

CITY OF ELLSWORTH

STARTING A BUSINESS GUIDE





WELCOME

Dear Prospective Business Owner,

Welcome to Ellsworth, Maine! We're excited to support you in your business journey!

This guide is designed to be your starting point, providing key information on city contacts, processes, regulations, and helpful resources to make doing business in Ellsworth as smooth as possible. Our dedicated city staff is ready to assist you with any questions you may have.

We look forward to partnering with you for your success!

City of Ellsworth

4 HR
PARKING
AM
TO
PM

John
Edwards
MARKET
INCORPORATED

Wine Cellar Art Gallery

finn's
IRISH PUBLIC HOUSE

Drinks & Gifts

LET'S START *HERE*

Guide Overview

This guide is designed to help business owners navigate the startup process in Ellsworth. In the following pages, you'll find essential contacts, a step-by-step walkthrough of the licensing and permitting procedures, a checklist to keep you on track, and information on organizations who can help you when you've established your business!

Please note that this guide is not intended to cover every type of business. We encourage you to review information relevant to your specific business needs, as different businesses may require different processes.



It all starts with a plan...

When starting a business, there are many factors to consider before you begin. These include defining your business concept and target market, choosing the right business structure, addressing any legal requirements, planning your finances, managing logistics, selecting a location, creating a marketing strategy, and planning for growth. Additionally, it's important to assess your personal investment of time, skills, and resources.

Write out a plan outlining key points and strategies, this will help you identify potential challenges, stay focused, identify and pursue funding, and maintain momentum throughout your business journey.

Check out the last page of the guide for a Lean Business Plan template to get you started.



Photo by No Umbrella Media, courtesy of Heart of Ellsworth

Stay on track with support tailored to your business goals.

Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI) is a Community Development Financial Institution that supports individuals starting businesses by providing mission-driven financing, business expertise, and policy advocacy to promote equitable economic opportunities. CEI pairs supportive advising with lending to mitigate risk and foster success, aiming to build climate-resilient, inclusive, and thriving local economies, particularly in Maine and rural areas. CEI has an office right here in Ellsworth at 416 Water Street in the Union River Center for Innovation.

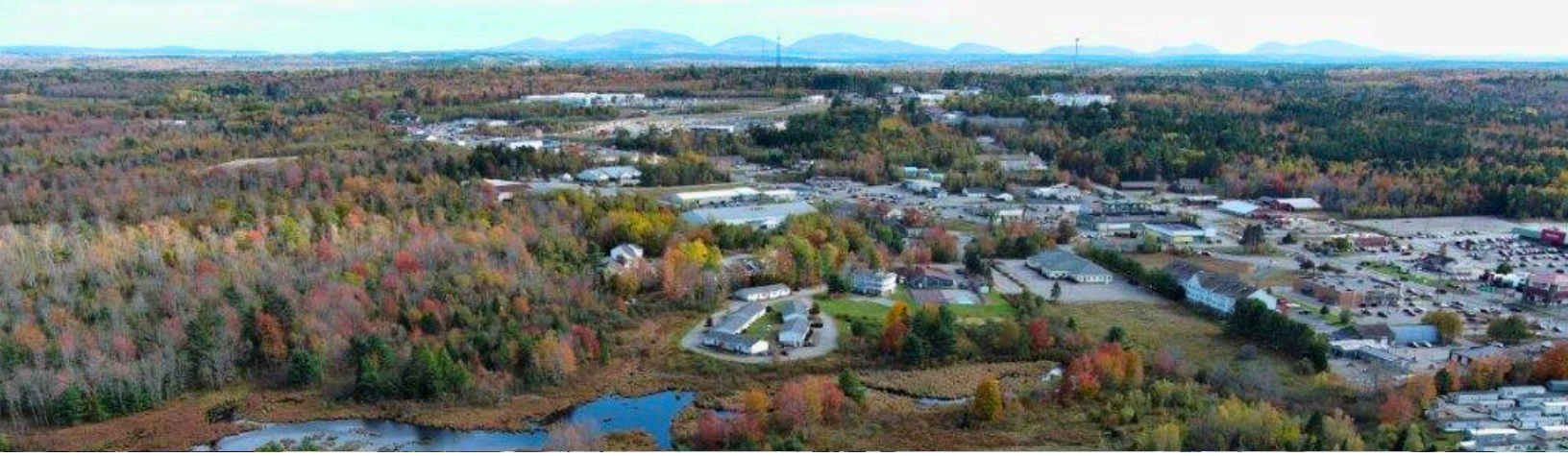
Contact CEI at: info@ceimaine.org or (207)664-2990

Website: ceimaine.org

The **Maine Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** helps entrepreneurs start and grow businesses by offering no-cost, confidential advising and training. Their certified advisors provide expert guidance on business planning, financing, marketing, e-commerce, and more. Supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration and other partners, the Maine SBDC has assisted tens of thousands of clients over 40 years through personalized advising, workshops, and online resources.

