



# Starting a Business in Nova Scotia

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Starting a business can be exciting, but it can also be hard to know where to begin and what you need to consider before taking the first step. The following guide will help walk you through the steps to consider, however it is not an exhaustive list of every requirement. Refer to your industry-specific guide on the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness website for more detailed start-up information or contact the Business Navigators.

## Step 1: Create a Business Plan

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A business plan is one of the most important tools you can have when planning for the future of your business. It is a concise and structured document that gives readers everything they need to assess how your business will achieve its goals. A business plan helps you measure your progress and is often required to apply for loans.

## Step 2: Finance Your Business

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Most businesses need money or capital to start up. There are two main ways to secure funding.

**Grants:** A grant is a sum of money given by a government or organization to a specific demographic, industry, or a wider audience. Grants generally do not have to be repaid. The application period for grants is typically short and closed once the funding allowance has been met.

**Loans:** Some organizations offer interest-based loans, a sum of money that must be repaid over a set period. Terms of repayment and interest are determined by the organization providing the loan and can differ between organizations.

## Step 3: Choose a Location

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How your location is zoned, how accessible it is, and how the public accesses your business from the roadway, are all important variables that impact your ability to obtain certain licences. Ensure you understand any requirements that apply to your space before signing a lease agreement. Contact your municipality for more information.

## Step 4: Register Your Business

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Most businesses are required by law to be registered with the Province's Registry of Joint Stock Companies before operating. To do this, follow these steps:

1. Start by [choosing your business name](#)
2. Next, [reserve your business name](#)
3. Choose your [legal structure](#)
4. Finally, [register your business](#)

A business number will be provided to you once your business is registered. This number identifies you and your business for taxation purposes. Depending on your business activities, you may need to register this number with Canada Revenue Agency.

## Step 5: Permits and Licences

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Your business may require certain permits and licences from government regulators to ensure the safety of the public, your staff, and yourself.

Applying for your permits and licenses early in your process can prevent unnecessary costs and delays. Consider starting these applications at least three to six months before you plan to open. Most permits are not transferrable, meaning that a permit issued to a previous business cannot be used or purchased by a new business.

## Step 6: Inspections

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Inspections are required for some businesses as part of the permitting process.

An inspection is when a Compliance Officer visits your business to ensure your premise meets all regulatory requirements. Upon a successful inspection, your permit(s) will be granted.

## Step 7: Before You Open

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### **Business Insurance**

Your business may have many assets: vehicles, office space and equipment, inventory, an indispensable employee or partner and, most importantly, yourself. To protect these assets and to protect your business from potential risks, you should consider acquiring business insurance.

### **Workers' Compensation Insurance**

Workplace injury coverage may be mandatory for your staff, or an option you may want to consider. Visit their [website](#) or contact the Workers' Compensation Board directly at 1-800-870-3331 to discuss your specific requirements.

## Occupational Health and Safety

You and your staff are subject to occupational health and safety requirements. To understand your requirements and for support implementing your health and safety plan, read the [Small Business Safety Toolkit](#), contact the provincial Occupational Health and Safety Branch at 1-800- 952-2687, or download the workplace safety app [Nova SAFE](#).

## Labour Standards

The Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code sets out the minimum employment rules in the province that employers and employees must follow. It also sets out rules specific to the recruitment of workers and the hiring of foreign workers. Employees, employers, and recruiters have rights and responsibilities under these rules.

For more information employer and employee obligations and rights, including minimum wage, hours of work, terminations, vacation/holiday pay, visit their [website](#) or contact the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Division directly at 1-888-315-0110.

## Taxation

The Canadian Revenue Agency offers free, personalized support to help small businesses understand your tax obligations. A visit from a liaison officer is 100% confidential; the information you choose to discuss with a liaison officer will not be shared with other areas of the CRA, or anyone else.

Contact a [CRA Liaison Officer](#) to receive one-on-one help with your specific taxation requirements.

## Staffing

Successful companies know the value of good staff. Finding committed, passionate, employees can be a challenge. Nova Scotia Works makes it easy to find, recruit, hire and retain staff. Use the [Nova Scotia Works HR Toolkit](#), contact an [Employer Engagement Specialist](#) or visit your local Nova Scotia Works office for help.

## Need help?

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Contact the Business Navigators for assistance in:

- identifying what regulations you need to follow
- determining what licences and permits you need to operate your business
- understanding any inspection requirements
- locating support for additional requirements like financing, taxes and staffing



Scan to contact a Business Navigator  
[biznav@novascotia.ca](mailto:biznav@novascotia.ca)  
1-833-734-1300

