

A Guide To  
**STARTING A  
BUSINESS IN  
MINNESOTA**

**Minnesota Small  
Business Assistance  
Office**

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Minnesota Department  
of Employment and Economic  
Development

*A Guide To Starting a Business in Minnesota* is updated annually.

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# **A Guide To STARTING A BUSINESS IN MINNESOTA**

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Twenty-eighth Edition, January 2010

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## **PREFACE**

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This twenty-eighth edition of *A Guide to Starting a Business in Minnesota*, like its predecessors, is intended to provide a concise, summary discussion of the major issues faced by those starting a business in Minnesota. This edition of the Guide contains three major sections: the narrative text; a Resource Directory, which provides addresses and telephone numbers of organizations referenced in the text; and the Directory of Licenses and Permits, which lists all business licenses and permits required by the State of Minnesota, the state agency which issues or administers the license or permit, and a telephone number for obtaining more information. Topics presented in the narrative text are presented in the order in which the new business owner typically must address them. Note that a business that will have operations or a physical presence (with the possible inclusion of an Internet presence) in another state should check with the government authorities in that state to obtain information on licensing, tax and other issues. We hope this organization is useful.

While no one publication can answer every question for every kind of proposed business, this Guide does respond to the questions and concerns most frequently raised. While it tries to be both timely and comprehensive, this Guide is not intended as a final statement on any one subject. In particular, users should be aware that the formal legal requirements for business start-up and operations may change from time to time. Specific updates and additional information may be obtained from the many sources listed.

Before engaging in any business venture, it is advisable to seek both legal counsel and advice from an accountant. Both professionals can advise you as to the best course you might take in establishing your business. The information provided in this Guide is not intended to replace that kind of advice and assistance.

We would like to thank Millie Caballero for her numerous contributions to the compilation of this Guide.

Charles A. Schaffer  
Madeline Harris  
Mark Simmer

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Preface .....	i
Choosing the Form of Business Organization .....	1
Tax and Non-Tax Considerations .....	1
Naming the Business Entity .....	29
Forming a Sole Proprietorship .....	36
Forming a Partnership .....	36
Forming a Minnesota Business Corporation .....	41
Forming a Minnesota Limited Liability Company .....	47
Special Types of Business Organizations .....	53
Filing Documents with the Secretary of State .....	58
Secretary of State Fee Schedule .....	60
Regulatory Considerations .....	65
Securities Registration .....	65
Franchise Registration .....	70
Evaluating a Business Opportunity .....	72
Business Licenses and Permits .....	74
Environmental Protection Programs .....	77
Access to the Regulatory Process .....	96
Intellectual Property Protection .....	99
Basic Types of Intellectual Property Protection .....	99
Patent Protection .....	99
Practical Considerations .....	105
Trademark Protection .....	112
Copyright Protection .....	116
Trade Secret Protection .....	118
Commonly Asked Questions Concerning Intellectual Property .....	119
Patent Depository Library .....	123
Business Plan .....	125
Accounting for the New Business .....	130
Basic Accounting Principles .....	130
Income Forecasting Techniques .....	131
Business Grants .....	136
Business Loans .....	137
Public Sources of Financing – Federal Programs .....	139
Public Sources of Financing – State Programs .....	150
Public Sources of Financing – Local Programs .....	155
Private Sources of Funds .....	155
Insurance .....	157

Issues for Employers.....	160
Who is an Employee? .....	160
Employment Agreements .....	165
Labor Standards .....	166
Rest Breaks and Leave Time.....	183
Employee Testing and Background Checks.....	188
Employment of Minors .....	192
Protection of Employees Who Report Violations of Law .....	195
Human Rights .....	196
Immigration Law Compliance .....	204
Occupational Safety and Health .....	205
Workers' Compensation .....	212
Employee Benefits .....	218
Plant Closings.....	221
Poster Requirements.....	222
Checklist for Hiring an Employee .....	224
Business Taxes .....	233
Tax Identification Numbers.....	235
Business Income Tax Returns.....	238
Sales and Use Tax.....	245
FICA Tax.....	251
Income Tax Withholding.....	252
Successor Liability for Certain Taxes When a Business or its Assets are Transferred .....	259
Revocation or Prevention of License Issuance or Renewal .....	260
Unemployment Taxes.....	261
Federal Tax Requirements .....	269
State of Minnesota Tax Requirements.....	270
Sources of Information and Assistance .....	272
State Programs.....	272
Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office .....	272
Small Business Development Centers.....	273
Minnesota Trade Office .....	274
Vocational Rehabilitation Services .....	275
Employment and Training Programs .....	276
Minnesota Extension Service.....	277
Minnesota Job Skills Partnership.....	277
Dislocated Worker Program.....	278
Government Procurement Assistance.....	278
Accounting and Tax Assistance .....	284
Libraries .....	286
Additional Sources of Assistance .....	291
Specialized Legal Research and Assistance .....	291
Management Assistance for Minority Businesses.....	291
Incubators.....	291
Inventors Resources.....	292
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) .....	292
Regional Development Commissions.....	292
Trade Information Center .....	293
SCORE Offices .....	293
Business Planning Center .....	294

Women' Business Centers .....	296
Resource Directory .....	299
Cooperatives .....	301
Environmental.....	301
Export / Import Assistance .....	301
Financing, Federal Sources .....	301
Financing, State Sources .....	303
Financing, Local Sources.....	304
Financing, Private Sources .....	306
Government, Federal.....	307
Government, State .....	310
Government, Regional .....	319
Insurance .....	319
Inventors .....	320
Job Service and Job Training.....	320
Legal Assistance .....	322
Libraries .....	323
Local Assistance for Small Businesses .....	327
Management Assistance, General .....	328
Management Assistance for Minority Businesses.....	331
Procurement Assistance/Purchasing/Certification Assistance .....	332
Tax and Accounting Assistance .....	334
Additional Resources .....	335
Directory of Licenses and Permits.....	341
Index .....	371

# CHOOSING THE FORM OF BUSINESS ORGANIZATION

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## TAX AND NON-TAX CONSIDERATIONS

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### INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental initial decisions a new business owner faces is choosing the form of organization for the business. Generally speaking, a person should consider himself or herself to be “in business” once they have begun the operation of an activity for which they expect to be paid. This is true whether or not that person terminates other employment (such as a job that brings a paycheck), or intends to operate that business on a seasonal or short-term basis. For most businesses, the choices are:

**Sole Proprietorship.** In a **sole proprietorship**, the business is owned and controlled by one individual. This person alone receives the profits and bears the losses from the business, and this person alone is responsible for the debts and obligations of the business. Income and expenses of the business are reported on the proprietor’s individual income tax return, and profits are taxed at the proprietor’s individual income tax rate. If a husband and wife wish to own a business together, they must either form a partnership, corporation or limited liability company (in order to have each of them be an owner of the business) or a sole proprietorship (in which case only one of them will be an owner of the business).

Effective with tax years beginning after December 31, 2006, a married couple who jointly operate an unincorporated business and who file a joint federal income tax return may have a qualified joint venture and can elect not to be treated as a partnership for federal tax purposes provided that the husband and wife are the only members of the joint venture and that both husband and wife materially participate in the running of the business. In this case each spouse will report his or her share as a sole proprietorship.

**Partnership.** A **general partnership** is a business owned by two or more persons who associate to carry on the business as a partnership. Partnerships have specific attributes, which are defined by statute. All partners in a general partnership share equally in the right, and responsibility, to manage the business, and each partner is responsible for all the debts and obligations of the business. Distribution of profits and losses, allocation of management responsibilities, and other issues affecting the partnership usually are defined in a written partnership agreement. Income and expenses of the partnership are reported on federal and state “information” tax returns, which are filed by the partnership. The partners are taxed on their respective share of the partnership’s profits at their individual income tax rates.

Minnesota partnerships are formed and governed only by the Revised Uniform Partnership Act (RUPA), Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 323A. Partnerships formed under former partnership law are now subject to this chapter. If you were formed under former laws and have not yet consulted with an attorney about the changes in partnership law, you are encouraged to do so immediately.



**Limited Liability Partnership.** A general partnership may register as a **limited liability partnership (LLP)** by filing a limited liability partnership registration. In limited liability partnerships, the personal assets of the partners are shielded against liabilities incurred by the partnership in tort or contract situations. This is different from a non-LLP general partnership, in which partners may be personally liable up to an unlimited extent for the debts and obligations of the partnership. It should be noted that limited liability partnerships are a relatively new type of entity and certain aspects, such as tax aspects, of such entities are not yet fully developed or understood.

Limited liability partnership status affords protection to the individual partner from liability for partnership obligations in tort and contract. An LLP files with the Secretary of State an annual report. There is a one-year grace period for retroactive reinstatement after revocation of LLP status for failure to file the annual report.

There is an additional provision (Minnesota Statutes section 322A.88) allowing a limited partnership to elect limited liability partnership status under Chapter 323A. This allows for limited liability protection for both general and limited partners and this type of partnership is called a limited liability limited partnership. Limited liability limited partnerships are discussed below.

A **limited partnership** is a type of partnership in which the limited partners share in the partnership's liability only up to the amount of their investment in the limited partnership. By statute, the limited partnership must have at least one general partner and one limited partner. The general partner has the right and responsibility to control the limited partnership, and is responsible for the debts and obligations of the limited partnership. In Minnesota, a limited partner may participate in the management and control of the limited partnership without losing limited liability protection but does not have the power to act for or bind the limited partnership. Limited partnerships must be established in compliance with statutory requirements, including requirements of tax and securities laws. Because of their complex nature, limited partnerships should not be undertaken without competent professional advice.

Note that a limited partnership is governed by Chapter 323A for certain matters not addressed by Chapter 322A. Chapter 322A was repealed effective June 1, 2007.

As mentioned above, limited partnerships, just like general partnerships, may elect limited liability partnership status under Chapter 323A of Minnesota Statutes. A limited partnership that does so is known as a limited liability limited partnership. In other words, a limited liability limited partnership (L.L.L.P.) is a limited partnership because it has a certificate of limited partnership on file with the Secretary of State's Office (pursuant to Chapter 322A, the Minnesota Statute dealing with limited partnerships) and it has also filed, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 322A.88, a Statement of Qualification as a limited liability partnership. In all instances, however, the partnership remains a limited partnership governed by Chapter 322A (except to the extent that Chapter 323A addresses certain matters that Chapter 322A does not), and must meet all the requirements that limited partnerships must meet.

Care should be taken in naming a limited liability limited partnership; the name must contain either, the words "limited partnership, limited liability partnership" (or the abbreviation "L.P., L.L.P." or the words "limited liability limited partnership" (or the abbreviation "L.L.L.P.")).

It is important to note that if a limited liability limited partnership chooses the L.L.L.P. designation, that partnership should also use that designation in its name as listed on its certificate of limited partnership. There are two reasons for this. First, without doing so, the Secretary of State's office might not accept the partnership's Statement of Qualification, because it is not clear that the entities are one and the same. Second, there could be questions about what standard of personal liability to apply to the partnership and the partners, and what entity is responsible for the partnership's actions, because the partnership's filings with the Secretary of State's office are inconsistent.

**Corporation.** A corporation is a separate legal entity. It is owned by one or more shareholders. The corporation must be established in compliance with the statutory requirements of the state of incorporation. The shareholders elect a board of directors which has responsibility for management and control of the corporation. Because the corporation is a separate legal entity, the corporation is responsible for the debts and obligations of the business. In most cases, shareholders are insulated from claims against the corporation.

**It is worth noting here that because a corporation is an entity separate from its owners, if the owner (and/or members of the owner's family) performs services for the corporation, these persons are considered to be employees of the corporation. Thus, the corporation will be required to comply with most of the laws and regulations and reporting requirements applicable to employers.**

The corporation, as a separate legal entity, is also a separate taxable entity. The corporation may be taxed under Subchapter C of the Internal Revenue Code (a "C corporation") or Subchapter S of the Code (an "S corporation"). Minnesota tax laws provide for comparable treatment. A C corporation reports its income and expenses on a corporation income tax return and is taxed on its profits at corporation income tax rates. The corporation income tax is sometimes called a corporate franchise tax. Profits are taxed before dividends are paid. Dividends are taxed to shareholders, who report them as income, resulting in "double taxation" of profits which are paid as dividends. If the corporation meets the statutory requirements for S corporation status, the shareholders may elect to be taxed as an S corporation. Under the Internal Revenue Code, an S corporation may have only one class of stock, no more than 100 shareholders, and no shareholders that are nonresident aliens or non-individuals (e.g., corporations, partnerships, limited liability companies) except for certain estates, trusts and certain tax exempt entities. The federal 2004 American Jobs Creation Act allows an S corporation to treat shareholders within six generations of one family as one shareholder thus allowing family business S corporations to distribute shares to family members of existing shareholders without those new shareholders being counted as new shareholders against the 100 shareholder limit. The S corporation is taxed in much the same manner as a partnership, i.e., the S corporation files an information return to report its income and expenses, but it generally is not separately taxed. Income and expenses of the S corporation "flow through" to the shareholders in proportion to their shareholdings, and profits are allocated and taxed to the shareholders at their individual tax rate. S corporations are described in more detail in later sections of this Guide.

