

*Congratulations! You have decided to become an Independent Financial Consultant and create your own firm! Now what? It can be incredibly intimidating to take this step. The unknown can be formidable. However, you know that you believe in yourself, enjoy the privilege of giving advice to your clients, and can't wait to take it to the next level. And, we are here to help...*

## 1. Make it Official

- **Decide on a Business structure** (ex. LLC, corporation or partnership)
- **Develop a Business name / Register your business** > There are four different ways to register your business name. Each way of registering your name serves a different purpose, and some may be legally required depending on your business structure and location.
  - Registering your **Entity name** protects you at state level > An entity name can protect the name of your business at a state level. Depending on your business structure and location, the state may require you to register a legal entity name.
  - **Trademark** protects you at a federal level > A trademark can protect the name of your business, goods, and services at a national level. Trademarks prevent others in the same (or similar) industry in the U.S. from using your trademarked names.
  - **Doing Business As (DBA)** doesn't give legal protection, but might be legally required. > You might need to register your DBA — also known as a trade name, fictitious name, or assumed name — with the state, county, or city your business is located in. Registering your DBA name doesn't provide legal protection by itself, but many states require you to register your DBA, if you use one. Some business structures require you to use a DBA.
  - **Domain name** protects your business website address > If you want an online presence for your business, start by registering a domain name — also known as your website address, or URL.

*LPL will review/approve submitted OBA/DBA names for use, however it is important to note that it is approved for Marketing purposes ONLY. LPL only checks the components of the DBA name (to ensure it is complies with the guidelines and is not promissory) and to ensure another LPL Financial Advisor is not using the DBA name.*

- LPL does NOT check to see if the DBA name has been registered with any State agency.
- LPL does NOT check to see if there are any Trademark's or Copyrights filed for the DBA name.
- LPL does NOT check to see if the DBA name is an existing Broker/Dealer.

***It is best to consult with a lawyer when starting out, so you can make sure you've covered all of the bases. However, you can start the process on your own:***

1. Check with your Secretary of State (see table below)
2. Check [The Broker Protocol](#), to see if the name is an existing Broker/Dealer.
3. Check domain name availability: <https://www.name.com/domain/search>

STATE	SECRETARY OF STATE/
AL	<a href="https://www.sos.alabama.gov/">https://www.sos.alabama.gov/</a>
AK	<a href="https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/">https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/</a>
AZ	<a href="https://azsos.gov/business">https://azsos.gov/business</a>
AR	<a href="https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/">https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/</a>
CA	<a href="https://www.sos.ca.gov">https://www.sos.ca.gov</a>
CO	<a href="http://secretaryofstates.com/colorado/">http://secretaryofstates.com/colorado/</a>
CT	<a href="https://portal.ct.gov/sots">https://portal.ct.gov/sots</a>
DE	<a href="https://corp.delaware.gov/">https://corp.delaware.gov/</a>
DC	<a href="https://os.dc.gov/">https://os.dc.gov/</a>
FL	<a href="http://secretaryofstates.com/florida/">http://secretaryofstates.com/florida/</a>
GA	<a href="https://sos.ga.gov/">https://sos.ga.gov/</a>
HI	<a href="http://ltgov.hawaii.gov/">http://ltgov.hawaii.gov/</a>
ID	<a href="https://sos.idaho.gov/">https://sos.idaho.gov/</a>
IL	<a href="https://www.ilsos.gov/corporatellc/">https://www.ilsos.gov/corporatellc/</a>
IN	<a href="https://www.in.gov/sos/">https://www.in.gov/sos/</a>
IA	<a href="https://sos.iowa.gov/search/business/search.aspx">https://sos.iowa.gov/search/business/search.aspx</a>
KS	<a href="https://sos.kansas.gov/">https://sos.kansas.gov/</a>
KY	<a href="https://www.sos.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx">https://www.sos.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx</a>
LA	<a href="https://www.sos.la.gov/Pages/default.aspx">https://www.sos.la.gov/Pages/default.aspx</a>
ME	<a href="https://www.maine.gov/sos/">https://www.maine.gov/sos/</a>
MD	<a href="https://sos.state.md.us/Pages/default.aspx">https://sos.state.md.us/Pages/default.aspx</a>
MA	<a href="https://www.mass.gov/">https://www.mass.gov/</a>
MI	<a href="https://www.michigan.gov/sos">https://www.michigan.gov/sos</a>
MN	<a href="https://www.sos.state.mn.us/">https://www.sos.state.mn.us/</a>
MS	<a href="http://www.sos.ms.gov/">http://www.sos.ms.gov/</a>
MO	<a href="https://www.sos.mo.gov/">https://www.sos.mo.gov/</a>

STATE	SECRETARY OF STATE/
MT	<a href="https://sosmt.gov/">https://sosmt.gov/</a>
NE	<a href="https://sos.nebraska.gov/index">https://sos.nebraska.gov/index</a>
ND	<a href="http://sos.nd.gov/">http://sos.nd.gov/</a>
NV	<a href="https://www.nvsos.gov/sos">https://www.nvsos.gov/sos</a>
NH	<a href="http://sos.nh.gov/">http://sos.nh.gov/</a>
NJ	<a href="https://www.state.nj.us/state/">https://www.state.nj.us/state/</a>
NM	<a href="https://www.sos.state.nm.us/">https://www.sos.state.nm.us/</a>
NY	<a href="https://www.dos.ny.gov/">https://www.dos.ny.gov/</a>
NC	<a href="https://www.sosnc.gov/search/index/corp">https://www.sosnc.gov/search/index/corp</a>
OH	<a href="https://businesssearch.ohiosos.gov/">https://businesssearch.ohiosos.gov/</a>
OK	<a href="https://www.sos.ok.gov/">https://www.sos.ok.gov/</a>
OR	<a href="https://sos.oregon.gov/Pages/index.aspx">https://sos.oregon.gov/Pages/index.aspx</a>
PA	<a href="https://www.corporations.pa.gov/Search/CorpSearch">https://www.corporations.pa.gov/Search/CorpSearch</a>
RI	<a href="http://business.sos.ri.gov/">http://business.sos.ri.gov/</a>
SC	<a href="https://sos.sc.gov/">https://sos.sc.gov/</a>
SD	<a href="https://sdsos.gov/">https://sdsos.gov/</a>
TN	<a href="https://tnbear.tn.gov/ecommerce/default.aspx">https://tnbear.tn.gov/ecommerce/default.aspx</a>
TX	<a href="https://www.sos.state.tx.us/corp/publicinfo.shtml">https://www.sos.state.tx.us/corp/publicinfo.shtml</a>
UT	<a href="https://ltgovernor.utah.gov/">https://ltgovernor.utah.gov/</a>
VT	<a href="https://sos.vermont.gov/">https://sos.vermont.gov/</a>
VA	<a href="https://www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/">https://www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/</a>
WA	<a href="https://www.sos.wa.gov/">https://www.sos.wa.gov/</a>
WV	<a href="https://sos.wv.gov/Pages/default.aspx">https://sos.wv.gov/Pages/default.aspx</a>
WI	<a href="https://sos.wi.gov/">https://sos.wi.gov/</a>
WY	<a href="http://soswy.state.wy.us/">http://soswy.state.wy.us/</a>