

STEPS NEEDED TO BUILD A MEAT PLANT

High-level Overview

Owner-operators need to complete all of the tasks outlined below before they can move to plant construction and operation. Each of these steps has a number of complexities to be addressed. *Standing up a meat processing facility is complex matter with many factors to be considered!*

1. **Background Research**—Before going into any business, or expanding an existing one, it is good to ask a lot of questions about the industry. Talk with other meat plant owners, trade groups, regulatory agencies, farmers and customers; many questions and insights will emerge.
2. **Business Planning and Feasibility**—This step involves understanding from where your supplies (animals, non-meat ingredients, packaging, equipment) will be coming, who will be using services/buying your products, and what your competition is like. To complete this step, you will also need to know the ownership model for the plant, what your facility will look like, and what construction costs will be.
3. **Plant Design**—This is an integral part of both your business plan and your financing. You will need to involve contractors to estimate your construction costs.
4. **Financing**—Once your business plan is together, you can start looking for financing.
5. **Permitting and Inspection**—Before you can build anything, you will need permits: business permits, building permits and wastewater permits. Since either the state or the federal government inspects all meat-processing facilities—even custom plants (those that process animals for their owners and do not sell meat to the public) must be inspected periodically—it is generally a good idea to have an inspector look over your plant design before you build.
6. **SOPs, SSOPs and HACCP**—Before you can begin operation, you will need to have a written plan for each of these. The plans must be examined by your inspection agency and are subject to regular review.
7. **Labor**—Meat processing is hard work. Finding able and willing employees challenges plants throughout the industry, and finding laborers and the time it takes to train them will be an important part of the business plan.

Suggestions:

1. Acquire a single project manager (PM) to oversee professional development of a comprehensive, detailed business plan that addresses all the factors necessary to drive this project to a successful outcome (Steps 1-4). This individual should have a comprehensive business development background, knowledge of the overall requirements for standing up and operating a facility, and demonstrated experience in managing complex projects. Someone with local knowledge is advised. This will be a full-time position requiring a number of months to complete (4-8). Funding for this necessary and critical phase needs to be identified.
2. A search for a qualified plant manager can commence on completion of the business plan. The plant manager would be responsible for ensuring facility development, obtaining all inspection approvals, labor recruitment, quality interactions with clients, and successful operation of the plant. On completion and approval of the business plan, additional expertise will be required, e.g., architects, HACCP certified planner, etc..