

Lawn Care to Landscaping

Starting your business



MAINE SMALL BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

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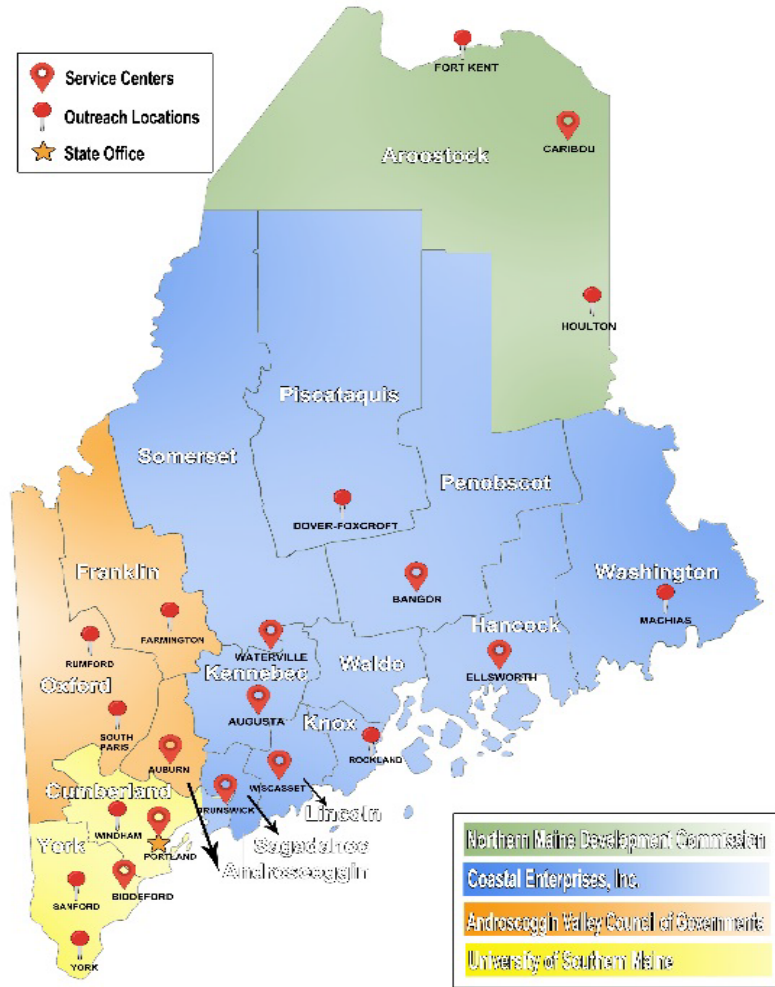


What does the Maine SBDC do?

Provides no-cost and confidential business advising to current and aspiring Maine business owners!

- Business Planning and Startups
- Business Transitions and Exits
- Assistance with Credit and Financing
- Financial Analysis
- Marketing and Sales
- Operations Management
- Much More!





There is an Advisor near you!

14 Professional Business Advisers
Locations Throughout the State of Maine
(with additional outreach locations)

- Request Advising:
<https://www.mainesbdc.org/advising/>

Housekeeping

- This is being recorded if you prefer to have your camera off.
- It will be emailed to you within a week after the presentation.
- Please have audio on mute.
- Submit any questions in the chat.



Overview

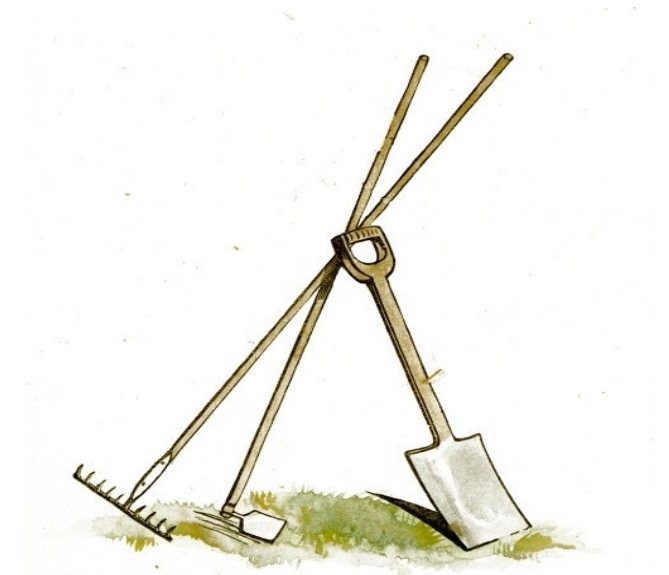
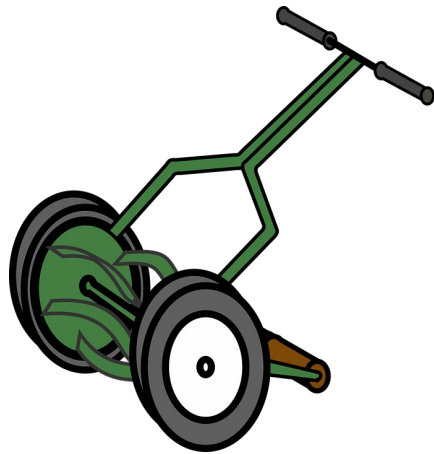
1. The Business Plan -
2. Naming
3. Licensing and insurance
4. Contact information
5. Equipment Needs & Maintenance plans
6. Attracting clients
7. Pricing, Quoting jobs and invoicing / Getting Paid
8. Taking it to the next Level – Landscaping & Hardscaping
9. Education and experience
10. Hiring staff
11. Expanding the business

