



Catering Startup Roadmap



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✓ Plan Your Business

Create a business plan for your catering business.

The business plan is a written, viable plan of action to guide your success.

[Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina has great resources to help with your business plan.](#)

Determine your business legal structure.

Before selecting a business structure, consult your attorney and/or accountant as each structure carries with it unique legal and tax consequences.

Register your business.

Your business must be registered. It's a good idea to [perform a name search online](#) or in office to determine if the proposed business name has already been filed. If you've [organized as an LLC register with the N.C. Secretary of State](#). [Corporations also register with North Carolina](#) as well.

If you're organized as a sole proprietorship or general partnership, [file with the Durham County Register of Deeds](#) and pay the \$26 file fee.

Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS.

Also known as a Federal Tax ID Number, you'll need an EIN if you will be hiring employees, forming a partnership, or corporation. [Read more about EINs and apply online for yours with the IRS.](#)

Sign up for a State Tax ID.

To collect sales and use taxes, [you'll need to register the N.C. Department of Revenue](#). You will receive information from the Department of Revenue on sales and use tax reporting and remittance requirements.

Learn about financial resources available.

Small business owners in North Carolina have [financial resources available at the federal level and right here in North Carolina.](#)

Business Resources

Business Planning

<https://edpnc.com/start-or-grow-a-business/start-a-business/small-business-resources/>

Legal Structure

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/launch/choose-business-structure-types-chart>

EIN Info & Application

<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online>

Business Name Search

<http://www.sosnc.gov/search/index/corp>

LLC State Registration

<https://edpnc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Limited-Liability-Company-Articles-of-Organization.pdf>

Corporation State Registration

<https://edpnc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Instructions-for-Filing-Corporation-Articles-of-Incorporation.pdf>

County Register of Deeds

<https://www.dconnc.gov/county-departments/departments-f-z/register-of-deeds>

NC Department of Revenue

<https://eservices.dor.nc.gov/ncbusreg/>

Financial Resources (Federal)

<https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs>

Financial Resources (State)

<https://edpnc.com/start-or-grow-a-business/start-a-business/small-business-resources/#sec2>

Plan Your Location

Find a location zoned for your catering business.

The [Unified Development Ordinance \(UDO\)](#) designates zoning of properties in Durham. Use the [Zoning Atlas](#) to find properties with the zoning you need.

Confirm zoning for the location you want.

Send a “[Business Zoning Verification Form](#)” to the City of Durham/Durham County Planning Department. You can also visit the Development Services Center at Durham City Hall.

Choose your design professionals.

Depending on the type of construction, you may need to hire a licensed professional. Contact City of Durham/Durham County Planning Department to determine if you will need to do so.

Check if your location will require historic review.

Some locations and buildings need to have [renovations reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission](#) (HPC).

Complete and sign your lease.

To avoid common pitfalls, it is best to review the lease with your attorney.

Location Resources

UDO Uses & Zones

<http://www.codepublishing.com/NC/Durham/#/5.1.html>

Zoning Atlas

<http://durhamnc.gov/423/Zoning-Atlas>

Zoning Form

<http://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2674/Business-Verification-Letters-PDF>

Historic Locations

<http://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1347/Work-Requiring-a-Certificate-of-Appropriateness-with-Classification-Chart-PDF>

Develop Your Space

Learn about the City's Development Review Process.

Development Review Section of the Durham [City-County Planning Department](#) reviews plans and serves as case managers for projects.

Obtain a building permit.

Have your general contractor [start the building permit process with City/County inspections](#). Your general contractor can [expedite the plan review process by submitting plan documents digitally](#).

Monitor your progress.

Stay current with the [progress of your building plan review status, permits, and Certificates of Compliance online](#).

Apply for a sign permit.

Prior to installation, [a sign permit must be issued per Unified Development Ordinance \(UDO\)](#). Both permanent and temporary signs require permits.

Contact the fire department.

