

The Service-Area Page and Local Landing Playbook

How to build city and service-area pages that earn their place in the index instead of reading as doorway pages: a unique-data test, a page template, proof, structured data, linking, and a staged launch.

Contents

01 What counts as a doorway page, and why service businesses attract the label

02 The unique-data test: decide before you design

03 The page template: fixed structure, variable substance

04 LocalBusiness structured data: what it can and cannot do

05 Internal linking and a staged launch

06 Service-area page launch checklist

Key Takeaways & Sources

01

What counts as a doorway page, and why service businesses attract the label

Service businesses reach for location pages because customers search by place. "Roof repair Tulsa", "roof repair Broken Arrow", and the next forty suburbs each look like a separate query, and a page per query looks like the obvious answer. The trouble is that Google's spam policies address this directly. Doorway abuse is defined there as sites or pages created to rank for specific, similar search queries, where the pages funnel users to a destination that is no more useful than the page they came from. The policy gives examples that include multiple domain names or pages targeted at specific regions or cities that funnel users to one page.

The same documentation covers scaled content abuse, which is producing many pages primarily to manipulate rankings without adding value for users, whatever the method of production. A template filled from a spreadsheet of city names fits that description if the only variable is the name. Whether a given site gets caught depends on the whole pattern across the site, and nobody outside Google can state a safe page count. What you can control is whether each page holds something a visitor in that place could use.

Not every location page is a problem. A page for a physical branch with its own address, staff, hours, and phone number is a genuine business page. A page for a service area where you do real work and can show it is a useful page. The test is not "how many pages" but "what does this page tell a visitor in this town that the main service page cannot".

A template filled from a spreadsheet of city names fits that description if the only variable is the name.

02

The unique-data test: decide before you design

Run this test on every candidate page before anyone writes a word. For each place, list the facts you hold that are true of that place and could not be pasted onto another. Good material comes from your own records: completed jobs in that area (with the customer's permission for any public detail), local permit or inspection requirements published by the municipality, typical housing stock or building types you service there, travel and scheduling realities such as response windows, local regulations that change how the work is done, and photos you took on site. Pull them from the CRM, the field-service tool, and your technicians. Do not invent them to fill space.

Score each candidate on how many distinct, verifiable local items it has. A workable rule, and it is a judgement and not a documented standard, is a minimum of three items, at least one of which is proof (a job record, a photo, a permit link, a review that names the area). A candidate that cannot meet the bar

does not get a page. It gets a mention on a broader area page, and a line in the main service page's list of towns served. Declining to publish is the intended outcome for most of the weakest candidates, and it is the only reliable way to avoid the pattern Google's policies describe.

Watch for fake locality. A page that claims a local office the business does not have, or implies a staffed branch where there is only a service call, misrepresents the business. That is a separate problem from doorway abuse, and Google's Business Profile help for service-area businesses says to remove your address from the profile if you do not serve customers there. Use "we serve" and not "visit our office" for places without one.

Local evidence	Where to find it	Counts as unique?
Completed jobs in the area, with details the customer has approved for public use	CRM or field-service history	Yes, if real and approved
Local permit or inspection rules from the municipality	City or county website	Yes, if cited and current
Typical building types or constraints in the area	Technician knowledge, job photos	Yes, if specific and checkable
Response time or scheduling windows for that area	Dispatch records	Yes, if you commit to it
Reviews that name the town or neighbourhood	Review platforms	Yes, quoted accurately with source
The city name, population, or generic history copied from elsewhere	Any web page	No
The same paragraph with the place name replaced	Template	No

03

The page template: fixed structure, variable substance

A template is fine. The structure can repeat while the content that fills it changes. Each page needs a clear statement of what you do and for whom in that place, the local facts from the unique-data test, proof, a way to book or call, and links to the parent service page and to nearby areas where it helps. Put the proof high on the page. A visitor deciding whether to call will look for evidence that you work in their town before they read any description of the service.

Keep the title and heading honest and specific, such as the service, the place, and one distinguishing fact. Avoid appending a list of neighbouring cities to the title tag or footer. That is the classic keyword-stuffing shape and it adds nothing a visitor can use. Add a short FAQ only when the questions are real ones your office hears for that area, and answer them with local specifics. A FAQ of generic

questions reproduced on every page is the same problem in a smaller block.

Do not fabricate proof. If you have no customer from a particular suburb, say what you can: that you take calls there, what your response window is, and who to contact. A page that says less and is true is better than one with an invented testimonial. This repository applies the same rule to its own pages for the same reason.

- Opening: service, place, and the one thing that is specific to that place
- Local facts: the items that passed the unique-data test, with sources for any regulation or permit rule
- Proof: job records, photos taken on site, or reviews that name the area, with permission where needed
- Call to action: phone, booking link, and hours, matching the Business Profile
- Links up to the parent service page and across to two or three genuinely adjacent areas

Keep the title and heading honest and specific, such as the service, the place, and one distinguishing fact.

