



Give Your Business a Fresh Start!

Starter Company Plus is designed to provide business training, coaching, mentorship, and grant opportunities up to \$5,000 for eligible participants to start, expand or buy a business.

Starter Company Plus includes:

- Business training through a mix of in-person and online sessions led by industry experts covering key aspects of running a small business.
- Guidance and support in developing a business plan and cash flow projections, which may help you secure future traditional financing.
- Personalized support and guidance from an experienced Business Advisor.
- Individual and group mentorship opportunities.
- The opportunity to receive up to \$5,000 in micro-grant funding.
- Opportunities to connect and network with other local business owners.

Upon successful completion of the program, participants will submit their final Business Plan Package and pitch for a chance to receive up to \$5,000 in microgrant funding. There is a total of \$35,000 in grants in 2026.

Limited Spaces Available

While the Starter Company Plus program is open to all eligible individuals, spaces are limited and admission is competitive. Applications are reviewed as they are received, and selected applicants may be contacted by a Business Advisor for an interview to discuss their application and suitability for the program. Please note that not all applicants will be contacted or accepted into the program.

As a training and mentoring initiative, the program is designed to support entrepreneurs who would benefit from additional business knowledge, guidance, and support. To help address local and regional economic development priorities, Huron County Economic Development may also prioritize participation based on specific industries and sectors.

2026 Intake Schedule:

Key Dates	
Activity	Dates
Enrollment Open	July 1–31
Applicant Interviews	August 3–14
Acceptance Confirmations (provided no later than)	August 28
Kick-Off Event	September 10
Business Training Sessions	September – November (<i>mix of in-person and online</i>)
1:1 Business Advisory Sessions x 4	September, October, November (2)
Business Plan – Draft Deadline	October 13 (<i>feedback provided in 1:1 consultations</i>)
Business Plan Package – FINAL Deadline	November 13 at 12:00pm
Pitch Presentations	November 25–27 (exact date and time TBC)
Wrap-Up Celebration	April 15, 2027

Grant recipients must continue 1:1 advisory sessions post-program. They will meet monthly with their Business Advisor for the first 3-months post program (January, February, and March), with check-in meetings 6 and 12-months post program (May and December 2027). This process is in place to help businesses succeed and is a provincial funding requirement.

Business Training/Networking Sessions

Business training sessions will be held in-person and online as indicated. All in-person events will take place at Huron County Economic Development, located at 57 Napier Street in Goderich. A program training schedule outlining training specifics will be provided to all successful applicants ahead of the beginning of the program.

Virtual Workshop	In-Person Event/Workshop	Online Training Videos
In-Person / Online Business Training – Set Dates to Attend		
Date	Time	Business Training Topic
September 10 ***In-Person	9:00am – 12:30pm Lunch provided	Kick-off Event + “How to Write a Business Plan”
September 17 ***In-Person	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Cash Flow 101”
October 1 Zoom	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Business Operations & Client Experience”
October 25 **In-Person	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Ask the Expert” Session
October 29 Zoom	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Pitching Your Business”
April 15, 2027 ***In-Person (location TBD)	9:00 am – 12:30 pm	Wrap-Up Event

Pre-recorded Online Training Videos – Due to be completed by October 13

	Module	Business Training Topic
	1	"Market Research"
	2	"Business Financials"
	3	"Bookkeeping Basics"
	4	"Marketing and Content Creation"
	5	"Everything You Need to Grow Online"

Business Advisory/Mentorship Sessions

Throughout the program, the participant must participate in a minimum of 4 business advisory sessions to be eligible to pitch for grant funds. These advisory sessions will be set and booked upon entrance to the program.

Participants will also engage with other business mentors in group and individual settings throughout the program to provide additional expertise and support.

Draft Business Plan – Due October 13

Participants must provide a draft of their Business Plan along with cash flow projections (templates will be provided). The draft Business Plan will be reviewed by the Business Advisor and feedback will be provided at the following 1:1 advisory session.

Final Business Plan Package Submission – Due November 13 at 12:00pm

The application package includes:

- Business Plan
- Cash Flow Projections
- SWOT Analysis
- Completed Learning Plan (training, coaching, and mentorship)
- 2 Letters of Reference
- Resume

Pitch Presentation Day – November 25 and 26 (exact dates/times TBC)

Following the successful submission of all items above, applicants will also be required to make a 10-minute pitch to an external Grant Review Committee. The presentation is followed by a 5–10-minute Q&A period with the committee members.

Participant Requirements:

Participants in the Starter Company Plus program are expected to attend all in-person sessions, workshops, networking events, and business advisory meetings. Participants should also be prepared to dedicate an average of 25 hours per week to building and running their business during and after the program.

To be eligible for funding, participants must complete a 10-minute pitch presentation.

Please note: To remain eligible for the program, participants are expected to complete all program requirements.

Grant Review Committee:

The Grant Review Committee reviews each participant's Business Plan Package in advance of the pitch presentations and uses the quality of the pitch and the significance of the ask to help determine who will receive funds and how much funding they will receive.

The Grant Review Committee assesses using the following criteria:

- Feasibility of the business
- Quality of applicant - teachability, entrepreneurial aptitude
- Potential for job creation
- Start-up budget/financing needs of the business
- Cash/in-kind contributions of the participant
- Quality and deliverance of pitch presentation and the specific funding request 'The Ask'.

Grant Recipients:

Successful applicants will be required to prove a personal financial contribution to their business in the amount of 25% of the awarded amount (i.e. \$1,250 is 25% of \$5,000). Eligible expenses must be reasonably aligned with your business (may include in-kind contributions). This may include asset-based or in-kind contributions at fair market value, such as equipment or machinery required to run the business (i.e. ladders/scaffolding for a painting company, camera, and lenses for a photographer). In-kind contributions may not include "sweat equity" (a contribution in the form of effort as opposed to a financial contribution) or loans or other types of loaned support.

In accordance with the Micro-Financing Agreement, during post-program 1:1 advisory sessions, grant recipients will be asked to report on their business objectives (operations, sales and marketing, finance, HR, etc.), as well as grant fund expenditures (including receipts). During the 6 and 12-month check-in meetings, they will also be asked to provide financials to show the impact of the grant funding. This structure is in place to help your business succeed and to adhere to our provincial funding agreement.

The grant funding is considered taxable income and recipients will receive a T4A for the amount received.

Initial Installment

After signing a Micro-Financing agreement, the successful recipients will receive up to 75% of total eligible funding at the time of funding being approved (December 2026).

Grant funding MUST be spent within 60 days of receiving funds. Legitimate receipts MUST be provided to the program administrator before the second installment can be issued.

Final Installment

The final amount of the grant will be received by the end of March 2027, if the recipient has submitted the required monthly reports and has reached the mutually agreed upon milestones/targets.

Who Should Apply:

- Anyone aged 18+ who is out of school and interested in pursuing a career in entrepreneurship.
- Anyone interested in starting a new business, expanding, or buying an existing business in Huron County.

For full eligibility criteria, please see the [Eligibility Requirements for Starter Company Plus](#).