



## 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:

- In-class training (mostly virtual) with experts in their fields on all aspects of running a small business.
- Training and assistance in writing a business plan and cash flow projections (that may help you obtain traditional financing in the future).
- 1:1 business coaching sessions with a Business Advisor.
- Individual and group mentorship opportunities.
- An opportunity to receive up to \$5,000 in micro-grant financing.
- An opportunity to build your 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 2025.

### Limited Spaces Available

While the Starter Company Plus program is open to all eligible individuals, it is a training and mentoring initiative geared towards assisting those in need of business knowledge and support. Approval into the Starter Company Plus program is a competitive process, and not all applicants will be accepted. As the program aims to address local and regional economic development needs, Huron County Economic Development may prioritize participation based on specific industries and sectors.

### 2025 Intake Schedule:

Key Dates	
Activity	Dates
Enrollment Open	July 1-31
Applicant Interviews	August 5-15
Participant Confirmation Process	August 22-29
Kick-Off Event	September 4
Business Training Sessions	September 4 - November 13 ( <i>weekly on Thursdays</i> )
1:1 Business Advisory Sessions x 4	September, October, November (2)
Business Plan – First Draft Deadline	October 1 ( <i>feedback provided in 1:1 consultations</i> )
Business Plan – Second Draft Deadline (Optional)	November 1 ( <i>feedback provided in 1:1 consultations</i> )
Business Plan Package – FINAL Deadline	November 14 at 12:00pm
Pitch Presentations	November 26-27 (exact date and time TBC)
Wrap-Up Event and Grant Awards Presentations	December 10

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 2026). This process is in place to help businesses succeed and is a provincial funding requirement.

### Business Training/Networking Sessions

Most business training sessions will be held virtually, unless otherwise indicated.

Date	Time	Business Workshop Training Topic
September 4 ***In-Person	9:00am – 12:30pm Lunch provided	Kick-off Event + “How to Write a Business Plan”
September 11	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Market Research”
September 18	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Business Operations – Part 1”
September 25	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Business Operations – Part 2”
October 2	9:00 am – 11:00am	“Time Management & Costing”
October 9	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Cash Flow & Financial Planning”
October 16 ***In-Person	9:00 am – 11:30 am Refreshments provided	“Business Financials – Bookkeeping Best Practices” + Peer-to-Peer Learning/Networking
October 23	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Business Sales and Customer Service”
October 30	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Marketing and Content Creation”
November 6	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Digital Marketing”
November 13	9:00 am – 11:00 am	“Pitching Your Business”
December 11 ***In-Person (location TBD)	9:00 am – 12:30 pm	Wrap-Up Event and Grant Awards Presentations

All in-person events will take place at the Huron County Economic Development Department, located at 57 Napier Street in Goderich on the main floor (unless otherwise noted). Parking is located behind the building, off Gloucester Terrace – you can walk along the side of the building to the main entrance.

A program training schedule outlining training specifics will be provided to all successful applicants ahead of the beginning of the program.

### Business Advisory/Mentorship Sessions

Throughout the program, the participant must partake 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 1 and November 1

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.

- First Draft – Due October 1
- Second Draft – Due November 1 (*optional*)

## Final Business Plan Package Submission – Due November 14 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 26-27 (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:

All Starter Company Plus program participants must be able to attend all in-person sessions, training workshops, networking opportunities, advisory, and mentorship sessions. Participants must be willing to commit an average of 25 hours a week to the development and/or operation of their business during the program period and beyond.

Participants must also provide a 10-minute pitch in order to be eligible to receive funds.

*Note: If you do not complete all elements of the program, you could be disqualified from the program at any time.*

## 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 2025).

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 2026, as long as 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](#).