A **closely held corporation** is any corporation whose shares are held by a relatively small number of shareholders. The Minnesota Business Corporation Act defines a closely held corporation as one which does not have more than 35 shareholders. Most closely held corporations are relatively small business enterprises, in which all shareholders tend to be active in the management of the business. The closely held corporation can provide many of the advantages of incorporation, such

as limited liability for shareholders and S corporation status for tax purposes (if an S corporation election is made under the Internal Revenue Code) while retaining many of the simplified, less formal operating procedures of sole proprietorships and partnerships. Some states provide a separate, less formal, less restrictive set of laws for closely-held corporations. Minnesota does not. In Minnesota, the business corporation law is geared to small corporations, so a separate law is not necessary, and all corporations operate under one law.

**Limited Liability Company.** A Minnesota business also may organize as a limited liability company. A limited liability company is a form of business organization that is designed to combine the tax treatment of a partnership with the limited liability characteristics of a corporation. A limited liability company may have one or more members. As described further in the section on tax considerations in choosing the form of organization, organizers of Minnesota limited liability companies have some flexibility with respect to the federal income tax treatment of such entities due to the Treasury Regulations on entity classification. These Regulations appear in 26 C.F.R. § 301.7701-1 et. seq.

Limited liability companies with more than one member, like partnerships and limited partnerships, may choose to be taxed as partnerships or corporations. (In either event, the limited liability company must obtain both federal and state tax identification numbers, even if it has no employees). **A limited liability company with only one member may be taxed as a corporation or as a sole proprietorship. A limited liability company with one member that chooses to be taxed as a sole proprietorship generally does not obtain a federal or state tax identification number.** Business income and losses of the limited liability company that chooses to be taxed as a partnership or as a sole proprietorship may be passed through to the owners of the business. A limited liability company that chooses to be taxed as a partnership or as a sole proprietorship is not taxed at the entity level, eliminating the double taxation of profits that occurs with a C corporation. Income is then taxed at the owners' individual tax rate. Like a corporation, liability for business debts and obligations generally rests with the entity rather than with individual owners. A limited liability company is not subject to many of the restrictions that apply to S corporations. Unlike a limited partnership, all members of a limited liability company may participate in the active management of the company without risking loss of limited personal liability. It is managed by a board of governors and an active manager.

**Other Forms of Organization.** Other forms of organization available to Minnesota businesses include professional organizations, cooperative associations, business trusts, and certain variations of these forms of organization. These types of organizations are established and regulated by statute and involve complex legal, financial and accounting issues. Organizing under any of these forms should not be attempted without competent professional advice. Because of their highly specialized nature, these forms of organization are not addressed in detail in this Guide.

**Changing the Form of Organization.** Note that although the discussion in the above paragraphs is also applicable when changing the form of business organization, (e.g., when converting a sole proprietorship to a corporation), a business owner is strongly urged to seek professional assistance when doing so, because unintended consequences may result. As an example, contracts entered into by the business may or may not be assignable to the new entity; also, there may be a tax cost to changing the form of organization, such as when an S corporation becomes a C corporation. Minnesota Statutes [302A.681] authorizes conversions in either direction between corporations and limited liability companies. That section requires the converting organization to adopt a plan of conversion which must be approved by a majority of the board of directors or board of

governors. Upon approval, articles of conversion are drafted and filed with the Secretary of State who issues a certificate of conversion and a certificate of incorporation or certificate of organization. There are similar requirements for the conversion or merger of partnerships and for the conversion of limited liability companies.

## **NON-TAX FACTORS IN CHOOSING THE FORM OF ORGANIZATION**

In choosing the most appropriate form of organization, the business owner will want to consider a variety of factors, including: complexity and expense of organizing the business; liability of the business owner; distribution of profits and losses; management control and decision making; financing startup and operation of the business; transferability of ownership interest; continuity of the business entity following withdrawal or death of an owner; complexity and expense of terminating or reorganizing the business; extent of governmental regulation, and tax considerations.

These factors should be examined carefully in light of the objectives of the business owner. Competent legal, accounting and tax professionals can provide valuable advice and assistance in selecting the most appropriate form of organization.

As with many business decisions, choosing a form of organization involves weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative before selecting the form most appropriate to the business owner's situation. No one form of organization will be appropriate to all situations, and as the business expands a change in the form of organization may be necessary. The discussion which follows examines the differences in each of the above factors for proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, and limited liability companies.

### **Complexity and Expense of Organizing the Business**

All businesses, regardless of their form, will encounter certain organizational costs. These costs can include developing a business plan, obtaining necessary licenses and permits, conducting market research studies, acquiring equipment, obtaining the advice of counsel, and other costs.

**Sole Proprietorship.** The sole proprietorship is the simplest form of organization, and the least expensive to establish. There are no statutory requirements unique to this form of organization. From a regulatory standpoint, the business owner only needs to obtain the necessary business licenses and tax identification numbers, register the business name, and begin operations. Many individuals begin their business as a sole proprietorship. As the business expands or more owners are needed for financial or other reasons, a partnership or corporation may be formed.

**Partnership.** A **general partnership** is more complex to organize than a sole proprietorship, but involves fewer formalities and legal restrictions than a limited partnership, corporation, or limited liability company. Basic elements of partnership law are established by statute, but most issues can be determined by agreement of the partners. A written partnership agreement is highly recommended, but is not legally required. Factors to consider in a partnership agreement are listed in a later section of this Guide. The partnership agreement is not required to be filed with any governmental entity. Note that under the Revised Uniform Partnership Act (RUPA) of 1997,

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 323A, partnerships have the option of filing with the Secretary of State certain statements regarding the authority and liability of partners as well as the status of the partnership.

A **limited partnership** must meet specific statutory requirements at the time of organization, and the offering of ownership interests in the limited partnership is subject to tax and securities laws. Accordingly, the limited partnership will be more complex and expensive to organize than a general partnership.

**Limited Liability Partnership and Limited Liability Limited Partnership.** An existing general partnership may elect limited liability partnership status by filing a limited liability partnership registration with the Secretary of State. Such registration is effective for an indefinite period of time. Limited liability limited partnerships are also permitted. Anyone interested in forming an LLP or an LLLP is advised to seek the advice of counsel. Note also under RUPA (i.e., Minnesota Statutes Chapter 323A), limited liability limited partnership registrations have an indefinite term, although the Secretary of State's Office will revoke LLP or LLLP status if the required annual registration is not filed. Limited liability partnerships generally follow partnership law with specific exceptions as provided by law.

Corporation. The corporation is a formal and complex form of organization, and accordingly can be expensive to organize. Procedures and criteria for forming the corporation and for its governance are established by statute. **FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE STATUTORY FORMALITIES CAN RESULT IN LOSS OF CORPORATE STATUS AND IMPOSITION OF PERSONAL LIABILITY ON THE INCORPORATORS OR SHAREHOLDERS.** The S corporation faces further complexity in that the election of S corporation status for federal tax purposes must be filed with the Internal Revenue Service in a timely fashion. In addition, care must be taken in the transfer of shares not to inadvertently lose S corporation status.

Because of the complexities involved in incorporating, corporations often will make greater use of professional advisors, which will increase costs. Other costs associated with incorporating include filing fees, which are greater for corporations, and the costs associated with tax compliance and preparing various government reports. If the corporation does business in other states, it generally will be required to register to do business in those states, thus further increasing the cost and complexity of incorporation. And, if the corporation will raise capital by selling securities, the compliance costs involved will be substantial.

Minnesota has attempted to simplify the incorporation process by including in the Minnesota Business Corporation Act all of the rules pertaining to the internal governance of the corporation. A corporation that agrees to be governed as specified in the statute need only file standard form articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State. The corporation that wishes to vary the statutory requirements generally must do so in its articles of incorporation. Prior consultation with legal counsel can assist the incorporators in determining which approach is most appropriate for the corporation. Further information on incorporating appears in the section of this Guide titled Forming a Minnesota Business Corporation.

**Limited Liability Company.** The limited liability company combines aspects of the partnership and the corporation. It can be expected to be similar to a corporation in complexity and cost to organize. As with a corporation, the procedures and criteria for forming a limited liability company are specified by statute. **FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

**CAN RESULT IN LOSS OF LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY STATUS AND IMPOSITION OF PERSONAL LIABILITY ON THE ORGANIZERS AND MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY.** There is very little case law to guide organizational and operational decisions although the limited liability company law is modeled on the business corporation law. For this reason, owners of a limited liability company may need to consult often with their professional advisors, increasing their costs.

Under the Treasury Regulations dealing with the federal income tax classification of business entities, the organizers of a Minnesota limited liability company have some flexibility in choosing the tax status of their entity. Professional advice in this area is strongly encouraged.

As is the case for Minnesota corporations, organizers of a limited liability company may agree to have the company governed by the provisions of Minnesota statutes. In that case, standard form articles of organization may be used to organize the company.

Further information on forming a limited liability company appears in the section of this Guide on Forming a Minnesota Limited Liability Company.

## **Liability of the Business Owners**

**Sole Proprietorship.** The sole proprietor is personally liable for the debts of the business, even if those debts exceed the owner's investment in the business. All of the owner's assets – both those used in the business and personal property (subject to certain exemptions) – can be attached by creditors and sold to pay business debts. The sole proprietor may be able to minimize certain risks such as property loss, personal injury or product liability by obtaining adequate insurance.

**Partnership.** In a non-LLP **general partnership**, each partner may be personally liable for up to the full amount of the debts of the business, even if the debts exceed the owners' investment in the business. This is because, unless care is taken in the partnership agreement to limit a partner's authority and potential creditors are notified of the limitation, any partner may bind the partnership. The partner with greater personal assets thus risks losing more than a partner with fewer personal assets. As with a sole proprietorship, many business risks can be lessened by obtaining adequate insurance.

However, in a Minnesota **limited liability partnership**, partners are not personally liable for the wrongful acts or omissions in the ordinary course of business of other partners, for the misuse of money or property of a non-partner by another partner, or for the debts or obligations of the partnership, subject to certain exceptions. It is uncertain how this kind of partnership will be treated in other states, although most states have adopted some form of limited liability partnership legislation.

In a **limited partnership**, so long as the statutory formalities are met and the limited partner is not relied upon by others as a general partner, the limited partner generally is not liable for the obligations of the limited partnership. Thus the limited partner risks loss only up to the amount of his or her investment. The general partner retains full liability as in any other partnership. In **limited liability limited partnerships** general partners will enjoy the same protections from liability enjoyed by limited partners.

**Corporation.** The corporation is a separate legal entity, and in most cases is the entity that is liable for the debts of the business. The shareholders generally are exempt from personal liability for those debts and thus risk loss only up to the amount of their investment in the corporation. This is the case for both the C corporation and the S corporation. It should be noted, however, that in a small, closely held or newly created corporation without an established credit history, some or all of the shareholders may be expected to personally guarantee repayment of certain corporate debts as a condition of obtaining a loan or credit.

Also, under certain circumstances such as fraud or personal wrongdoing, shareholders may be held personally liable for wrongful acts. Finally, it is possible for courts to “disregard” the corporate entity and make shareholders liable under certain circumstances.

**Limited Liability Company.** Liability of the owners of a limited liability company generally is the same as for shareholders of a corporation; that is, absent fraud, personal wrongdoing or disregard of the entity, they generally are not held personally liable for the debts and obligations of the business. They therefore risk loss only up to the amount of their investment. As is the case for corporations, owners of small, closely held, or newly organized limited liability companies may be required to give personal guarantees of repayment to secure financing or credit.

## **Distribution of Profits and Losses**

**Sole Proprietorship.** The sole proprietor receives all the profits from the business, and bears all the losses, which may exceed the proprietor’s investment in the business.

**Partnership.** In the general partnership, the limited liability partnership, the limited liability limited partnership and the limited partnership, profits and losses are passed through to the partners as specified in the partnership agreement. If left unspecified, profits and losses are shared equally among the partners.

**Corporation.** In a **C corporation**, profits and losses belong to the corporation. Profits may be distributed to shareholders in the form of dividends, or they may be reinvested or retained (within limits) by the corporation. Except upon sale of stock or liquidation of the corporation, losses by the corporation are not claimed by individual shareholders. In an S corporation, profits and losses flow through to shareholders in proportion to their shareholdings.

