



Vermont Secretary of State Business Start-Up Guide

1. Develop Your Business Idea

Determine whether business ownership meets enough of your personal and professional goals to put the time and energy into researching the business idea's viability. The following agencies provide some useful tools:

- [Regional Development Corporations \(RDCs\)](#)
- [U.S. Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#)
- [Vermont Small Business Development Center \(VtSBDA\)](#)

2. Create Your Business Plan

Research and write a complete business plan. There are many resources available for this including:

- [Regional Development Corporations \(RDCs\)](#)
- [Vermont Small Business Development Center \(VtSBDC\)](#)
- [Service Corps of Retired Executives Association \(SCORE\)](#)
- [Women's Small business Program \(WSBP\)](#)

3. Obtain Individual State Professional Licensing (As Needed)

Depending on your profession, you may need to apply for the privilege of engaging in a certain profession, or occupation with the state of Vermont. To see comprehensive lists of professions licensed by the state of Vermont, please click on the options below:

- [Professions licensed by the state of Vermont](#)
- [Professions licensed by the Office of the Secretary of State](#)

4. Choose Your Business Structure

The business structure you choose will have liability and tax implications. Click on the options below to explore the options that are available to you:

- [Trade Name \(i.e. Assumed, Fictitious, or Doing Business As" \(DBA\) Name\)](#)
- [Limited Liability Company \(LLC/PLC/L3C\)](#)
- [Profit Corporation \(General, Close, Professional, or Benefit\)](#)
- [Nonprofit Corporation](#)
- [Benefit Corporation](#)
- [Low Profit Limited Liability Company \(L3C\)](#)
- [Cooperative \(Coop\)](#)
- [Mutual Benefit Enterprise \(MBE\) or Limited Cooperative Association \(LCA\)](#)
- [Limited Liability Partnership \(LLP\)](#)
- [Limited Partnership \(LP\)](#)

Please Note: Script corporations (a.k.a. "Sub-chapter S Corporation" or "S Corp.") and sole proprietorships are not business structures, but are rather tax statuses:

- **S Corporation -**
This status may be applied to either profit corporations or limited liability companies. Please visit the IRS website for details and restrictions on [S corporations](#).

- **Sole Proprietorship –**

This status may be applied to either limited liability companies or trade names (DBA). Please visit the IRS website for details and restrictions on [sole proprietorships](#).

5. Choose and Register Your Business Name

Choosing and registering your business name is a key step to legally operating your business and potentially obtaining financial aid from the government. Your business name will be registered with the Office of the Secretary of State based on your chosen business structure:

- [Trade Name or “Doing Business As” \(DBA\) Name](#)
- [Limited Liability Company \(LLC/PLC/L3C\)](#)
- [Profit Corporation \(General, Close, Professional\)](#)
- [Nonprofit Corporation](#)
- [Benefit Corporation](#)
- [Low Profit Limited Liability Company \(L3C\)](#)
- [Cooperative \(Coop\)](#)
- [Mutual Benefit Enterprise \(MBE or Limited Cooperative Association \(LCA\)\)](#)
- [Limited Liability Partnership \(LLP\)](#)
- [Limited Partnership \(LP\)](#)

6. Obtain Employer ID Number and Vermont Business Tax Account

Please click on the options below for further details on obtaining the following:

- **Internal Revenue Service (IRS) – Federal Employer ID Number (EIN)**

An Employer Identification Number (EIN), also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number, and is used to identify a business entity. Generally, businesses need an EIN.

For details, please contact the IRS via the link above or by phone at 800-829-4933 (Profit Businesses) or 877-829-5500 (Nonprofit Businesses).

- **[Vermont Department of Taxes](#)**

[Agency of Administration](#)

For details please contact the Vermont Department of Taxes via the link above, or by phone at 802-828-2551 (Business Taxes).

7. Register for Unemployment and Workers Compensation

For information on Unemployment Compensation, Workers Compensation, the regulation of wages and hours, Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Act rules, and State Labor Relations Act Provisions, contact:

- **Worker's Compensation Board**

802-828-2286

labor.vermont.gov

- **Unemployment Employer Services**

802-828-4344

https://uipublic.labor.vermont.gov/EmployerRegistration/VT_UI_Liability/Liabilitycheck1.aspx

8. Municipal (City/Town) Permits and Zoning

Before buying a property or signing a lease, contact the city or town clerk where the business will be located to assure your plans conform to local restrictions and to obtain the necessary permits for buildings types and signs. Download a list of [municipal zoning contacts](#).

