



Starter Guide

This guide tells you which forms you need to fill out, offices to visit, and decisions to make when starting a catering or food & beverage business 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>



Starting a business can be expensive. You will need to have enough money to run your business for at least the first several months without relying on a profit. Using calculations from your business plan, determine how much capital you will need to start.

- 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.



Choose a Location



Catering businesses are required to prepare food in a commercial kitchen that is licensed by the Minnesota Department of Health.

- Institutional kitchen.** Churches, or other community institutions like schools, often have large, health-inspected kitchens that are not always in use. They may be willing to rent you space during off times.
- Restaurant kitchen.** Some restaurants are willing to rent out their kitchen space during times when they are not open.
- Shared commercial kitchen.** This can be a good option if you are looking for some additional business support in addition to kitchen space. Often, shared commercial kitchens are connected to business support organizations. <https://goo.gl/5wYXrE>
- Private commercial kitchen.** If your operation is larger and you need a dedicated kitchen space you don't have to share with anyone else, look into leasing out your own private commercial kitchen.
- Request Sewer Availability Charge (SAC) determination letter.** If you add any new equipment to the kitchen you are using, you may be required to pay a fee for the waste water your business will generate. <https://goo.gl/U7c30I>



It can take 10-15 days to receive your SAC determination letter once you request it.

- Contact the neighborhood business association** where your business will be located to get their support and learn about the resources they offer small businesses. <https://goo.gl/xk0FTM>
- Sign your lease.** Before you sign, ensure the kitchen you will be using meets all license requirements.



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 Assumed 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.

- Research the insurance you will need,** such as workers' compensation, liability, and disability insurance. If you will have employees, your workers compensation insurance policy number is required to complete your business license application. <http://www.dli.mn.gov/WC/Employer.asp>

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

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.



Your business cannot open, operate or serve the public prior to receiving your business license.

- Review the business license application** for opening a food business in Minneapolis. <https://goo.gl/zqrXxQ>
- Complete Food Plan Review application.** Required of all new food businesses. <https://goo.gl/6o7LPf>
- 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/tEk9WZ>
- Gather documents you will need for your license application,** including your proposed menu, a floor plan for your space, and your food plan review
- Submit all required documents and fees to your Development Coordinator.** They will be your main point of contact throughout the regulatory process.



Upon document submittal, your Development Coordinator will forward your documents to the appropriate City departments for review and approval.



What if...

- 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 for ways 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/kbpaJZ>
- If you want to put up a sign or awning** on the outside of your building, ensure you comply with size and location requirements. Sign Permits are only issued to Sign Contractors licensed by the City. <https://goo.gl/1fCdJR>



If you don't own your building, make sure you work with your landlord if you'd like to put up a new sign or awning.

- Green your business!** The City of Minneapolis offers Cost Sharing awards up to \$100,000 for businesses willing to invest in cleaner, greener, or more efficient technologies. <https://goo.gl/oAyd8J>
- 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 SAC determination, submit a new Food Plan, and obtain an additional license.



After Opening

- Post all required posters and permits** including your business license and required state labor law posters. <http://www.dli.mn.gov/ls/posters.asp>
- Mark your calendar.** Set reminders to renew your permits and licenses as needed. Failure to renew a license by the license expiration date will result in license expiration, late renewal penalties, and an ineligibility to offer services.



If your kitchen has a hood exhaust system, it will have to be cleaned and inspected twice a year. Touch base with the owner of the kitchen to make sure you know who is responsible for scheduling maintenance.

- 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.** 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, such as equipment. If you plan to expand, make sure to connect with your Development Coordinator who can guide you through any regulatory steps.