ReferenceUSA is a resource that will be useful for you as you complete your feasibility study. Reference USA contains information about businesses as well as demographic information.
In order to access ReferenceUSA you can use the link on the research guide. You can also access ReferenceUSA through the library website, [www.mchenry.edu/library](http://www.mchenry.edu/library). From the library homepage choose the dropdown for “Databases” and then select “A to Z Databases.” On the A to Z page, just scroll down until you get to ReferenceUSA and click on the name of the database to get started.
This is what the home page for ReferenceUSA looks like. You'll see the four databases we have access to: U.S. Businesses, U.S. New Businesses, U.S. Jobs/Internships, and U.S. Standard White Pages. You may find the white pages useful to find demographic information for your feasibility study. You can search by geographic area, such as zip code or city, to find the number of households and to get a summary by certain factors, like estimated income, which may be useful as you think about your business. The database we will look at right now is U.S. Businesses. This will allow you to view businesses by industry and location.
When you click on U.S. Businesses you will go to the search screen. The default search is the quick search, which you can use if you want to look up a particular company. Click on the tab for the advanced search in order to have more options to customize your search.

In the left column you will see all the search options. Unless you have a very specific search in mind, you can start by searching business type, where you will be able to use the NAICS code(s) you found for your industry, and geography, which allows you to limit the businesses you retrieve to a specific zip code, city, or even to an area that you draw on a map. Just select the check boxes next to each criteria you want to search. As you select search criteria, the middle section of the screen will populate with boxes you can fill in.
In the “Business Type” box, I am going to click on “Search all NAICS” and then enter the two NAICS codes that I found for pizza delivery and pizza parlors. Remember that these codes cover all fast-food and full-service restaurants, not just those that serve pizza. We will see this in the records we retrieve. I have also selected to limit by City/State and I selected Crystal Lake.
As I enter my search criteria I can click “Update Count” in the upper right to see how many records match my search. If this number is very small or 0, you may want to double-check your search. If there are a large number of results you may want to add additional search terms (like business size or a narrower geographic area) in order to get the most relevant results. 119 is a manageable number to review, so I will click the green button to view my results.
The results page lists basic information about each company, including the name and address. There are 25 results listed on each page and you have the option to push the arrows to go forward or backward in your results. Clicking on the hyperlinked company name will open the full record for the company. As you look at my search results you will see that I have retrieved fast-food and full-service restaurants, some of which serve pizza and some that don’t. So even though I have retrieved 119 records, not all of these will be exactly what I’m looking for. However, there is still value in knowing what other options consumers have in Crystal Lake within the restaurant space, as these could be competitors for the same dollars.
Clicking on Halftime Pizza & Ribs brings up the full record. Depending on the company and what information is available, which will vary greatly, especially between public and private companies, you will see these fields completed. On the left side is a list of the information available and clicking on these links will take you directly to that section of the record.
Some parts of the record that will be the most useful are the Business Demographics, Business Expenditures, and the Competitors Report. Business Demographics gives basic information about the company, including if the business is public or private, the number of employees, and the sales volume. Business Expenditures gives estimates for annual expenses. These are based on the size of the business, but will give you a good idea of what it costs to run a business. The Competitors Report lists nearby businesses in the same industry. This may give you an idea of other companies to look at. But again, remember that these are based on the NAICS code, so in the case of this record the competitors listed are other restaurants, but not necessarily other pizza restaurants. Clicking on any of the company names will take you to the full record for that company. Otherwise you can go back to your search results and choose a new company to view or go back and revise your search.
If you have any questions about searching ReferenceUSA or putting together your search, just ask a librarian.