



Ten Steps to Start a Business in Grays Harbor

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Compiled by Greater Grays Harbor, Inc.
Updated June 2022
www.graysharbor.org



A note from Greater Grays Harbor, Inc.

Congratulations on your decision to start a business in Grays Harbor! With a skilled workforce, low cost of living, accessible rail, road and sea transportation, and many more opportunities for growth, Grays Harbor offers a unique, thriving area for you and your business to succeed.

Greater Grays Harbor, Inc. is here to help you through your entrepreneurial journey. You can find us online @ www.GraysHarbor.org. We very much look forward to working with you.

Once you've had a chance to use this resource, we'd love to hear from you. Was it helpful? Anything missing? Your feedback is greatly appreciated and will benefit future entrepreneurs in Grays Harbor.

Thank you,

Loretta Thomas
Program Manager of Business Development
lothomas@graysharbor.org

1. Conduct Research

Many resources are available to help educate new entrepreneurs in Washington State. Take some time to explore the below resources and get familiar with what it takes to do business in Washington. By doing so now you will be better prepared to create your business plan.

General Research

You don't need a degree in business to start one, but knowledge is power. Taking classes and attending workshops are excellent ways to gain the knowledge you will need to be successful.

Business Training <https://www.careerbridge.wa.gov/>

Small Business Assessment

https://eweb1.sba.gov/cams/training/business_primer/assessment.htm

Business.WA.gov is a resource hub designed to provide an overview of what it takes to do business in Washington State. Their Small Business Guide is a fantastic place to begin your initial research on doing business in Washington. www.business.wa.gov

The **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)** has created a series of online resources for entrepreneurs. www.sba.gov

The **Washington State Department of Revenue (DOR)** has resources for new businesses in Washington state. dor.wa.gov

Washington State's **Secretary of State (SOS)** also has resources for businesses in Washington. www.sos.wa.gov/corps

Access Washington has information for businesses. access.wa.gov/topics/business

The **Governor's Office of Regulatory Assistance** offers small business assistance. www.ora.wa.gov/business.asp

Industry-specific Research

In addition to conducting general research, you will want to thoroughly research what is currently happening in your chosen industry, including trends and key competitors. This will give you a strong working knowledge of the competitive landscape.

The **Edward Lowe Foundation** offers guidance on how to conduct a competitive analysis here: edwardlowe.org/how-to-conduct-and-prepare-a-competitive-analysis/

2. Develop a Business Plan

Developing a business plan is a critical step in the planning process. Not only will this plan increase your chances of success, but it may be necessary if you intend to seek outside funding.

The **SBA** provides a step-by-step guide on writing a business plan at: www.sba.gov/business-guide/plan-your-business/write-your-business-plan

The **Washington Small Business Development Center (WSBDC)** provides business planning guidance and support. Learn more at: wsbdc.org/Aberdeen/

Legal Structure

A key element of your business plan is your legal structure. The **SOS** provides an overview of the options available at: www.sos.wa.gov/corps/registration_structures.aspx

The **SBA** also provides information on selecting an appropriate business structure at: www.sba.gov/business-guide/launch-your-business/choose-business-structure

Business Name

Another key element of your business plan is your business name. The **SOS** provides a tool that will let you search for existing business entities in Washington at: ccfs.sos.wa.gov/

The **Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL)** also offers a tool for searching for existing business here: www.dol.wa.gov/business/checkstatus.html

3. Finance Your Business

There are several organizations available to provide financial assistance to entrepreneurs starting a business in Grays Harbor.

