town that's quickly turning into an entrepreneurship hot spot. Home to Brigham Young University and several successful tech startups, Provo has a culture of innovation that belies its small size. Local business accelerators and boot camps help entrepreneurs bring their ideas to life, and the community enthusiastically backs new companies. Utah is considered a favorable state for small business owners, with high consumer spending, low taxes and a steadily growing economy.



## Top Big Cities For Small Business Owners

(Pop. 500,000+)

### Columbus, Ohio

**Population:** 917,811

**Median Home Price:** \$265,000

**Crime Rate:** 40.13 per 1,000 residents

Known for spacious parks and college football, Columbus offers the perfect balance of big-city opportunity and small-town warmth. It is centrally located in the middle of Ohio and has some of the best infrastructure in the Midwest. Wide streets, ample parking and beautiful bridges make it easy to explore the city's many unique neighborhoods.

The Columbus economy is consistently strong, even during downturns, thanks to the presence of the state government, Ohio State University, major medical systems and several large corporations. Entrepreneurs love the low cost of living, pro-business culture and the networking events, accelerators and other resources available to small business owners.





## Charlotte, North Carolina

**Population:** 928,154

**Median Home Price:** \$389,000

**Crime Rate:** 41.95 per 1,000 residents

Bursting with Southern charm and urban excitement, Charlotte is an entrepreneurship hub with a growing startup scene. Low taxes and easy access to capital make the Queen City a top destination for ambitious business builders.

The city's moderate cost of living (on par with the U.S. average) is balanced by its convenient location in the middle of the Eastern Seaboard. Charlotte experiences all four seasons, with humid summers and wet winters. Don't miss the city's excellent museums, historic Fourth Ward neighborhood and delicious Southern fusion cuisine.

## Kansas City, Missouri

**Population:** 509,993

**Median Home Price:** \$235,400

**Crime Rate:** 63.18 per 1,000 residents

Located in the heart of the Midwestern "Silicon Prairie" region, where tech startups are flourishing,

Kansas City is an affordable and family-friendly place for business owners. It's famous for barbecue joints and jazz music, but Kansas City has a lot to offer entrepreneurs as well. Local residents love supporting small businesses and the low cost of living makes it easier to get a new business off the ground. Be aware that Kansas City is located right in the middle of Tornado Alley, which means high winds and the occasional rush to a storm shelter.

## Atlanta, Georgia

**Population:** 512,047

**Median Home Price:** \$410,000

**Crime Rate:** 47.91 per 1,000 residents

Modern Atlanta is a global city with the world's busiest airport, high-ranking universities, and influential companies of all sectors and sizes. Despite the city's recent growth, the cost of living and doing business in Metro Atlanta remains relatively low. With a solid economic outlook and a diverse, educated workforce, there is tremendous potential for entrepreneurs to grow with the city. The mild winters, ample green space, rich cultural heritage and BeltLine urban trail system all contribute to making Atlanta a great place to call home.



# See the Latest Press Releases from NASE



### NASE Congratulates former GA Senator Kelly Loeffler on Nomination to Lead Small Business Administration

Dec 06, 2024

NASE congratulated former U.S. Senator Kelly Loeffler on being nominated by President-elect Trump as the nation's next Small Business Administrator.

[READ FULL STORY →](#)



### Resources are Available to Assist Record-Breaking Number of New and Existing Entrepreneurs Select Health Care Insurance in the Marketplace

Dec 05, 2024

NASE is urging millions of new and existing small business owners to take advantage of available tools and resources to choose the right health care plan.

[READ FULL STORY →](#)

[READ ALL PRESS RELEASES](#)

# Your Business Could be Featured in our Monthly e-Newsletter!

*We want to hear from you!*

Each month NASE publishes a new Member Spotlight in our e-Newsletter called SelfInformed, a national newsletter sent to over 50,000 members across the country with the latest news about the self-employed and micro-business community. As part of this national e-Newsletter, we want to shine a spotlight on those members, regardless of where they live, who are operating successful businesses that are growing and thriving.