**Limited Liability Company.** Profits and losses of a limited liability company generally are allocated among the members in proportion to the value of their contributions. The articles of organization or the board of governors, under circumstances specified in the statute, may provide for a different allocation.

## **Management Control and Decision Making**

**Sole Proprietorship.** The sole proprietor has full and complete authority to manage and control the business. There are no partners or shareholders to consult before making decisions. This form of organization gives the proprietor maximum freedom to run the business and respond quickly to day-to-day business needs. The disadvantage of this form is that the sole proprietor, as just one person, will have limited time, energy and expertise to devote to the business. His or her experiences may not provide the breadth of skills and knowledge necessary to deal with all phases

of the business. Further, because the sole proprietor is the only person authorized to act on behalf of the business, he or she may be unable to leave the business for extended periods of time without jeopardizing its operations. As the business expands, the proprietor may be able to hire managers to perform some of these functions and provide additional expertise, but in the early years of the business, the sole proprietor often will perform many of these tasks alone.

**Partnership.** The general rule of management is that in both a **general partnership** and a **limited liability partnership**, all partners share equally in the right, and responsibility, to manage and control the business. The partnership agreement may centralize some management decisions in a smaller group of partners, but all partners continue to share ultimate responsibility for these decisions. By statute, certain management decisions require unanimous consent of the partners. Other decisions may be made by consent of a majority of the partners. The right to share equally in decisions can make the decision-making process cumbersome, and the risk of major disagreements can impair effective operation of the business. An advantage of the partnership that is not present in a sole proprietorship is that the partnership, with its several owners, can bring a broader range of skills, abilities and resources to the business. The owners' combined experiences also can promote more informed decision making. In addition, the workload can be shared to lessen the physical and other demands on the individual owners.

However, under the Revised Uniform Partnership Act (RUPA), Minnesota Statutes Chapter 323A, a system of formal filings has been established that allows partnerships to limit the authority of certain partners to third parties as well as to limit the liability of partners for obligations incurred after a partner has left the firm. In order to use this system, the partnership must first file with the Secretary of State an assumed name certificate or limited liability partnership statement of qualification. After that filing has been made, the partnership may again file any of the following statements with the Secretary of State:

- **Statement of Partnership Authority.** This allows the partnership to either restrict or specifically expand the authority of particular partners to conduct various transactions, particularly real estate transactions.
- **Statement of Denial.** This allows a partner to deny partnership status or the conferral of authority upon the partners by a Statement of Partnership Authority.
- **Statement of Dissociation.** This allows a partner who is withdrawing from the partnership to avoid liability for obligations for the partnership incurred after the partner has withdrawn, and also allows the partnership to eliminate the authority of that partner to bind the partnership.
- **Statement of Dissolution.** This allows the partnership to notify the world that it is dissolving and that partners will no longer have authority to act on behalf of the partnership.

The following are also permitted:

- **Statement of Merger.** This allows partnerships and limited partnerships to merge with each other.
- **Statement of Qualification.** This statement establishes a Minnesota limited liability partnership under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 323A.
- **Statement of Foreign Qualification.** This statement registers a non-Minnesota limited liability partnership.

Any of these seven statements may also be amended or cancelled.



In order for any Statement to have an effect on real property transactions, a certified copy of the Statement, obtained from the Secretary of State, must be recorded in the office where land records for the county in which the real property is located, and, if applicable, has been memorialized on the certificate of title for that real property.

In a **limited partnership** in Minnesota, limited partners may participate in the management and control of the partnership but may not act for or bind the partnership. Those functions are performed by general partners.

**Corporation.** The rules for corporate decision making are established by statute, but many rules may be modified by the articles of incorporation or bylaws. Shareholders elect the board of directors, which in turn manages the operation of the business. The corporation also must have one or more natural persons exercising the functions of chief executive officer and chief financial officer. Except in very small corporations in which the shareholders are also the directors, shareholders as a group generally will not directly participate in management decisions. This concentration of decision making in a relatively few individuals promotes flexibility in decision making, but also can result in overruling of minority interests or in some cases manipulation or exploitation of minority shareholders. To resolve this problem, corporations may adopt provisions in the articles of incorporation or bylaws to give minority shareholders a stronger voice in management decisions. Decision-making authority also may be delegated by the shareholders and/or directors to hired managers, who may or may not be shareholders. This delegation further removes decision-making authority from the shareholders. Like a partnership, the corporation can draw on the skills and expertise of more than one individual in running the business. This can broaden the base of information for decision making and reduce workload demands on individual managers.

The articles of incorporation, bylaws or state business corporation act establish procedures and criteria for decision making, such as meeting and quorum requirements, voting margins, and the like, which may make decision making in the corporation more cumbersome than in a sole proprietorship or partnership.

**Limited Liability Company.** Like a corporation, a limited liability company has centralized management. By statute, a limited liability company is managed by or under the direction of a board of governors, comprised of one or more individuals. In addition, the limited liability company must have one or more individuals exercising the functions of chief manager and treasurer. Additional managers and agents may be appointed by the board. The limited liability company act also authorizes members of the limited liability company to make management decisions under certain circumstances. As with a corporation, many of the rules governing the management of the limited liability company are specified in the articles of organization, bylaws, or the limited liability company statute.

## **Financing Startup and Operation of the Business**

A startup business, regardless of form, generally will find it difficult to obtain outside financing. The statistical failure rate for new businesses is high, and many lenders view financing the startup business venture as extremely risky. Banks and other creditors generally will require a significant capital investment by the business owner, and a personal guarantee that the owner will repay the loan. Corporations may issue securities to pool capital from a large number of investors; however,

the costs of complying with complex federal and state securities laws may be prohibitive, and there is no guarantee that a market will exist for the securities of a new firm. Likewise, limited liability companies may increase capital by admitting more members, but will need to offer prospective members some likelihood of return on their investment. Thus as a practical matter, startup financing for the new venture – whether it is a sole proprietorship, a partnership, a corporation or a limited liability company – often is limited to what the owner and others closely associated with the venture are able to raise.

The discussion which follows addresses the relative ease with which firms with established credit histories may be able to attract financing.

**Sole Proprietorship.** The sole proprietor's ability to raise capital generally is limited to the amount he or she can personally secure. Accordingly, the sole proprietorship ordinarily will have less capital available to finance operations or expansion than will other forms of organization that may be able to attract outside investors.

**Partnership.** In most cases, a partnership will be able to raise capital more easily than a sole proprietorship, but not as easily as a corporation. The borrowing power of each partner may be pooled to raise capital, or additional partners may be admitted to increase this pooled borrowing power. Or, if the partnership does not wish to distort the ownership position of the original partners, a limited partnership may be established to raise capital. Unlike a corporation, however, partnership assets generally will not be accepted as collateral by a lender. Instead, assets of the individual partners are used to secure loans, which are made to the partners in their individual capacity.

**Corporation.** The corporation generally is the easiest form of organization for raising capital from outside investors. Capital may be raised by selling stocks or bonds to investors. As noted in the section of this Guide on securities registration, the sale of securities is regulated by federal and state laws. Due to the complexity of these laws, the sale of securities is expensive, and the cost may be prohibitive for startup firms. Long-term financing by lending institutions is easier for a corporation to structure because corporate assets may be used to secure the financing. Personal assets of the principals of the corporation and its shareholders also may be used to guarantee loans to the corporation.

The number of shares of stock a corporation may issue must be authorized by the articles of incorporation. If a corporation has issued all of its authorized shares, it is necessary to amend the articles of incorporation to authorize additional shares. The amended articles of incorporation must be filed with the Secretary of State, and a filing fee paid. The corporation can avoid these additional costs by authorizing a large number of shares at the time of incorporation.

An S corporation may have only one class of stock outstanding. This may limit the financing alternatives available to the S corporation.

**Limited Liability Company.** The limited liability company is financed by contributions from members. It also may invest its own funds, borrow money and trade in the securities of other organizations and the government. The limited liability company offers more flexibility in structuring outside financing than does the S corporation. The S corporation is limited by the single class of stock rule and it generally must allocate profits and losses proportionately. The limited liability company may create multiple membership classes and series, and may provide

in its articles of organization that profits and losses may be allocated other than in proportion to the value of a member's contribution. (Tax counsel should be consulted on the tax consequences of a disproportionate allocation.)

Limited liability company members may, unless denied in the articles, have preemptive rights to increase their own contributions and maintain their proportion of ownership before the company accepts contributions from outsiders. Also, the articles of organization may need to be amended to allow the limited liability company to create additional membership classes or series of membership interests. Another potential issue in attracting outside financing is that lenders and venture capitalists may not be familiar with the limited liability company as a form of organization. They thus may be unwilling to finance a deal without substantial equity participation and personal guarantees by limited liability company members or principals.

### **Transferability of Ownership Interest**

**Sole Proprietorship.** A sole proprietor transfers ownership of the business by transferring the assets of the business to the new owner. The prior proprietorship is terminated and a new proprietorship is established under the new owner.

**Partnership.** The transfer of a partner's economic interest in a partnership is determined by the partnership agreement, or by statute if there is no partnership agreement. Unless permitted by the partnership agreement, no person may become a partner without the consent of all the other partners. If a partner attempts to transfer his or her interest in the partnership without such an agreement, the transferee does not become a partner but instead becomes entitled to receive the profits which the transferring partner otherwise would receive. A properly drawn partnership agreement will address the conditions under which an ownership interest may be transferred, and the consequences to the transferee and to the partnership.

**Corporation.** Ownership in a corporation is transferred by sale of stock. A change in ownership does not affect the existence of the corporate entity. Technically, shares of stock in a corporation are freely transferable. As a practical matter, however, the market may be limited for shares of stock in a small corporation that is not publicly traded. In addition, shareholders in a new venture often will want to prevent unrestricted transfer of shares and thus may provide in the articles of incorporation or bylaws for transfer restrictions or buy-sell and redemption agreements, further limiting transferability. In an S corporation, shares of stock are also freely transferable, in theory. However, the S corporation election may be inadvertently terminated if the entity to which the shares are transferred does not qualify as an S corporation shareholder.

**Limited Liability Company.** Membership rights in a limited liability company consist of financial rights and governance rights. Financial rights are the rights to share in the profits, losses and distributions of the limited liability company. Governance rights are the rights to vote and to manage the business. Unless the articles of organization or operating agreement provide otherwise, a member may assign or transfer financial rights. Such a transfer gives the transferee all the rights to profits and distributions that the transferor had. The transfer does not create membership rights in the transferee, nor can the transfer allow the transferee to directly or indirectly exercise governance rights. Governance rights can only be transferred if all members give their written consent. The articles of organization may provide for less-than unanimous consent.

## **Continuity of the Business Following Withdrawal or Death of an Owner**

**Sole Proprietorship.** The business entity terminates at the death of the proprietor or if the proprietor becomes unable to manage it.

**Partnership. General partnerships and limited liability partnerships** under the Revised Uniform Partnership Act (RUPA) (Minnesota Chapter 323A) do NOT automatically cease to exist when a partner dies or otherwise withdraws from a partnership. The partnership continues, unless certain other events occur. A limited partnership does not terminate when a limited partner dies or becomes disabled. The limited partner's interest may be assigned, and if the limited partner dies, his or her legal representative may exercise all the partner's rights for purposes of settling the estate.

**Corporation.** A corporation is a separate legal entity, and therefore the death, disability or withdrawal of an owner has no legal effect on the business entity's existence. As a practical matter, however, many small businesses depend heavily on the efforts of one or two individuals, and the death or disability of one of those key individuals can seriously impair the economic viability of the business. For this reason, a small business corporation, like a partnership, often will obtain life insurance on key shareholder-employees. The articles of incorporation may provide for share purchase agreements or other restrictions on the transferability of stock in order to retain control of the firm by the remaining key individuals.

**Limited Liability Company.** For limited liability companies formed before August 1, 1999, the termination of membership of a member by any means is an event of dissolution which generally terminates the existence of the limited liability company. If the articles of organization permit remaining members to give dissolution avoidance consent, or to enter into a business continuation agreement, the limited liability company, or its business, may be continued following an event of dissolution. If at least two members remain following the event of dissolution, and all remaining members unanimously consent within 90 days of the termination of membership, the limited liability company's existence and business can be continued. (The articles of organization may provide for less-than-unanimous consent to continue the limited liability company.) Even if the limited liability company's existence is terminated, if the articles of organization permit it, the remaining members may continue the business by merging the limited liability company into another Minnesota limited liability company or into a Minnesota or foreign corporation.

For limited liability companies formed on or after August 1, 1999, the termination of membership of a particular member is an event of dissolution only to the extent specified in the articles of organization or in a member control agreement, or if the membership of the last member terminates and no new members are admitted within 180 days of that termination. Otherwise, the termination of a member's interest does not affect the existence of the limited liability company.

