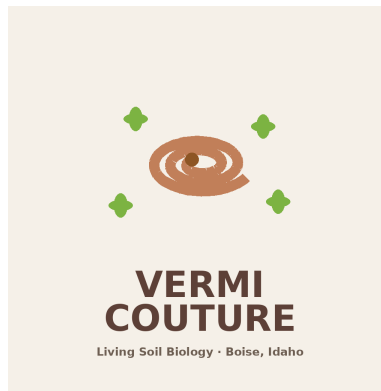




Vermi-Couture

Worm & Vermicompost Business Setup Guide

Boise, Idaho · dare404 · August 2026

A practical guide to launching a small vermiculture business as a sole proprietorship and converting to an LLC once the business proves itself. Covers legal setup, operations, marketing, and scaling — with compliance built in from day one.

Mission Statement

To produce and sell high-quality red wiggler composting worms, worm castings, and beginner-friendly vermicomposting kits to home gardeners, composters, and urban growers in our local region — starting small, selling direct, and growing only as demand proves itself.

We prioritize freshness, education, and customer success over bulk volume. We are not a commodity agricultural supplier. We are a trusted local source for living soil biology and composting know-how.

Founder: dare404 · Location: Boise, Idaho · Launch model: Sole proprietorship proof of concept · First investment target: under \$1,000 · Long-term goal: Convert to Idaho LLC once revenue and benefits situation allow.

Entity Structure: Sole Proprietorship → LLC

Starting as a sole proprietorship preserves the current tax-free medical plan through work. It avoids creating a separate legal entity while demand is still unproven. Once revenue is consistent, the business will convert to an Idaho LLC for liability protection and cleaner ownership.

Phase 1 — Sole Proprietorship

- **Register a DBA.** File a Certificate of Assumed Business Name with the Idaho Secretary of State for 'Vermi-Couture.' Fee: ~\$25.
- **Search the name first.** Use <https://sosbiz.idaho.gov/search/business> to confirm availability.
- **Get an EIN.** Free from IRS.gov, even for sole proprietors.
- **Open a business bank account.** Use the DBA. Keep business money separate from personal money.
- **Check local permits.** Contact Boise City Clerk about a home occupation permit if operating from an apartment.

Phase 2 — Convert to LLC

- **Trigger:** Consistent monthly revenue, rising liability exposure, bringing in a partner, or when the medical benefits situation changes.
- **Step 1:** Form an Idaho LLC with the Idaho Secretary of State.
- **Step 2:** Transfer the DBA, bank account, contracts, and business assets into the LLC.
- **Step 3:** Update insurance policies to name the LLC.
- **Step 4:** Continue using the same EIN or apply for a new one depending on LLC structure.

Phase 1 Products

Start simple. Only expand the catalog after the first products sell consistently.

Product	Why First	Notes
Red wiggler starter kits	Fastest path to local sales; high perceived value	Never ship live worms in heat
Worm castings (1–5 lb)	Repeat purchase; shelf-stable	Ornamental label until ISDA registration + lab testing complete
Aerated worm tea	Add-on liquid product; local pickup	Brewed from finished castings only; no raw leachate

Legal & Compliance Setup

These steps apply whether operating as a sole proprietor or an LLC. Do not skip insurance and registration.

- **General + product liability insurance.** Required before selling soil amendments. Providers: Next Insurance, Hiscox.
- **Idaho ISDA soil/plant amendment registration.** Required before distributing worm castings or worm tea commercially. Contact: FFS@isda.idaho.gov · 208-332-8625. Annual deadline Jan 31.
- **Lab testing.** Test castings/tea for pH, moisture, organic matter, heavy metals, and pathogens. Basic panel: \$75–250 per sample.
- **Labeling.** Product name, net weight, ingredients, directions, storage, manufacturer contact, and a disclaimer. Avoid unverified organic or nutrient-guarantee claims.
- **Live worm shipping.** Domestic U.S. shipping generally does not require USDA permit, but check destination state rules. Avoid shipping above 85°F or below 40°F.

