

Starting Your Business in Bristol



Department of Community Development
9 Court St., Bristol, RI
401-253-7000

The Town of Bristol's Department of Community Development is excited that you have chosen to do business in Bristol! We always look forward to assisting business owners locate, open, or expand their operations. Use this guide to help you through the process. Our staff are available to answer questions and walk you through each step.

Step 1: Write a business plan with projections and market research. Find out what in-person workshops and trainings are available to assist you.

- There are plenty of on-line tools to help you get started with business planning and research. The [US Small Business Administration](#) website is a great starting point.
- Contact the Center for Women and Enterprise to set up one-on-one consultations, or to find out what workshops they are offering to get you on the right track. Many of these services and workshops are free of charge.
- [Commerce RI](#) also has services available to assist new and expanding businesses.
- The [East Bay Chamber of Commerce](#) provides workshops and counseling services through [RI SCORE](#) and [RI Small Business Development Center](#), as well as networking opportunities for business owners in the area.

Step 2: Determine the legal and financial structure of your business.

- Create an advisory board, and find an accountant, lawyer, insurance agent, and other services your business will need. Use the RI Secretary of State's [Quick Start Guide](#) to help you determine your business structure.
- Depending on the legal structure and nature of your business, you may have to register with the Rhode Island [Secretary of State Office](#).

Step 3: Get an Employer Identification Number (EIN) and a DUNS number.

- A Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) is required under US Internal Revenue Code for businesses with more than one employee. An EIN may be [applied for on-line](#).
- A DUNS number is used if grants or contracts will be applied for. This number is especially useful for non-profit organizations.
- Check with the RI Secretary of State to determine whether you will need a state number or charter.

Step 4: Choose a business name and register your business with the Town of Bristol and the State of Rhode Island as needed.

- The [Town Clerk](#)'s office can assist you in filing a "Trade Name" certificate if the business is not considered a corporation (LLC, Inc., etc.) but will be operated under a name other than the name of the owner(s). A trade name certificate helps you open a bank account and receive financing.

Step 5: Register for State and local taxes. Purchase insurance as necessary for your business.

- You will need to visit the [RI Division of Taxation](#) to register your business for retail sales, income tax withholding, workers' compensation, and RI Unemployment Insurance.
- The Town of Bristol assesses tangible taxes on the physical assets and inventory of businesses. You are also responsible for property taxes on any property you own. Talk with the [Tax Assessor](#) to find out what you will be responsible for.
- Ask the Department of Community Development about any [tax incentive programs](#) you may be eligible for.

Step 6: Choose a location and obtain all necessary physical permits.

- Work with the [Department of Community Development](#) and local realtors to find the right location. Use our [location and feasibility tool](#) to make sure your business is allowed in the location you want to be in. Contact the Zoning Officer if you have questions regarding the types of businesses that are allowed in your chosen location.
- You may need additional permits from the [Building Inspector](#), [Fire Department](#) or [Water Pollution Control](#), depending on the nature of your business. Depending on the nature of your business, you may be required to participate in the Industrial Pre-Treatment Program. Contact Water Pollution Control for more information.
- You will need a [sign permit](#) for new or update signage.
- If you are locating within the Historic District, any signs and other exterior changes must be submitted to the [Historic District Commission](#) for review.
- The Department of Community Development can help determine if you will need permits from the [RI Department of Environmental Management](#) or the [RI Coastal Resources Management Council](#).

Step 7: Obtain business licenses and permits as necessary.

- Different businesses require different licenses. Some businesses require state and local licenses, while some require only one or the other. Visit the RI Secretary of State Office's [quick start guide](#) to ensure you complete all required licenses and registrations.
- Local licenses are available at the [Town Clerk's office](#). Talk with the Department of Community Development to determine what licenses you will need.

Step 8: Ensure all necessary physical permits and business licenses have been approved.

- Work closely with the Department of Community Development throughout the process and keep us informed of any obstacles and challenges. Knowing of issues as they arise can keep the process moving forward smoothly.

Step 9: Open for business!

- Register with local associations and organizations, and get involved in the community! The [Bristol Merchants Association](#), [Explore Bristol](#) and the East Bay Chamber of Commerce are great places to start!

Important Note: The Town of Bristol assesses a Sewer Fee in the amount of \$450/year for all businesses.

Important Contacts

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Referenced Links

US Small Business Association: <https://www.sba.gov/>

Center for Women and Enterprise: <http://www.cweonline.org>

Commerce RI: <http://commerceri.com/>

East Bay Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.eastbaychamberri.org/>

RI SCORE: <https://ri.score.org/>

RI Small Business Development Center: <http://web.uri.edu/risbdc/>

Bristol Department of Community Development: <http://www.bristolri.us/282/Community-Development>

Bristol Location and Feasibility Tool: <http://www.bristolri.us/DocumentCenter/View/452>

Building Inspector: <http://www.bristolri.us/284/Building-Inspection-Department>

Fire Department: <http://www.bristolri.us/258/Fire-Department-and-Division-of-EMS>

Water Pollution Control: <http://www.bristolri.us/155/Water-Pollution-Control>

Signage: <http://www.bristolri.us/293/Zoning>

Bristol Historic District Commission: <http://www.bristolri.us/287/Historic-District-Commission>

RI Department of Environmental Management: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/>

RI Coastal Resources Management Council: <http://www.crmc.ri.gov/>

RI Secretary of State: <http://sos.ri.gov/>

RI SOS Quick Start Guide: <https://www.ri.gov/SOS/quickstart/>

Bristol Town Clerk: <http://www.bristolri.us/232/Town-Clerk>

EIN Registration: [https://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&-Self-Employed/Apply-for-an-Employer-Identification-Number-\(EIN\)-Online](https://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&-Self-Employed/Apply-for-an-Employer-Identification-Number-(EIN)-Online)

RI Division of Taxation: <http://www.tax.ri.gov/>

Bristol Tax Assessor: <http://www.bristolri.us/278/Tax-Assessment>

Bristol Tax Incentive Programs: <http://www.bristolri.us/473/Financial-Resources>

Explore Bristol: <http://www.explorebristolri.com/>

Bristol Merchants Association: <https://www.facebook.com/BMA-Bristol-Merchants-Association-153655130932/>

Other Resources

Rhode Island Department of Health: <http://www.health.ri.gov/>

Rhode Island New Hire Reporting Center: <https://ri-newhire.com/>

Rhode Island Worker's Compensation Insurance: <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wc/>