



# 10 Steps to Starting a Business

## Table of Contents

1. Why Visit the Hamilton Business Centre and One-Stop for Business?
2. Conduct Market Research
3. Prepare a Business Plan
4. Register your Business
5. Licensing
6. Zoning
7. Business Number (BN)
8. Additional Regulations
9. Financing Your Business
10. Additional Resources



# 1 Why Visit the Hamilton Business Centre and One-Stop?

The **Hamilton Business Centre (HBC)** provides information and resources that entrepreneurs need to start and grow their business. Operating as a division of the Economic Development Department with the City of Hamilton, in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT) and the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Science (MRIS), the Centre is a one-stop resource for business information, guidance, and professional advice on starting and running a successful business - for both start-up and growing businesses.

The HBC provides the following services:

- **Access to Qualified Business Consultants:** Our consultants will help with the review and development of business and marketing plans, provide advice on incentives and financing programs, as well as outline the rules and regulations for business operation. Book an appointment: <https://21145108.hs-sites.com/online-booking>
- **Seminars and Workshops:** Clients can register for monthly workshops that focus on Business Planning, Marketing Basics, Bookkeeping, Legal Issues, and explore the 10 Steps to Starting a Business. To see all upcoming sessions, click here: <https://investinhamilton.ca/hamilton-business-centre/workshops/>
- **Access to Professionals Program:** Clients can register to meet one-on-one with a certified accountant, business lawyer, and/or marketing professional. <https://investinhamilton.ca/hamilton-business-centre/access-to-professionals-2/>
- **Community Service Provider:** Summer Company, Starter Company Plus, Digital Main Street, Business Plan Competition, and Success in the City. <https://investinhamilton.ca/hamilton-business-centre/programs/>
- **Blog:** Stay up-to-date on local trends and strategies to enhance your business, as well as information on current programs and services available: <https://investinhamilton.ca/hamilton-business-centre/news/>
- **Follow Us** on Facebook & Instagram: @hamiltonbusinesscentre or Twitter: @hamontbizcentre

The **Business Facilitation** and **Business Licensing** (One-Stop) area provides the following services:

- Helping businesses through the municipal processes of starting and/or expanding their business including step-by-step guidance by a Business Facilitator.
- Access information, advice, mediation, and problem solving.
- Understand the approval requirements and process - this makes it easier for business decisions to be made and faster to receive approvals.
- Understand if your business needs to be licensed, what your business needs to become licensed, and help in getting your licensing application processed.



## 2 Conduct Market Research

An often-overlooked step in starting a business is market research. It is critical to understand the industry and market that you will be operating your business in. Thorough research forms the basis of your business plan and proves the viability of your idea.

Types of market research that you should conduct:

### Industry

- **Canada Business** - Pulls together information from all levels of government to provide you with information about your business sector, demographics of your customer, sample business plans, etc. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/business.html>
- **Industry Canada** - Information about your industry including regulations, processes, and statistics. [www.ic.gc.ca](http://www.ic.gc.ca)

### Customers/Target Market

- Identify who your ideal customer is - who is most likely to buy your product or service. Now, write down their age, gender, income, marital status, family status, location, etc.
- **Statistics Canada** - Produces statistics that help you understand demographics related to your business. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca>

### Competitors

- **Hamilton Business Directory** - Check out what businesses are listed under the same category as your business. [http://www.ylm.ca/ylm/ylm\\_home.aspx?l=1&f=403](http://www.ylm.ca/ylm/ylm_home.aspx?l=1&f=403)
- If your business isn't operational, where do people go to buy your product or service right now?

### Location

- **Invest in Hamilton** - Local online resource that provides detailed economic data and key demographics to help you understand who lives and operates in certain sectors of Hamilton. <https://investinhamilton.ca/tools-data/>
- **Site Selector** - Allows you to search for properties and land available within the Hamilton communities. <https://investinhamilton.ca/site-selector/gis-tools/>
- **Business Improvement Areas (BIA)** - Allows local business people and property owners to join together to promote economic development in their district. <http://www.investinhamilton.ca/downtown-bia/business-improvement-areas/>

### Financing

- Identify the costs and fees associated with starting up your business (business registration, marketing/advertising, licensing, insurance, rent, utilities, product development, web site, etc.)
- Identify the costs associated with operating your business on a day-to-day basis.
- Contact a Small Business Banker at your local bank for assistance.
- Meet with a consultant at the Hamilton Business Centre for assistance and to learn about potential funding opportunities.