Operations & Best Practices

Bin Management

- Start indoors to control temperature (worms thrive at 55–77°F).
- Use clean feedstock: paper, cardboard, vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, crushed eggshells.
- Avoid meat, dairy, oils, pet waste, diseased plants, and synthetic chemicals.
- Bury food under bedding to prevent odors and fruit flies.
- Harvest castings only when fully finished — dark, crumbly, earthy-smelling.

Product Quality

- Let castings cure before bagging to prevent anaerobic pockets or heat.
- Use breathable packaging to keep biology alive and prevent mold.
- Sell live worms harvest-to-order; never pre-ship in temperature extremes.
- Brew aerated worm tea from finished castings only. Do not sell raw bin leachate.
- Keep batch records: feedstock source, dates, harvest quantity, test results.

Safety & Claims

Start with an ornamental-use label to reduce early testing burden:

For use on ornamental plants, lawns, flower beds, and non-food landscapes. Not for use on food crops.

Use this conservative disclaimer on all soil amendment products:

This product is a soil amendment made from composted organic materials processed by earthworms. Use as directed. We recommend washing all produce grown with any soil amendment before consumption. This product is not a pesticide or plant nutrient guarantee.

Marketing & Sales

Go-to-Market Order

- **Local pickup first.** Facebook Marketplace, local gardening groups, Nextdoor, Craigslist.
- **Farmers markets.** One weekend booth = direct feedback + cash + list building.
- **Direct website orders.** Shopify starter plan or Astro + Stripe for full control.
- **Subscriptions.** Castings refill reminders; seasonal worm kit restocking.
- **Educational content.** Short videos on worm care, common mistakes, harvest tips.
- **Email newsletter.** Weekly or biweekly composting tips; product drops announced to list first.
- **Local SEO.** Google Business Profile, Yelp, local gardening directories.
- **Paid ads.** \$5–10/day Facebook/Instagram, 25-mile radius, gardeners 25–65+. Scale on ROAS.

First 90 Days

Weeks	Action
1–2	File DBA with Idaho Secretary of State, get EIN, open business bank account, confirm local permits
3–4	Set up first breeding bins; begin population build
5–6	Build Shopify or Astro site; photograph products
7–8	List worms on Facebook Marketplace + local groups; test pricing
9–10	Launch newsletter signup; publish first educational content
11–12	Submit ISDA registration; arrange first lab test; evaluate sales data

Key Metrics to Track

- Cost per pound of worms produced
- Cost per bag of castings produced
- Average order value
- Customer acquisition cost
- Repeat purchase rate
- Monthly revenue vs. monthly expenses

Scaling Roadmap

Phase 1 — Apartment Proof of Concept. Under \$1,000. Local pickup, farmers markets, direct website. Prove demand, unit economics, and retention.

Phase 2 — Rented Production Space. \$2,000–10,000. Add stackable bins, shelving, small sifter. Increase volume, keep overhead low.

Phase 3 — Farm Scale. \$20,000+. Rural/ag-zoned land, climate-controlled building, CFT reactors, mechanized harvesting, bulk/wholesale.

Funding Options

Program	Type	Amount	Best For
USDA FSA Microloan	Loan	Up to \$35,000	Operating expenses, bins, equipment
USDA FSA Farm Operating Loan	Loan	Varies	Scaling after track record
USDA Value-Added Producer Grant	Grant	Competitive	Processing castings/tea into higher-value products
SBA Microloan	Loan	Up to \$50,000	Home-based businesses without farmland
Idaho State Department of Agriculture	Grants/Loans	Varies	Idaho-specific agricultural projects

Recommendation: Bootstrap Phase 1 for under \$1,000. Build 6–12 months of sales records before applying for loans or grants.

Guiding Principles

- Start small. Prove demand before buying equipment.
- Sell direct. Keep margins healthy.
- Educate first. Trust converts better than discounts.
- Track every dollar. If the numbers do not work at small scale, scale will not fix them.
- Design for scale. Every apartment process should be documentable and repeatable on a farm.