Contact SBDC at: mainesbdc@maine.edu or (207)780-4420

Website: mainesbdc.org



CITY SUPPORT FOR YOU

Listed here are the city departments that may be involved in the licensing and permitting process when you are looking to open a new business or expand on an existing operation. Have a question? Contact City Hall at (207)667-2563 to speak with any of the departments below, they are here to help!

Code Enforcement

Your first stop in the licensing and permitting process is here! The Code office will ensure your business is allowed at your chosen location. They will walk you through the requirements from start to finish using the checklist provided in this guide.

Email: CodeEnforcement@ellsworthmaine.gov

Economic Development

Can help you with site selection, identifying business resources, and making local connections. Assistance for businesses at every stage of development and growth.

Email: EconomicDevelopment@ellsworthmaine.gov

City Clerk

Provides applications and issues licenses. The Clerk's Office tracks license expiration dates, sends renewal reminders, and maintains records of all licensed businesses in the city.

Email: ClerksOffice@ellsworthmaine.gov

Planning / Planning Board

This department compliments the Economic Development and Code Enforcement departments. In addition, provides guidance to developers and businesses in the planning board process, should it be required.

Email: Planning@ellsworthmaine.gov

Fire & Life Safety Inspector

Offers business and development plan review, making recommendations on how a development can meet local and state fire and life safety codes, should this be required.

WHY ELLSWORTH?

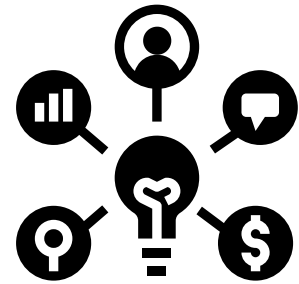


Location, Location, Location!

Ellsworth serves as the service hub for Downeast Maine. Located on the scenic tidal Union River, Ellsworth is just 30 minutes from I-95 and an additional 15 minutes to Bangor. The city sits at the crossroads of coastal Route 1 and scenic Route 3, with Acadia National Park only a short drive away. Ellsworth offers a wide range of services—from shopping, lodging, and dining to financial and medical providers—meeting the needs of businesses, residents and visitors.

Certified Business Friendly

We understand the importance of local business to economy and quality of life. Comprehensive assistance is available for businesses at every stage of development and growth, whether just starting up, expanding, or relocating to Ellsworth. Businesses enjoy the benefits of doing business in Ellsworth, including the availability of accessible and affordable land and buildings, utility infrastructure, telecommunications, workforce, and an expansive service area.



Community and Business Partnerships

The City of Ellsworth collaborates closely with local business-focused community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Ellsworth Business Development Corporation (EBDC), Heart of Ellsworth and more to provide strong support for our businesses and foster long-term success and growth.

Accredited Main Street America Community

In 2024, Ellsworth became Maine's 11th accredited Main Street America Community through the local nonprofit, Heart of Ellsworth. This designation strengthens our city's ability to attract, retain, and support businesses in the downtown district. Heart of Ellsworth is dedicated to cultivating a vibrant commercial district—one that thrives for both residents and visitors alike. For businesses and entrepreneurs, this means direct access to industry expertise, tailored small business resources, and new funding and grant opportunities—all designed to help business owners start, sustain, and grow their businesses in downtown Ellsworth.



LOCAL
LOVE

ELLSWORTH

BUSINESS LICENSES BY DEPARTMENT

For a the full list, review the City of Ellsworth Ordinances & Codes: Chapter 14: *Licenses and Permits*

The Code Enforcement Office issues business licenses for the following:

(If your business/industry type is not listed, please inquire with the Code Enforcement Office)

Retail/Mercantile

Daycare

Professional Services (office, bank, medical office, hair salon, etc.)

Educational Facilities

Assembly Occupancy (church, movie theater, etc.)

Redemption Center

Agricultural (non-food production)

Industrial/Manufacturing

The City Clerk's Office issues business licenses for the following:

Amusement License (Live music, dancing, entertainment, performances, shows, etc.)

