

# 10-Step Success Guide: Starting a Bottled Water Business

## 1. **Market & Competitive Research + Niche Definition**

Understand demand, trends (e.g. mineral, spring, flavored, functional), customer preferences, and key competitors. Use this insight to define your niche and product lines.

## 2. **Business Plan & Financial Strategy**

Produce a robust business plan (mission, goals, structure, operations, financial projections). Estimate startup costs, margins, funding requirements, and break-even points. See below for estimated startup costs & estimated equipment costs.

## 3. **Legal Structure, Registration & Licensing**

Choose your legal entity (e.g., LLC), register the business, get an EIN. Secure required permits, health, FDA / regulatory licenses, environmental approvals. Your dept. of agriculture is a good place to start when seeking guidance on local codes. Also, the International Bottled Water Association also has a variety of useful information regarding compliance and standards.

## 4. **Sourcing & Water Quality**

Identify high-quality, sustainable water source(s): springs, wells, or municipal. Ensure regular testing, compliance with safety and regulatory standards. Obtain a thorough water analysis to provide to Norland to properly design a treatment system. Test kits can be purchased here: <https://norlandintl.com/resources/water-testing>

## 5. **Facility, Equipment & Infrastructure**

Set up or lease a facility with layout & utility capacity to support purification, storage, bottling, and packaging equipment. Acquire machinery (filtration, RO, UV etc.), packaging supplies, caps, bottles etc. Norland can help craft your ideal equipment lineup as well as provide facility layouts to ensure adequate space for production. Sample layouts for water facilities can be found here: <https://norlandintl.com/products/complete-plants/example-plant-layouts/>

## 6. **Quality Control, Compliance & Labeling**

Establish rigorous QC protocols (GMPs, lab tests), ensure compliance with health & safety standards. Create labels that meet FDA or relevant jurisdiction requirements.

#### **7. Brand Identity & Packaging Strategy**

Develop brand name, logo, packaging design, messaging. Decide on sustainability of packaging (recycled, biodegradable, lightweight), and align visual identity with your brand's values. Norland can help source virtually everything you need to launch your business — from caps, preforms, labels, and bottle racks to treatment systems.

#### **8. Pricing, Distribution & Sales Channels**

Determine pricing strategy based on cost structure and market positioning. Set up distribution channels: retail, direct-to-consumer, B2B, subscriptions, local delivery etc.

#### **9. Marketing & Launch Execution**

Build marketing plan (online, sampling, influencers, events). Emphasize storytelling / sustainability if that aligns with your niche. Roll out launch campaigns and begin full operations.

#### **10. Monitor, Scale & Grow**

Track key performance indicators (sales volume, costs, customer acquisition, retention, margins, cash flow). Once stable, expand product offerings (flavors, enhancements), broaden geography, explore partnerships or franchise/subscription models.

## **Startup Cost Ranges — By Scale**

#### **1. Small Bottling Operation**

For a modest facility bottling 300ml - 2 L bottles, the equipment investment typically ranges from \$230,000 to \$370,000, covering water treatment, filling equipment, packaging equipment, and needed compressors. Adding a blow molding unit can add another \$325,000.

For a modest facility bottling 3 & 5 gallon bottles, the equipment investment typically ranges from \$130,000 to \$200,000, covering water treatment, filling equipment, packaging equipment, and needed compressors. Adding a blow molding unit can add another \$170,000

#### **2. Regional to Full-Scale Production Operation**

Building out a full production plant for 300ml - 2L bottles, capable of larger output— will likely cost \$350,000 to \$1.5 million for equipment, depending on facility size and production capacity.

For a production facility bottling 3 & 5 gallon bottles, the equipment investment typically ranges from \$180,000 to \$500,000, covering water treatment, filling equipment, packaging equipment, and needed compressors. Adding a blow molding unit can add another \$170,000

Operation Type	Bottling Size(s)	Estimated Investment Low	Estimated Investment High	Add-On Blow Molding Option
Small Bottling Operation	300 ml – 2 L bottles	\$230,000	\$370,000	+ \$325,000
Small Bottling Operation	3 & 5 gallon bottles	\$130,000	\$200,000	+ \$170,000
Regional to Full-Scale Production	300 ml – 2 L bottles	\$350,000	\$1,500,000	—
Regional to Full-Scale Production	3 & 5 gallon bottles	\$180,000	\$500,000	+ \$170,000

## Norland Recommendations

**Minimum Building Size:** 10,000 Sq. Ft.

**Water Analysis:** [SimpleLabs](https://norlandintl.com/resources/water-testing) (<https://norlandintl.com/resources/water-testing>)

Full Bottled Water Success Guide can be found [HERE](https://norlandintl.com/resources/success-guide/)  
(<https://norlandintl.com/resources/success-guide/>)