## 3 Prepare a Business Plan

The next step on the path to success involves preparing a business plan. A well-prepared business plan covers research and analysis of the market, customers, suppliers, and competition. This document is about your business and you.

### Why is a Business Plan important?

- Clearly and concisely explains your business idea, explains short and long-term business goals, and discusses what resources are available, and what are needed, to start and operate your business.
- Required to apply to funding programs such as Starter Company, Futurpreneur, and Canadian Small Business Financing Program.

### What are the benefits of having a Business Plan?

- Helps you understand if your business idea is viable - based on the research you did in Step 2.
- Identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that apply to your business and industry.
- Introduces your business to bankers and investors to assist in securing financing/funding.
- Helps you, the business owner, stay on track when starting up, expanding or selling your business.

### Business Plan Tips:

- Your business plan should clearly explain your short and long-term goals, as well as how you will manage the resources you have to start and operate your business, as well what resources are needed now and in the future.
- Explain your business idea as if the person reading it does not have any knowledge of your business or industry. Use market research to help strengthen the need or want for your product/service.
- There is no specific length required for a business plan. The general guideline is 8-10 pages.
- Write the Executive Summary last - it is a summary of all the sections in your business plan.

### How the Hamilton Business Centre can help:

- To learn about the steps discussed above and more, we encourage you to attend the monthly Business Planning seminar - <https://investinhamilton.ca/hamilton-business-centre/workshops/>
- For further assistance, you can work with a consultant on your business plan.
- During a consultation, please ask a consultant for a business plan template.

### Additional Business Plan resources:

- BPlans - Your Small Business Planning Resource - <http://www.bplans.com/>
- Many banks have comprehensive tools to assist you when starting a business.

For example, check out the Small Business Resources through TD Bank:

<http://www.tdcanadatrust.com/products-services/small-business/resources.jsp>



## 4 Register Your Business

If you plan to use a business name and operate either as a sole proprietorship or partnership company in Ontario, you can register through the Ontario Business Registry.

**NOTE:** If you would like to operate your business in your first and last name only, you do not have to register the business.

### Ontario Business Registrations for a Sole Proprietorship or Partnerships:

- **Cost:** \$60.00 per registration (Expires after 5 years)
- **Register here:** <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-business-registry>

To learn more about registering your business please visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/registering-your-business-name>

### Provincial Incorporations:

**NOTE:** It is recommended that you meet with a lawyer or an accountant before registering for a corporation. They can ensure that incorporating your business is right for you.

- **Cost:** \$300\*  
\*Please visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/cost-time-required-to-register-change-search-for-business-name-corporation-not-for-profit> to review the different registrations, services, filing types, fees, and timelines.
- **Register here:** <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-business-registry>
- **Not-for-Profit:**
  - Visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-business-registry>
  - To obtain the Not-for-Profit Incorporator's Handbook, visit <https://www.publications.gov.on.ca/301543>

### Federal Incorporations:

- Please visit Industry Canada to identify if a Federal Incorporation is needed: <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/cs06939.html>

### REMINDERS:

- A reminder will not be sent when your Master Business Licence is expiring/expired. Please note the expiration date on your document.
- Your business registration documents are needed to apply for a Municipal Licence or to open a Business Bank Account.



## 5 Licensing

Many businesses in Hamilton must be licensed to operate legally for public health and safety, consumer protection and/or nuisance prevention. A business licence protects the health and safety of the public who use their service or products and also helps ensure consistency for business owners and customers.

### Licence classifications include:

1. Establishment
2. Mobile
3. Trade

**NOTE:** We recommend that you visit Licensing to find out if your business needs a Municipal Licence to operate in Hamilton.