## **Complexity and Expense of Terminating the Business**

**Sole Proprietorship.** There are no federal or state regulations governing termination of the sole proprietorship itself. The sole proprietor simply winds up the affairs of the business and discontinues operations. If the business had employees, the owner must notify federal and state taxing authorities that the proprietor is no longer operating the business and paying employees.

See also the section of this Guide entitled "Business Taxes – Income Tax Withholding – Withholding Tax Penalties and Interest". The final report of income and expenses attributable to the business

is included in the proprietor's individual income tax return, which is filed at the usual time. No final return or early filing is required. Tax consequences may flow from the sale or other disposition of assets used in the business.

**Partnership.** The partnership, because it is a more formal structure than a sole proprietorship, is more complex to terminate. RUPA identifies several ways in which dissolution may occur, but the partners may provide for continuation of the partnership even if an act of dissolution occurs. The consequences of causing the dissolution of a partnership also are specified in RUPA. The statute addresses the allocation and distribution of partnership property upon dissolution, liability of persons continuing the business, and other rights and liabilities of the partners. However, the statute does not address procedural matters such as filing final tax returns, notifying taxing authorities of the termination for employment tax purposes, notification of creditors and similar matters involved in winding up the affairs of the partnership. Assistance with these matters may be obtained from legal counsel. Tax consequences may apply to the disposition of partnership assets, and those tax consequences will flow through to the partners. The general partnership may file a Statement of Dissolution with the Secretary of State but generally otherwise need not file notice of dissolution or termination of the partnership with any governmental entity. The limited partnership must formally cancel the certificate of limited partnership and file the cancellation with the Secretary of State. A limited liability partnership will revert to a general partnership upon voluntarily terminating limited liability partnership status, which is done by filing a withdrawal or termination statement with the Secretary of State. Limited liability partnerships do not expire unless the partnership fails to file the annual registration, in which case the limited liability partnership status is terminated and the partnership reverts to general or limited partnership status.

Note that the Revised Uniform Partnership Act (RUPA), Minnesota Statutes Chapter 323A, also allows for mergers of partnerships which terminate all but the surviving partnership.

**Corporation.** The corporation is the most complex business form to terminate. Formal dissolution procedures, both before and after the issuance of shares, are specified by statute, and include, for example, filing notice of intent to dissolve the corporation and articles of dissolution with the Secretary of State, notification of creditors, disposition of assets, and distribution of the proceeds to shareholders. Tax consequences will affect both the corporation and its shareholders. Because of the complexity of the statutory procedures and tax implications, professional legal and accounting advice is highly recommended.

Corporations may end their separate existence by merging into another corporation or into a limited liability company.

**Limited Liability Company.** As is the case with partnerships, limited partnerships, and corporations, the procedures for dissolving a limited liability company, both before and after accepting contributions, are spelled out in the governing legislation. Different procedures apply, depending on when the limited liability company is dissolved (e.g., before or after membership contributions are accepted), and who dissolves it (e.g., the organizers, the members, or the court). The law specifies the notices to be given (e.g., to members and creditors), filings with the Secretary of State and procedures for winding up the business of the limited liability company.

Limited liability companies may end their separate existence by merging into another limited liability company or into a corporation.

**Subsequent Reorganization of the Business.** If the business is being terminated because the owner wishes to do business under a different type of entity (such as converting a sole proprietorship to an S corporation), special issues might need to be addressed. For instance, when an S corporation is converted to a C corporation, adverse tax consequences often result. Also, certain assets of the business may not be transferable; for example, any contract that the business has entered into might or might not be transferable if the business is terminated and reorganized. Many other issues could arise when a business is terminated and begun again under a different form of organization. Although generally speaking an owner is permitted to change the form of his or her business at any time, a business owner is advised to seek professional assistance when considering changing the form of his or her business.

## **Extent of Government Regulation**

Certain types of government regulation will apply to the business regardless of the form of organization. Licenses or permits, where required, will be required of all business entities conducting the regulated activity. Note that businesses operating in multiple jurisdictions (whether cities, states or counties) should inquire about licensing requirements imposed by each of those jurisdictions. This is equally true of businesses using the Internet. Federal, state and local consumer protection laws regulate business relationships with the public, without regard to the form of organization. Every business that hires employees will be required to comply with certain federal and state labor and tax laws governing the employment relationship. The following paragraphs identify the major differences in the extent of regulation of the form of organization itself.

**Sole Proprietorship.** The sole proprietorship, as a form of business organization, is not generally regulated by the state. Other than tax filings and specialized reports applicable to certain kinds of businesses (e.g., hazardous waste generators), no special governmental filings or reports are required, making the sole proprietorship the least restrictive, most private form of organization.

**Partnership.** A **general partnership**, like a sole proprietorship, operates with relatively few governmental controls. RUPA provides statutory rules for basic questions of partnership management and relationships between the partners and third persons, but most issues are determined by the partnership agreement. No special partnership reports or filings with government entities are required, but an assumed name certificate may be required, depending upon the partnership name.

**Limited partnerships, limited liability partnerships and limited liability limited partnerships** must file with the Secretary of State on a yearly basis in order to retain their special status.

**Limited partnerships** are more closely regulated than general partnerships, and public filings remove some of the privacy associated with sole proprietorships and general partnerships.

**Corporation.** Rules governing the corporation are established by laws of the state of incorporation and the corporation's articles of incorporation. These rules are more formal and complex than those governing partnerships and limited partnerships. In addition to complying with laws and regulations applicable to similarly situated businesses, any corporation that issues registered securities will be required to make periodic filings with state and federal regulators and must comply with other reporting requirements. Tax laws applicable to corporations generally are more complex than those applicable to proprietorships and partnerships and specific statutory procedures apply to dissolving the corporate entity. Most governmental filings are public

documents, making the corporation the least private form of organization. The S corporation must meet specific requirements to qualify for S corporation tax treatment, and S corporation status may be terminated when these requirements are not met.

Minnesota corporations must file an annual corporate registration with the Secretary of State which will provide corporations with a reminder-to-file notice. Failure to file an annual registration for two years will trigger administrative dissolution of the corporation.

**Limited Liability Company.** Rules governing the limited liability company are established by statute and by the limited liability company's articles of organization and operating agreement (if any). These rules are similar in complexity to those governing partnerships and corporations.

## **TAX CONSIDERATIONS IN CHOOSING THE FORM OF ORGANIZATION**

Note: Both the Internal Revenue Code and Minnesota tax laws are periodically revised. Every effort has been made to incorporate these changes into this section. However, because of the complexity and potential impact of the changes, consultation with a professional advisor on any tax matter is highly recommended.

This section discusses the major tax considerations for the sole proprietorship, partnership, and corporation. For limited liability companies, the Internal Revenue Service has adopted rules (which appear in 26 C.F.R. 301.7701-1 et. seq.) that allow the organizer(s) to select the federal tax treatment for the LLC: either as a sole proprietorship or a corporation, in the case of LLCs with only one member; or as a partnership or a corporation, in the case of LLCs with at least two members. (The Minnesota Department of Revenue, in Revenue Notice 98-08, has stated that except for entities organized outside the United States and which have only one owner, which is a C corporation, the Department of Revenue will for Minnesota tax purposes respect the choice made under the Federal Regulations). Thus because LLCs are treated as sole proprietorships, corporations, or partnerships, they are not specifically described in the following text. However a business is treated for federal tax purposes, it also will be so treated for state tax purposes. Detailed advice on specific situations should be obtained from a competent tax advisor.

Considerations addressed in this section include:

- Who is the Taxpayer?
- What Tax Forms Are Used?
- Tax Rates
- Tax Impact
- Selection of the Tax Year
- Compensation for Services
- Employment Taxes and Workers' Compensation Insurance
- Employee Retirement Benefit Plans

- Fringe Benefits
- Capital Gains and Losses
- Net Operating Loss
- Estimated Tax Payments
- Disposition of Ownership Interest

## Who Is the Taxpayer?

**Sole Proprietorship.** In a sole proprietorship, the taxpayer is the individual business owner. The proprietor is taxed on the entire net income from the business, regardless of whether the income is withdrawn for personal use or retained in the business. This is the case for both federal and Minnesota tax purposes.

**Partnership.** The partnership itself is not a taxable entity. The partnership serves as a conduit through which income, deductions and credits are passed through to the individual partners. Each partner is taxed on his or her share as defined in the partnership agreement. All income of the partnership is taxed to the partners, whether or not it is actually distributed. The partnership itself files an information return which reports partnership income and distributions to the partners. This is the case for both federal and Minnesota tax purposes.

**Corporation.** A corporation is a separate legal and taxable entity. For tax purposes, the corporation may be a “C corporation” (taxed under Subchapter C of the Internal Revenue Code and corresponding sections of Minnesota Statutes) or it may elect to be treated as an “S corporation” (taxed under Subchapter S of the Internal Revenue Code and corresponding sections of Minnesota Statutes). Both C corporations and S corporations file federal and Minnesota tax returns. In a C corporation, the corporation itself pays tax on corporate profits. After taxes are paid, remaining corporate profits may be distributed to shareholders in the form of dividends. The shareholders are then taxed on the dividends they receive from the corporation. In general, an S corporation is taxed in a manner similar to a partnership; that is, the income, deductions and credits of the corporation are passed through to shareholders and are taxed to shareholders at their individual tax rates.

**Note: It is possible that each of the above-listed entities, other than a sole proprietorship, may be subject to a Minnesota minimum fee. See the discussion of “Tax Rates,” which follows after the discussion of “What Tax Forms are Used?”**

## What Tax Forms Are Used?

**Note:** Income tax forms identified here apply to the 2010 tax year. Amendments to the Minnesota tax laws and federal Internal Revenue Code may change these requirements.

**Sole Proprietorship. Federal:** The sole proprietor reports income and expenses from the business on Schedule C or Schedule C-EZ (Form 1040) and any related forms and schedules. The net income or loss from the business is then transferred to the proprietor’s individual Form 1040. The sole proprietor uses Schedule SE to report net self employment income for purposes of computing the Social Security and Medicare self employment tax. **Minnesota:** There is no separate form for



reporting proprietorship income. To compute Minnesota income tax, the proprietor uses Form M-1, the individual income tax form. A copy of the federal Form 1040, including a copy of Schedule C or Schedule C-EZ, plus Schedule SE, if appropriate, must be attached to Minnesota Form M-1. Minnesota does not impose a self employment tax.

**Partnership. Federal:** The partnership files Form 1065, which is an information return. No tax is paid by the partnership with this return. Other forms and schedules may be required, including Schedules K and K-1. Individual partners use Schedule E (Form 1040) which is prepared with information from their Schedule K-1 of Form 1065, to report their distributive share of partnership income, deductions, credits and losses on their individual Form 1040. Schedule SE (Form 1040) is used to compute Social Security and Medicare self employment tax. **Minnesota:** The partnership files Form M3. Taxes paid by the partnership with such return are: Minnesota Minimum Fee; Minnesota Composite Income Tax; and Withholding for Nonresident Partners, which is described in the Tax Rates section of this Guide. Form M1 is used to compute the partners' individual income tax. Schedules KPI and KPC are supplemental K1 type schedules used to report modifications to federal tax computations of partnership income and the other information a partner needs to complete the Minnesota individual income tax return. Schedule KC is used for computing the Minnesota Composite Income Tax. Schedule MW3NR is used for the Withholding for Nonresident Partners. Minnesota does not impose a self employment tax.

**C Corporation. Federal:** The C corporation reports its income, deductions and credits, and computes its tax, on Form 1120 or Form 1120-A. Supporting forms and schedules may be required. If the corporation issues dividends, it must annually send its shareholders Form 1099-DIV, stating the amount of dividends paid. A copy also is filed with the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue. The shareholder reports dividends received from the corporation on his or her individual Form 1040. **Minnesota:** The corporation files Minnesota Form M-4. Dividends paid to shareholders also must be reported to the Department of Revenue. Form M-1 is used to compute the shareholder's individual Minnesota income tax.

**S Corporation. Federal:** The S corporation files Form 1120S and supporting forms and schedules, including Schedules K and K-1 (Form 1120S). The S corporation generally is not separately taxed. Individual shareholders report their share of the S corporation's income, deductions and credits on their individual Form 1040, using information contained on the Schedule K-1. **Minnesota:** For Minnesota income tax purposes, the S corporation files Form M8. Taxes paid by the S corporation with that return are: Minnesota S Corporation Taxes, which apply only if the S corporation is paying federal income tax; Minnesota Minimum Fee; Minnesota Composite Income Tax; and Withholding for Nonresident Shareholders, which is discussed in the Tax Rates section of this Guide. Form M-1 is used to compute the shareholder's individual income tax. Schedule KS is a supplemental K-1 type schedule used for reporting modifications to federal income tax computations of S corporation income and the other information a shareholder needs to complete the Minnesota individual income tax return. Schedule KC is used for computing the Minnesota Composite Income Tax. Schedule MW3NR is used for the Withholding for Nonresident shareholders.