To ensure your building meets the N.C. Fire Code, you should [contact the Durham Fire Department](#). Note: A Change of Use will require a full inspection.

Space Resources

City-County Planning

<https://www.durhamnc.gov/338/City-County-Planning>

Building Permit

<http://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/983/Building-Application-Form-PDF>

Submit & Monitor Plans

<http://durhamnc.gov/467/Dplans>

Monitor Permit Progress

<https://ldo4.durhamnc.gov/durhamweb/>

Sign Permits

<http://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10717/Sign-Permit-Application-and-Checklist>

Fire Department

<http://durhamnc.gov/620/Fire-Department>

Complete the New Food Service Establishment Plan Review Application.

Then submit it to County that includes the [menu, scaled drawing, specification sheets for new equipment, and the required fee](#). Plan on a response within two weeks.

Review the mobile food unit requirements.

Durham County Health Department has [specific requirements for mobile food units](#).

Ensure one employee is a certified food protection manager.

Review the [North Carolina Food Code Manual](#) for details.

Complete a Shared Use Kitchen Agreement.

[This agreement for shared use kitchens is a required part of your plan](#) for Durham County Health Department.

Verify N.C. Food Rules Compliance

Understand the [rules around food protection and sanitation](#).

Complete a Catering Plan Review.

Durham County Public Health has to review your plan. Before that can happen you need to submit your [Catering Plan Review Application](#).

Contact Durham County Environmental Health Division.

Call (919) 560-7800 at least 5 but not more than 30 business days prior to projected opening date to schedule the permitting evaluation.

Food Resources

County Privilege License

<https://www.dcopublichealth.org/home/showpublisheddocument/29874/637133091120930000>

New Establishment Review

<https://www.dcopublichealth.org/services/environmental-health/forms-applications>

N.C. Food Service Establishment Rules

<https://www.dcopublichealth.org/services/environmental-health/forms-applications>

Food Code Manual

<http://ehs.ncpublichealth.com/faf/docs/foodprot/NC-FoodCodeManual-2009-FINAL.pdf>

Catering Plan Review

<https://www.dcopublichealth.org/services/environmental-health/forms-applications>

Shared Use Kitchen Permits

<https://www.dcopublichealth.org/services/environmental-health/forms-applications>

Renovation Plan Review

<https://www.dcopublichealth.org/services/environmental-health/forms-applications>

Alcohol Regulations

If your business will engage in the selling of alcohol, you should:

- Learn more [about applying for ABC Permits](#)
- Apply for an [ABC Retail Permit](#) by submitting application
- Complete [Local Government Opinion 001](#)
- Complete [Local Government Opinion 002](#)
- Complete [Proof of Alcohol Training Form](#)
- Complete [Recycling Compliance Form](#)
- Obtain a [County Beverage License](#)

Alcohol Resources

ABC Permits - Learn

<http://abc.nc.gov/Permit/Apply>

ABC Permits - Apply

[https://portal.abc.nc.gov/Public%20Web%20Documents/Divisions/Permits/Retail/1.%20Retail%20Permit%20Application%20and%20Forms/Application%20for%20ABC%20Retail%20Permit\(s\).pdf](https://portal.abc.nc.gov/Public%20Web%20Documents/Divisions/Permits/Retail/1.%20Retail%20Permit%20Application%20and%20Forms/Application%20for%20ABC%20Retail%20Permit(s).pdf)

Local Gov't 001

[https://portal.abc.nc.gov/Public%20Web%20Documents/Divisions/Permits/Retail/1.%20Retail%20Permit%20Application%20and%20Forms/Local%20Government%20Opinion%20\(A%20link%20to%20Designated%20Opinion%20Contacts%20is%20provided%20on%20the%20Permits%20page\).pdf](https://portal.abc.nc.gov/Public%20Web%20Documents/Divisions/Permits/Retail/1.%20Retail%20Permit%20Application%20and%20Forms/Local%20Government%20Opinion%20(A%20link%20to%20Designated%20Opinion%20Contacts%20is%20provided%20on%20the%20Permits%20page).pdf)