**GET FEATURED**



## ANNOUNCEMENT



## Dependent Scholarship Applications Opened January 1<sup>st</sup>

*Multiple College Scholarships of \$3,000 are Awarded Each Year*

This program is open to legal dependents of NASE Members, ages 16–24. To apply, students need to be high school students or college undergraduates planning to enroll in college for the upcoming fall semester. The application period is **January 1<sup>st</sup> through April 30<sup>th</sup>**.

**APPLY NOW**

New!



# Member Benefits

Visit [NASE.org](https://www.nase.org) to learn more about the following benefits!

**UPS**

**Members Save Up to 50%**  
Count on UPS® to deliver  
this holiday season.

**Save Now**

Terms Apply

**NASE** members now have access to new and improved **flat rate pricing** — no matter how much you ship, when you ship, or where it's going.

### Members-Only Savings Include:

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- 50% on Domestic Next Day / Deferred
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New!



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One customized policy at a time.

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Underwritten by Hiscox Insurance Inc., a Chicago based insurer.

## Get Insurance Customized To Your Small Business

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Hiscox offers professional service businesses a new way to buy small business insurance online in minutes. We specialize in protecting IT/technology, marketing, consulting, and many other professional service businesses, tailoring coverage to the specific risks in each industry.

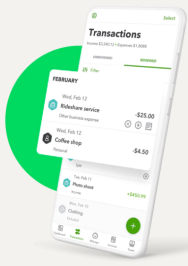
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### Tools to help your business thrive



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- Manage Cash Flow
- Invoicing
- Manage Bills

**Are you preparing for the 2025 tax season?**

[Click here to get started](#)



**New!**



# Member Benefits

Visit [NASE.org](https://www.nase.org) to learn more about the following benefits!

## LEGALZOOM

Use LegalZoom to start your business in 3 easy steps

**1**

### Choose a business structure and a business name

We'll help you get set up right, and we'll check with the state to make sure the name you want is available.

**2**

### Answer a few questions about your business

Tell us all about the business you'd like to form, and we'll help make sure you have what you need to make your small business official and keep it compliant.

**3**

### Sit tight while we file your paperwork

When your filing is approved, we'll upload your documents to your online account and your business will be off and running. It's that simple!

[Shop LegalZoom!](#)



## Small Business Resources

### AARP Sponsored Growth Grants

AARP is committed to supporting older entrepreneurs. AARP is collaborating with the NASE as a supporter of the Growth Grants program. The grants are targeting **NASE Members** who are minority business owners aged 45 and older. Through this partnership NASE and AARP are working to provide greater access to capital for business growth.

[Click Here to Learn More!](#)

Apply for a NASE Growth Grant sponsored by AARP today. There will be three winners each quarter awarded a \$4,000 grant to support the growth of their business.

[Sponsorship Showcase](#)



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

# Leading Self-Employment

The Liberated Leader is committed to empowering bold individuals to embrace authentic leadership, break free from traditional models, and dare to do things differently. By focusing on cultivating Power Skills like resilience, adaptability, and communication, the platform equips forward-thinkers with the tools to build trust, drive engagement, and create aligned teams. At the heart of the Liberated Leader approach is the belief that curiosity, courage, and compassion are essential to navigating today's fast-paced, project-driven, and AI-enhanced business world. Rooted in values of freedom, self-knowledge, and integrity, the Liberated Leader is for those ready to drive purposeful change and lead with both heart and mind.

Katie Schuelke, Founder and CEO of BANS Consulting is a Project Management Professional (PMP) and widely recognized as the Power Skills Expert. A best-selling author who has collaborated with Chris Voss on *Empathy and Understanding in Business*, Katie is known for her ability to inspire and motivate teams. Her intuitive leadership style, combined with her sense of humor, fosters a culture of trust and collaboration. Dedicated to overall well-being, Katie enjoys reading in the sun and believes in making adventure as you go. She loves mid- to late-60's muscle cars, owning a '65 Fastback Mustang, and is very curious by nature, often sharing seemingly random but wildly interesting tidbits of information. If Katie were a mixed drink, she'd be a unique blend of boldness, heart, loyalty, independence, and a tall shot of rebel!

