



Mobile Food Vendor Starter Guide

This guide tells you which forms you need to fill out, offices to visit, and decisions to make when starting a food truck or cart in Minneapolis.

For additional support, call 612-673-2499 or email smallbusiness@minneapolismn.gov



Create a Plan

- Are you ready to be an entrepreneur?** Planning, launching, and running a business is a lot of work. Ask yourself these 20 questions before starting the process. <https://goo.gl/4CmNrk>
- Connect with a small business consultant** at a service provider through the Minneapolis Business Technical Assistance Program (B-TAP) to access business training, support, and advice for opening your business. <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/business/B-TAP>



Building a relationship with a small business consultant can be a crucial step in your journey as an entrepreneur.

- Write a business plan** to map out your steps and ensure your business will start and run successfully. <http://www.bplans.com>



While starting a mobile food business will cost less than a restaurant, you will need to have enough money to run your business for at least several months without relying on a profit. New food truck owners' initial costs average about \$60,000.

- Secure financing for your business** by connecting with a lender from a community bank, credit union, or Community Development Financial Institution.

- Determine if you qualify for any of the City's financing resources** offered through Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED). <https://goo.gl/e5yVLT>



Lenders will want to see that you have some initial capital invested in your business before underwriting a loan.



Prepare Your Space

- Visit the Minneapolis Development Review Customer Service Center** at 250 South 4th Street, Room 300. You will meet a Development Coordinator (DC) who will guide you through requirements for being a mobile food vendor in Minneapolis.
- Decide what kind of mobile food unit you need.** Food trucks and carts have different requirements for the types of food that can be served and where they can operate in the City. <https://goo.gl/YcWMEU>
- Purchase your vehicle and equipment.** Review the vehicle plan standards on the business license application for the requirements of a mobile food vehicle. <https://goo.gl/YcWMEU>



If you plan to do remodeling or conversion of an existing vehicle to a mobile food unit, you must submit a plan review and receive approval from the Minnesota Department of Health before you begin construction. <https://goo.gl/YG85Mp>

- Find a place to prepare your food.** Unless you are only selling pre-packaged food, such as ice cream or candy, all food served from a mobile food vendor must be prepared at a commissary kitchen licensed by the Minnesota Department of Health. <https://goo.gl/P5pYPi>



A commissary is a permanent food establishment that is approved for the purpose of providing support services to your mobile food unit, such as storing and preparing food and cleaning and servicing of your equipment.



To operate in Minneapolis, mobile food vendors must use a facility located within the City of Minneapolis.



Register Your Business

- Verify the name you would like for your business is available.** You can use the Secretary of State Online Business Services page to check name availability. <https://goo.gl/3ttDys>
- Choose a business structure.** Decide what type of business structure is right for your business. <https://goo.gl/hmwa6K>
- Register your business with the MN Secretary of State.** LLCs, Corporations, Nonprofits, and Limited Partnerships must register with State of Minnesota. <https://goo.gl/C7rJW5>
- File a Certificate of Assume Name** if you will be using a name other than your given name, the names of your partners, or the officially registered name of your LLC or corporation. <https://goo.gl/6b8Mpe>
- Apply for a MN Tax ID and a Federal Employer ID Number.** Both are used to identify your business. If you are a sole proprietor, you may be able to use your Social Security Number instead. <https://goo.gl/aHRucU>



Before you begin withholding state taxes, you must register for a Minnesota tax ID number. If you fail to register prior to withholding Minnesota taxes, you may be subject to a \$100 penalty.

- Obtain insurance.** All mobile food vendors are required to have liability insurance. If you will have employees besides yourself and members of your immediate family, you will also need to have workers compensation insurance.