Visit the One-Stop: Business Facilitation and Licensing desk at 71 Main Street West, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Hamilton or email at [licensing@hamilton.ca](mailto:licensing@hamilton.ca)

For more information on Business Licences, <https://www.hamilton.ca/build-invest-grow/starting-small-business/business-licences>

### Provincial Business Licenses

Certain types of businesses may require provincial licences:

- **Liquor Licence**  
Contact the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) at 416-326-8700 or <https://www.agco.ca/en/alcohol/liquor-sales>
- **Vehicle Dealer Registration**  
<https://www.omvic.ca/selling/register/>
- **Day Care Service**  
Contact the Ministry of Education at [information.met@ontario.ca](mailto:information.met@ontario.ca) or <https://www.ontario.ca/page/provide-child-care-and-early-years-programs>

### REMINDER:

Your business registration documents are needed to apply for a Municipal Licence.



## 6 Zoning

**Before** buying a property, signing a lease or rental agreement, visit the City of Hamilton's One-Stop: Business Facilitation and Licensing. They will help you identify whether you can operate your business with the current zoning in place for that location. You can confirm a location's zoning by requesting a **Zoning Verification** (fees do apply).

There are two different service fees depending on how fast you need the zoning verified:

- **Regular Service Fee (fees subject to change annually)**  
To get zoning verified in 10 business days for:
  - Single & Two-Family Dwellings, Townhouses
  - Non-Residential / Multi-Residential
- **Express Service Fee (fees subject to change annually)**  
To get zoning verified in two business days for:
  - Single & Two-Family Dwellings, Townhouses
  - Non-Residential / Multi-Residential

If the use is not recognized but permitted within your location, you can apply for a Building Permit for the change of use.

For more information regarding Zoning Verifications, please visit <https://www.hamilton.ca/build-invest-grow/starting-small-business/one-stop-business/zoning-verification-report-application>

### Home-Based Business:

- If you are operating a home-based business in Hamilton, check with the One-Stop: Business Facilitation and Zoning to ensure you can legally operate your business from your home.
- For more information, please visit The City of Hamilton Zoning web page: <http://www.hamilton.ca/city-planning/official-plan-zoning-by-law>

If you need assistance **finding a location**, please check out the following resources:

- **City of Hamilton Property Search (Site Selector)** - Allows you to search for properties available within the Hamilton communities. <http://www.investinhamilton.ca/locate-expand/property-search/>
- **Contact a Commercial Real Estate Agent**
- **Invest in Hamilton** - Local online resource that provides detailed economic data and key demographics to help you understand who lives and operates in certain sectors of Hamilton. <https://www.investinhamilton.ca/advantages/>
- **Business Improvement Areas (BIA)** - Allows local businesspeople and property owners to join together to promote economic development in their district. <http://www.investinhamilton.ca/downtown-bia/business-improvement-areas/>



## 7 Business Number (BN)

When registering for Business Number (BN), you will contact the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

### To register a Business Number visit:

- Call Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-959-5525
- Visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/businesses/topics/registering-your-business/register.html>

### The Business Number encompasses:

- A company's HST account: Harmonized Sales Tax (HST)
- Import and Export Account
- Payroll Deductions Account
- Corporate Income Tax Account

**NOTE:** The Business Number (Canada Revenue) is different from the Business Identification Number on your Master Business Licence (Service Ontario).

The most popular reason that a business owner registers for a Business Number is to obtain an HST number:

- **Harmonized Sales Tax (HST)**
  - All businesses with HST taxable revenue of \$30,000 gross or more in one year or four consecutive periods, must register for HST with the Canada Revenue Agency.
  - Firms with less than \$30,000 annual revenue may opt to not collect HST. Contact Canada Revenue Agency to learn more.

### How the Hamilton Business Centre (HBC) can help:

- To learn more about accounting and taxes for businesses, we encourage you to check out our monthly bookkeeping and CRA workshops. <https://investinhamilton.ca/hamilton-business-centre/seminars-workshops/>
- Set-up an appointment with a Certified Accountant to discuss your business needs through our Access to Professionals service: <https://investinhamilton.ca/hamilton-business-centre/access-to-professionals-2/>

### Additional Resources:

- GST/HST for Business - <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/gsthst/>
- Learning the Basics of HST- <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/publications/rc4022/general-information-gst-hst-registrants.html>





## 8 Additional Regulations

Here are some additional steps and regulations that may apply to your business:

### Taxes

- As a self-employed person, you are required to remit your CPP contribution and Personal Income Tax per year. For more information, contact Canada Revenue Agency at **1-800-959-5525**.