## Tax Rates

The rate of tax paid on income from the business activity depends on whether the business is organized as a sole proprietorship, a partnership, an S corporation, a C corporation, or a limited liability company. Income from a sole proprietorship, partnership, S corporation, or limited liability company is taxed to

the owner at individual tax rates. A C corporation's income is taxed to the corporation at corporate tax rates. Dividend income paid by the C corporation is taxed to shareholders at individual tax rates.

**Federal Individual Income Tax Rates.** For federal income tax year 2010, the tax rates are 10 percent, 15 percent, 25 percent, 28 percent, 33 percent and 35 depending on income.

**Minnesota Individual Income Tax Rates.** Minnesota individual income tax rates are 5.35 percent, 7.05 percent, and 7.85 percent depending on income and filing status. Partnerships and S corporations that have nonresident individual partners or shareholders are allowed to pay a composite income tax, on behalf of such nonresident partners or shareholders, on the partnership's or S corporation's return. In that event, the nonresident partners or shareholders do not have to file separate Minnesota income tax returns. The tax rate for the Minnesota Composite Income Tax is 7.85 percent of the individual's "Minnesota source" income. In addition, a partnership or S corporation that does not pay a composite income tax on behalf of nonresident individual partners or shareholders must withhold tax at a rate of 7.85 percent from such an individual's "Minnesota source" income, and submit it with the partnership's or S corporation's return. A bill that would have increased the maximum rate to 9 percent was vetoed by the governor in May, 2009.

**Federal Corporate Income Tax Rates.**

Taxable income over	Not over	Tax rate
\$ 0	\$ 50,000	15%
50,000	75,000	25%
75,000	100,000	34%
100,000	335,000	39%
335,000	10,000,000	34%
10,000,000	15,000,000	35%
15,000,000	18,333,333	38%
18,333,333	.....	35%

Personal Service Corporations are taxed at a rate of 35%.

These rates are set to expire for tax years beginning after December 31, 2010.

**Minnesota Corporate (Franchise) Income Tax Rates.** The Minnesota corporate income tax rate is 9.8 percent. Corporations are subject to an alternative minimum tax based on Minnesota alternative minimum taxable income at the rate of 5.8 percent. The amount due is the excess of the alternative minimum tax liability over the firm's regular franchise tax liability.

**Minnesota Minimum Fee Rates.** A graduated minimum fee is imposed by Minnesota on corporations, S corporations, partnerships, and limited liability companies. The fee is based on a single factor apportionment phase-in for the years 2007-2014. The new formula for conversion from the three factor (sales, property and payroll) apportionment to the single (sales) apportionment is:

Year	Sales % Factor	Property % Factor	Payroll % Factor
2007	78	11	11
2008	81	9.5	9.5
2009	84	8	8

2010	87	6.5	6.5
2011	90	5	5
2012	93	3.5	3.5
2013	96	2	2
2014 and later	100	0	0

Note that for partnerships, the minimum fee is the joint and several liability of the partners. The minimum fee schedule is as follows:

<b>Minnesota Payroll, Property and Sales</b>	<b>Fee</b>
Less than \$500,000	\$ 0
\$500,000 to \$999,999	\$ 100
\$1 million to \$4,999,999	\$ 300
\$5 million to \$9,999,999	\$ 1,000
\$10 million to \$19,999,999	\$ 2,000
\$20 million or more	\$ 5,000

## **Tax Impact**

Many factors determine the full tax burden on a business. Some of these factors – such as treatment of capital gains, deductibility of certain items, and the availability of certain credits – will vary depending on the form of organization. Other factors, such as employment taxes attributable to non-owner employees or property taxes, will apply regardless of the form of organization. For detailed analysis of these factors in the context of the specific business, a competent tax advisor should be consulted. The following paragraphs describe the major differences in tax impact attributable to the form of organization.

**Sole Proprietorship.** Net income or loss from the business is combined with the proprietor’s income and losses from other sources to determine the proprietor’s income for tax purposes. The proprietor is taxed on the net income of the business, regardless of whether the income is withdrawn for personal purposes or retained in the business. Because income or loss from the business is combined for tax purposes with income and losses from other sources, the tax impact on income from the business may be different than if the business were taxed as a separate entity. However, because only the proprietor and not the business entity is taxed, there is no double taxation on profits of the business paid to the owner. Another advantage of the sole proprietorship compared with the C corporation is that not only the amount but the character of various income items, deductions, and credits may be claimed by the business owner. In a C corporation, items are claimed by the corporation on its tax return and are not passed through to shareholders.

**Partnership.** Partnership income is taxable to the partners regardless of whether it is actually distributed or retained in the business. The partners report their distributive share of partnership income, deductions and credits on their individual income tax returns, where these items are combined with income and losses from other sources. This income is taxed at the individual income tax rate applicable to the partner’s tax bracket. The partners may allocate their distributive share of partnership income, deductions and credits for tax purposes in the partnership agreement. So long as there is “substantial economic effect” to the allocation (as defined by tax laws and Internal Revenue Service regulations), the partnership may offer greater opportunity for tax

planning than the proprietorship or corporate form of organization. By “substantial economic effect” the Internal Revenue Service essentially means that the allocation made in the partnership agreement may actually affect the dollar amount of the partner’s share of the partnership income or loss independently of any tax consequences. As with the proprietorship, both the amount and character of various income and deduction items are passed through to shareholders. However, certain deductions may not be permitted, certain items must be separately stated, and a partner’s ability to claim his or her share of partnership losses generally is limited to the partner’s adjusted basis in the partnership.

**C Corporation.** C corporations are separate taxable entities. The C corporation’s taxable income, and tax, are determined prior to distribution of profits to shareholders. Profits which are distributed to shareholders in the form of dividends are then taxable to the shareholders at their individual income tax rate. Thus these dividends are subject to double taxation: once on the corporation’s income tax return and once on the individual shareholder’s income tax return. In addition, the dividends are taxed to the shareholder as ordinary income: capital gains, charitable contributions and other income and deduction items do not retain their character when passed to shareholders in the form of dividends. Similarly, individual shareholders do not share a corporation’s losses for tax purposes.

C corporations offer some opportunity for tax planning in that dividends may be accumulated by the corporation rather than paid to shareholders, thus postponing double taxation. However, Internal Revenue Service regulations limit the amount of accumulated earnings that may be retained by the corporation. An accumulated earnings tax may be imposed on excessive accumulated earnings. Because all income of the sole proprietorship, partnership, and S corporation is taxable to the owners whether or not it is distributed, these entities are not subject to the accumulated earnings tax. The C corporation also may pay a salary to owner-employees. Salaries are deductible by the corporation and thus are not included in the corporation’s taxable income. However, the Internal Revenue Service may treat as dividends excessive salaries that appear designed to avoid double taxation.

**S Corporation.** Like a partnership, the S corporation is a conduit through which the firm’s income and deductions flow to the shareholders. Income items (including capital gains) and deductions generally retain their character when passed through to shareholders, although special reporting rules apply and the opportunity to fully claim a share of the S corporation’s losses may be limited. Unlike a partnership, allocations to S corporation shareholders must be in proportion to their shareholdings. Thus this form of organization may offer less attractive tax planning opportunities.

A shareholder’s pro rata share of S corporation income and deductions is combined with income and losses from other sources and reported on the shareholder’s individual income tax return. The total taxable income is taxed at individual income tax rates applicable to the shareholder’s tax bracket.

## **Selection of the Tax Year**

The business figures its taxable income and files a tax return on the basis of an accounting period called a tax year. A tax year usually is 12 consecutive months, although in some cases a 52-53 week year or a short tax year may be permitted. A **calendar** tax year is 12 consecutive months ending

December 31. A fiscal tax year is either 12 consecutive months ending on the last day of any month other than December, or a 52-53 week year. To use a fiscal tax year, the business must keep its books on that basis. Once a tax year is established, the business generally may not change it without Internal Revenue Service approval. The application to change the tax year must show a substantial business purpose for the change, and that no significant tax advantage will result.

**Sole Proprietorship.** Like most individual taxpayers, sole proprietors generally use the calendar year as their federal and Minnesota tax year. The sole proprietor must report income from all sources on the basis of the same tax year.

**Partnership.** In general, the partnership must use the same tax year as the partners who own a majority interest in partnership profits and capital. If those partners have different tax years, the partnership must use the same tax year as its principal partners. Principal partners are defined by the Internal Revenue Service as those having an interest of five percent or more in partnership profits or capital. If the principal partners have different tax years, the partnership generally must use the calendar tax year. However, a partnership may adopt a fiscal tax year if it can establish to the satisfaction of the Internal Revenue Service that it has a business purpose for using a fiscal tax year. If a business purpose for using a fiscal tax year cannot be shown, a partnership that would otherwise be required to use a calendar tax year may in some cases elect a fiscal tax year by filing with the IRS Form 8716, Election to Have a Tax Year Other than a Required Tax Year. This election is called a "Section 444 election." A partnership that makes the Section 444 election must in some cases make a payment to the government that reflects the value of the tax deferral obtained by the partners as a result of the partnership's use of a fiscal tax year. A partnership uses the same tax year for both federal and Minnesota income tax purposes.

**C Corporation.** A C corporation establishes its tax year when it files its first income tax return. The first tax year must end not more than 12 months after the date of incorporation. A C corporation that is not a personal service corporation may choose a calendar tax year or a fiscal tax year, so long as the tax year selected does not distort income. This allows the corporation to establish a tax year in conformity with its natural business cycle. C corporations that are personal service corporations must use a calendar tax year unless the corporation establishes to the satisfaction of the IRS that it has a business purpose for using a fiscal tax year, or makes a Section 444 election.

**S Corporation.** S corporations must use a calendar tax year unless there is a business purpose for using a fiscal tax year, and the Internal Revenue Service approves. If the S corporation cannot establish a business purpose for using a fiscal tax year, it may be eligible to make the Section 444 election described above. The corporation uses the same tax year for both federal and Minnesota tax purposes.

## **Compensation for Services**

A business may use a variety of methods to compensate persons who provide services to it. Some of these methods include salaries or wages, personal draw, cash for services, and property for services. This section discusses the tax consequences of compensation for services provided by the owner of the business. Compensation to non-owner third parties, including the spouse or children of a sole proprietor, generally will be a deductible expense so long as compensation is reasonable and the services are necessary to the business.

**Sole Proprietorship.** A sole proprietor is not considered an employee of the business and does not receive wages or salary for tax purposes. A sole proprietor is subject to tax on the net income of the business as it is earned, regardless of whether it is withdrawn. Compensation for services or other amounts withdrawn from the business thus are considered withdrawals of income and are not again taxed at the time of withdrawal.

**Partnerships.** Like sole proprietors, partners of a general partnership are not considered employees of the business and do not receive wages or salary for tax purposes. The partners are subject to tax on their share of partnership income as it is earned, regardless of whether it is withdrawn. Amounts withdrawn by a partner for compensation or other purposes are considered withdrawals of income and are not again taxed at the time of withdrawal. However, withdrawals in excess of a partner's basis are taxed.

**C Corporations.** Payments to owners: Payments to shareholder-employees in the form of salary or wages are deductible by the corporation in determining taxable income. As with other wages and salaries, these payments are taxed to the recipient as wage or salary income. Payments must be reasonable and the services must be necessary to the business. Compensation to shareholder-employees which is found by the Internal Revenue Service to be unreasonable may be reclassified as a dividend. This is to prevent using salary payments as a device to avoid double taxation of corporate profits.

**S Corporations.** Payments to owners: The payment of wages or salary to S corporation employees, including owner-employees, is deductible by the corporation in determining taxable income. These payments are then taxed to the recipient as wage or salary income. Payments must be reasonable and the services must be necessary to the business. The question of unreasonably large salaries to shareholder-employees of S corporations is not as important as it is in C corporations, because the S corporation generally pays no taxes at corporate rates. However, the Internal Revenue Service may challenge salaries which are used as a device to shift income to shareholders in lower income tax brackets.

**Note:** Special rules apply to tax treatment of property, such as stock, received for services. Business owners contemplating such transfers should consult with their tax advisor prior to the transfer.

## **Employment Taxes and Workers' Compensation Insurance**

Employment taxes include income tax withholding, Social Security and Medicare taxes and federal and state unemployment insurance taxes. Although workers' compensation insurance technically is not a tax, coverage is required for most employees. Employment taxes and workers' compensation insurance are deductible business expenses in determining net income.

