

WORK CENTRAL AB

Starting a Business

Your Step-by-Step Guide to Launching in Central Alberta

A Career Resource from Work Central AB

Starting a Business in Central Alberta

Alberta is consistently ranked among Canada's most business-friendly provinces, with streamlined registration, competitive tax rates, and no provincial sales tax. This guide walks through the essential steps to launch a business in Central Alberta.

1. Choose Your Business Structure

- **Sole proprietorship** - the simplest structure, with minimal registration and lower start-up costs, but unlimited personal liability for business debts.
- **Partnership** - similar simplicity, shared between two or more owners, with liability considerations depending on the partnership type.
- **Corporation** - creates a separate legal entity with stronger liability protection, generally the right choice as a business grows, though it comes with higher setup and ongoing accounting costs.

2. Register Your Business Name

- Sole proprietors operating under a name other than their own legal name generally need to register a trade name through an authorized Alberta registry agent (roughly \$10 government fee plus the registry's service fee).
- Provincial incorporation carries a government fee of approximately \$275, plus optional NUANS name search and registry service fees.
- A trade name registration establishes proof of association with your business name, though it does not grant exclusive ownership - a NUANS or trademark search can help you assess name conflicts.

3. Write a Business Plan

A clear business plan is valuable even if you're not seeking financing - it forces clarity on your target market, costs, and path to profitability. Community Futures Central Alberta offers free business planning and coaching support to any entrepreneur in the region, regardless of whether you're seeking a loan.

4. Handle Licensing and Permits

Common Requirements

- A municipal business licence, required by most Central Alberta municipalities regardless of business size.
- A home-based business licence if operating from home, along with confirmation of local zoning rules.
- Industry-specific provincial permits or licences for certain sectors (see our Business Licences guide for detail).
- Use the BizPaL online tool to identify the specific licences and permits relevant to your business type and location.

5. Set Up Finances and Taxes

- Open a dedicated business bank account to keep personal and business finances separate.
- Register for a GST number with the CRA once your revenue exceeds the small supplier threshold, or voluntarily if it benefits your business.
- Consider working with an accountant or bookkeeper early - proper record-keeping from day one saves significant time and cost later.
- See our Funding & Grants guide for financing options if you need capital to launch.

6. Frequently Asked Questions

Common Questions

How long does business registration take? Trade name registration is typically fast, often same-day through a registry agent; incorporation can take slightly longer depending on name searches and registry processing.

Do I need a lawyer to start a business? Not necessarily for a simple sole proprietorship, but incorporation and partnership agreements often benefit from legal review, especially as complexity increases.

Can I start a business while working full-time? Yes - many Central Alberta entrepreneurs start as a side business before transitioning to full-time; just confirm your current employment contract doesn't restrict outside business activity.

Starting a Business Checklist

- ✓ Chose a business structure that fits your risk tolerance and goals
- ✓ Registered your trade name or incorporated with an Alberta registry agent
- ✓ Drafted a business plan, with free support from Community Futures Central Alberta if desired

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- ✓ Identified required municipal and provincial licences using BizPaL
 - ✓ Set up a business bank account and considered accounting support
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Build Your Business With Work Central AB

See our Business Licences and Funding & Grants guides for the next steps in launching your business. Visit workcentralab.ca/resources.