



## Small Business Starter Kit

Single Publication – 5 or more pages

# Small Business Starter Kit

A GUIDE TO STARTING *your* SMALL BUSINESS



**Prepared For: Economic Developers Association of Canada**  
Marketing Canada Awards

# Introduction

Small businesses are a vital part of the Niagara Region's economy, making up nearly 75% of all businesses.

Most have fewer than 10 employees or are owner-operated, playing a key role in local job creation and economic growth. The St. Catharines Enterprise Centre (SCEC) supports these small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs by providing guidance, resources, and hands-on assistance to help them succeed.

Each year, the SCEC handles around 3,000 inquiries from individuals looking to start or grow a business. A common challenge among these entrepreneurs was not a lack of information, but rather the difficulty in qualifying it. With an overwhelming number of resources available, many struggled to identify legitimate and relevant guidance to get started.



# Purpose of the Project

To address this, the SCEC developed the Small Business Starter Kit—a concise, user-friendly guide designed to answer the most frequently asked questions about starting a business. It covers essential topics like business registration, licensing, and accessing local resources. Its purpose is to provide a trusted starting point for entrepreneurs and help reduce confusion during the early stages of business development.

There are local organizations that can assist you with recruitment and they may have hiring incentives and other programs to support you:

- [YMCA Employer Services](#)
- [Job Gym](#)
- [Niagara College Employment Services](#)
- [Employment Ontario](#)

## SUBCONTRACTORS

If you plan to hire subcontractors instead of employees, it is important to verify if they are truly subcontractors or if they should be an employee. Learn more about this [here](#).

► *Want more info on how to hire?*

*Book a consultation with us!*



## Additional Resources

Build your Business Knowledge  
SMALL BUSINESS CENTRES ONTARIO

Planning a Business  
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Futurpreneur Resource Library  
FUTURPRENEUR

Marketing Resources  
DIGITAL MAIN STREET COURSES

Downtown Business Directory  
ST. CATHARINES DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION

St. Catharines Economic Development  
ST. CATHARINES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Strategy  
NIAGARA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Small Business Services  
FEDERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Commercialize Innovative Ideas  
INNOVATE NIAGARA

Intellectual Property  
PATENTS, TRADEMARKS AND COPYRIGHT

## SMALL BUSINESS LOANS

- [Venture Niagara CFDC](#)
- [Futurpreneur](#)
- [BDC](#)
- Local banks or credit unions

Note: Please take caution when researching funding opportunities. Not all sources of grants opportunities are credible, and you should never be pressured into purchasing business planning services to apply for funding.

### REGISTER YOUR BUSINESS NAME

Businesses operating under any name other than the legal name of the business owner must register the business name with the [Ontario Business Registry](#).

Register your business name at:

- [Ontario.ca](#) (Cost: \$60-\$300)
- [Ownr.co](#) (Cost \$49-\$300)





# Challenges

The development of the Starter Kit was not without its challenges. The initial version, while rich in information, was very lengthy and risked overwhelming readers. By analyzing common client inquiries and refining content, the SCEC was able to reduce the document to a more manageable 12 pages. Subsequent drafts focused on layout, formatting, and usability. Key improvements included the addition of clear calls to action, a comprehensive resource page, and photographs of real past clients instead of generic graphics.

These photos fostered a sense of community and relatability by showing and celebrating successful businesses that started locally.

Recognizing the importance of professional presentation, the SCEC enlisted a local graphic designer to finalize the kit. The result was a polished and approachable resource that could be shared widely.



# Distribution

Originally launched as a digital product in July 2024 to reduce environmental impact, the Starter Kit was added to the SCEC's resource webpage, leading to an increase in page traffic, and included in email correspondence.

## Resource Links

[ENTREPRENEURSHIP](#)[TARIFFS](#)[MARKET RESEARCH](#)[STARTING A BUSINESS](#)[FUNDING AND FINANCING](#)[BUYING A BUSINESS](#)[MARKETING](#)[WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY](#)[OTHER INFORMATION](#)[Access Our Small Business Starter Kit](#)

However, when the SCEC encountered clients without reliable internet access, the Starter Kit was rescaled for print. Hard copies are now available for walk-in clients and are used as a take-away resource for SCEC training sessions like *Exploring Entrepreneurship* and *Steps to Starting a Small Business*.

- ▶ [Attend our Steps to Starting information session](#) to better understand how to research the regulations that pertain to your business.

# Reach and Outcomes

Since its launch, nearly 600 copies of the Starter Kit have been distributed or viewed through various channels, with an additional 100 distributed in support of training sessions. Client feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with many noting smoother planning and improved outcomes. The SCEC has also seen more follow-up meetings and higher-quality client interactions. Since July 2024, the launch of the Starter Kit, the SCEC supported the start of 78 new businesses and the creation of 126 jobs across Niagara.

The Small Business Starter Kit exemplifies how targeted, accessible resources can empower entrepreneurs, strengthen local economic development, and ensure that everyone—regardless of their background or access to technology—has a fair chance at business success.

## SUBMITTED BY:

ST. CATHARINES ENTERPRISE CENTRE,  
CITY OF ST. CATHARINES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM SERVICES

14 ONTARIO STREET,  
ST. CATHARINES, ON, L2R 7M3

ENTERPRISECENTRE@STCATHARINES.CA  
WWW.INVESTINSTC.CA/SMALLBUSINESS

[HTTPS://WWW.INVESTINSTC.CA/FILES/SMALLBUSINESSSTARTERKITDIGITALVERSION.PDF](https://www.investinstc.ca/files/smallbusinessstarterkitdigitalversion.pdf)