**Note:** The following information on employment taxes and workers' compensation insurance applies only to businesses that have employees. Sole proprietors and partners that provide services to the business are not considered employees for purposes of paying unemployment taxes or obtaining workers' compensation insurance coverage for themselves. They may, however, be liable for Social Security and Medicare self employment tax. (See the discussion of the self employment tax below.) Shareholders in a C corporation or an S corporation who perform services for the corporation generally will be considered employees of the corporation and therefore will be subject to employment taxes. In most situations, workers' compensation coverage for these shareholders also will be required.

**Self Employment Tax.** Although sole proprietorships and partnerships that do not have employees are not required to pay employment taxes, the sole proprietor or partners may be liable for Social Security and Medicare self employment tax. For 2009 the anticipated Social Security and Medicare self employment tax rate is 15.3 percent. The rate consists of two parts: 12.4 percent for Social Security and 2.9 percent for Medicare. There is no upper limit on payments for self-employed individuals.

**Social Security and Medicare Tax.** Social security and Medicare taxes are paid by both the employer and the employee. The anticipated Social Security tax rate for 2010 for both the employer and the employee is 7.65 percent of the first \$106,800. Social Security and Medicare taxes are not required for a sole proprietor's children under age 18 who work in the sole proprietorship.

**Federal Unemployment Taxes.** Employers generally are liable for both federal and Minnesota unemployment taxes. The federal unemployment tax rate is 6.2 percent of the first \$7,000 in wages paid each employee. A credit of up to 5.4 percent may be allowed for state unemployment taxes paid for a normal net tax of 0.8 percent. Wages paid to a spouse or child under age 21 who works in a sole proprietorship owned by the spouse or parent are not subject to federal unemployment taxes; other exceptions also may apply. (Editors note: changes in state unemployment tax law may change your FUTA liability. Timely payment of state unemployment tax creates an offset credit on FUTA tax liability. Contact a tax advisor for more information.

**Minnesota Unemployment Tax.** State unemployment tax rates are discussed in the business tax section of this Guide. Different rates apply to new businesses, the construction industry, and businesses which have an established experience rating. The wage base to which the tax applies also depends on the experience rating of the business. Wages paid by a sole proprietor for services performed by a parent, spouse or child under the age of 18 are not subject to Minnesota unemployment taxes. Wages paid to corporate officers or member of an LLC who own 25 percent or more of the corporation or LLC are not subject to Minnesota unemployment tax. Other exceptions also may apply.

**Workers' Compensation Insurance.** Workers' compensation insurance rates depend on the nature of the work performed by the employee and the employer's experience rating. A sole proprietor or partner may elect to obtain workers' compensation coverage for an employee who is a spouse, parent or child of the owner, but coverage for these family employees is not required. In addition, certain closely held corporations may elect coverage for executive officers who own at least 25 percent of the stock of the corporation.

## **Retirement Benefit Plans**

Retirement benefit plans include qualified employee benefit plans, nonexempt trusts and annuity plans, self-employed retirement plans, individual retirement arrangements, and simplified employee pension plans. The tax treatment of contributions to these plans is highly technical; also there are frequent changes in tax laws that affect the treatment of those contributions. A business owner contemplating such a plan or making deductions for contributions to the plan should obtain the advice of competent counsel.

**Note:** Whenever the term "IRA" is used in the following paragraphs, generally speaking the discussion applies to both conventional IRAs and Roth IRAs.

**Sole Proprietorship.** A sole proprietor may establish and contribute to a Keogh retirement plan. Depending on the proprietor's adjusted gross income and net earnings from self-employment, he or she may open and contribute to an individual retirement account (IRA) in addition to or in place of the Keogh plan. Qualified contributions to the sole proprietor's own Keogh plan or IRA are deductible (with some exceptions) in determining the proprietor's adjusted gross income on Form 1040. Those contributions are not considered expenses of the business, however, and therefore are not deductible in computing net income from the business on Schedule C. Minnesota generally follows IRS rules in the tax treatment of Keogh and IRA contributions. A sole proprietor who has employees may establish a qualified retirement plan for the employees. Contributions to the plan, if they meet IRS requirements, are deductible from business income reported on Schedule C.

**Partnership.** Like sole proprietors, working partners in a partnership may contribute to a Keogh plan established by the partnership. They also may open and contribute to an IRA if they meet income limitations for such contributions. Qualified contributions by each partner may be deducted (with some exceptions) in computing their individual adjusted gross income on Form 1040. Contributions by or on behalf of partners to their own retirement plans are not deductible from partnership income. Minnesota generally follows IRS rules. Retirement plans which are established for employees must comply with Internal Revenue Service requirements. Contributions to qualified plans on behalf of employees are deductible business expenses.

**Corporation.** Generally, contributions by the corporation to qualified pension plans and qualified profit sharing plans will be deductible by the corporation. The plan must be approved by the Internal Revenue Service.

**Note:** Master and prototype retirement plans may be available to the business. In many cases, it will be easier to use these samples rather than setting up a new plan. Master and prototype plans may be sponsored by trade or professional organizations, banks, insurance companies, or regulated investment companies. These entities usually will have applied for, and received, an IRS opinion letter on the plan. Using one of these master or prototype plans does not mean that the plan is automatically qualified. The plan still must meet all IRS requirements. However, the master or prototype may offer a firm some guidance in developing its own plan.

## **Fringe Benefits**

Fringe benefits include items such as accident and health insurance, medical savings accounts, group term life insurance, salary continuation plans, reimbursements for educational expenses, dental insurance, death benefits, day care programs, supplemental unemployment benefits, "cafeteria plan" programs, and others. As with employee retirement benefit plans, the tax treatment of fringe benefits is a highly technical area. Accordingly, it is recommended that the advice of competent counsel be obtained prior to structuring such plans.

The following paragraphs discuss the tax treatment of providing fringe benefits to owners of the business. The cost of providing fringe benefits to employees generally will be a deductible business expense if reasonable in amount and in compliance with federal and state tax codes and other statutory requirements. In some cases the benefits may be taxable to the employee and subject to income tax withholding.



**Sole Proprietorship.** Sole proprietors generally may not deduct as a business expense the cost of obtaining fringe benefit items for themselves, although items such as day care for the proprietor's children may be eligible for a tax credit if they otherwise meet IRS requirements. For federal tax purposes sole proprietors, after 2003, may deduct up to 100 percent of the cost of medical insurance premiums paid for themselves, assuming IRS requirements are met. Note that this issue is frequently the subject of legislation in Congress, so anyone interested should monitor developments. Note that for Minnesota income tax purposes, in some cases amounts paid by a sole proprietor for health insurance are subtracted from federal taxable income for purposes of computing Minnesota taxable income. That calculation is made on Schedule M-1H to a sole proprietor's Minnesota income tax return.

**Partnership.** Working partners of a partnership are considered self employed individuals, and are subject to the same rules on deductibility of fringe benefits as sole proprietors.

**C Corporation.** The C corporation may deduct the cost of providing fringe benefits to all employees, including shareholder employees. To be deductible, the fringe benefit plan must meet requirements of the federal and state tax laws, including nondiscrimination in favor of executive or highly compensated employees. Employee health plans also must comply with applicable state statutory requirements to be deductible for Minnesota income tax purposes.

**S Corporation.** An S corporation may deduct the cost of providing fringe benefits that it pays to all employees, including shareholder employees. However, the cost of fringe benefits paid for employee shareholders who own more than two percent of the company's stock must be included in the income of the shareholder. Typically, this is reported on the shareholder employees' Form W-2 in addition to their normal salary.

## Capital Gains and Losses

A business that sells or otherwise disposes of capital assets will have a capital gain or capital loss from the transaction. Capital assets are defined by Internal Revenue Service regulations and generally include everything a business owns except property held for sale to customers, most accounts or notes receivable, real and depreciable personal property used in the business, copyrights and similar intellectual property, and certain government publications.

**Sole Proprietorship.** For individuals, the maximum tax rate on long-term capital gains is 15 percent (5 percent for individuals up to the 15 percent bracket). In order to qualify as a long-term capital asset and thus subject to these more favorable rates, the asset must be held at least twelve months.

Generally speaking, capital gains and losses are offset against each other, and a net capital loss can be used to offset up to \$3,000 of ordinary income (\$1,500 for married individuals filing separately). Capital losses that are not fully used in a tax year may be carried over to future years until offset entirely.

**Partnership.** Gains and losses from the sale or exchange of capital assets are reported on the partnership return and retain their character when passed through to the partners. The partners treat capital gains and losses that pass through to them in the same manner as other individuals. (See discussion of Sole Proprietorships, above.)

**C Corporation.** A corporation's capital gains are taxed at the corporation's regular tax rate. Thus the maximum federal tax rate on a corporation's capital gain is 35 percent. A corporation may deduct capital losses only up to the amount of its capital gains. If a corporation has a net capital loss, the loss cannot be deducted in the current tax year but instead must be carried to other tax years and deducted from capital gains that occur in those years. This is the case for both federal and Minnesota tax purposes.

**S Corporation.** S corporations may pass capital gains through directly to shareholders, although the S corporation must make the determination of when the long-term capital gain is taken into account on its own books.

## **Net Operating Loss**

If the taxpayer's deductions for the year exceed gross income, the taxpayer may have a net operating loss (NOL). The NOL is used to reduce taxable income in other years. There are limits on the kinds of deductions, and the amounts, that can be used in computing an NOL. These limits are different for individuals and for corporations and for federal and Minnesota returns. For C corporations, if the NOL is attributable to business carried on both in and outside Minnesota, a computation allocating a portion of the NOL may be required on the Minnesota return.

The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) amended the Internal Revenue Code to allow an "eligible small business" to carry back a 2008 net operating loss for three, four, or five years (rather than two years). An "eligible small business" is a taxpayer with \$15 million or less in gross annual revenues in the tax year in which the 2008 net operating loss arose.

**Sole Proprietorship.** The NOL is determined on the proprietor's gross income from all sources as reported on the Form 1040, not just on the income or loss from the business reported on Schedule C. In general, an NOL is computed in the same way taxable income is computed: deductions are subtracted from gross income, and if deductions exceed gross income there is a net operating loss. However, there are rules that limit what deductions may be taken in computing an NOL. In general, these rules do not permit a deduction for net capital losses, nonbusiness losses, nonbusiness deductions, personal exemptions and NOL carryovers or carrybacks from previous years. Some deductions also must be modified in taking the NOL. Internal Revenue Service regulations and those of the Minnesota Department of Revenue determine the years to which the NOL is carried, and the order in which NOLs are deducted.

**Partnership.** A partnership is not allowed to take an NOL deduction. All losses to the partnership for tax purposes are passed through to the partners each year. The partners may use their separate shares of the partnership's loss to compute their individual NOL. The rules for sole proprietors discussed above apply.

**C Corporation.** For federal tax purposes, a C corporation determines and deducts an NOL in much the same way an individual does. The same carryback and carryover periods apply and the same rules apply when two or more NOLs are carried to the same year. A corporation's NOL differs from an individual's NOL in three ways. First, a corporation is allowed to take different deductions in figuring an NOL. Second, a corporation must make different modifications to its taxable income in the carryback or carry forward year when figuring how much of the NOL may be deducted. Third, Minnesota does not permit carryback of an NOL. (An NOL may be carried forward 15 years.) Because the corporation is a separate taxable entity, the NOL is deducted by the

corporation and is not passed through to shareholders. Minnesota's tax laws must be followed in taking the NOL deduction for Minnesota income tax purposes.

**S Corporation.** The S corporation, like a partnership, is not allowed to take an NOL deduction. If the S corporation incurs a loss for the year, it is passed through to shareholders in proportion to their shareholdings. The shareholders of the S corporation may use their share of the corporation's loss to compute their individual NOL.

## **Estimated Tax Payments**

**Sole Proprietorship.** The sole proprietor generally will be required to make federal and Minnesota estimated tax payments if his or her income tax and (for federal purposes) self employment tax will exceed taxes paid through withholding and credits by \$1,000 or more. The tax is determined on income from all sources, including income from the business. A penalty may be imposed on underpaid estimates.

**Partnership.** The partnership itself is not required to make estimated tax payments. However, for Minnesota tax purposes, a partnership is required to pay quarterly estimated tax if its Minnesota minimum fee is \$500 or more or if it has a nonresident partner whose share of the composite income tax is \$500 or more. As with the sole proprietorship, individual partners generally will be required to make estimated tax payments if their income tax and self employment tax will exceed taxes paid through withholding and credits by \$1,000 or more. The tax is based on taxable income from all sources, not just the income from the partnership. If the tax is underpaid, a penalty may be imposed on the partner. As with the sole proprietorship, both federal and Minnesota estimates generally will be required.