Arcade License

Carnival/Circus/Festival (Public Hearing required)

Class A/B/C Establishments (Public Hearing required)

Consumer Fireworks Retail Sales (Public Hearing required)

Junkyard/Auto Graveyard (Public Hearing required)

Liquor License (Public Hearing required)

Lodging House (Public Hearing required)

Medical Marijuana (Public Hearing required)

Mobile Vending Unit (Victualer License)

Special Amusement (Public Hearing required) (Amusement that includes offering of alcoholic beverages)

Street Use (letter to be submitted by applicant, to be placed on Council agenda)

Taxi Cab / Taxi Driver

Towing/Wrecker

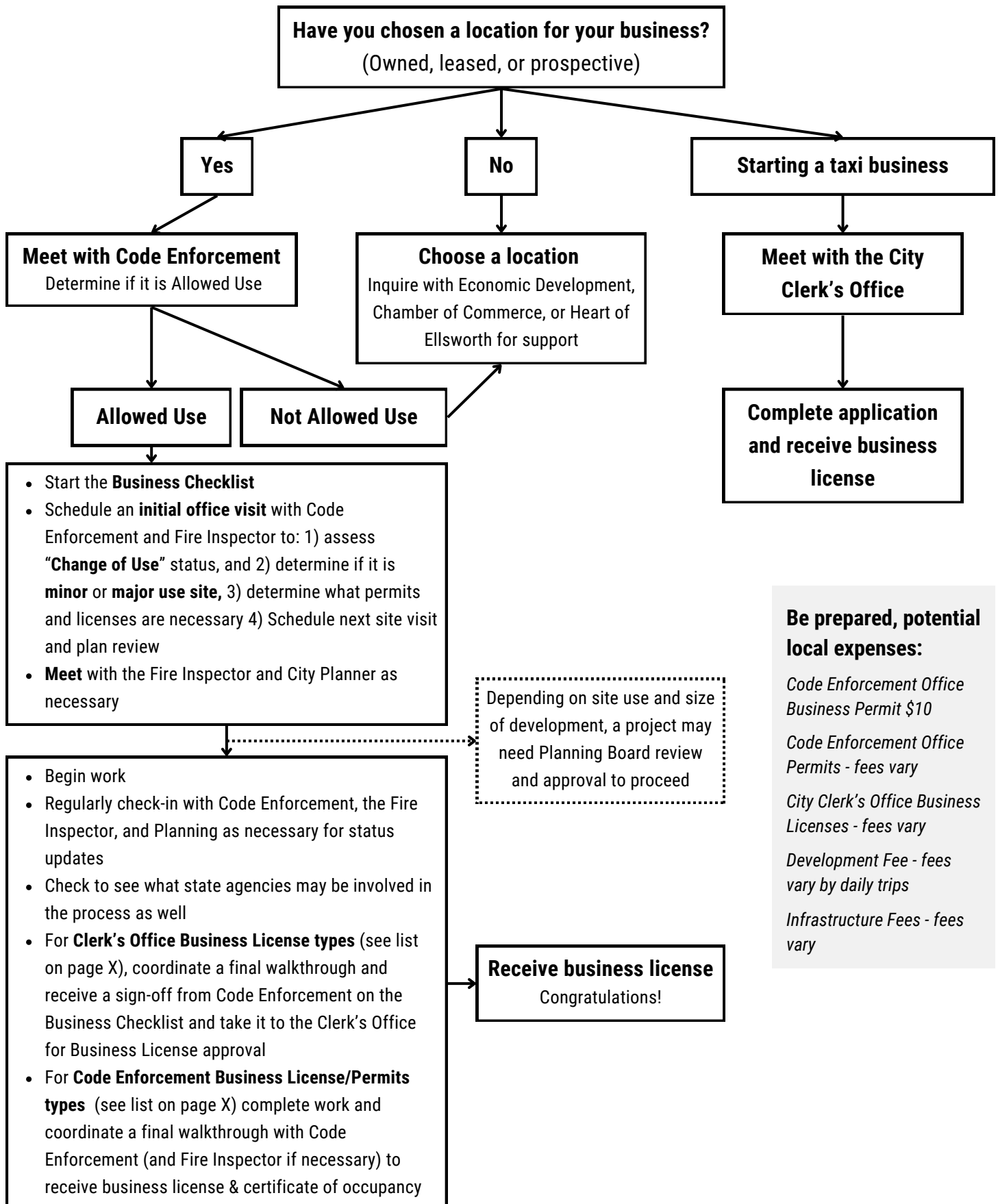
Victualer License (Prepared food for public consumption either on or off premises for a fee)

Terms of licenses vary and may require annual renewal.

For terms review the City of Ellsworth Ordinances & Codes, Chapter 14: Licenses and Permits

All business inquires (excluding Taxi), whether the license is issued by the Clerk's Office or Code Enforcement Office, should begin with meeting the Code Enforcement Office.

