Trash Bin Cleaning Business Startup Checklist

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Key takeaways

- Sell monthly or quarterly plans and clean on each street's trash day
- Route density is where the profit comes from
- Capture dirty wash water and dispose of it where your city allows
- Use EPA-registered products if you advertise sanitizing

1. Plan

- [ ] Choose your niche and the services you'll offer first
- [ ] Define your service area (keep it tight to cut drive time)
- [ ] Write a one-page plan: who, where, what you charge, how you'll get 10 clients
- [ ] Check local competitors' services and prices

2. Register & insure

- [ ] Pick a business name and check your state registry, trademarks and the .com domain
- [ ] Choose a structure (sole proprietor or LLC)
- [ ] Get a free EIN from the IRS (irs.gov)
- [ ] Check city/county business license requirements
- [ ] Open a separate business bank account
- [ ] Get general liability insurance before your first paid job
- [ ] Dirty bin water carries food waste, bacteria and detergents, so don't let it run into the street or storm drains. EPA guidance for vehicle and equipment washing says to capture wash water and send it to the sanitary sewer only with the sewer authority's permission, or to an approved disposal facility. Many cities enforce this through their stormwater rules, so ask your city or county where you may dispose of it before you start. If you advertise that you sanitize or disinfect, use EPA-registered products and follow the label. Check your startup rules for your state.

3. Equipment

- [ ] Hot-water pressure washer (hot water cuts grease and grime much faster)
- [ ] Bin-cleaning wand or spinner head for the inside of cans
- [ ] Fresh water tank and a wastewater recovery (reclaim) tank
- [ ] Trailer or truck to carry the rig, or a purpose-built bin cleaning trailer later
- [ ] Deodorizer and cleaning solution (EPA-registered if you claim to disinfect)
- [ ] Gloves, eye protection, boots and rain gear

4. Pricing

- [ ] Track your real job times on your first jobs

- [ ] Set a target hourly rate that covers pay, taxes, insurance, fuel and admin time
- [ ] Create a simple price menu and a minimum charge
- [ ] Use estimate and invoice templates for every quote
- [ ] Check your numbers with the free calculator on ServiceStartKit.com

5. Get online

- [ ] Register a short domain and set up a professional email
- [ ] Launch a 4-page website: home, services & prices, reviews/photos, contact
- [ ] Create a Google Business Profile with photos and your service area

6. First clients

- [ ] Door hangers on the same street right after the garbage truck passes
- [ ] Nextdoor and neighborhood Facebook groups, especially in summer when bins smell
- [ ] Offer your pressure washing or window cleaning clients a bin plan
- [ ] Pitch HOAs and apartment managers for building-wide contracts
- [ ] Google Business Profile with before/after photos of bins
- [ ] Ask every happy client for a review and a referral

7. Money

- [ ] Invoice every job and log every expense
- [ ] Keep a mileage log for business driving
- [ ] Set money aside for taxes each month
- [ ] Review prices at least once a year

General information, not legal, tax or insurance advice. Rules vary by state and city.