**C Corporation. Federal:** A C corporation whose estimated tax is expected to be \$500 or more is required to make estimated tax payments. If the corporation does not use Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS), deposit corporation income tax payments (and estimated tax payments) with Form 8109, Federal Tax Deposit Coupon. Mail or deliver the completed Form 8109 with the payment to an authorized depository (that is, a commercial bank or other financial institution authorized to accept federal tax deposits). **Minnesota:** A corporation with an estimated tax of \$500 or more must make Minnesota quarterly estimated tax payments. In addition, a C corporation with more than \$20,000 in tax liability must make all its tax payments via electronic funds transfer. These payments are filed with the Minnesota Department of Revenue. For both federal and Minnesota purposes, a penalty may be imposed for failure to pay the correct estimated tax on or before its due date.

**S Corporation.** The S corporation is not subject to estimated tax on income which passes through to shareholders. For Minnesota tax purposes, an S corporation is required to pay quarterly estimated tax if its S corporation taxes and minimum fee is \$500 or more or if it has a nonresident shareholder whose share of the composite income tax is \$500 or more. A penalty may be applied if the estimated taxes are underpaid.

## **Disposition of Ownership Interest**

**Sole Proprietorship.** The sole proprietor who sells the business is treated as selling the individual assets of the business. The income tax treatment of the sale will depend on whether or not the

property is a capital asset, and the length of time the property has been held. The assets may also be subject to state sales tax. A sole proprietor also may change the form of the business without selling its assets, such as by joining with one or more persons to form a partnership or a corporation, and then transferring the assets of the sole proprietorship to the new organization. The tax consequences of such a transfer should be discussed in advance with a competent tax advisor.

**Partnership.** The sale or exchange of a partner's interest in a partnership ordinarily results in capital gain or loss on the difference between the amount realized and the adjusted basis of the partner's interest in the partnership. Special rules apply to exchanges of an interest in one partnership for an interest in another, liquidation of a partner's interest, and the treatment of unrealized receivables and inventory items. Tangible assets sold as part of the transaction also may be subject to state sales tax. Because of the complexity of the tax laws affecting the disposition of a partnership interest, the tax consequences of such a disposition should be thoroughly explored in advance with a competent tax advisor.

Note also that under the Revised Uniform Partnership Act (RUPA), Minnesota Statutes Chapter 323A, (RUPA) mergers of partnerships are allowed. Again, because of the complexity of tax laws, a competent tax advisor should be consulted when considering a merger of partnerships.

**Corporation.** Disposition of an ownership interest (shares of stock) in a corporation must be distinguished from liquidation of the corporation. Individual shareholders who sell their stock generally will recognize capital gain or capital loss on the sale of their shares. The gain or loss will be long term or short term, depending on the length of time the shares were held. An interest in a corporation also may be disposed of by complete or partial liquidation of the corporation. In liquidation, the corporation may either dispose of its property for cash, and distribute the cash to its shareholders, or it may distribute its property to the shareholders in exchange for the corporation's capital stock held by those shareholders. In either case, the distribution generally will result in capital gain or capital loss to the shareholders. Tangible assets sold as part of the transaction also may be subject to state sales tax. In some cases, the timing of the transaction may affect the tax consequences. The tax consequences of corporate liquidations and stock redemptions for both C corporations and S corporations and their shareholders can be complex. For this reason, it is advisable to consult with a competent tax advisor prior to attempting to liquidate the corporation or dispose of corporate assets.

## **NAMING THE BUSINESS ENTITY**

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### **CERTIFICATE OF ASSUMED NAME**

#### **When Filing is Required**

An individual or partnership that conducts or transacts business in Minnesota under a name that is different from the full, true name of each business owner must register the name of the business by filing a certificate of assumed name with the Secretary of State. A corporation, limited partnership, limited liability partnership or limited liability company that conducts business under a name that is different from the exact, legal name likewise must file a certificate of assumed name for the business name.

An assumed name filing is also required when a general or limited partnership that is not also a limited liability partnership (or its partners) wishes to file statements of partnership authority, statement of denial, statements of merger, statements of dissociation, statements of dissolution or amendments or cancellations of those statements. (Note that such a partnership is not “assuming” a business name by making these filings; instead, the reason for making the certificate of assumed name filing is that the Secretary of State’s Office requires it to be filed before any such statements may be filed.)

For example, if John Smith, a sole proprietor, does business under “Smith’s Realty,” he must file a certificate of assumed name. Filing is not required, however, if John Smith, a sole proprietor, does business as “John Smith Realty.” Likewise, if Able Building Company, a corporation, does business as “ABC Construction,” it must register the assumed name “ABC Construction.” If, however, Able Building Company does business under the name Able Building Company, it is not required to file a certificate of assumed name.

### **Restrictions on Assumed Names**

An assumed name may include a designation required to be in the name of a business entity only if the business owner using the assumed name is that type of entity. For example, ABC Incorporated, a corporation, may file the assumed name XYZ Limited, because Limited is a corporate designation and the business owner is a corporation. If, however, John Smith is an individual in the realty business, the assumed name cannot be registered as “Smith Realty, Inc.” Also, assumed names may not include in their names a geographic reference to a place or community if the business is not located in that community. Finally, financial institutions wishing to use an assumed name must first receive approval from the commissioner of the Department of Commerce.

### **Reason for Filing**

The reason for filing a certificate of assumed name is to provide information to the consumer on the identity of the business owner. Registration of the assumed name does not protect the name against use by other persons. It is up to the individual to decide whether to take legal action to prevent use of the name. An attorney can provide advice on the likelihood of success and potential costs of such a lawsuit. Note also that registering a domain name or Federal trademark is a process completely separate from making any filing with the Secretary of State’s office.

### **Determining Whether an Assumed Name is Available**

An assumed name will not be accepted for filing if it is the same as, or is not distinguishable from, the name of a corporation, limited liability company, limited partnership, limited liability partnership or state trademark on file with the Secretary of State. (See the section titled “Determining Whether A Name is Distinguishable” later in this chapter.)

Business owners may call the general information line of the Secretary of State’s office (651) 296-2803, or access the Secretary of State’s’ website, [www.sos.state.mn.us](http://www.sos.state.mn.us), prior to registration to determine whether a name is available. The Secretary of State’s office will perform a preliminary check but does not guarantee that the name will be available at the time of filing. There is no procedure for reserving an assumed name. A sole proprietorship or partnership that intends to

incorporate at a later date may, however, reserve the corporate name by filing a reservation of corporate name with the Secretary of State. This procedure is described in the section of this Guide on forming a corporation.

2009 legislation provides that upon the dissolution or termination of a business entity for failure to file an annual renewal, the Secretary of State shall automatically file a name reservation to hold the name of the dissolved or terminated entity for a period of one year from the date of dissolution or termination. The intent of this legislation is to prevent a party from “name squatting” on the name of a business that has forgotten to file its yearly renewal and then demanding payment from the business to get the name back.

## **Filing Procedure**

A simple, one-page certificate of assumed name form can be downloaded from the Secretary of State’s website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331), and is also available by fax from the Fax Forms Library at (651) 296-2803, and by mail from that office. The business owner completes and signs the form and files it with the Secretary of State, along with a filing fee. The Secretary of State’s office then processes the form. After the Secretary of State notifies the business owner that the filing is accepted, the business owner must have the certificate published for two consecutive issues in a newspaper qualified to print legal notices (sometimes called a “legal newspaper”) in the county where the registered office or principal place of business is located. A qualified newspaper is one which meets the statutory standards established by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 331A. The cost of publishing this notice is set by the newspaper and paid for by the person or entity making the assumed name filing. The Secretary of State’s office maintains a list of “legal newspapers.”

Failure to publish the notice renders the assumed name filing invalid. A business that fails to file its assumed name as required by law will be assessed \$250 in costs at the time of any subsequent lawsuit by or against the business.

## **Duration of Filing Period; Filing Amendments**

A certificate of assumed name is valid for ten years from the date of filing, unless there are changes in the information provided on the certificate. The Secretary of State’s office mails the business a renewal form six months prior to expiration of the certificate. For this reason, it is important to file an amendment to the assumed name certificate each time the address information on the certificate becomes outdated.

If other information provided on the certificate of assumed name changes, the business must also file an amendment with the Secretary of State’s office. Any amendments must be filed within sixty days after the change takes place.

See the Secretary of State fee schedule later in this Guide for filing fees.

## **NAMING A CORPORATION, LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP OR LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY**

### **Statutory Requirements**

Name requirements for corporations, limited liability partnerships and limited liability companies are established by statute.

The name of a corporation must:

- Be in the English language or any other language expressed in English characters;
- Contain the words “corporation”, “incorporated”, or “limited”, or an abbreviation of one or more of these words, or the word “company” or the abbreviation “Co.” if that word or abbreviation is not preceded by “and” or “&” or in the case of a professional corporation, the words “professional association,” or “chartered,” or the abbreviation “P.A.”;
- Not contain a word or phrase indicating that the corporation conducts a business that is not a legal business purpose; and
- Be distinguishable from the name of each domestic or foreign corporation, limited liability company, limited partnership, limited liability partnership or any reserved name, assumed name, trademark or service mark on file with the Secretary of State at the time of the filing.

The name of a limited partnership that is not a limited liability partnership must:

- Contain the phrase “limited partnership” or the abbreviation “L.P.” or “LP” and may not contain the phrase “limited liability limited partnership” or the abbreviation “LLLP” or “L.L.L.P.”

The name of a limited liability partnership must:

- Be in the English language or any other language expressed in English characters;
- Contain the words “limited liability partnership” or the abbreviation “L.L.P.” or in the case of a professional limited liability partnership the choices already stated or the words “professional limited liability partnership” or the abbreviation “P.L.L.P.”;
- Not contain a word or phrase indicating that the limited liability partnership conducts a business that does not constitute a legal business purpose;
- Be distinguishable from the name of each domestic or foreign corporation, limited liability company, limited partnership, limited liability partnership or any reserved name, assumed name, trademark or service mark on file with the Secretary of State at the time of the filing; and
- If the limited liability partnership is also a limited partnership, contain the phrase “limited liability limited partnership or the abbreviation “LLLP,” or “L.L.L.P.,” and must not otherwise contain the abbreviation “LP” or “L.P.”

The name of a limited liability company must:

- Be in the English language or any other language expressed in English characters;
- Contain the words “limited liability company” or the abbreviation “LLC”, or in the case of a professional limited liability company the words “professional limited liability company” or the abbreviation “PLC”;
- Not contain the words “corporation” or “incorporated” or the abbreviations of either or both words;
- Not contain a word or phrase that indicates or implies that the limited liability company is organized for a purpose other than a legal business purpose; and
- Be distinguishable from the name of each domestic or foreign limited liability company, corporation, limited partnership, limited liability partnership or any reserved name, assumed name, trademark or service mark on file with the Secretary of State.

### **Determining the Availability of a Corporate Name or Limited Liability Company Name**

The Secretary of State’s office will not accept for filing articles of incorporation for a corporation, articles of registration for a limited liability partnership or articles of organization for a limited liability company if the name of the corporation, limited liability partnership or limited liability company is the same as, or not distinguishable from, the name of a Minnesota or foreign corporation, limited liability company, limited partnership, limited liability partnership or reserved name or trademark. (See the section titled “Determining Whether A Name is Distinguishable” later in this chapter.)

The Secretary of State’s office will perform a preliminary check to determine the availability of a corporation, limited liability partnership or limited liability company name before the articles of incorporation, registration or organization are filed. Business owners may call the Secretary of State’s office, or access that office’s website, [www.sos.state.mn.us](http://www.sos.state.mn.us), prior to filing to determine whether the name is available. The telephone number to call is (651) 296-2803. The Secretary of State’s office does not guarantee that the name will be available at the time of filing, however incorporators or organizers who wish to place a hold on a name before proceeding with formation of a corporation or limited liability company may file a name reservation with the Secretary of State’s office. (See the section of this chapter below on “Reserving a Corporate Name or Limited Liability Company Name.”)

### **Warning**

**As is the case with filing a certificate of assumed name, the registration of a corporate name or limited liability partnership or limited liability company name does not necessarily mean that the name can be used without penalty. There may be existing users of that name who have perfected a prior federal trademark or common law right to the name without filing with the Minnesota Secretary of State. Note also that registering an Internet domain name is a process completely separate from making a filing with the Minnesota Secretary of State. These users may be able to use the courts to prevent the incorporators, organizers, or business entity from actually using the name even though it may be available for registration with the Secretary of State.**



## **Reserving a Corporate Name or Limited Liability Company Name**

A corporate name or limited liability company name may be reserved by an individual or entity in one of the eligible categories listed below. The reservation is made on a form available from the Secretary of State, and is effective for 12 months. The reservation may be renewed for an unlimited number of 12-month periods. The fee for reserving the name appears in the Secretary of State fee schedule later in this Guide.

