



The Champaign Economic Partnership *Business Playbook*

Starting a Business? *Start Here!*

Starting, sustaining and growing a business takes significant time, effort and attention to detail. The Champaign Economic Partnership is here to guide you each step of the way – to help make your journey successful and as smooth as possible.

We have created the CEP Business Playbook to help you understand the steps involved in starting a business and the resources that are available to help you – *including the CEP*.

We encourage you to call or email the CEP. We're ready to listen and work with you to achieve your specific goals. And we'll give you the advantage of our partnerships with local, regional and state resources – to bring your plans to reality. We're here to help you succeed in Champaign County!

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Good resources to help you in developing or growing your business include:

- [The Small Business Development Center, Springfield-Clark County](#) (also serving Champaign County)
- [The Ohio Secretary of State's Information on Starting and Maintaining a Business](#)
- [The U.S. Small Business Administration Business Guide](#)

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Write a Business Plan

Why write a business plan? First, to prove to yourself that your business concept has great potential for success. Then, to convince lenders, investors, and potential partners and employees that your new venture deserves their support – with a level of risk they can comfortably live with.

A business plan, based on solid analysis of the market and other considerations, serves as a blueprint that increases your new business's chances of success. It's an essential step in deciding whether to start a business – *and how*.

A business plan consists of the following:

- Executive Summary
- Business Description
- Market Analysis
- Organization and Management
- Service or Product Line
- Marketing and Sales
- Financial Projections
- Funding Request
- Appendix

Executive Summary: Two pages at most, this summary offers the reader a quick introduction to your business – and why it will work. Information to include here: your products and/or services and why consumers will want them, your mission statement, basics about your leadership team, where your business is or will be located (physical and/or online address), financial information and a high-level forecast of your business's future.

Business Description: Expand on a description of your purpose, products and services. For instance, who is in your target market and how will you solve their problems and needs? Be sure to include what sets your business apart from other players in your market segment. Perhaps you have an industry expert or two on your team. Or you've developed a patented process or product – or have created a service unique to the local market. Also cover the timeline for launching your business, if you're not already in operation.

Market Analysis: Here you'll prove that you've done your homework. This includes identifying and describing your potential competitors, their strengths, and how they serve customers. You'll also determine if there is unmet demand in the market for your type of service or product and how you'll differentiate your business in the market to win over and retain customers.

Organization and Management: You'll describe the legal structure of your business, provide an organizational chart and explain the roles, experience and qualifications of members of your leadership team – and how they'll contribute to business success. You could include resumes of key team members.

Service or Product Line: Provide a more detailed description of your services and/or products and how they will benefit customers. Again, describe how they differ from products or services already in the market and how they uniquely solve customers' problems.

Marketing and Sales: Describe here your strategies to attract and retain customers. Also describe the process of making a sale, who will be involved and how you will monitor and adjust your marketing strategies to meet challenges of a changing marketplace, technology and other factors that could impact sales.

Financial Projections: If your business is already in operation provide income statements, balance sheets and cash flow statements for the last three to five years. Also provide a five-year financial projection, including sales projections, a break-even analysis, projected income statements, cash flow, balance sheets and capital expenditure budgets. Also list collateral to put against a loan.

Funding Request: The financial projections you provide will support your request for a loan or other funding. In this section, you'll state how much money you will need, the period your request will cover, and how you will use the money (for instance, equipment, materials, salaries or other needs). Also describe your future financial plans and how you'll pay off the debt.

Appendix: This includes supporting documents to help make the case for your business. Common documents for this section include credit histories, resumes, letters of incorporation, trademark registrations, partnership agreements, product pictures, letters of reference, licenses, permits, legal documents and other contracts.

Who can help you write a business plan?

- [Small Business Development Center \(SBDC\), Springfield-Clark County](#) (also serving Champaign County) – 937-322-7821, ralexander@springfieldsbdc.com
- Rich Whalen, a business consultant with the SBDC - 937.399.5246, rjwhalen3@gmail.com

Choose a Business Structure

Before you register your business with the State of Ohio, you'll need to decide how you want to structure your business. Your options include:

- Sole proprietorship
- Partnership
- Limited liability company (LLC)
- Corporation
- Cooperative

Following is a brief explanation of each type of business structure. [The Small Business Administration offers more information.](#)

Sole Proprietorship

This is the simplest and easiest of the alternatives to form and provides you complete control as the sole owner of your business. With this option, you don't create a separate business entity, though you can obtain a trade name. Your business assets and liabilities are also your personal assets and liabilities. And your business's tax ID is your Social Security number.

