



# STARTING A BUSINESS IN BEDFORD

## Step by Step Guide

This Guide is designed to provide a variety of information available to new and existing businesses in the Town of Bedford to help you start or grow your business. Some information on the regulations governing business in Virginia is also included. This Guide is useful when viewed online since the underlined /blue text links connect to the information referenced. Please contact us with any questions – 540-587-6021.

### **Step 1: Business Entity Creation – State Corporation Commission (SCC)**

If the business will be operated under a name other than that listed on the Town business license application, the applicant may register his/her Trade or Fictitious Name (Certificates of Assumed or Fictitious Names) with the State Corporation Commission.

<https://www.scc.virginia.gov/clk/begin.aspx>

### **Step 2: Zoning Permits – Planning and Community Development Office – [215 East Main St](#)**

All individuals or organizations wishing to start a business in the Town of Bedford must contact the Office of Planning and Community Development (540-587-6021). All businesses require a zoning permit and a business license. The type of zoning permit required will depend upon what type of business you're starting. If you're working in a commercial space, you'll need a Zoning Use permit. If you are working from your home, you will need a Home Occupation permit. If you will have a sign, you will need a sign permit.

#### **Zoning Use Permit**

A zoning use permit for occupancy is required for all businesses locating in commercial or industrial zoning areas where businesses may be permitted. Depending on what kind of changes you are making to the existing structure to accommodate your business, you may need to obtain a building permit from the [Town Building Inspection Office](#) when you need a zoning permit (540-587-6024).

Zoning Use Permits require a fee of **\$20.00 only if** the nature of the new business at your location is different from the nature of the immediately prior business at that location. For example, if you're planning on opening a bakery in a building that was a bakery before you, there is no fee. If you're opening a retail flower shop in a building that used to be a bakery, the fee would be assessed. Businesses locating in the Enterprise Zone or downtown area may have the Zoning Use Permit fee waived.

#### **Home Occupation Permit**

A home occupation permit is required for all businesses locating in residential zoning districts. The applicant is required to sign a [home occupation agreement](#) certifying that he/she agrees to comply with all Town of Bedford home occupancy permit regulations as set forth by the [Bedford Town Code](#). Home Occupation Permits require a fee of **\$25.00**.

Regardless of the type of zoning permit required, you will need to provide the following information:

1. Owner of property
2. Type of business
3. Use and intensity of business
4. Payment of all outstanding real estate taxes and other fees
5. Location
6. Name, addresses, telephone numbers and other contact information.

**Note:** If the applicant is **not** the property owner, a letter signed by the property owner allowing the operation of the business on the property must be provided with the application.

Depending on the type of business to be operated on the property (examples: professional office, beauty salon, machine shop, restaurant, etc.), other permits or licenses may be required by the Commonwealth, the County, or other agencies. Some types of business may require a building permit and inspection. If you're unsure, please contact the [Town Building Inspection Office](#).

All food-related businesses (service or manufacturing) must contact the [Health Department](#) (540-586-7952) and the [US Department of Agriculture](#) prior to the application for Zoning Use Permits to ensure Health and USDA requirements are met. Some food services may require grease control measures by the [Bedford Regional Water Authority](#) (540-586-7679 ext. 4). For those businesses selling prepared food and beverages, meals taxes must also be paid to the Town Treasurer's Office in Town Hall (540-587-6057).

State law requires that individuals or organizations in the construction industry may be required to have a Class A, B or C contractor's license issued through the [Virginia Department of Professional & Occupational Regulation](#) (DPOR) depending upon the type of work performed.

Applicants for [Home Occupation or Zoning Use Permits](#) can fill out and print the application from the online link or apply in person at the Town of Bedford Office of Planning and Community Development (215 East Main Street). When in doubt, call prior to visiting the Office to ensure all application requirements can be met at that time. You can find the [business license application](#) on our website to print and fill out ahead of time to bring with you.

### **Sign Permit**

A sign permit is required when putting up a sign advertising any product or service. When applying for this permit, please bring information about the sign dimensions, location, how it's to be mounted, if it is lighted, and roughly what type of sign it is. The fee for a sign permit is **\$50.00**. Banners and "sail" or "fin" signs are generally not permitted.

### **Step 3: Business License – Planning & Community Development Office**

After getting a permit for Zoning, the next step is to get an annual business license from the Town. This is also done in the Office of Planning and Community Development. The annual fee for a business license in the Town of Bedford is **\$30.00** regardless of type of business. Businesses locating in the Enterprise Zone or downtown area may have the business license fee waived the first year. The Town accepts credit cards, cash, checks or money orders for the payment of business license and zoning permit fees.

Information required on a [Business License Application](#) includes:

1. Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) or Social Security Number
2. Sales Tax Account Number (if required)
3. Applicant name
4. Trade name
5. Mailing address
6. Physical address (location of the business)
7. Type of operation
8. Telephone numbers
9. Contact person

We expect that the total process (zoning permit, sign permit, and business license) would take 45 – 60 minutes if all required documentation and fees are provided.

### **Other Business Registrations:**

You can obtain a Federal Employer ID Number (FEIN) directly from the IRS online at [www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online). If selling items at retail, you will need to register with the State of Virginia to pay sales tax of 5.3%: [www.tax.virginia.gov/retail-sales-and-use-tax](http://www.tax.virginia.gov/retail-sales-and-use-tax). Use caution and make sure you use the official government websites; these should be free except for required registration fees. In addition, the Bedford County Commissioner's office has federal, state and local tax forms for individuals and businesses.

### **Additional Resources & Contact Information**

For information on water and sewer connections and fees, please contact the [Bedford Regional Water Authority](#) (540-586-7679 ext. 4). For electric service billing connections, please contact the Town Finance Department at (540-587-6047). For new electric meter service, contact the [Town of Bedford Electric Department](#) at (540-587-6071).

The [Town Economic Development Office](#) has many resources and can help you get started here in Bedford. If you locate your business in the Enterprise Zone or the downtown area, there may be property improvement incentives available through the Economic Development Office.

Planning & Building Inspection Office  
215 East Main Street, Town Hall  
Bedford, VA 24523  
Phone: 540-587-6021

Economic Development Office  
215 East Main Street, Town Hall  
Bedford, VA 24523  
Phone: 540-587-6006  
[www.betterinbedford.com](http://www.betterinbedford.com)

You may wish to consider joining the [Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce](#), the [Central Virginia Business Coalition](#), the [Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance](#), or the [Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce](#). Especially for restaurants and service providers that need to reach tourists in town, you may wish to contact the [Bedford Welcome Center](#).

### **Town Demographics at a Glance**

- ∂ Total Population – 6,642 (2021 US Census estimate)
- ∂ Median Age – 38.7 (2020 American Community Survey)
- ∂ Persons per square mile – 763 (2020 US Census)
- ∂ Mean Travel Time to Work – 23.2 minutes (2016-2020 American Community Survey)
- ∂ Civilian Labor Force – 3,051 (2016-2020 American Community Survey)
- ∂ Unemployment Rate – 2.5% (Bedford County – 2019)
- ∂ Median Household Income – \$40,263 (2020 US Census)

Sources:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/bedfordtownvirginia,bedfordcountyvirginia/PST045221>  
[Virginia Career Works – Central Virginia through JobsEQ](#) (statistics)