Why a business plan is important

- Clarity – Why are you doing this business and what do you want to accomplish with it
- Understanding - your market and competition
- Organization – Keeps you on track (revenue forecasting, expense projection)
- Confirm the Math – Is it a viable endeavor , will you make money
- Hold yourself accountable – using a business plan guide you work through all of the what if's
- [Writing a Business Plan Playlist](#) - & [Business Planning Guide](#)

Sprout's Lawn Care Company

- Choose a name that is catchy and easy for people to remember
- When thinking about a logo, keep it simple and recognizable to your business



What Entity

- **Sole Proprietor** – Requires the least amount of work to setup
- Register the business with your local town costs varies from \$0 to \$100 and usually it is a one time fee .
- You are the business: your social security number is on the accounts,
- You do not need a separate bank account,
- You are personally liable
- [Business Entities & Legal Structures Playlist](#) (4 videos)

Entities Continued

- **LLC** – Register with the state (some steps involved) pay \$175 plus an annual filing fee of \$85
- Apply for EIN from the IRS, this is FREE!
- Create a separate bank account using the EIN and keep the accounts separate. The company is liable, *not you personally
- **S-Corp** - The state of Maine charges a \$145 filing fee for Articles of Incorporation, annual report is \$85. Need to name company directors, draft bylaws and articles of incorporation, issue stock, have annual meeting, have a registered agent. Pay yourself a reasonable salary. Average \$1,400 for legal work to form the corporation



Licensing

- Generally, you don't need a license to start a lawn care or landscaping business.
- If you plan to work with pesticides you'll need a **Commercial Applicator / master certification** from the Board of Pesticides Control, Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
- **Arborist license.** Candidates for an arborist license must pass a test in either landscape, utility or both categories demonstrating knowledge, skill and capability to safely and professionally provide arborist services to the public and demonstrate proof of adequate insurance.
- <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/arborist/licensing.shtml>

Insurance

- It doesn't cost very much, but it will save you a lot of headaches
- **General Liability Insurance:** guards you against lawsuits from clients, protecting you and your lawn care business against multiple forms of negligence.
- **Property Insurance** - Property insurance protects the premises, furniture, and other business equipment like phones, computers, copiers, and cabinets.
- **ME Commercial Auto Insurance** - Regular auto insurance will not cover accidents that occur when using vehicle for commercial operation such as towing your equipment
- **Workers' Compensation Insurance** - is a requirement for your employees

Equipment



\$4,700



\$1,800 - \$3,000



\$199 - \$700



\$340



\$269



\$379

Preventive Maintenance

Check Air Filter

Spark Plugs

Check Oil Level

Check mower blades

Check belts

Clean the deck

Clean all tools

Recharge batteries

Stabilize Fuel

BOUND EDGE			8/13						
Equipment Safety Inspection & Repair Report									
Company _____				Date _____					
Location _____				Shift _____					
Job # _____				Job Name _____					
Equipment # _____				Type _____					
Hour Meter _____				Mileage _____					
N/A = NOT APPLICABLE			OK = NO REPAIRS NEEDED			RR = REQUIRES REPAIR			
Outside			Engine Compartment			Inside Cab (continued)			
NA	OK	RR	NA	OK	RR	NA	OK	RR	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Battery Cable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Glass (all sides)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steps/Hand Rails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fan Belt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mirror
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tires/Tracks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hoses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Roll Over Protection
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exhaust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Air Filter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Seat Belt/Seat
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fenders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Guards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steering
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bucket	Inside Cab			Fluids		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cutting Edge/Teeth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brakes, Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Visible Leaks
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lifting Mechanism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brakes, Parking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oil Level/Pressure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hoses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Backup Alarm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coolant Level (check only when equipment is COLD)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fittings Greased	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire Extinguisher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hydraulic Oil Level
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hitch/Coupler	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gauges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transmission Fluid Level
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wipers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Horn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fuel Level
				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hydraulic Controls			
Explanation of Defects _____									

_____ Repairs or adjustments needed _____ Repairs or adjustments NOT needed for safe equipment operation									
Operator's Signature _____									
_____ Repairs or adjustments if needed COMPLETED by									
Mechanic's Signature _____ Date _____									
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27348									



How will customers find you?