- Make a plan to have a certified food manager on site.** Minnesota state law requires that a certified food manager be present on site at all times when food preparation is happening. Certification requires a day-long class in food safety. <https://goo.gl/caJxPA>

To speak with a Development Review Coordinator or Business Licensing Representative, visit the Minneapolis Development Review Customer Service

Free Parking is available.

http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/mdr/mdr_location-and-parking

Public Service Center Building, Room 300

250 S. 4th Street

Minneapolis, MN 55415

Mon - Wed, Friday | 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Thursday | 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM



Get Your License

- Meet with your Development Coordinator at Minneapolis Development Review Customer Service Center** to go over the requirements for the business license type you will need.
 - Review the business license application for your business type.** There are different license applications for food truck, limited food truck, and food cart. <https://goo.gl/qEBqnh>
 - Complete Food Plan Review application.** Follow this guide for food handling and safety requirements to open a food business in Minneapolis. <https://goo.gl/gvzXZC>
 - Prepare for site and vehicle plan review.** You will need to draw out your site plan for a food cart and floor plan for a food truck. Photos may also be needed. Check the business license application for details.
- !** If you are found operating without a license, your food sales will be immediately suspended. Your equipment may be impounded and a citation may be issued.
- Gather and submit required documents to your Development Coordinator,** including a list of food items you will be selling, vehicle plan that conforms to Mobile Food Vehicle Plan Standards, and site plan drawing.
 - Schedule final environmental health inspection.** A final inspection will be required prior to approval of the permit to operate. Call 311 or 612-673-3000 and request a "Food Safety Call Back Request."
- !** Upon document submittal, your Development Coordinator will forward your documents to the appropriate City departments for review and approval.
- Obtain a MNDOT Number.** Your food truck must obtain a vehicle inspection by a mechanic certified to issue a DOT number.



What if...

- If you have a food truck,** here is a map of the public streets you can operate in the City of Minneapolis. <https://goo.gl/QLL522>
 - If you have a food cart,** you are only allowed to operate at pre-approved locations on commercial corridors. Contact Business Licensing at 612-673-2080 for a list of approved locations.
- !** If you plan to operate on private property/parking lot, you will need written consent from the property owner for your license application.
- If you plan to hire employees,** be sure to follow all wage and employment guidelines. Most of these are set by the State: <http://www.dli.mn.gov/LaborLaw.asp>. There are some Minneapolis-specific labor ordinances, like Sick and Safe Time: <http://sicktimeinfo.weebly.com> and Minimum Wage: <https://goo.gl/q7NQDm>
 - If you are looking to expand your customer base,** a marketing plan is a great first step to identify who your potential customers are and how to connect with them. The Small Business Administration offers a variety of resources to help you think through what you should include in your marketing plan. <https://goo.gl/eAPA48>
 - If you plan to operate in a bus lane,** you will need to obtain an obstruction permit. <https://goo.gl/JfLnB5>
 - If you make any changes to your business,** such as adding a piece of equipment or expanding your operations, meet with your Development Coordinator as you may need to update your food plan or business license.



After Opening

- Connect with the Minnesota Food Truck Association** for networking opportunities and more tips on how to successfully run your food truck. <http://www.mnfoodtruckassociation.org>
 - Post all required posters and permits,** including your Dot number, business license, and required state labor law posters. <http://www.dli.mn.gov/ls/posters.asp>
 - Mark your calendar.** Schedule equipment maintenance and set reminders to renew your permits and licenses as needed.
- !** Common violation types include not wearing proper hair restraints and using handwashing sinks for food preparation.
- Renew your business license.** Your business license must be renewed annually. Check out this video about the renewal process. <https://goo.gl/TbH54y>
 - Pay Pollution Control Annual Billing.** You are required to pay an annual fee for any equipment that has an impact on the environment. <https://goo.gl/2FbCao>
 - Be prepared for health inspections.** Your first routine inspection will be scheduled within 60 days of opening. Inspectors will arrive unannounced. Be sure you are always following food safety practices by regularly completing a self-inspection. <https://goo.gl/f2mJZR>
 - Prepare and pay your local, state, and federal taxes** <https://mn.gov/deed/business/starting-business/taxes>
 - Expand your business.** The City offers financing that can be used to help you cover costs of expansion. If you plan to expand, make sure to connect with your Development Coordinator who can guide you through any regulatory steps.