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



### When and why did you join NASE?

I joined NASE in 2024 for the support and tools offered to self-employed individuals, as well as opportunities to network with other entrepreneurs. Even though I started my consulting company in 2015, all contracts were with the government. Fast forward to this year, offering new products and services to the public, I found myself at a learning curve for various market approaches.

### What inspired you to enter the field you are in?

After decades in the corporate world, I experienced significant burnout and health issues, largely due to what I call the Conformity Culture—an environment where challenging the norm is often discouraged. As the Project Economy and AI era rapidly reshape how we work, this culture is no longer sustainable. These shifts create demand for leaders who can break free from outdated thinking and embrace adaptability, creativity, and emotional intelligence. This realization inspired me to build the Liberated Leader platform, empowering project managers, team leaders, and innovators to thrive in a world where collaboration and authenticity are critical. Blending in and following the old rules stifles creativity and holds people back from their full potential. It's detrimental to both individual well-being and team success. This shift is crucial for sustained success and growth.

### When and why did you start your business?

I originally founded BANS Consulting with a mission to provide top-notch contractors and consultants for IT and Project Management. Wanting to offer services that will have a bigger impact to help more people, the Liberated Leader platform has been added, allowing for affordable, easily accessible digital programs and online resources that equip individuals with Power Skills. With emerging technologies reshaping the workplace, like the project economy and AI, it's more important than ever to equip ourselves with the people skills that are resistant to automation.

### How do you market your business?

I market my business through earned media, social media, referrals, and networking events.

### What challenges have you faced in your business? How have you overcome them?

As a solopreneur it can get lonely at times. I have often missed having a core team and regularly sounding board with colleagues. Joining groups of like-minded people has been a great way to overcome this.

Wearing all the hats most of the time can be challenging. It's easy to gravitate toward the activities that I'm more interested in. It takes diligence to stay focused on the work that is the best use of my time and hire freelancers as needed.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Marketing has been a big area to overcome. It's not my wheelhouse but I'm learning and seeking help with resources, both expertise and funding.

While I love having a home office, it can be a challenge to maintain boundaries. Balancing work and personal requests can get tricky when others assume that being at home means I'm always available for their needs. I've had to set clear boundaries to ensure that just because I'm home doesn't mean I'm on personal time.

### **Do you have any employees?**

I currently do not have any employees. As needed, I work with a virtual assistant (VA) or freelancer for one off or special projects. My goal in the next year is to have a partner to oversee the consulting side of the business and a part time VA.

### **What's your schedule like, what's a typical day for you?**

Each day is an ebb and flow depending on business needs! I always start the day with a gratitude and intention setting meditation. I periodically spend time reviewing business strategy and execution to ensure things are staying aligned and properly prioritized. I regularly spend time preparing

new content for the monthly membership and interacting with my community. Daily activities include marketing efforts and ensuring I take care of myself holistically. When the weather is nice, I like to take a lunch break by the pool and play ball with the dogs.

### **What's the best thing about being self-employed?**

Freedom is my highest value and one of the best things about being self-employed. I live life on my terms! It's not always easy to stay diligent in what it takes to be your own boss but it's definitely worth it!

### **What's the best compliment you've ever received from a client?**

The best compliment I've ever received from a client is, "Katie brings a lot of energy, passion, and dedication to her work. Really enjoyable person to be around. Definitely a positive booster to your work culture."

She is great to counsel with and talk strategy with. Her depth of knowledge on project management, organizational human dynamics, and level of emotional intelligence makes her an asset to organizations and teams."





