



STARTING A NEW BUSINESS IN BONITA SPRINGS KEYS TO SUCCESS!

Effective Planning

A well written strategic business plan is essential to starting and running a business. A strategic business plan is required when applying for business loans or seeking investors. A good startup business plan describes in detail a business' mission and goals, and how these goals will be achieved. The plan should provide a detailed description of the business, its product or service, marketing plan, financial statements, projections and management principles.

Even when a formal strategic business plan is not required by others, it is a valuable tool for making quality business decisions. It helps business owners define and focus on their strategic objectives and it is an important tool when managing and communicating with managers and staff.

Several free counseling and training programs are available to help you get started writing an effective business plan and expand your business in Bonita Springs. These services cover all aspects of starting and running a business, from getting a loan to developing startup business plans and marketing strategies.

Contact: SCORE, Mr. Ike Lichtenstein

900 Goodlette Road North, Naples, Florida 34102 | 239-430-0081 | info@scorenaples.org

Financing - Common Sources of Small Business & Startup Business Financing

Banks

Typically, banks are reluctant to offer small business startup loans. However, for over half of today's established small businesses, commercial lenders are the preferred source of long-term financing.

Commercial Credit

The most prevalent type of business financing is commercial credit. Commercial credit involves vendors delivering goods or performing services before payment is received. In many industries, buyers have up to 30 days after billing to pay for goods or services before the payment is considered past due, allowing businesses flexibility in managing cash flow.

Credit Cards

Personal or business credit cards issued by a bank or other financial institution can be used to buy office supplies, computers, and other necessities for start-up costs, but the interest rates tend to be higher. Personal credit card debt should be considered a short-term loan to be paid back by the business, just as if the loan had come from a bank.

Equity Loans and Personal Funds

A common source of financing for small business start-ups is a home equity loan. Other options are personal funds from savings, trust accounts, or some form of personal equity of the business owner or owners. These are the easiest and least expensive methods of financing. The limitations are the amount of capital available and the willingness to put it at risk.



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Leasing

Leasing is a fast-growing method of financing capital equipment. Under a lease agreement, a business can acquire immediate use of equipment without tying up capital. Leasing can be an attractive option for obtaining technology equipment, which becomes obsolete quickly. Since leasing can be more expensive than buying equipment outright, it should be researched carefully.

Small Business Loans & Business Startup Grants

Federal, state and local governments offer a wide range of startup business funding programs to help small businesses start and grow their operations. These programs include low-interest loans, venture capital, and scientific and economic development grants.

Venture Capital

Venture capitalists expect two things when they invest: much higher returns than would be expected on a traditional business loan; an influence in how the company is managed. One advantage of venture financing is that this infusion of capital does not typically have to be repaid.

Other Financial Resources

Use the Loans and Grants Search Tool on the federal government's website www.business.gov to get a list of small business and startup business financing programs for which you may qualify, or visit the resources below to learn more about small business and startup business funding programs.

Use the following resources to find information about financing your small business:

- Government Business Startup Grants: <http://www.grants.gov/aboutgrants/eligibility.jsp>
- Seed and Venture Capital: <http://www.sba.gov/content/venture-capital-startups-high-growth-technology-companies>
- Tax-Exempt Bonds: <http://www.sba.gov/content/tax-exempt-bonds>

The City of Bonita Springs supports the attraction of different types of business in order to diversify and strengthen our local economy, and continue to improve the quality of life for our residents and visitors.

The City's incentives include cash incentives for creation of higher-than-average wage jobs, expedited permitting time frames and reduced or waived permitting fees.

The Bonita Springs/Estero Economic Development Council is your point of contact for City, County, and State business incentives.

Contact: Bonita Springs Estero Economic Development Council

Christine Ross, Executive Director

25071 Chamber of Commerce Drive, Bonita Springs, Florida 34135 | 239-333-2332

director@bonitaedc.com



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Government Business Incentives

State of Florida Business Incentives

The State of Florida offers existing, expanding and relocating businesses workforce training grants. The Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWT) program is available to current businesses and provides grant funding for customized training of existing employees.

Florida's Quick Response Training Program is a state grant offers an average grant benefit of \$600.00 per trainee.

When a business' preferred building site has transportation deficiency, Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI) offers grants for funding up to \$2 million for projects that facilitate economic growth, job creation and retention.

Lee County Business Incentives

Lee County's Economic Development Office offers several local and state business incentives to new, expanding and relocating businesses in the county. Among them are \$25 million dollars in Industrial Revenue Bonds and financial incentives for the attraction of strategic target industries.

Each year Lee County designs \$1.5 Million from general funds to be used for the purpose of business incentives. Cash Incentives are available for the creation of targeted industry jobs, paying up to \$6,000 per full time job.

City of Bonita Springs Business Incentives

The Bonita Springs Economic Development Council offers several site selection services and resources available to help you through the business site selection process. Our resources will help you understand some basic legal and regulatory issues that you may encounter when selecting a business location, as well as practical advice for choosing the ideal business location. We partner with the City of Bonita to ensure a smooth and easy transition into your new business!