- Setup an email account
- Create a Facebook page
- Website – Squarespace, Go Daddy, Wix, Blue Host
<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/free-website-builders>
- Google My Business page – it's free and a great way for customers to find you!
- Business Phone – voicemail should say your business name
- Print – be consistent with invoices, business cards, marketing items such as pens, magnets, key chains, etc.

Attracting Clients

- Mailing to your target area starting at \$60 per thousand
- Lawn signs – corrugated plastic signs cost \$5- \$9 each. Owner permission, allowed public spaces
- Social Media – Your online reviews play a big role in whether someone chooses to hire you or not. Ask for reviews
- Vehicle – Get it wrapped
- Local Bulletin board – In stores & Virtual , such as town community pages, and Facebook groups
- Referral program – Ask current customers. Create a program



Quoting a Job & Taking Payment

- Know how much you expect to pay yourself and employees
- Factor in your overhead expenses
- The difficulty of the job
- The distance from your business
- How many hours will it take
- Make a profit
- Replacement cost
- Software programs such as QuickBooks, Jobber, RazorSync, WorkWave, House Call Pro
- Takes time to set up
- Keeping track of quotes, invoices, and manage clients in the beginning will have you organized and ready once your business takes off.
- The longer you wait, the more time you'll have to invest in moving your growing client list data over to your software system.

Specialized Pricing

- Keep in mind that your hourly rate and service rates may change over time depending on your service area and business needs.
- For example, you may need to adjust pricing if:
- You offer packages like mowing, trimming, and watering during the summer months, and biweekly snow removal or less intensive lawn services in the winter
- The job is out of your normal scope and requires more work than your initial terms of service stated
- The jobsite is farther away so it costs more in gas
- The cost of the supplies for a particular job like fertilization or herbicide applications
- You want to target specific neighborhoods by offering a group rate
- The job or client has specific needs outside of your usual scope, for example the yard is in rough shape or the client needs a job done with short notice
- You want to offer discounts or special rates for marketing promotions

Adding Landscaping Services



Education

- Work Experience
- Adult Education through local town
- Books & Online courses
- Local garden centers & Home Depot
- Garden Mentorship – UMAINE Cooperative Extension
- Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens – certificate in Native plants & ecological horticulture
- SMCC – Associates degree Horticulture
- UMAINE – B.S. Environmental Horticulture & Landscape design



More Tools



Hardscape refers to hard landscape materials in the built environment structures



Hardscaping Job Skills

- Knowledge of standard construction practices and basic understanding of electricity, piping and plumbing
- Strong oral and written communication skills, math skills, job planning skills and mechanical aptitude are a must.
- Read & execute blueprints.
- Retaining wall, walkway, raised patio and outdoor kitchen installation
- Masonry and veneer work is a plus
- Recognize plant material
- Operate/use all landscape tools & equipment effectively.
- Operate skid-steer & mini-excavators effectively

Next Investment

- Personal Protective Gear / steel toe boots, dusk masks, gloves, safety glasses, hear protection
- Hand tools/ tape measure, level, string line, stakes, hand tamper, rubber mallet, hammer, chisel, caulking gun, push broom
- Power tools/ Masonry Saw, plate compactor, reciprocating saw, angle grinder, drill, block cutter
- Big Equipment / Backhoe, bulldozer, excavator, skid-steer loader

Renting vs Buying

Skid steer \$300 per day



\$15,000 to \$50,000

Mini excavator \$200 per day



\$10,000 to \$30,000



Hiring Workers

- [Hiring Employee Basics](#)
- Plan for the future – as your business is starting to grow
- Job description – have a detailed outline with expectations
- Online job boards – 79% of job seekers search online
- Onboarding – Employee handbook ready, I9s, W-2s, and all documents
- Training – the more time you spend training the better outcome for the employee and the customer
- Empower – should be able to solve problems
- Bonus – Seasonal work it's hard to get them to stay and come back so incentivize the position. Easier to keep a good employee then train a new one

Business Owner Requirements

- Transparency Act
[FinCEN's Small Business Entity Compliance Guide](#)
- Maine Retirement Plan
<https://meritsaves.org/>
- Maine PTO
[Maine Earned Paid Leave](#)
- Maine FMLA (2025)
[Paid Family Medical Leave](#)
- Minimum Wage 2024
 - Maine \$14.15
 - Portland \$15.00
 - Rockland \$15.00

Growing the Business

- Keep a schedule
- Communicate with clients
- Create a portfolio
- Fall clean up
- Spring refreshing
- Plowing



We are here to help you succeed



ASKING FOR HELP

