

Program Guide: Starter Company Plus 2026 -27

Welcome to the Starter Company Plus program!

We are excited to have you join us for this valuable opportunity to participate in a program designed to support you on your business journey. Whether you're just getting started or looking to strengthen your existing venture, this program will provide you with the tools, knowledge, and support to move your business forward.

Over the course of the Starter Company Plus Program, you can participate in 8 sessions, including 7 online training sessions and 1 in-person networking event. To complete the program and be eligible to apply for the Starter Company Plus grant, participants are expected to attend as many of the sessions as possible.

Each training session will be offered at two different times each day, one during the day and one in the evening, to help fit your schedule. The in-person networking event will be a valuable opportunity to connect with peers, program staff and local business leaders. This is an important part of building your network.

Once you have finished participating in the free training, you will need to submit a small business plan to finalize your application to be considered for a \$5,000 Starter Company Plus Grant. You will receive a business plan template along with details on how both your business plan and overall participation in the program will be evaluated as part of the grant selection process.

Please note that grant funding is limited, and as a result, not all participants will receive a grant. While a grant is not guaranteed, all participants will benefit from the valuable knowledge, tools, and support provided through the free training sessions and networking opportunities offered throughout the program.

Who can apply for the training portion of the program?

Anyone over the age of 18 who is seeking a valuable learning opportunity is encouraged to participate. The free training and networking sessions are open to Bruce County businesses of any stage – whether you are just starting out or already established.

Who can apply for a grant?

To be considered for a Starter Company Plus grant, you must attend at least 10 of the 12 program sessions and meet the eligibility criteria outlined below:

- 18 years of age or older at the time of application.
- Proposing starting a new company, expanding an existing company, or buying a business in Bruce County.
- Not attending school full time or returning to school.
- Resident of Ontario.
- Canadian Citizen or permanent resident.
- Not enrolled in other comparable provincial employment or self-employment related initiatives and programs that include or do not include financial assistance.
- Not currently enrolled concurrently in any comparable self employment or entrepreneurship training/financial initiatives and programs offered by government funded organizations.
- Is a sole proprietorship or a corporation in which the Approved Participant is the majority Shareholder.
- Operates at arms length from family business ventures.
- Is able to operate in compliance with applicable laws.
- Be able to make a contribution of at least 25% of the grant amount (\$1,250) in cash or in kind.

What can the grant be used for?

We reserve the right to determine the eligibility of any expense submitted under this program but want to work with you find the most impactful way to use the funding to support your business.

Eligible cost examples:

- Equipment and tools
- Inventory
- Marketing and branding
- Leasehold improvements
- Technology and digital tools

Ineligible cost examples:

- On-going operational costs of business such as monthly bills
- Taxes
- Wages or salaries

Program Steps

Step 1: Attend a Starter Company Plus Information Session Online

Attend one of three mandatory information sessions to learn full details of the program and determine if this program is a good fit for you and your stage of business.

Step 2: Attend Free Training & Networking Sessions

- Grant applicants are required to attend 7 of the 8 essential training sessions to be considered for the \$5,000 grant.
- Online training will be delivered on the Microsoft Teams platform.
- All training sessions will be offered at two different times. One during the day and one in the evening to accommodate varying schedules.
- All training sessions will be recorded.

Step 3: Submit your business plan and projected cash flow statement

- To be considered for a Starter Company Plus grant, you will need to submit a business plan.
- Business plans need to be submitted no later than December 4, 2026
- You will receive a Business Plan Template, Cash Flow template, and training support to complete a strong application.

Step 4: Pitch your business to compete for a Starter Company Plus Grant

- Once you have completed the training and submitted a business plan, you will be eligible to apply for the Starter Company Plus grant.
- You will pitch your business plan to our Starter Company Plus Committee to be considered for a \$5,000 grant.

Step 5: Starter Company Plus Grant Selection

- Your program participation, business plan and business pitch will be considered in the grant selection process.
- You will receive clear guidelines on how your business is evaluated.
- The Starter Company Plus Grant Committee consists of local Economic Development professionals.
- Priority may be given to businesses that support the strategic goals of Bruce County and the Economic Development Division.

Step 6: Starter Company Plus Mentorship

- You will be able to participate in virtual group mentorship provided by a professional business mentor.

Step 7: Starter Company Plus Grant Distribution

- If you are awarded a grant, you will need to sign agreements with Bruce County that outline your responsibilities in receiving the grant.
- You will need to submit proof of a minimum of \$5,000 in purchases of goods or services required to start your business.
- You will need to submit proof of a minimum of \$1,250 of your own personal investment into the business.
- You will then be given a cheque for \$5,000 as reimbursement

- Please note that the Starter Company Plus Grant is considered taxable income and you will be provided a T4A as record of earnings while being self-employed.

Training schedule at a glance

All Starter Company Plus training sessions can be joined using one convenient link: [Click here to join the Starter Company Plus Training](#)

Session Title	Date	Time
Business Model Canvas 1	Thursday, October 1	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm or 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm
Business Model Canvas 2	Monday, October 5	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm or 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm
Understanding Target Market	Thursday, October 8	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm or 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm
Building Your Value Proposition	Tuesday, October 13	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm or 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm
Foundational Digital Marketing	Thursday, October 15	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm or 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm
In Person Networking Event	Thursday, October 29	6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Cash Flow Projections 1	Thursday, November 12	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm or 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm
Cash Flow Projections 2	Wednesday, November 25	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm or 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Training session details

Business Model Canvas Part One with Teresa Shaver

In this first session, we'll introduce the Business Model Canvas as a powerful visual tool to help you map out the key elements of your business. You'll learn about the first five building blocks – customer segments, value propositions, channels, customer relationships and revenue streams – and how they work together to share your customer-facing strategy

Business Model Canvas Part Two with Teresa Shaver

This follow-up session focuses on the back end of your business model – how you operate, deliver, and sustain your value proposition. We'll explore the remaining blurb

away with a complete and practical snapshot of how your business runs and earns.

Understanding Your Target Market with Ryan Burwell

Effective marketing begins with understanding your audience. In this introductory session, participants will learn essential techniques and mindsets for identifying and gathering information about their target market. Particular attention will be placed on strategies for conducting primary market research through direct interactions with current and potential customers.

Building your Value Proposition with Don Bourne

Effective marketing helps your audience understand what's in it for them. This session provides participants with practical tips for quickly and clearly explaining the value their businesses provides. Participants will be challenged to move away from listing features of their products or services, and towards a clear description of the outcomes they provide their customers.

Foundational Digital Marketing with Crys Wiltshire

This session explores powerful marketing tools that participants can use to more effectively reach their target market and amplify their value proposition. Participants will leave this session with clarity on how they can continue building and refining their marketing approach.

In-person networking session

Join us for an engaging in-person business networking event designed to connect entrepreneurs, professionals, and Economic Development staff for an evening of meaningful connections. Whether you are looking to grow your network, explore collaboration opportunities, or simply share ideas with like-minded individuals, this is the place to be. Expect casual but guided conversation, a light meal, and the chance to build valuable relationships that can help move your business forward.

Location: Powerlinks in Port Elgin

October 29 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm. Free dinner provided.

Questions?

For any questions or support, please reach out to:

Jenelle Bannon, Business Development Coordinator

Jbannon@brucecounty.on.ca

226-909-2664

Monday-Friday. 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

[Book a Meeting with Jenelle](#)