



The Pool Service Business

Water chemistry as an annuity: pools need you every week, forever. Build a dense route and you own one of the most sellable small businesses there is.

\$990-2,100

START LEAN

7-14 days

FIRST DOLLAR

55-70%

TYPICAL MARGIN

Is this your business?

Pool service is the subscription business that happens to involve water: every pool needs attention every single week, customers pay monthly whether they swim or not, and a dense route of sixty pools is a salary that arrives by direct deposit. The chemistry is learnable in a month. The moat is showing up every Tuesday, forever, and being trusted with the gate code.

\$990-2,100

LEAN STARTUP COST

\$3,500-7,000

STANDARD BUILD

7-14 days

TIME TO FIRST DOLLAR

55-70%

TYPICAL GROSS MARGIN

Yes, fully

SOLO-FRIENDLY

Yes (mobile)

HOME-BASED

BUILT FOR THESE FOUNDER TYPES

THE OPERATOR

THE CRAFTSMAN

■■■■■ 3/5 difficulty

THE HONEST FIT TEST

You will work outdoors year-round, handle genuinely dangerous chemicals correctly every day, and win or lose on route discipline: same day, same order, every week. Green-pool calls will test your chemistry under pressure. If you like systems, measurable results, and recurring revenue more than novelty, pools fit. If you need variety, the sameness will wear on you.

Who pays, and why now.

There are more than ten million swimming pools in the United States, and every one of them is a chemistry experiment that goes wrong within two weeks of neglect. Owners are not buying skimming: they are buying freedom from a 30,000-gallon liability they never fully understood. The weekly visit is the product, the monthly invoice is the rhythm, and the result is subscription revenue with a moat made of trust and gate codes.

The structural tailwind is the early-2020s pool construction boom now aging into its high-maintenance years, layered on owners who are older, busier, and more willing to outsource than any prior generation. Rentals and Airbnbs need documented, photo-proof service between guests. HOAs and apartment complexes need certified operators on file for compliance. And every heat wave converts a neighborhood of neglected pools into green-water emergency calls at premium rates.

Here is what makes pools unusual among service businesses: routes are bought and sold openly, typically at eight to twelve times monthly billing per account. Every customer you sign is not just income, it is equity with a published market price. The competition is flaky enough that a tech who texts a photo and the chemical readings after every visit, every week, without fail, becomes effectively unfireable within a season.

WHO BUYS	WHAT THEY PAY	WHAT THEY ACTUALLY WANT
Homeowners with in-ground pools	\$150-250 per month, full service	Clear water, zero thought, the gate closed every time
Snowbirds and rental owners	\$180-300 per month	Photo proof after every visit on a pool they cannot see
Airbnb hosts	\$200-320 per month + swim-ready checks	Guest-safe water and documentation between bookings
HOAs and apartment complexes	\$400-1,500 per month	A certified operator, compliance records, no resident complaints

WHAT A ROUTE SELLS FOR

8-12x

Pool routes trade hands at eight to twelve times monthly billing per account, openly and often. A \$10,000-a-month route is roughly a six-figure asset, which means every gate code you earn is equity, not just income.

Every dollar, before you spend it.

The kit is modest; the knowledge is the real startup cost. Two rules from day one: buy a drop-count test kit because strips lie, and open wholesale chemical accounts the moment the LLC exists, because retail chlorine prices will eat a chemicals-included route alive.

THE LEAN BUILD · START HERE	WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE	COST
Drop-count test kit (Taylor K-2006 class)	The professional standard. Test strips are how pools go green politely	\$90-130
Telescoping poles, skimmer nets, wall brushes, leaf rake	Two poles: one on the truck, one for the day a customer's dog eats the first	\$100-180
Manual vacuum head + hoses (battery vac later)	The lean way to handle debris until the route buys better	\$120-300
Starter chemical stock	Liquid chlorine, muriatic acid, tabs, shock, soda ash. Wholesale account ASAP	\$200-350
Chemical-safe transport bins + PPE	Vented, separated, secured. Acid and chlorine never share a sealed box	\$80-150
CPO certification course	Required for commercial pools in most states; the trust badge everywhere else	\$300-400
GL insurance (first month)	Confirm it covers chemical damage; see the legal page	\$50-100/mo
LLC + city license (varies by state)	Your liability wall. THE LAUNCHPAD Module Three walks it	\$50-500
Lean total		\$990-2,110 all-in

THE STANDARD BUILD · ADD AFTER FIRST REVENUE	WHAT IT UNLOCKS	COST
Truck chemical setup (vented bins, spill kit, lockable storage)	Safe, legal, and visibly professional at every gate	\$200-500
Route software with dosage logs + photo reports	The texted report after every visit is your entire marketing department	\$30-60/mo
Repair starter kit (o-rings, gauges, baskets, multimeter)	Minor repairs are 30-40% margin add-ons you are already standing next to	\$150-400
Battery-powered vacuum system	Halves debris time on heavy-tree pools; buy once the route is dense	\$400-900

THE RULE

Chemical margin is route margin: never stock the truck at retail. Open accounts with a pool products distributor in week one, track cost per pool per month, and reprice any account where trees, sun, or bather load push chemistry costs past plan. The route is a portfolio; manage it like one.