Since there's no legal separation between you and your business with a sole proprietorship, you can be held personally liable for your business's debts and obligations. Other downsides: sole proprietorships have difficulty raising money as they can't sell stocks, and banks are less likely to lend you money as a sole proprietor.

This can be a good option if your business is low-risk or you want to give your business a test drive before creating a formal business structure.

Partnership

For businesses with at least two owners, this is the simplest business structure. Partnerships come in two common varieties:

- **Limited partnerships (LP)**, in which one general partner has unlimited liability and the others, limited liability (and usually limited control over the company, as covered in a partnership agreement). Business profits pass through to personal tax returns. The general partner must pay self-employment taxes.
- **Limited liability partnerships (LLP)**, in which all partners have limited liability. Each partner is protected from debts against the partnership and is not responsible for actions of the other partners.

Partnerships can be a good choice for groups of professionals, businesses with multiple owners, and those who want to try out their business concept before adopting a more formal business structure.

Limited Liability Company (LLC)

This option can help business owners who want to protect personal assets, those wanting a lower tax rate than possible with a corporation and for medium- and higher-risk businesses.

In most cases, LLCs protect owners' personal assets – such as home, car and savings – if the LLC is sued or goes bankrupt. Under an LLC, your business profits and losses pass through to your personal income, enabling you to avoid higher corporate taxes. However, under an LLC structure, you'll be considered self-employed, and will have to make self-employment tax contributions toward Medicare and Social Security.

LLCs face limitations in some states. For instance, some states require LLCs to dissolve and reform when a member joins or leaves the LLC, unless an agreement exists to allow such changes.

Corporation

Corporations come in various forms, the most common, the C corp. In general, the corporation structure offers owners the strongest protection from personal liability. That's because a corporation is a legal entity separate from the corporation's owners. Corporations, which pay taxes on profits, cost more to form and require more extensive record-keeping, reporting and operational processes.

In some cases, corporate profits are taxed twice – first, on the profits, then on dividends paid to shareholders, on their personal tax returns.

Corporations are in a better position than other types of business structures to raise funds, as they can sell stock. For this reason, the corporation structure can be a good choice for businesses that need to raise money, medium- or higher-risk businesses, and businesses that may want to "go public" or be sold in the future.

Other corporation variations include the S corp, B corp, close corporation (more common for smaller or family-owned companies), and nonprofit corporations that are organized for charitable, educational, religious or scientific purposes – and qualify for tax exemption.

Cooperative

This is a business organization owned and controlled by the people – or owner/members of the cooperative – who use the business's products or services. Profits and earning generated by the cooperative are distributed to the members. Cooperatives are usually run by a board of directors, elected from the membership. Regular members, who purchase shares to join the cooperative, hold voting power to control the cooperative's direction.

Who can help you choose a business structure?

You may want to consult with a lawyer and/or tax consultant to help determine the best business structure for your purposes. You can also receive guidance from:

- [Small Business Development Center \(SBDC\), Springfield-Clark County](#) (also serving Champaign County) – 937-322-7821, ralexander@springfieldsbdc.com
- Rich Whalen, a business consultant with the SBDC – 937-399-5246, rjwhalen3@gmail.com

Name, Register and License Your Business

Register Your Business with the Secretary of State

When you start a business in Ohio, you'll need to register your business with the Ohio Secretary of State's Office. The forms you need to file with the Secretary of State vary depending on the structure and type of business you're starting.

You can [find the forms](#) on the Secretary of State website.

And check out the Secretary of State's [Information on Starting and Maintaining a Business](#) for more details on starting your new business.

If you are starting a [sole proprietorship](#) or general partnership (as described in **Choose Your Business Structure** (Page 4), you are not required to register your business entity with the Secretary of State. But you may need to register a trade name or report the use of a fictitious ("doing business as") name if you will be doing business in a name other than your own name.

Choosing a Business Name

When you register your business with the Secretary of State, you'll need to provide a name for your business. You'll want to choose a business name that you like *and* is distinct from the names of existing businesses. The Ohio Secretary of State will conduct a search of Ohio business names to make sure the name you select hasn't already been taken.

Before you register your business, you can conduct your own preliminary search using a [search tool](#) on the Ohio Secretary of State website.

If you conduct business solely in Ohio, your business name will be protected when you register it with the Secretary of State's Office. However, registering your business name with the state has no impact on the other 49 states. If you conduct business in multiple states, you should protect your name on a federal level with a [trademark](#).

Here's a caveat: When you form your business as a limited liability corporation (LLC) or corporation and register your business with the State of Ohio, no other business will be able to form an LLC or corporation with the same name in Ohio. However, there's nothing to stop a business that operates as a sole proprietorship or partnership from using your name in the state. It just won't be able to include "LLC" or "Corporation" in its name. Also, the fictitious names of sole proprietorships are not protected from being used by LLCs and corporations that register with the Secretary of State.