The **SBA** also offers a suite of funding services. www.sba.gov/funding-programs
They also have a tool that will match you with prospective lenders:
www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/lender-match

Business Impact NW provides a suite of services to entrepreneurs including training, coaching, and financing services. businessimpactnw.org/

Craft3 is a nonprofit community development financial institution offering small business loans and technical assistance. www.craft3.org/

Evergreen Business Capital is a nonprofit organization that provides financing to small businesses. www.evergreen504.com/

Enterprise for Equity is a nonprofit organization based in Olympia that provides a structured training program and financing for new and existing businesses.
www.enterpriseforequity.org/

4. Register Your Business

Before obtaining any license, you will need to register your business with the **SOS**. You can find a summary of requirements as well as registration forms here:
www.sos.wa.gov/corps/all-services.aspx

5. License Your Business – Federal & State

The **SBA** has compiled a resource for determining if your business will need to file for any Federal licenses or permits: www.sba.gov/business-guide/launch-your-business/apply-licenses-and-permits

Businesses in Washington State are required to get a state business license. This is done through the Washington **Business Licensing Service (BLS)**, here:
bls.dor.wa.gov/index.aspx

6. License Your Business – Local

In addition to state licenses, you may need to comply with city licensing requirements. Grays Harbor County does not issue business licenses.

Aberdeen

The City of Aberdeen issues a business license for businesses located within the city. More information, and the business license application, can be found here:

<https://access.wa.gov/topics/business/City/Business/License/Aberdeen.html>

Cosmopolis

The City of Cosmopolis issues a business license for businesses located within the city. More information located here: www.cosmopoliswa.gov/finance.html

Elma

The City of Elma issues a business license for businesses located within the city. More information can be found here: www.cityofelma.com/?SEC=CBFA9D9D-2A97-4E67-A0B7-B162119B7113

Hoquiam

The City of Hoquiam issues a business license for businesses located within the city. The business license application can be found here: <https://cityofhoquiam.com/our-departments/finance-department/>

McCleary

The City of McCleary does not issue a city business license. Other special types of licenses may be required. More information can be found here: cityofmccleary.com/

Montesano

The City of Montesano issues a business license for businesses located within the city. The business license application can be found here: cityofmontesano.com/wp-content/files/Business_License_Application.pdf

Oakville

The City of Oakville does not issue a city business license. Other special types of licenses may be required. More information can be found here: www.oakvillecityhall.com/

Ocean Shores

The City of Ocean Shores issues a business license for businesses located within the city. More information can be found here:

https://www.osgov.com/departments/finance_department/business_licensing.php

Westport

The City of Westport issues a business license for businesses located within the city. More information can be found here: <https://www.ci.westport.wa.us/government/clerk-treasurer/index.php>

7. Obtain Permits

Building Permits

Building permits are required for most construction activities in the County including plumbing and mechanical work. More information can be found here: www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us/departments/public_services/building_division/permits.php

In addition to county permits, many cities also require building permits for construction projects located within the city.

Aberdeen

The City of Aberdeen issues permits for building, plumbing, mechanical, and signage projects located within the city. More information can be found here:

<https://www.aberdeenwa.gov/323/Building-Division>

Cosmopolis

The City of Cosmopolis

More information can be found here: www.cosmopoliswa.gov/building-and-code-enforcement.html

Elma

The City of Elma issues a variety of permits for projects located within the city.

More information can be found here: <https://cityofelma.com/city-departments/community-development/>

Hoquiam

The City of Hoquiam issues a variety of permits for projects located within the city.

More information can be found here: cityofhoquiam.com/our-departments/Hoquiam-building-department/

McCleary

The City of McCleary issues a variety of permits for projects located within the city.

More information can be found here: cityofmccleary.com/?SEC=47982D03-1A0A-4ABD-B029-32470EBD4601

Montesano

The City of Montesano issues a variety of permits for projects located within the city.

More information can be found here: cityofmontesano.com/departments-directory/community-development/

Oakville

The City of Oakville issues a variety of permits for projects located within the city.

More information can be found here: www.oakvillecityhall.com/

Ocean Shores

The City of Ocean Shores issues a variety of permits for projects located within the city.