Clean from day one.

You are transporting and applying hazardous chemicals on private property every working day, which makes this the most safety-regulated trade on this list. The rules are learnable in a weekend, and following them visibly is itself a sales advantage.

- Form your LLC:** File in your home state, get the EIN free at irs.gov, open the business bank account. THE LAUNCHPAD Module Three walks every step.
- City or county business license:** Usually \$50-150 a year. One call to the city clerk answers it.
- CPO certification:** The Certified Pool Operator credential (a two-day course, roughly \$350) is legally required to service commercial pools in most states and is the trust badge for residential. Schedule it in month one; HOA contracts are closed with it on file.
- Chemical transport and storage rules:** Chlorine and muriatic acid must travel separated, vented, and secured: mixed fumes in a hot truck bed are the trade's signature disaster story. Respect DOT quantity limits, keep a spill kit, and store nothing in a closed cab.
- State repair licensing thresholds:** In several states, equipment repairs above a dollar threshold (commonly \$500-1,000 including parts) require a contractor license. Check your state board before selling repair work; service and cleaning are unrestricted, big repairs may not be.
- GL insurance that covers chemical damage:** A mis-dosed pool can bleach a liner or etch plaster, and some general liability policies exclude chemical damage unless asked. Ask, in writing, before binding.
- VGBA compliance awareness for commercial:** The federal Virginia Graeme Baker Act governs drain covers on public pools. Inspectors check it; knowing what a compliant cover looks like wins commercial trust and protects swimmers.

INSURANCE, SPECIFICALLY

General liability with chemical damage coverage confirmed is the floor. Add commercial auto early (you are hauling hazardous materials daily, and a personal policy will not survive that claim), an umbrella when HOA contracts require \$2M, and workers' comp at the first hire.

WATCH FOR

CYA creep. Stabilized chlorine tabs add cyanuric acid every single week, and past roughly 100 ppm the chlorine stops sanitizing no matter how much you add: the pool drifts green while the test 'looks fine.' Track CYA monthly, switch high-CYA pools to liquid chlorine, and recommend partial drains before summer. Catching chlorine lock before the algae bloom is the single most valuable habit in this trade, and most competitors never learned it.

Requirements vary by state and city. Verify with your state, city clerk, and a licensed professional. Education, not legal advice.

Three doors. Real numbers.

Price per pool, not per zip code: trees, screen enclosures, sun exposure, salt systems, and bather load all change your weekly minutes and chemical spend. Anchor on full service, and remember that chemicals-included pricing means you own chemical inflation.

	RECOMMEND	
<p>DOOR ONE</p> <p>The Chem-Only</p> <p>\$115-145 per month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Weekly water testing and balancing ◆ Standard chemicals included ◆ Dosage report texted every visit ◆ Equipment visual check with alerts 	<p>DOOR TWO</p> <p>The Full Service</p> <p>\$185-245 per month, most-booked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Everything in Chem-Only ◆ Skim, brush, and vacuum as needed ◆ Baskets emptied, filter pressure logged ◆ Photo of the pool texted after every visit ◆ Gate closed and locked, every time 	<p>DOOR THREE</p> <p>The Resort</p> <p>\$295-385 premium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Everything in Full Service ◆ Two filter deep-cleans per year included ◆ Salt cell cleaning and monthly equipment report ◆ Algae-free guarantee with priority response ◆ Swim-ready checks before parties and guests

PRICING NOTES FOR THIS BUSINESS

- Floor: \$115 a month even for the easiest pool; the stop, the chemicals, and the liability are all real before the first brush stroke.
- Heavy-tree and unscreened pools take double the debris time: price the property, not the polite assumption.
- Green-pool recoveries are one-time jobs at \$150-400 plus chemicals, never a free favor, even for members: recovery is days of visits and a truckload of chlorine.
- Filter cleans (\$85-150) happen twice a year on your schedule, not on request: put them on the calendar and invoice them as the routine they are.
- Reprice annually with sixty days notice: chlorine costs move, and a chemicals-included route at stale prices is a slow leak.