BUSINESS LICENSE FLOW CHART



Be prepared, potential local expenses:

Code Enforcement Office
Business Permit \$10

Code Enforcement Office
Permits - fees vary

City Clerk's Office Business
Licenses - fees vary

Development Fee - fees
vary by daily trips

Infrastructure Fees - fees
vary

BUSINESS LICENSE CHECKLIST

THANK YOU for choosing Ellsworth to start, relocate, or expand your business!

We are here to help you from start to finish.

This checklist can be used to guide you through the process and can be a reference to help set you up for success.

Initial Code Enforcement Meeting	Date & Time of Meeting
To Schedule a Meeting Call 207-667-4910, or email the Code Enforcement Office: broberts@ellsworthmaine.gov ; awiesing@ellsworthmaine.gov ; or rgrant@ellsworthmaine.gov	
Please provide a minimum of a 24 hours notice to ensure staff are available.	
Questions to Consider	Feedback
Have you selected a site for your business? Is it owned, leased, or prospective? If not owned, do you have the owner's written permission?	
Is your business allowed at the desired site? <i>Review City Ordinances & Codes: Chapter 56, Article 3.</i>	
What modifications/improvements will need to be made to accommodate your business?	
What permits/licenses will you need to acquire?	
Does your project meet the criteria of a minor or major site development? <i>Minor see Code Enforcement Office, Major see Planning Office.</i>	
Do you have a site plan for your project that is ready to be reviewed?	
Are you ready to have Code Enforcement staff and Fire Inspector visit the proposed location to provide input on potential modifications/improvements?	
Walk-Through/Plan Review Meeting	Date & Time of Meeting
Purpose of Meeting	Feedback
If you were unable to provide a site plan or were not ready to conduct a walk-through of your desired site during the Initial Meeting, this is the time to do so.	
Based on this meeting, what local and state permits, licenses, and approvals are necessary for your business to open at your desired location?	
Do you have all of the necessary contact information to follow-up on permits, licenses, and approvals? Do you understand next steps and timing? Have you identified any other state agencies that need to be notified of your project (i.e. State Fire Marshal's Office, Maine Bureau of Alcoholic Beverages and Lottery Operations, Health Inspection Program, etc.).	

Additional Follow-Up Meetings or Inspections as Necessary

Depending on your business and project, expect to have follow-up meetings and/or inspections as modifications/improvements are made to your business location. You can work with staff to outline those follow-up meetings/inspections here.

Meeting Date & Time	Purpose/Questions to Ask	Feedback

Signatures & Sign-offs

Work with staff to list out permits/licenses in this section. Obtain signatures to sign-off on, or provide status updates of the permit and licensing process.

Permits/Licenses	Sign-off & Date

Completed the Business License Process on: _____

Approved by: _____



RESOURCES

Once your business is established, we encourage you to connect with Ellsworth's robust support network, designed to give business owners the best chance for success. The City of Ellsworth, Ellsworth Business Development Corporation, Ellsworth Area Chamber of Commerce, and Heart of Ellsworth work together to promote the City of Ellsworth as an economically, socially, and culturally vital community that serves the region through providing an exceptional place for business, leisure, and life. When you're ready, reach out—we're here to help you grow and succeed.



Ellsworth Business Development Corporation

Contact: ellsworthbdc@gmail.com



Ellsworth Area Chamber of Commerce

Contact: info@ellsworthchamber.org



Heart of Ellsworth

Contact: info@heartofellsworth.org

(207)812-4164



City of Ellsworth, Maine

Contact: (207)667-2563



WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!

Our team is here to support and help you with all of your transition needs and questions. The Ellsworth community prides itself for being caring, friendly, and inviting. We will welcome you here with open arms and assist you with getting acclimated in your new home. If you are thinking of moving or growing your business here in Ellsworth, we will provide assistance not only to the business owner, but also to their employees and their families. If you are ready to learn more about all that Ellsworth has to offer, explore Discover Ellsworth today at: discoverellsworth.com



DISCOVER ELLSWORTH

LIVE WORK EXPLORE





YOUR NOTES

What's next for your business journey?

Who else do you need to speak with?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 28 horizontal grey lines spaced evenly apart, typical of standard notebook paper. The lines extend across the entire width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical lines, text, or other markings present.

LEAN BUSINESS PLAN TEMPLATE

Your business plan on one page.

IDENTITY

PROBLEM WORTH SOLVING	OUR SOLUTION
TARGET MARKET	THE COMPETITION
SALES CHANNELS	MARKETING ACTIVITIES
REVENUE	EXPENSES

MILESTONES

TEAM AND KEY ROLES	PARTNERS AND RESOURCES
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An example lean business plan is available on the U.S. Small Business Administration website:
<https://www.sba.gov/document/support-andrews-business-plan-template-lean>



DISCOVER ELLSWORTH