Your 501(c)(3) Starter Checklist

From Filing to Flourishing: Everything You Need to Launch & Maintain a Tax-Exempt Nonprofit

Before You File

- ❏ Choose a name that complies with your state's nonprofit laws
- ❏ Draft a clear, IRS-aligned mission statement
- ❏ File Articles of Incorporation with required 501(c)(3) language
- ❏ Form your Board of Directors (check state-specific requirements)
- ❏ Create your nonprofit bylaws (your internal rulebook)
- ❏ Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS
- ❏ Set up a business bank account and basic bookkeeping system
- ❏ Hold your first official board meeting and document the minutes

Apply for 501(c)(3) Status

- ❏ Determine if you qualify to file Form 1023-EZ or must use Form 1023
- ❏ Prepare a detailed description of your programs and activities
- ❏ Draft a three-year projected budget
- ❏ Gather required documents (i.e. Articles, Bylaws, EIN, Board Information)
- ❏ Complete the appropriate IRS form
- ❏ Submit your application via Pay.gov
- ❏ Pay the IRS filing fee ($275-$600 depending on form)
- ❏ Monitor your application status and respond to any IRS follow-up

After Approval: Staying Compliant

- ❏ File your annual Form 980, 980-EZ, or other
- ❏ Maintain accurate financial records and board meeting minutes
- ❏ Ensure ongoing mission alignment in all programs
- ❏ Review any state-level charitable registration requirements
- ❏ Set up a system for annual board evaluations

Bonus: Set Your Board Up for Success

- ❏ Adopt a board management platform like Boardable
- ❏ Centralize key documents, meeting agendas, and minutes
- ❏ Use task tracking to assign action items and follow through

Boardable