

## Business Idea? Great! Here's How to Start

Bowdoinham is such an entrepreneurial town! New businesses are starting up all the time. If you are on fire with a self-employment idea, whether it is a modest home-based enterprise or a larger venture that will employ several people, the Town of Bowdoinham wants to smooth your path forward so you can succeed. Here are some helpful tips for how to take your first steps:

1. Work on a written business plan whether your idea is small or large. Even if you don't know a lot of details yet, writing down what you **do** know will help you to see the things you need to research. It will also help you answer the key questions: Is this idea feasible (can I get it underway); is it viable (can it grow to the point where it will meet my financial goals)?; is it desirable (will the demands of the business fit into my life and be something I want to spend my time on)? There are free services that can help you write your plan including one-on-one help or workshops. See the footnote.
2. Decide if you want to operate as a sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporation. Forming an LLC has become more popular in recent years (rather than a corporation). A business counselor or lawyer can help you decide which form is best for you. See the footnote for information on business counselors.
3. If you decide to incorporate, you can obtain incorporation papers from the Maine Secretary of State, Bureau of Corporations, State House Station #29, Augusta, Maine 04333.
4. A federal employer identification number is required if you intend to have employees. It is also helpful on some federal forms even if you are a sole proprietor with no employees. You can obtain the needed form from the nearest Internal Revenue Service Office (Form SS-4, EIN) or you can download it from the IRS website, [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). Use the search bar to get to the form you need.
5. Obtain a State Sales Tax Number if you plan to sell a taxable product. You can get this from the Maine Department of Finance, Bureau of Taxation, State House Station #78, Augusta, Maine 04333. (207) 287-2336. They can give you guidance about the current sales tax rate and on how often you need to file your sales tax forms and revenue given the volume of sales you think you may have.
6. Talk with the Bowdoinham Town Office about the permitting process. This process is also outlined on the Town Website.
7. If your business is operated in your home, check in with the Town's Code Enforcement Officer to be sure you are not violating any local codes.

8. If you plan to have employees, there are a couple of other things you will need. One is an unemployment insurance identification number from the Unemployment Compensation Division, Maine Department of Labor. Also, make sure you are in necessary compliance with the Workers Compensation Act by contacting the Maine Workers Compensation Commission. Finally, contact the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Standards to determine compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act. The Maine State website can help give you information on all of this. Simply go to [www.maine.gov](http://www.maine.gov).

Footnote: Now, for the resources that can help. There is comprehensive list of the various business resources—many of them free—at the Bowdoinham Town website. Here is how you find it:

Go to [www.bowdoinham.com](http://www.bowdoinham.com). Along the top of the page are some tabs. Hover your cursor over “Town Gov.” Then move your cursor to hover over “Departments.” Then move your cursor to hover over “Community and Economic Development.” In the drop down menu for that tab is “Resources for businesses.” Click on that. When the page comes up, the document, “Business Support Handout,” is right at the top. You can click on that to get a comprehensive list of support services and lending information.

Finally, don’t feel like you are alone in a jungle of confusing information. There are a lot of folks who are eager and willing to help. The expert staff at the town office are more than happy to give you guidance.