04

LocalBusiness structured data: what it can and cannot do

Google's documentation for LocalBusiness structured data describes the markup as a way to tell Google about the business, such as its name, address, opening hours, and the departments or branches involved, and says it can help Google show that information in Search and Maps surfaces. The documentation does not present it as a ranking factor, and no markup converts a thin page into a useful one. Treat it as an accurate description of something the visible page already says.

Mark up what is on the page and true. For a branch with a staffed address, a LocalBusiness page with name, address, telephone, and opening hours matched to the Business Profile is straightforward. For a pure service-area business with a hidden address, check what you can truthfully state before adding an address property. The documentation lists the properties it needs for eligibility, so confirm the current list before shipping and do not publish an address you do not display on your profile. The schema.org vocabulary includes an `areaServed` property that fits service-area businesses, but check the current Google documentation on whether it affects any feature, and do not assume it does.

Do not copy the same block, with only the city swapped, onto forty pages. A markup block should describe the entity that the page is about. Use one organisation-level entity for the business, and branch-level entities only for real branches. Validate with Google's Rich Results Test or the Schema Markup Validator and confirm the values match the visible text and the Business Profile.

For a branch with a staffed address, a LocalBusiness page with name, address, telephone, and opening hours matched to the Business Profile is straightforward.

05

Internal linking and a staged launch

Link structure should follow how a visitor would browse: from the main service page to an areas hub, from the hub to each area page, and from each area page back up to the service and across to adjacent areas. Anchor text should name the service and the place the way a person would say it. Avoid footers with every city linked from every page. They add noise, and they also add to the pattern that looks like a doorway network.

Launch in small batches. A recommendation, not a documented threshold: publish five to ten pages that clearly pass the unique-data test, wait for indexing, and look at impressions, clicks, and calls from those pages in Search Console and your call tracking before adding more. If the pages are indexed and drawing calls, the next batch can follow the same template. If they sit in "discovered, not indexed" or draw no engagement, the template or the evidence is too thin, and publishing more of them will not help. Fix the template first.

Keep a changelog of what was published and when, so that a later drop in visibility can be traced to a specific batch. If a page proves too weak, consolidate it into a broader area page with a redirect and not leave it standing. A smaller set of pages that each do real work is the better outcome, and it is the one your own records can defend.

06

Service-area page launch checklist

Work down the table in order. Each gate is something a reviewer can verify from the page, the sheet, or the markup test, not a feeling about quality.

Step	Owner	Gate to pass before moving on
List candidate places and the service each page would cover	SEO lead	Each candidate is a place you actually serve, with a real job or call history
Run the unique-data test for every candidate	SEO lead with operations	Each page has at least three distinct local items, including one piece of proof; candidates below the bar are dropped
Collect permissions for any customer detail, photo, or quote	Operations lead	Written permission is on file for every public customer detail

Step	Owner	Gate to pass before moving on
Draft pages from the template, filling only from the evidence sheet	Content writer	Swapping the place name onto another page leaves it visibly wrong; no invented facts
Add LocalBusiness markup that matches the visible page and Business Profile	Technical SEO	Markup validates, values match the page text, no undisplayed address is published
Add links from the service page, areas hub, and two or three adjacent areas	Technical SEO	Every new page is reachable in two clicks from the service page, with descriptive anchors
Publish the first batch of five to ten pages	SEO lead	Pages return 200, are indexable, and appear in the sitemap
Review indexing, impressions, and calls after the batch has had time to settle	SEO lead	Pages are indexed and drawing calls or clicks before the next batch is approved

Key Takeaways

- A service-area page is worth publishing only if it contains information that is true of that place and not of the others. If you can swap the city name and the page still reads correctly, it is a doorway page.
- Google's spam policies name doorway abuse and scaled content abuse. The risk is a pattern across many near-identical pages, not any single page.
- Build the unique-data test before the template: for each candidate page, list the local facts, jobs, and proof you actually hold. If the list is empty, do not publish the page.
- LocalBusiness markup describes the business and should match the visible page. It is not a ranking lever, and it cannot make a thin page useful.
- Launch in small batches of five to ten pages, check indexing and engagement, and only then continue. This pacing is a recommendation, not a documented Google threshold.

Sources

1. Google Search spam policies (doorway abuse, scaled content abuse) —
<https://developers.google.com/search/docs/essentials/spam-policies>
2. Local business structured data (LocalBusiness) —
<https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/structured-data/local-business>
3. schema.org: LocalBusiness — <https://schema.org/LocalBusiness>
4. Creating helpful, reliable, people-first content —
<https://developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/creating-helpful-content>
5. Manage your service areas for service-area and hybrid businesses —
<https://support.google.com/business/answer/9157481?hl=en>