More information can be found here:

https://www.osgov.com/departments/building_permits_planning.php

Westport

The City of Westport issues a variety of permits for projects located within the city.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.ci.westport.wa.us/departments/building.php>

Health & Food Handling Permits

Grays Harbor County issues permits for food-related establishments. More information can be found here: [www.co.grays-](http://www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us/departments/public_services/environmental_health_division/food_section.php)

[harbor.wa.us/departments/public_services/environmental_health_division/food_section.php](http://www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us/departments/public_services/environmental_health_division/food_section.php)

Miscellaneous Permits

Grays Harbor County issues a variety of different permits for specific activities. Be sure to contact the county to see if additional permits are required for your business.

www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us/

The Federal government requires special permits for certain types of business activities. The **SBA** has compiled a resource for determining if your business will need to file for any Federal licenses or permits: www.sba.gov/business-guide/launch-your-business/apply-licenses-and-permits

8. Understand Taxes

Businesses are subject to various federal, state, and local taxes. The following taxes are common to most businesses operating within Grays Harbor, but entrepreneurs are encouraged to consult a tax advisor to make sure your business pays all the appropriate taxes.

Federal

All for-profit businesses are subject to federal income tax, however how the taxes are paid will differ depending on the legal structure of your business. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provides a summary of Federal taxes here: www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/business-taxes

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to employers who invest in American job seekers who have consistently faced barriers to employment. Employers may meet their business needs and claim a tax credit if they hire an individual who is in a WOTC [targeted group](http://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wotc).

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wotc>

State

Washington state does not have a corporate, unitary, or personal income tax. However, most businesses will be subject to a Business and Occupations (B&O) tax, a retail sales/use tax, and state property taxes. The state also imposes a variety of taxes on specific products, such as certain beverages, fish, timber, tobacco, litter, and others. Other products may benefit from state tax incentives. More information regarding state taxes can be found at: dor.wa.gov/file-pay-taxes

Grays Harbor County

All businesses in Grays Harbor County are required to file and pay personal property taxes. This tax is typically paid twice per year, the first payment being due April 30, and the second payment being due October 31. Taxpayers have the option of paying the total annual amount by April 30 if they would like. For more information, visit: www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us/government/treasurer/real_and_personal_property_taxes.php

Incentives & Development Programs

There are several incentives offered to businesses to engage in certain activities. Greater Grays Harbor, Inc. maintains a list of programs that may be relevant to businesses within the county. Learn more at: graysharbor.org/business/incentives.php

9. Get Additional Support

A number of organizations exist to provide additional support to your new or established business.

Greater Grays Harbor, Inc. is the county's combined Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council, providing opportunities for networking, marketing, professional development, and business assistance. Learn more at: www.graysharbor.org

The **Washington Small Business Development Center (WSBDC)** has an office at Grays Harbor College in Aberdeen. The WSBDC provides no-cost business support services including business planning, ongoing consultation, and export readiness. Learn more at: wsbdc.org/Aberdeen/

Will your business be manufacturing? **Impact Washington** provides business assistance and resources pertinent to manufacturing businesses. Learn more at: impactwashington.org/

The **Washington State Department of Commerce** has a plethora of program that benefit new and growing businesses in the state. Learn more at: www.commerce.wa.gov/

Looking to start a farm? The **Washington State University Extension** office in Grays Harbor offers support for beginning farmers. Learn more at: extension.wsu.edu/Grays_Harbor/

Washington Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) provides no-cost technical assistance to businesses across the state on how to succeed in the government marketplace. Learn more at: washingtonptac.org/Thurston-economic-development-council/

The **Washington Center for Women in Business (WCWB)** offers training, support, and workshops for woman entrepreneurs. Learn more at: wcwb.org/

10. Ensure Compliance

Additional requirements arise when a business hires employees. Employers should consider federal, state, and local regulations.

Before you hire employees, you will need to get an **Employer Identification Number (EIN)** from the **IRS**. You can apply for your EIN and learn more about employer responsibilities at: www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed

The **Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I)** provides information for businesses with employees: www.lni.wa.gov/

If you or your employees will be handling food, they'll likely need to obtain Food Worker Card from the **Washington State Department of Health**: www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food/FoodWorkerandIndustry/FoodWorkerCard