Local Gov't 002

<https://portal.abc.nc.gov/Public%20Web%20Documents/Divisions/Permits/Retail/1.%20Retail%20Permit%20Application%20and%20Forms/InspectionZoning%20Compliance%20Form.pdf>

Proof of Training

<https://portal.abc.nc.gov/Public%20Web%20Documents/Divisions/Permits/Retail/1.%20Retail%20Permit%20Application%20and%20Forms/Proof%20of%20Alcohol%20Seller%20Server%20Training.pdf>

Recycling Compliance

[https://portal.abc.nc.gov/Public%20Web%20Documents/Divisions/Permits/Retail/1.%20Retail%20Permit%20Application%20and%20Forms/Recycling%20Compliance%20Form%20\(Application\).pdf](https://portal.abc.nc.gov/Public%20Web%20Documents/Divisions/Permits/Retail/1.%20Retail%20Permit%20Application%20and%20Forms/Recycling%20Compliance%20Form%20(Application).pdf)

County Beverage License

<https://www.dconc.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/27166/636818657994700000>

Employer Requirements

Hire employees.

The [Durham NCWorks Career Center](#) can help you find the talented [workers](#) you need for your Catering Business.

Check if you need unemployment insurance.

Use the [Division of Employment Security's site](#) to see if you need to comply.

Obtain Workers' Compensation Insurance.

For 3 or more employees, you'll likely need workers' compensation insurance. [Learn more at N.C. Industrial Commission.](#)

Complete Federal Form I-9.

[Form I-9](#) is used for verifying the identity and employment authorization of individuals hired for employment in the United States.

Employer Resources

Find Workers

<https://durhamnc.gov/572/NCWorks-Career-Center>

Unemployment Insurance

<https://des.nc.gov/DES>

Worker's Comp

<http://www.ic.nc.gov/>

Form I-9

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-9>

Plan Your Opening

Open a business bank account.

[Business banking offers limited personal liability protection](#) by keeping your business funds separate from your personal funds.

Create a marketing plan.

The Small Business Administration can help you with a [sample marketing plan](#).

Place your business on Google.

[Listing your business with Google](#) is an important step today.

Opening Resources

Banking

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/launch/open-business-bank-account-fees-benefits>

Sample Marketing Plan

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/manage-your-business/marketing-sales>

Google Business

<https://www.gybo.com>

Staying Successful + Resources

Post required state and federal posters and permits.

You can [print required posters for free from the N.C. Dept. of Labor](#).

Prepare for inspections.

Once permitted the establishment is inspected on a regular basis. Regular inspections and visits are not announced or scheduled. Ensure food service workers are following required laws and have good hygiene.

Learn about business recordkeeping.

As a new business owner, you need to know your [federal tax responsibilities](#).

Prepare for taxes.

The [N.C. Dept of Revenue](#) holds regular [Tax Seminars](#) throughout the year.

Other resource partners

- [Small Business Center at Durham Tech](#)
- [Small Business Technology & Development Center](#)
- [The Institute](#)
- [Durham Small Business Advisory Committee](#)
- [Durham E3](#)

General Resources

Required Posters

<https://www.labor.nc.gov/safety-and-health/publications/state-and-federal-workplace-poster-requirements/free-ncdol-labor-law-poster-order-form>

Federal Tax

<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p583.pdf>

N.C. Tax Seminars

<https://www.ncdor.gov/business-and-income-tax-seminars>

Durham Tech

<https://www.durhamtech.edu/sbc/>

Tech & Development Center

<http://www.sbtcd.org/offices/nccu/>

The Institute

<http://www.theinstitutenc.org/>

Small Business Advisory

<http://durhamnc.gov/462/Small-Business-Advisory-Committee>

Durham E3

<https://forwardcities.org/ecosystems/e3durham/>

Connect for Additional Assistance



**ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**
CITY OF DURHAM

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