Other Licenses and Permits

When you start a business, you may also have to apply for special licenses or permits required for the type of profession or business you're involved in.

The Ohio Business Gateway provides a [list of professional licenses and business permits necessary to do business in Ohio](#).

Also contact your county and local government to determine if any local requirements exist for your type of business.

Vendor's License

If you're starting a business that will make taxable sales and collect sales tax, you'll need to apply for a Vendor's License.

The [Champaign County Auditor's Office](#) issues vendor's licenses for businesses with a permanent storefront. A separate license is needed for each location.

Businesses without a fixed place of business, apply directly to the [Ohio Department of Taxation](#) for a transient vendor's license.

Champaign County Auditor's Office
937-484-1600
1512 S Highway 68, Ste. B300
Urbana, OH 43078
Mon - Fri, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
auditor@co.champaign.oh.us

For more advice on starting a business:

The [Small Business Development Center](#) in Springfield, which serves Champaign County.

937-322-7821

Rich Whalen, 937-399-5246, rjwhalen3@gmail.com

[Ohio Secretary of State Guide to Name Availability](#)

[Small Business Administration Business Guide](#)

Choosing Your Business Location

The Champaign Economic Partnership can serve as your gateway to finding the location to start or expand your business – and accessing local and regional resources that can help you bring your vision to reality.

Many factors go into [choosing where](#) you will establish or expand your business:

- Accessibility to your customers
- Availability of buildings or land to build on
- Availability of infrastructure and utilities
- Zoning laws
- Building regulations
- Other regulations that your business may be subject to
- [Taxes](#)

The CEP website includes a page of [available commercial properties](#), and we can connect you with realtors to help you find properties not posted on our website.

We also partner with the following resources:

[Champaign County Department of Building Regulations](#)

1512 S. Hwy 68, Bay 13
Urbana, Ohio 43078
937-484-1602
Fax 937-484-1591

[Logan-Union-Champaign Regional Planning Commission](#)

(sustainable development and zoning regulations, serving Champaign County)
9676 E. Foundry St.
PO Box 219
East Liberty OH 43319
937-666-3431
Fax 937-666-6203

[City of Urbana Zoning Office](#)

(Conditional Uses, Re-Zoning & Signage Approval)
Zoning Officer: 937-652-4322
Hours: M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Local Utilities (See Page 14)

Business Financing/Financials

Tax Incentives and Loan and Grant Programs

A variety of tax incentives are available through the State of Ohio and local governments to help businesses launch or expand their operations. Some of these incentives are available in specific geographic locations – *so this could play a role in deciding where you'll locate your business.*

The Champaign Economic Partnership can help you learn more about these incentives, as well as loan and grant programs, and you can learn the basics about them [on the CEP website](#).

Business Loans

You have many options for borrowing money for your business. Here, we offer you contacts at local lending institutions:

[Civista Bank](#)

937-653-1100

[The Peoples Savings Bank](#)

937-653-1600

[Perpetual Federal Savings Bank](#)

937-653-1700

[Security National Bank](#)

937-653-1290

[Wright-Patt Credit Union](#)

937-912-7000

Other resources:

[Ohio Development Service Agency](#)

(Grants, loans, tax credits)

77 South High Street, 29th Floor

Columbus, OH 43215

800-848-1300

[Ohio Treasurer's Office](#)

(Small Business – Low Interest Loans)

30 E. Broad Street - 9th Floor

Columbus, Ohio 43215

800-228-1102

Need help setting up the financials or budget for your business?

Local resources include:

Diane Kremer, CPA, H&R Block
1637 E. US Hwy 36, Suite 8
Urbana, OH 43078
937-653-4674

[Brown & Brown CPAs, LLC](#)

6097 State Route 161
Mechanicsburg, Ohio 43044
937-652-1614

[Phillip Edwards, CFP](#)

1 Monument Square, Urbana, OH 43078
937-652-3385

Workforce Recruitment and Training

The Champaign Economic Partnership has developed partnerships and resources to help businesses like yours find qualified employees and prepare our community's current workforce and students for in-demand skills and careers – and new technology.

The CEP partners with businesses, educational institutions, regional and state economic development organizations, and local and state government to help develop the skilled workforce needed for business success and growth – to strengthen the local economy and make Champaign County a better place to live and work.