### Business Insurance

- Although business insurance is not mandatory, it is highly recommended that you consider business insurance to ensure you, and everything related to your business is covered and protected.
- Some types of insurance available include Commercial General Liability, Errors and Omissions, Bonding, Life & Disability, Drug & Dental, as well as building, content, business interruption, marine cargo, employee injury, miscellaneous coverage, automobile insurance, and home-based business insurance.
- If you operate a home-based business, we highly recommend you review your home insurance policy for the home-based business clause.
- To obtain insurance, please contact your local insurance agent.
- Recommend you obtain 3 quotes for business insurance.
- Visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/business/start/business-insurance> for more information.

### Hiring Staff

- When the time comes where you need employees, you need to consider if you are hiring them as staff or contract, how many you are hiring, how many hours per week they will work, and how much you will pay them. Other considerations include:
  - **Employment Standards Act** - applies to most employees and employers in Ontario. The Act outlines the guidelines for hours of work, minimum wage, overtime pay, vacation pay, and mandatory statutory holidays. For more information, call the Ontario Ministry of Labour - Employment Standards Branch at **1-800-531-5551** or <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/>
  - **Payroll Deductions** - Employers are required to deduct and remit to the Canada Revenue Agency their employee's contribution to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Employment Insurance (EI), and Personal Income Tax, where applicable. Contact **1-800-959-5525** or <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/payroll/> for more information.
  - **Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)** - If you employ workers on a full-time, part-time or temporary basis in an industry or business covered under the Workers Compensation Act, you must register with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) within ten (10) days of employing your first worker. As a self-employed person, you can voluntarily contribute to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). Call them at **1-800-387-0750** or <http://www.wsib.on.ca/> for more information.



- **Wage Subsidies and Tax Credits for Employers** - Your business could receive a wage subsidy to hire an eligible unemployed person. Visit <https://sbs-spe.feddevontario.canada.ca/en/employer-subsidies-rebates-and-tax-credits> for more information.

### Patents/Trademarks/Copyrights

- For general information on patents, trademarks, industrial designs and copyrights, call the Canadian Intellectual Property Office at 1-866-997-1936 or <http://www.cipo.gc.ca/>

### Food Service/Preparation Regulation

- Any company engaged in the processing, preparation and/or servicing of food must comply with the Ontario regulations of the Health Protection and Promotion Act.
- Visit <https://www.hamilton.ca/build-invest-grow/operating-business/health-requirements-inspections> for more information.

### Food and Drug Products

- Regulations covering food labelling, advertising and quality, as well as the inspection of drug formulation and manufacturing should be checked with:

Canadian Food Inspection Agency  
**1-800-667-2657** or [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)

Health Protection Branch  
**416-973-1600** or [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

Drug Inspector  
**1-800-667-2657** or [https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,\\_c.\\_870/index.html](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,_c._870/index.html)

Health Canada  
**416-740-3007** or [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

### Development Charges

Development Charges (DCs) may apply if a building permit is required to prepare the space where your business will operate. DCs are a development fee associated with development (new construction) and redevelopment (change of use) which help to fund the cost of new infrastructure required as a result of growth. If a building permit is required, DCs may apply. Visit <https://www.hamilton.ca/build-invest-grow/planning-development/development-charges/development-charges> or contact the Development Charges, Programs & Policies Team at [DCRequest@hamilton.ca](mailto:DCRequest@hamilton.ca) for more information.



## 9 Financing Your Business

Prior to opening a business, you should evaluate what resources are needed to start and operate your business, what resources you currently have, and what resources are needed. There is no guarantee that funding will be available to help you start your business. Ensure that researching financing options is a priority **before** starting your business.