9. Act 250 Permit

For construction of improvements for new or existing commercial and industrial facilities, or for the change in use of an existing facility, you should check with the District Environmental Coordinator to determine if a Land Use (ACT 250) Permit will be required, please call 802-828-1556 or visit dec.vermont.gov/permits/handbook/info-sheets#NRB for the contact information for your regional office.

10. Signs

If you have an on-premises business sign, it is important to know that there are limitations on location, size, height, and structure in order to meet state and federal requirements. No privately owned signs are allowed in the state right of way, which is at least 25 feet from the centerline of the highway, and could be more.

To find out exactly where the state right of way is, you may contact the VTrans District Manager in your area to insure compliance with state and federal regulations. For a list of district managers and their contact information, please see http://vtransoperations.vermont.gov/maintenance_districts.

Most towns and cities have sign ordinances as part of their zoning. Contact your town officials to acquire necessary local permits for your on-premises sign. A local permit does not guarantee that your sign will comply with state and federal regulations.

At a minimum, an on-premises sign may not be larger than 150 square feet (unless attached to a building), be taller than 25 feet, or be farther than 1,500 feet from the main entrance to the business measured along the highway centerline. On-premises signs are not allowed to face limited access highways.

Official Business Directional Sign (OBDS)

Only official traffic control signs and devices are allowed within the highway right of way. One of these signs is an OBDS. For information on OBDS and how to apply for them, please visit http://vtransoperations.vermont.gov/technical_services/sign-control/info.

11. Other State Licenses, Permits, and Regulations

- **Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM)**
 - [Retail Licensing Requirements](#) the VAAFM is responsible for licensing a variety of items sold and used in retail stores that you may not connect with agriculture. Check this link for an announcement regarding the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets most current Retail Licensing Requirements.
- **Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation** *Agency of Natural Resources*
 - [Regional Permit Specialists](#) provide project review sheet or permitting information.
 - [The Vermont Permit Handbook](#), found in town clerk offices, state of Vermont libraries, Department of Environmental Conservation, regional planning commissions, libraries, and VtSBDC offices or online.
 - [The Environmental Assistance Office](#) offers assistance and information on all business environmental and permitting issues. Call 800-974-955.
- **[Vermont Department of Economic Development](#)** *Agency of Commerce & Community Development*

- [Regional Development Corporations \(RDCs\)](#) The Vermont Department of Economic Development provides twelve Regional Development Corporations (RDCs), serving every geographic region of the state. These organizations serve as “satellites” of the Department, and they provide local knowledge and facilitate assistance in their communities. Please see the link above for a complete list and to find one for your region.
- [Vermont Division of Emergency Management & Homeland Security](#) [Department of Public Safety](#)
 - [Emergency Planning & Community Right-to-Know Act \(EPCRA\)](#) reporting. If your facility has chemicals in storage and meets the requirements established in Federal Law, 42 U.S.C. ch. 116, and Vermont Statute, 20 V.S.A. ch. 1. Please follow the link above, or call 802-479-7586 for details.

12. Other Concerns

- **Legal**
You may need to consult an attorney regarding your form of business ownership, leases, contracts, patents, trademarks, copyright, and such. The Vermont Bar Association has a lawyer referral service. Call 802-223-2020 or visit www.vtbar.org.
- **Accounting**
Consult an accountant regarding bookkeeping systems, income tax planning and payments, pay roll reports, and related items.
- **Insurance**
Consult an insurance agent about various forms of insurance: liability, fire, automobile, employee health and life, fidelity (insuring your business against employee theft), burglary and vandalism, business interruption, key-person insurance, and worker’s compensation cost.
- **Banking**
Consult a banker about establishing a relationship for checking accounts, your future borrowing needs, credit card acceptance, and other concerns. Contact the U.S. Small Business Administration at <http://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/loans-grants> for information about their business loan and grant programs.
- **Trade Associations**
Research and contact trade associations for helpful information in starting your business, including market statistics and training opportunities.

Consult the following directory source available at most business reference libraries:

Harper, K. A., & Gale/Cengage Learning (Firm) “National Organizations of the United States” Encyclopedia of associations: An associations reference (Vol. 1, published annually). Detroit, MI: Gale/Cengage Learning.

Includes lists, trade, business, professional, labor scientific, educational, fraternal, and social organizations in the U.S. and historical data.

- **Chambers of Commerce**
Contact your local and state chambers regarding their helpful services for new businesses in your community. Call 802-223-3443 or visit www.vtchamber.com.

13. Economic Development Agencies and Funding Opportunities

- **Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development (ACCD)**
 - [Business Resources & Market Development](#)
802-828-3080.