**What's the most important piece of advice you would give to someone starting their own business?**

Get used to being uncomfortable. There will be plenty of things; that you don't know, that feel out of reach, that are outside your comfort zone. Remember you have the POWER to contribute to the world in a positive way so don't let fear or discomfort stop you. Remind yourself of the reasons you set out on this journey, when it comes from a place of personal values and passion, you'll find your way.

Surround yourself with people that elevate you. This is your high vibe tribe, the people that believe in you and lift you up when things get tough.

Create a workspace that inspires you. When your physical space is set up with your style it will boost energy, innovation, and productivity.

Get an amazing tax accountant. Who else can keep track of all the regulation changes, help you stay out of trouble, and save money!

Remember there are excellent affordable resources everywhere, just like NASE.

**Which NASE member benefit is most important to you?**

I utilize the Business Learning Center, though there are so many valuable benefits that are important and useful and centrally located!

**Any other information you would like to share?**

I am grateful for NASE's resources and support, and I appreciate the opportunity to share a bit about my story, business, and services.

## BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP:

# Courts Strike Down the Corporate Transparency Act



The **Corporate Transparency Act (CTA)**, enacted in 2021, mandates companies to report their beneficial owners to the **Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN)**. On December 3, 2024, when the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas issued a nationwide preliminary injunction against the enforcement of the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA). The CTA, enacted to enhance financial transparency, mandates that certain business entities report their beneficial ownership information to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN)

The debate surrounding beneficial ownership has led to key legal cases challenging the boundaries of transparency, privacy, and enforcement. In this case, advocacy groups argued that FinCEN's proposed regulations under the Corporate Transparency Act were insufficiently robust to combat financial crime. They argued that overly strict requirements could stifle legitimate businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which lack the resources to navigate complex reporting systems.



The court's decision in this and similar cases has underscored the importance of striking a balance between transparency and practicality. While the judiciary has generally favored the implementation of beneficial ownership laws, it has also called for safeguards to protect sensitive information and minimize unintended consequences for compliant businesses.

Small businesses expressed concern related to the proposed rule, arguing that the rule would adversely impact small or medium sized businesses on several fronts, including:

### **1. Compliance Burden**

Small businesses often lack the resources to navigate complex regulatory requirements. For small business owners who are already managing day-to-day operations with limited staff and budgets, this adds an administrative burden. They may need to hire legal or compliance professionals to ensure proper reporting, increasing costs.

### **2. Risk of Penalties**

Failure to comply with the beneficial ownership rule can result in steep penalties, including fines of up to \$10,000 and even jail time for certain violations in the U.S. These penalties, while intended to deter bad actors, can have devastating effects on small business owners who unintentionally fail to meet requirements due to lack of knowledge or resources.

### **3. Overlap with Existing Rules**

Many small businesses already comply with Know Your Customer (KYC) and anti-money laundering (AML) rules through their banks and financial institutions. The beneficial ownership rule creates an additional layer of reporting, which many argue is redundant.

### **4. Privacy Concerns**

The beneficial ownership rule requires small businesses to disclose sensitive personal information about their owners, including names, addresses, and identification numbers.

### **5. Disproportionate Impact**

Larger corporations often have complex structures, but they also have the resources to handle compliance without significant strain. In contrast, small businesses, which are often single-owner or family-run operations, may not have complex ownership structures but still face the same requirements.

### **6. Deterrent to Entrepreneurship**

The additional paperwork and potential penalties associated with the beneficial ownership rule may discourage individuals from starting new businesses. Entrepreneurs might feel that the regulatory landscape is too cumbersome, pushing them to avoid formal business registration or seek less regulated alternatives.

### **7. Limited Effectiveness**

Critics argue that the rule is unlikely to achieve its intended purpose of stopping financial crimes for small businesses. Illicit actors often operate through more sophisticated means or in jurisdictions that are less regulated. This leaves small businesses bearing the brunt of compliance costs, even though they pose a low risk of involvement in financial crimes.

It is expected that the incoming Trump-Vance Administration will rescind the rule and therefore halting the implementation of CTA permanently.

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