The City has appointed a Director of Development Services, who serves as your advocate in dealing with such issues as regulations, zoning, permitting, etc.

Contact: City of Bonita Springs

Director of Development Services

Ms. Arleen Hunter, AICP

9101 Bonita Beach Road, Bonita Springs, FL 34135 | 239-949-6262

arleen.sheehan@cityofbonitasprings.org

Zoning and Land Use Requirements

Bonita Springs Department of Community Development Assistance

Opening a new business location may involve a variety of permits and inspections. To guide the business through the process, the City provides direct assistance.



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For many businesses, the first contact is with the zoning section of the Department of Community Development (DCD) Planning Division to determine whether a business location is consistent with zoning and land use regulations. The Economic Development Council recommends that business owners check with the Bonita Springs Zoning Department before signing leases or purchase agreements. As a business expands, changing circumstances may trigger new DCD requirements.

The Bonita Springs Department of Community Development is responsible for most zoning and land use issues. The application process for comprehensive plan amendments, rezoning, special exceptions, variances and vacations includes a notice to affected property owners and a public hearing before the LPA and/or Zoning and/or the City Council, which decides whether to approve an application request.

Business Permits and License Requirements

As with most communities, Bonita Springs has established a system of licenses and certificates to ensure that businesses comply with building codes and land use, zoning and life safety regulations. This is for the protection of your business and your future customers! Two entities are primarily responsible for business licenses and permits: Lee County and the Department of Community Development (DCD). We urge all business owners to investigate these business permits and license requirements before signing a lease.

The **Business Tax Receipt (BTR)**, formerly Occupational License, is an annual tax for exercising the privilege of engaging in business. The BTR is issued by the Lee County Tax Collector:
http://www.leetc.com/occllic.asp?c=occllic&r=1&page_id=occllicnewbus.

The **Certificate of Use (CU)** indicates that the business location is consistent with zoning regulations and that inspections have been completed. The CU is issued by the Department of Community Development (DCD) ensuring proper zoning is in place. All businesses located in a commercial location (not home-based) must apply for a CU along with the BTR.

The **Certificate of Occupancy (CO)** indicates that the structure in which the business is housed is habitable. The CO is issued by the Department of Community Development (DCD).

However, when businesses intend to locate in leased or purchased facilities, the Business Tax Receipt will not be granted until the CO (if the building is under construction), Fire Department, utility and CU inspections are completed. Therefore, businesses may wish to apply for all at the same time.

To facilitate cost-effective decisions about selecting locations, businesses are advised to consult with the DCD Planning and Zoning Division to determine whether there are any issues, before entering into a lease or purchase agreement on the property.

In addition, one of the significant factors in considering applications for Certificates of Use is the business classification used by the City. An incorrect or incomplete classification may result in confusion or delay. Therefore, businesses may wish to pay particular attention in working with City staff to ensure that their business classification accurately represents the nature and extent of their services or products.



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In all events, the City administration wants to facilitate accurate and rapid processing of business applications.

Contact: City of Bonita Springs

Director of Community Development

Mr. John Dulmer, AICP

9220 Bonita Beach Road, Suite 111, Bonita Springs, FL 34135 | 239-444-6150

john.dulmer@cityofbonitaspringscd.org

Employee Training

Small Business Development Center

The Small Business Development Center is dedicated to providing businesses with free, confidential advice. Their services include counseling as well as educational workshops geared to provide businesses with all the information they need to conduct a successful business. The SBDC is just one part of the Center of Leadership and Innovation, operated by Florida Gulf Coast University's Lutgert College of Business and the U.S. Small Business Administration. The Bonita Springs satellite office is on Old 41 in Riverside Park, and is periodically staffed during business hours. Services of the Small Business Development Center also support the activities of the U.S. Small Business Administration. The Bonita Springs satellite office is on Old 41 in Riverside Park, and is periodically staffed during business hours. Services of the Small Business Development Center also support the activities of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

SBDC also provides small business development resources, as well as free on-site counseling plus training and technical assistance in all aspects of small business management. Their trained staff can help you with developing a business plan, marketing or production issues, engineering and technical problems, or with feasibility studies. The SBDC can also provide assistance in obtaining contracts with government and federal agencies.

Please contact the SBDC for an individual appointment or visit their website for upcoming seminars and events.

Contact: FGCU Small Business Development Center

Florida Gulf Coast University

College of Business

Lutgert Hall, 2nd Floor

10501 FGCU Blvd. S., Ft. Myers, FL 33965 | 239-745-3700

www.fgcu.edu/sbdc

Business and Industry Services (BIS)

This agency is part of the Lee County School District. It works with employers in Southwest Florida to provide economical employee training programs. BIS meets with the employer and designs individualized training programs for the specific needs of the business. The training is either at the employer's site or one of the BIS training sites. Training schedules are flexible to accommodate work schedules.

Contact: Business and Industry Services

Nancy D. Smith, Coordinator

High-Tech North Campus

360 Santa Barbara Blvd. North, Bonita Springs, FL 33993 | 239-939-6320

www.leecountybis.com



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Bonita Springs Estero Economic Development Council (BSEEDC)

The BSEEDC is staffed with marketing and business development professionals who focus on providing the business resources and information that you need for business development and growth.