THE UPSSELL THAT PAYS THE RENT

Minor repairs and equipment replacement. You are already standing next to every aging pump, gauge, and salt cell in your route, and you will see the failure coming weeks early in the pressure log. A failed pump motor is a \$400-700 ticket with healthy parts margin, sold with a photo and one sentence. Where state law caps unlicensed repair work, partner with a licensed repair tech and take the referral both directions.

Names, not strategies.

Pools are visible from satellites and poorly served on the ground, which makes prospecting unusually literal: you can see exactly who needs you. Your first ten accounts come from your own neighborhood map, the anxious, and the recently transacted.

1 The satellite scout

Open the maps app, switch to satellite, and list every pool home within ten minutes of your door. That list is your route plan, your door-hanger map, and your density strategy in one screenshot.

2 New pool owners

People who just bought a pool home are quietly terrified of it. Realtors know exactly who they are: offer agents a closing-gift water test and orientation visit, and the full-service signup follows naturally.

3 Nextdoor + local Facebook

Post one green-to-blue rescue with the readings that fixed it. Pool problems get described in these groups weekly; be the calm, certified answer.

4 Airbnb and rental hosts

Hosts need guest-safe water and proof of service between bookings. The photo-and-readings text after every visit is built for exactly their anxiety.

5 A retiring route operator

Poolies retire constantly and sell their accounts. Even asking around the local pool supply counter marks you as serious, and buying five accounts at market rate beats five months of door-knocking.

THE EXACT ASK

"Hi [name], I'm [name]: I take care of a few pools here in [neighborhood]. I'm adding five founding pools this month: weekly service, chemicals included, and I text you a photo and the readings after every visit so you never wonder whether I showed up. First month is half off while I build the route. Want me to test your water right now? Takes five minutes, and the report is yours either way."

THE FOUNDING-CUSTOMER DEAL

First ten pools: first month half off, in exchange for a Google review at day sixty and a yard sign for a month. The free on-the-spot water test is the door-opener: it costs you nothing, demonstrates the craft, and ends with their actual numbers on a card with your name on it.

Owned, earned, then paid.

Your best marketing already happens 52 times a year per customer: the texted photo and readings after every visit, seen by the household and shown to their friends. Around that core, build the Google profile, the neighborhood proof, and the new-owner pipeline.

CHANNEL, RANKED	WHY IT WORKS HERE	THE FIRST MOVE
Google Business Profile	'Pool service near me' peaks in spring and during the first heat wave	Claim it day one; green-to-blue photos monthly; one review per week
The visit report itself	A photo plus readings after every visit is proof of work nobody else sends	Make it automatic in your route software; never skip it, even on perfect weeks
Nextdoor + local Facebook	Green water panic posts appear every summer week	Answer with the fix, not the pitch; post one rescue transformation monthly
Realtor + new-owner pipeline	Every pool home sale creates a terrified new owner	Closing-gift water test offer to three agents; orientation visit converts
Door hangers on satellite-scouted streets	You know exactly which homes have pools before you knock	Hang the five nearest pool homes after every route stop

FIVE CONTENT PIECES THAT WIN THIS NICHE

- A green-to-blue rescue in four days, with the readings at each step
- What weekly pool service costs in [your city], and what chemicals-included should actually mean
- Why your chlorine stopped working (CYA and chlorine lock, explained like a human)
- The five-minute weekly skim that keeps your pool cheap to maintain between visits
- Salt pools are not maintenance-free: the three things owners get wrong

THE REVIEW MACHINE

Ask at day sixty, attached to proof: 'Two months of perfect readings now: would you put that in a review? I'll text the link.' Reviews in this trade hinge on reliability words: every week, never missed, always texts. Those phrases are what the next anxious pool owner is searching for.

One unit, one month, no fog.

Two honest snapshots: what one full-service account is really worth per month after chemicals, and a mature solo route in summer. Built on the middle door at \$190 with wholesale chemical costs.

ONE UNIT: ONE FULL-SERVICE POOL (ONE MONTH, \$190)	AMOUNT	A WORKING MONTH: SOLO, 55-POOL ROUTE (JULY)	AMOUNT
Revenue	\$190	Revenue (55 accounts)	\$10,450
Chemicals (wholesale)	-\$32	Filter cleans + minor repairs	+\$900
Fuel (route share)	-\$12	Chemicals (wholesale)	-\$1,760
Payment processing (2.9%)	-\$6	Fuel	-\$520
Insurance + overhead share	-\$15	Insurance, phone, software	-\$290
Gross profit (~2 hrs on site/mo)	\$125	Marketing (hangers, boosts)	-\$120
Tax reserve (27%)	-\$34	Pre-tax profit	\$8,660
Yours, per pool-month	\$91	Tax reserve (27%)	-\$2,340
		Owner take-home	\$6,320

BREAK-EVEN

10-15 pool-months

A ten-pool starter route recovers the entire startup, certification included, inside six weeks. From there every account is route equity with a published resale price, which is a sentence no other business on this list gets to say.