Your business may qualify for one of the government funding assistance programs. To find out contact:

- **Starter Company Plus** - This program will provide mentoring, training and funding up to \$5,000 for individuals to start and grow a small business. Eligible candidates are Ontario residents who are 18+ years of age, not attending school full-time, and looking to start a full-time business. Visit <https://investinhamilton.ca/hamilton-business-centre/starter-company-plus/> for more details.
- **Summer Company** - This program provides hands-on business training and mentoring, together with awards of up to \$3,000 to help enterprising students start-up and run their own summer business. Eligible candidates must be between 15-29 years of age, a student returning to school in the fall, a resident of Ontario, Canadian citizen or Landed Immigrant and is not to be operating an existing business or be employed full-time over the course of the summer. Visit [Summer Company - Hamilton Business Centre](#) for more details.
- **Futurpreneur Canada** has been fueling the entrepreneurial passions of Canada's young enterprise for nearly two decades. They are a national, non-profit organization that provides financing, mentoring, and support tools to aspiring business owners aged 18-39. Their internationally recognized mentoring program hand matches young entrepreneurs with a business expert from a network of more than 2,800 volunteer mentors. Visit <http://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/> for more information.
- **Canada Small Business Financing Program (CSBF)** - <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/csbf-pfpec.nsf/eng/home>
- **Business Development Bank (BDC)** - As Canada's business development bank, we work with entrepreneurs in all industries and stages of development, with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises. Visit <http://www.bdc.ca/EN/Pages/home.aspx> for more information.
- **Visit your local bank.**
- **Export Development Corporation (EDC)** - EDC provides Canadian exporters with financing, insurance and bonding services, as well as foreign market expertise. Visit <http://www.edc.ca/en/Pages/default.aspx> for more details.
- Additional funding opportunities:
  - **Canada Business** - Call 1-888-576-4444 or visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/business/start/support-financing.html>
  - **Ontario Business Program Guide** - Visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/business-and-economy>



# 10 Additional Resources

## General Business Resources:

- Local Business Directories - [http://www.ylm.ca/ylm/ylm\\_home.aspx?l=1&f=403](http://www.ylm.ca/ylm/ylm_home.aspx?l=1&f=403)
- Canada Revenue Agency - <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bsnsss/menu-eng.html>
- Entrepreneur Magazine - <http://www.entrepreneur.com/>
- Ontario Business Program Guide - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/business-and-economy>
- Canada Business Network provides comprehensive information on federal and provincial government services, programs and regulations - <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/business.html>
- Industry Canada has a listing of Canadian programs and services for all business - [http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/icgc.nsf/eng/h\\_07042.html](http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/icgc.nsf/eng/h_07042.html)
- Service Ontario - Service available for individuals and businesses in Ontario. Please contact Service Ontario at 1-800-565-1921 or visit them online at <http://www.serviceontario.ca>
- Hamilton Public Library - <https://www.hpl.ca/hpl-online/business>

## Local Networking Opportunities:

- Hamilton Chamber of Commerce - <https://www.hamiltonchamber.ca/>
- Stoney Creek Chamber of Commerce - <https://chamberstoneycreek.com/>
- Flamborough Chamber of Commerce - <https://flamboroughchamber.ca/>
- Hamilton Hive - <http://www.hamiltonhive.ca/>

## Food Product/Labelling Regulation:

- Canadian Food Inspection Agency - <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/>
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-agriculture-food-and-agribusiness-and-ministry-rural-affairs>
- Health Canada: Consumer Product Safety - <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/index-eng.php>
- Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act - [http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/h\\_01436.html](http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/h_01436.html)

## Import and Export Resources:

- Canada Border Services Agency - <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/menu-eng.html>
- Canada Revenue Agency: Import-Export Program Account - <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/businesses/topics/registering-your-business/import-export-program-account.html>
- Step-by-Step Guide to Exporting - <https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/guides/exporter-exportateurs/introduction.aspx?lang=eng>



- Centre for Intercultural Learning (learn about countries you plan to import/export) - <https://www.international.gc.ca/global-affairs-affaires-mondiales/services/cfsi-icse/programs-programmes/intercultural-interculturelle.aspx?lang=eng>