The City and EDC are focused on continuous improvement of the business climate in Bonita Springs with a vision that looks decades into the future. Our government and community resources support the growth of new and expanding businesses. Bonita Springs is centrally located between Fort Myers and Naples and because of its location, as well as major transportation corridors like I-75 and Highway 41 passing through it, is already a major player in the region. Our goal is the creation of a balanced economy in an environment that supports expansion, diversification and job creation.

Contact the EDC to learn about our community and business resources.

Contact: Bonita Springs/Estero Economic Development Council

Christine Ross, Executive Director

25071 Chamber of Commerce Drive, Bonita Springs, Florida 34135 | 239-333-2332

Bonita Springs Area Chamber of Commerce

The very active Bonita Springs Area Chamber is a not-for-profit membership organization with more than 799 business members. Its office is located on US 41 Road in Bonita Springs. The Chamber provides local business networking, small business resources, small business counseling, education, special events, visitor information and relocation assistance, community resources, and city and county government and business advocacy.

Contact: Bonita Springs Chamber of Commerce

2571 Chamber of Commerce Drive, Bonita Springs, FL 34134 | 239-992-2943

E-Mail: info@bonitaspringschamber.com | Web: www.BonitaSpringsChamber.com

Enterprise Florida

This is a not-for-profit, government-business partnership established to guide the development of Florida's economy. Its mission is to increase economic opportunities for all Floridians by supporting the creation of quality jobs, a well-trained workforce and globally competitive businesses. While not a state agency, Enterprise Florida is funded by the State of Florida and by donations from the private sector.

Enterprise Florida operates as a single point of contact for information about business assistance programs available in Florida. Enterprise Florida focuses on companies that are created in Florida and coordinates efforts in partnership with existing local and regional economic development organizations. Enterprise Florida's main office is located in Orlando, Florida. It also has offices in Tallahassee and Miami, several field offices, plus 12 offices worldwide.

Contact: Enterprise Florida, Inc.

800 N. Magnolia Avenue, Suite 1100, Orlando, FL 32803 | 407-956-5600

www.eflorida.com



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Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau

The Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau is devoted to maintaining and building year-round tourism in Lee County. To achieve this goal, the VCB works closely with the local industry to increase domestic and international visitation through integrated programs targeting key markets. Local tourism businesses are encouraged to actively participate in all of the programs and grassroots outreach efforts, such as marketing meetings, booking engine participation, media initiatives and trade/consumer shows.

Among many others programs and activities, the VCB offers the Guests First Customer Service Training Program for frontline support and management employees. Guests First provides training workshops complimentary to hospitality and allied industries.

In addition to the VCB's website, www.fortmyers-sanibel.com, the VCB has four off-site sales offices (Washington, D.C.; Minneapolis, Minn.; United Kingdom and Germany) and media/public relations representation in France. Domestic and international efforts are supplemented by contracted representatives.

Contact: Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau
2201 Second Street Suite 600, Fort Myers, FL 33901 | 239-338-3500
Toll Free: 800-237-6444 | Fax: 239-334-1106
www.leevcb.com

SW Florida Regional Planning Council

The regional planning council is recognized as Florida's only multi-purpose regional entity that plans for and coordinates intergovernmental solutions to growth-related problems on greater-than-local issues, provides technical assistance to local governments, and meets other needs of the communities in each region.

Since its designation as an Economic Development District in 1992, the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (Council) has worked to promote economic development in the six-county region (Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee and Sarasota) it serves. The Council has accomplished this by working closely with the cities and counties in the region and by implementing its work program that is submitted annually in the application to the Economic Development Administration.

These efforts will continue and are expected to increase based on the range of projects identified in this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The Council maintains its own website where most of this information is available.

Contact: SW Florida Regional Planning Council
1926 Victoria Avenue, Fort Myers, FL 33901 | 239-338-2550
Fax: (239) 338-2560 | Web: www.swfrpc.org



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Ten (10) Great Reasons to “Be in Bonita”!

- 1 A positive political atmosphere, where we are “business friendly”;
- 2 Reasonable Costs and Incentives Allow You to Maximize Your Investment;
- 3 Central, Accessible location and modern Infrastructure;
- 4 Quality business Sites at Very Affordable Prices;
- 5 Easy Access to your Markets – with (-75, “new” Highway 41, Imperial (Three Oaks) and Bonita Beach Road as major thoroughfares through the City;
- 6 A Trained and Youthful Workforce Offers a Ready Pool of Talent;
- 7 Higher Education and Workforce Training Opportunities;
- 8 Wide Variety of Housing in a Subtropical Climate;
- 9 Quality of Life is Key – Enjoy your Climate, Beaches and Recreational Opportunities;
- 10 Our Economic Development Team serves as your Liaison and Advocate.

In short, we have land, space, help and the location for you to “Be in Bonita”!

Bonita Springs - Quality Business, Quality Life!