Illustrative figures at typical market rates; your market, prices, and costs will differ. Run YOUR numbers in the One-Page P&L from THE LAUNCHPAD, Module Six. Remember the 25-30% tax reserve on every dollar of profit.

Pre-decided, so motivation is never consulted.

WEEK ONE: FOUNDATIONS

- LLC filed, EIN issued, business bank account open
- Insurance bound with chemical damage confirmed
- CPO course booked; lean kit purchased
- Wholesale chemical account opened
- Satellite scout list built: every pool within 10 minutes

WEEK TWO: DOORS OPEN

- First 2-3 founding pools signed and serviced
- Photo + readings report sent after every visit
- Door hangers on the five nearest pool homes per stop
- Google Business Profile claimed; first photos up
- Free water-test offer posted to Nextdoor/Facebook

WEEK THREE: MOMENTUM

- Route day and stop order locked; density protected
- Three realtors pitched the closing-gift water test
- One rental or Airbnb host signed on photo-proof service
- CYA logged on every account; high pools flagged
- Filter cleans scheduled onto the calendar

WEEK FOUR: THE SYSTEM

- Raise from founding to posted rates publicly
- First green-pool rescue documented start to finish
- Local pool supply counter introduced to your card
- Month-one P&L completed; one lever chosen
- Day-60 review asks scheduled for founding accounts

DAY 30 VERDICT

Green light: 8+ weekly accounts inside one tight loop, reports flowing, first referral arrived. Yellow: accounts signing but scattered across town: stop selling and densify, drive time is the silent killer of route margin. Red: under 4 accounts despite 25+ real asks: lead with the free water test and the photo-report promise; you are selling relief from anxiety, not skimming.

How this business fails, and how it grows.

THE FIVE KILLERS

- ✕ **Test strips and guesswork**
Strips drift, fade, and flatter. The drop-count kit costs \$100 and is the difference between a chemistry professional and a person with a net. Buy it first; trust it always.

- ✕ **Underpricing chemicals-included**
Chlorine prices move and summer bather load doubles demand. A flat rate set in a mild April quietly loses money by August; track cost per pool monthly and reprice without apology.

- ✕ **The scattered route**
Sixty pools across three towns is a driving job with chemistry breaks. Density decides your hourly more than any pricing decision: cluster ruthlessly, decline strays.

- ✕ **Ignoring CYA until the pool turns**
Chlorine lock builds silently for months, then becomes an algae bloom with your name on it. Log stabilizer monthly and act early; the bloom is always cheaper to prevent than to fight.

- ✕ **Repairs past your legal line**
The \$900 pump swap feels like easy margin until the state board defines it as unlicensed contracting. Know your threshold, partner with a licensed tech above it, and keep both referral streams.

THREE SCALE PATHS

- 1 **Buy accounts**
Routes trade openly at 8-12x monthly billing, and retiring operators sell every season. Buying twenty vetted accounts in one closing beats a year of door-knocking, and the bank math usually works.

- 2 **The repair arm**
Get licensed (or hire licensed) for repairs and equipment installs: pumps, heaters, salt systems, automation. Repair revenue can match service revenue on the same customer list with zero new marketing.

- 3 **The second route**
A trained tech can carry 55-60 pools with your software, your checklists, and your photo-report standard. You keep quality, sales, and the route map; the equity compounds in both books.

YOUR FIRST HIRE

A route tech at around 55 pools, trained for two weeks riding shotgun on your exact stop order. The photo-and-readings report is your remote quality control: you can audit every pool from your phone every evening. The deeper test is the route sheet itself: if a careful stranger could not service pool one correctly tomorrow from what you have written, the asset is still trapped in your head, and trapped assets do not sell at 12x.

THE STAIRCASE CONTINUES

The playbook is the map. The machine is waiting.

Everything this playbook describes, Epic Advisory Group can build with you: the brand, the cinematic website, the entity, the engine. Describe your idea to the Launch Engine and see your business real in about sixty seconds, free.

- The Launch Engine: your idea, built free, in about a minute
- THE ASCENT: Founder Edition: the eight-module course
- Launch-in-a-Box: entity, brand, site, and first campaign, one flat price
- Growth, capital readiness, and the path to the public markets

"There is no right age. There is only the decision."



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