- [Vermont Global Trade Partnership \(VGTP\)](#)
Provides trade assistance, training, and events. 802-828-1681.
- [Vermont Community Development Program](#)
May have loan and grant opportunities for some types of businesses. 802-828-5219.
- **Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTRANS)**
Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program (DBE): Small business assistance in the form of Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (woman and minority owned business) and other programs that provide contract opportunities with AOT. Call 802-828-2657 or visit www.aot.state.vt.us/civilrights/dbe.htm.
- **Vermont Department of Labor**
Offers a full range of workforce related services and information to businesses, workers, and job seekers. Call 802-828-4000 or visit www.labor.vermont.gov.
- **Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing**
Call 802-828-3237 or visit www.vermontvacation.com.
- **Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA)**
Offers a range of financing options to help businesses succeed. Call 802-828-5627 or visit www.veda.org.
- **Vermont Procurement Technical Assistance Center**
This network connects Vermont businesses with the government opportunities, both state and federal, and a Vermont business directory. Also, you may download "The Vermonter's Guide to Doing Business," a handy reference available at www.vermontbidsystem.com.
- **Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC)**
Helps to improve and grow manufacturing in the state of Vermont and strengthen the global competitiveness of the state's smaller manufacturers. Call 802-728-1432 or visit www.vmec.org.
- **Vermont Small Business Development Center (VtSBDC)**
Provides no-cost business advising and low-cost training to all Vermont entrepreneurs starting or growing their own businesses. Call 802-728-9101 or visit www.vtsbdc.org.
- **Burlington Community Economic Development Office**
A department of the City of Burlington. They work with the community to foster economic vitality; preserve and enhance neighborhoods, quality of life and the environment; and promote equity and opportunity for all residents of Burlington. Call 802-865-7144 or visit www.cedoburlington.org.

14. Other Sources of Business Assistance

- **Micro-Business Development Program**
A part of Capstone Community Action, Inc., assists low- and moderate-income Vermonters to start and operate micro businesses. Call 802-477-5214 or visit <http://www.capstonevt.org/community-economic-development/micro-business-development-program>.
- **Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC)**
Services the Northeast Kingdom through small business lending, financing of innovative entrepreneurs to develop a more diverse set of occupations for the region, and assisting in

strategic investment mechanisms to keep businesses competitive. Call 802-748-1888 or visit www.ncic.org.

- **Service Corps of Retired Executives Association (SCORE)**
A nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses start, grow, and succeed nationwide. Call 800-634-0245 or visit www.score.org.
- **Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility Corp. (VBSR)**
Fosters a business ethic in the state of Vermont that recognizes the opportunity and responsibility of the business community to set a high standard for protecting the natural, human, and economic environments of our citizens. Call 802-862-8347 or visit www.vbsr.org.
- **Vermont Hand Crafters, Inc.**
The oldest and largest juried craft organization in the state, this nonprofit organization of Vermont residents is dedicated to the education, promotion and sale of high-quality Vermont crafts. Call 802-223-2636 or visit www.vermonthandcrafters.com.
- **Vermont/New Hampshire Marketing Group, Inc.**
Provides seminars, an annual conference, and invaluable networking opportunities for business people throughout the Northeast. Call 802-457-2807 or visit www.vtnhdmg.org.
- **Vermont Retail & Grocers' Association, Inc. (VRGA)**
An association of merchants and trade partners united to promote the sustainable growth of our industry through the Educational, Economic and Public Policy needs of our members. Call 802-839-1928 or visit www.vtrga.org.
- **Vermont Specialty Food Association**
The nation's oldest and most highly regarded specialty food association. Call 802-839-1930 or visit www.vermontspecialtyfoods.org.
- **Vermont Venture Network**
A monthly breakfast meeting to meet bankers, investors, and other entrepreneurs. Call 802-658-7830 or visit www.vermontventurenetwork.org.
- **Vermont Wood Manufacturers' Association, Inc.**
Supports the industry in the state of Vermont and promotes its long-term viability by expanding member presence in the marketplace, ensuring a sustainable supply of raw materials, increasing workforce skill, and acting as responsible employers and community members. Call 802-828-3211 or visit www.vermontwood.com.
- **Women's Small Business Program (WSBP)**
A part of Mercy Connections, Inc. WSBP is committed to empowering women at every stage with the information and resources they need to develop and polish their entrepreneurial aptitude and achieve economic independence. Call 802-846-7063 or visit mercyconnections.org/start-small-business-vermont.html.

If you have suggestions for this guide, contact the Corporations & Business Services Division at corps@sec.state.vt.us