Following are workforce development resources available through these partnerships:

Job Posting and Search Boards

- CommunityJobConnect.com – a job board that is free for Champaign County employers to post job opportunities and free for job-seekers to search
- The State of Ohio's jobs board, OhioMeansJobs.com

Business-Education Partnerships

The CEP has helped form partnerships between local business and educational institutions to work toward developing educational curriculum that prepares students for local employers' current workforce needs and employment opportunities.

Schools involved in these partnerships include:

- Champaign County's five public school districts
- Ohio Hi-Point Career Center and Ohio Hi-Point's satellite programs at Champaign County schools, such as the Advanced Manufacturing program at Triad High School
- The Madison-Champaign Educational Service Center
- Urbana University
- Clark State Community College

Local businesses are involved in the partnership through the following initiatives and organizations:

- **Business Liaison** – Our business liaison visits local manufacturers to learn their skilled workforce needs. And she works with local schools to help them develop curriculum to prepare students for these career opportunities. She also helps manufacturers promote internships and job shadowing opportunities at local schools, helps advertise open positions, and helps coordinate job fairs, open houses and other activities where students can learn about career opportunities in local manufacturing.
- **Champaign County Human Resources Manufacturing Council** – Through this organization, human resources professionals of Champaign County manufacturing companies coordinate and support initiatives and activities to inform schools, students and their parents, and the

community at large about the high-tech environment of today's manufacturing facilities and the career opportunities they offer.

- **Champaign County Business Advisory Council (BAC)** – Composed of representatives of education, private business, government and nonprofit organizations, the BAC helps align school curriculum to prepare students with the knowledge and skills they'll need to succeed in today's workforce. The BAC is coordinated by the Madison-Champaign Educational Service Center under state law.

Other Resources

- [Incentive programs to help employers provide training for their employees](#)
- [OhioMeansJobs Champaign County](#) provides a range of services to strengthen the local workforce:
 - Services for job seekers – job listings, resume assistance and workshops, including interview training
 - Employment and training programs for veterans
 - Programs for dislocated workers to receive training for in-demand skills
 - Programs to help employers provide training to upgrade skills of existing employees, to stay competitive
- [Resources for hiring and training employees provided by the State of Ohio](#)

Local Utilities

Water/Sewer

[City of Urbana Utility Office](#)

937-652-4316

Municipal Building, 205 S. Main St. (payment window on ground floor at East Market Street entrance)

8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday

utility@ci.urbana.oh.us

[Village of Saint Paris](#)

357 W. Main St.

Saint Paris, OH 43072

937-663-4329

[Village of Mechanicsburg](#)

18 N. Main St.

Mechanicsburg, OH 43044

937-834-2720

[Village of North Lewisburg](#)

60 E. Maple St.

North Lewisburg, OH 43060

937-747-3645

Village of Christiansburg

115 W. Second St.

Christiansburg, OH 45389

937-857-9094

Electric

[Dayton Power & Light](#)

800-433-8500

[Pioneer Electric Cooperative](#)

937-653-7202

Gas

[Columbia Gas](#)

800-344-4077

Gas/Electric

[Vectren](#)

800-227-1376

Phone/Internet/TV

[CT Comm](#)

937-653-4000

[Spectrum](#)

800-892-4357

Other utility resources:

[Public Utilities Commission of Ohio](#)

[Federal Communications Commission Broadband Deployment Locator](#) for checking on broadband availability by property address.

Business Law Resources

Business laws vary by business type and how you have structured your business. Champaign County legal resources to guide you include:

Dana Zook

Wagner, Maurice & Davidson

937-653-7174

Chris Moell

[Thompson, Dunlap & Heydinger, LTD](#)

937-465-2002

Chris Leapley

[Martin & Browne](#)

937-653-7186

Marketing/Online Presence

Need help with marketing your new business? Contact these local organizations for assistance.

Berry Digital Solutions, LLC

1583 E Kanagy Rd., West Liberty, OH 43357
and
3 Monument Square, Urbana, OH 43078

Website development, social media, marketing and search engine optimization.

Ryan Berry
937-404-1050
ryan@berrydigitalsolutions.com

Chris Anders
937-404-1150
chris@berrydigitalsolutions.com

Bootstrap & Co. Creative Studios

112 S. Main St., Urbana, OH 43078

Website design, logo design, print, tradeshow design, videography & drone.

Mark Bloemhard
937-925-5428
info@bootstrapandco.com

Gary Schenkel, Freelance Copywriter

Marketing content for businesses – web content, case studies, articles, blog posts, brochure copy, news releases.

937-478-6533
gary@garyschenkel.com

Champaign County Chamber of Commerce

107 N. Main St., Urbana, OH 43078

Marketing and networking.

Coordinator Susie Koennecke
937-653-5764
info@champaignohio.com