Eligible categories are:

- A person doing business in this state under the desired name (the term “person” includes a corporation or unincorporated association);
- A person intending to incorporate under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 302A or form a limited liability company under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 322B;
- A domestic corporation or domestic limited liability company intending to change its name;
- A foreign corporation or foreign limited liability company intending to apply for a certificate of authority to transact business in Minnesota;
- A foreign corporation or foreign limited liability company authorized to transact business in Minnesota and intending to change its name;
- A person intending to incorporate a foreign corporation or foreign limited liability company and intending to have that entity apply for a certificate of authority to transact business in Minnesota; or
- A foreign corporation or foreign limited liability company doing business under that name or a name deceptively similar to that name in one or more states other than Minnesota and not described above.

## **DETERMINING WHETHER A NAME IS DISTINGUISHABLE**

### **General Rule**

In general, any name which contains a different word from existing names on file with the Secretary of State is distinguishable and the name is acceptable for filing as an assumed name or as the name of a corporation or limited liability partnership or limited liability company. Exceptions to this general rule are stated in the following section.

### **Exceptions**

Names which are identical except for the following are not distinguishable and will not be accepted for filing:

- Corporate endings regardless of where they appear in the name. These include Incorporated, Corporation, Company, Limited, Limited Liability Company, Limited Liability Limited

Partnership, Professional Limited Liability Company, Limited Liability Partnership, Professional Limited Liability Partnership, Professional Association, Limited Partnership and their abbreviations, and Chartered.

- The inclusion or omission of articles of speech, conjunctions, contractions, prepositions or punctuation. An article of speech is any one of the words “a,” “an,” or “the.” A conjunction is a word or symbol that joins clauses, phrases or words together. Examples include “and,” “or,” “as,” “because,” “but,” “+,” “-,” “&.” A contraction is the shortened form of a word such as assn. for association and dept. for department. A preposition is a word which expresses the relationship between a noun and another word. Examples are “at,” “by,” “in,” “up,” “of,” “to.”
- The abbreviation versus the spelling out of a word or different tenses of the same word. An abbreviation is the shortened form of a word or a recognized shortening of a word to an unrelated combination of letters, e.g., “Mister” to “Mr.,” “pound” to “lb.,” “Brothers” to “Bros.”
- The spacing of words, the combination of commonly used two-word terms or the splitting of words usually found in compound form.
- An obvious misspelling or alternative spelling or homonym.
- The use of the word or numerals (including Roman) for the same number, e.g., “two,” “2,” or “II.”

## **Options for Dealing with Names Which Are Not Distinguishable**

A business that wishes to use a name that is not distinguishable from a name that is already on file with the Secretary of State has several options. These include changing the name, obtaining and filing consent to use the name, filing a court order, and filing a statement of dormant business. A fee is charged for each filing.

**Changing the Applied-For Name.** The name may be changed by adding or deleting words to distinguish the name.

**Filing Consent to Use the Name.** Written consent may be obtained from the holder of the conflicting name and filed with the Secretary of State. A form for this purpose is available from the Secretary of State’s office. Applicants for a trademark may not obtain consents, but they may submit affidavits from themselves and from holders of conflicting names describing the nature of the businesses and the geographic and market area served as evidence that the marks will not be confusingly similar. There is no fee for filing these affidavits, although a fee is charged for filing a consent.

**Filing a Court Order.** An applicant for a name who obtains a court order establishing a prior right to use of that name may file the name. The court order must be attached to the filing.

**Filing a Statement of Dormant Business.** To use this method, the applicant must file a signed affidavit stating that: the existing corporation or business has been in existence for three years or more and is on file with the Secretary of State; the existing corporation has not filed anything with the Secretary of State in the past three years; the applicant mailed a written notice by certified

mail return receipt requested, to the registered office of the existing corporation or business, and the notice has been returned as undeliverable; the applicant has made a diligent inquiry and has been unable to find a telephone listing for the existing corporation or business in the county of its registered office; and the applicant has no knowledge that the existing corporation or business is still operating.

## **FORMING A SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP**

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As noted in the section on choosing the form of organization, a sole proprietorship is the simplest form of business organization. There are no statutory requirements unique to this form of organization. From a regulatory standpoint, the business owner only needs to register the business name as an assumed name (if it does not contain the business owner's first and last names), obtain business licenses and tax identification numbers if necessary, and begin operations.

A list of business licenses required by the state of Minnesota appears in the Directory of Licenses and Permits section of this Guide. Procedures for registering the business name as an assumed name are discussed in the previous section of this Guide.

The sole proprietor must obtain federal and state tax identification numbers if the business has employees even if those employees are members of the sole proprietor's family. A sole proprietor who will hire employees also will need an unemployment insurance employer account number and must secure workers' compensation insurance for employees. A sole proprietor who will be selling a product or service that is subject to sales tax will need to register for sales and use tax purposes. These taxes and procedures for obtaining tax numbers are discussed in the section of this Guide on business taxes.

Sole proprietors who will be hiring employees also should review the section of this Guide on issues for employers.

## **FORMING A PARTNERSHIP**

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There are two types of partnerships: general partnerships and limited partnerships. Both general and limited partnerships can elect certain legal rules that give partners in these partnerships greater protection against personal liability. A general partnership that makes this election is called a "limited liability partnership"; a limited partnership that makes this election is called a "limited liability limited partnership."

A general partnership that is formed in a state other than Minnesota, or in a foreign country, is called a foreign general partnership. A limited partnership that is formed in a state other than Minnesota, or in a foreign country, is called a foreign limited partnership and is subject to additional regulatory requirements. A limited liability partnership (or limited liability limited partnership) formed in a state other than Minnesota, or in a foreign country, is called a foreign limited liability partnership (or foreign limited liability limited partnership) and is subject to additional regulatory requirements.

## **GENERAL PARTNERSHIPS**

A general partnership is a business that is owned by two or more persons who associate to carry on the business of the partnership for profit. General partnerships have specific attributes, which are defined by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 323A. The general rule is that in a general partnership all partners share equally in the right, and responsibility, to manage the business, and each partner is responsible for all the debts and obligations of the business. General partnerships that have elected limited liability partnership status operate much like general partnerships, but generally partners in limited liability partnerships are not personally liable for the wrongful acts of other partners or for the debts or obligations of the partnership.

### **Regulatory Requirements**

From a regulatory standpoint, a partnership must obtain business licenses if necessary, obtain federal and state tax identification numbers and an unemployment insurance employer account number and will need to register the business name as an assumed name, unless the first and last name of each partner is included in the name of the partnership. Note that, as explained below, it is also strongly recommended that the partnership (no matter what type) draw up a written agreement addressing key issues like the allocation of management responsibilities, the distribution of profits and losses, and rights upon termination. The partnership agreement is not filed with the state, however. Issues commonly addressed in a partnership agreement are discussed in the next section.

A list of business licenses required by the state of Minnesota appears in the section of this Guide titled Directory of Licenses and Permits. Procedures for registering the business name as an assumed name are discussed in the previous section of this Guide.

Note that any partner of a general partnership that has elected limited liability partnership status, or professional limited liability partnership status, is jointly and severally liable for contributions or reimbursement, including interest, penalties and costs with respect to unemployment insurance benefits if the partnership, as an employer, does not pay any amounts with respect to unemployment insurance benefits due to the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program.

Although the partnership itself is not a taxable entity, it must file an annual federal and state “information” return with the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue. For this reason, both federal and state tax identification numbers must be obtained by the partnership. A partnership that will be selling a product or service that is subject to sales tax also will need to register for purposes of Minnesota sales and use tax. A partnership that will hire employees, even if those employees are members of a partner’s family, must secure workers’ compensation insurance covering employees. These taxes and procedures for obtaining tax numbers are discussed in the section of this Guide on business taxes.

Partnerships that will be hiring employees also should review the section of this Guide on issues for employers.

## **Registration of Domestic and Foreign Limited Liability Partnerships**

In order to become a limited liability partnership, a Minnesota general partnership must file a registration to that effect. A form that includes the specifically required language is available from the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331), or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803, or by mail from the office. The partnership is subject to limited liability partnership rules of law on and after the date the registration is filed. That registration is valid indefinitely as long as the annual registration for the partnership is filed on a calendar year basis.

Non-Minnesota limited liability partnerships must similarly register with the Secretary of State and must attach to the registration a certificate of good standing or status from the state or province where the foreign limited liability partnership is formed.

## **The Partnership Agreement**

The partnership agreement addresses a number of issues relating to the management and operation of the partnership. In drawing up the partnership agreement, the prospective partners should consult with legal counsel to assure that the needs and desires of the partners and relevant legal issues are addressed. Some of the issues typically addressed in a partnership agreement include:

- Name of the partnership.
- Duration of the partnership.
- Location of its place of business.
- Capital contribution of each partner.
- Whether partners may make additional contributions.
- The level at which capital accounts of the partners must be maintained.
- Participation of each partner in profits and losses.
- The amounts of any regular drawings against profits.
- Responsibilities and authority of each partner.
- Amount of time to be contributed by each partner.
- Prohibition of partners' outside business activities which would compete with the partnership business.
- Name of the managing partner and method for resolving management disputes.
- Procedure for admitting new partners.
- Method of determining the value of goodwill in the business, in case of death, incompetence, or withdrawal of a partner or dissolution of the partnership for any other reason.
- Method of liquidating the interest of a deceased or retiring partner.
- Circumstances under which a partner must withdraw from active participation, and arrangements for adjusting the partner's salary and equity.

- Whether or not surviving partners have the right to continue using the name of a deceased partner in the partnership name.
- Basis for expulsion of a partner, method of notification of expulsion, and the disposition of any losses that arise from the delinquency of such a partner.
- Period of time in which retiring or withdrawing partners may not engage in a competing business.
- Procedures for handling the protracted disability of a partner.
- How partnership accounts are to be kept.
- The fiscal year of the partnership.
- Whether or not interest is to be paid on the debit and credit balances in the partners' accounts.
- Where the partnership cash is to be deposited and who may sign checks.
- Under what conditions limited partners may be accepted into the firm, and, if so, who shall be designated as the general partner.
- Prohibition of the partners' pledging, selling, hypothecating, or in any manner transferring their interest in the partnership except to other partners.
- Identification of material contracts or agreements affecting the liability or operation of the partnership.

## **LIMITED PARTNERSHIPS**

A limited partnership is a type of partnership in which the limited partners share in the partnership's liability only up to the amount of their investment in the limited partnership. By statute, the limited partnership must have at least one general partner and one limited partner. The general partner has the right and responsibility to control the limited partnership, and is responsible for the debts and obligations of the limited partnership. The limited partner, in exchange for limited liability, generally does not participate in the day-to-day management and control of the business.

### **Regulatory Requirements**

As is the case with general partnerships, a limited partnership will need to obtain business licenses if necessary, obtain federal and state tax identification numbers and may need to register the business name as an assumed name. A limited partnership that will hire employees, even if those employees are members of a partner's family, must obtain an unemployment insurance employer account number and worker's compensation insurance for those employees. The limited partnership must file a certificate of limited partnership with the Secretary of State's office before commencing business. The filing requirements are discussed in the next section.

A limited partnership that will be selling shares in the limited partnership to the public likely will be required to register with the federal Securities and Exchange Commission and the Minnesota Department of Commerce. Persons contemplating such an offer or sale should consult with legal

counsel well in advance of the offering to assure that it complies with federal and state securities laws.

### **Certificate of Limited Partnership**

A limited partnership must file a certificate of limited partnership with the Secretary of State. Minnesota Statutes § 322A.11 sets forth the minimum content requirements of the certificate. A form containing these requirements is available from the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the office. A limited partnership is formed at the time the certificate of limited partnership is filed with the Secretary of State or at a later time specified in the certificate.

In addition to the certificate of limited partnership, the limited partnership may also adopt a limited partnership agreement. As is the case with a general partnership agreement, the limited partnership agreement governs the details of the partnership and the management arrangement between the general partners and the limited partnership. Issues and concerns to be addressed in the limited partnership agreement as well as consideration of securities law requirements and tax consequences should be discussed with legal counsel.

In order to become a limited liability limited partnership, the first step is to establish the limited partnership, second, it is necessary to follow the procedures required for creating a limited liability partnership described in the preceding sections of this Guide. It is recommended that the name of the limited partnership and the name on the limited liability limited partnership registration match so that there is no question whether the limited partnership entity has elected limited liability partnership status.

### **FOREIGN LIMITED PARTNERSHIPS**

A limited partnership that does business in Minnesota and is formed in another state or country must register with the Secretary of State as a foreign limited partnership. Filing requirements are established by Minnesota Statutes § 322A.70. A registration form containing the required information is available from the Secretary of State's office by mail, fax, or from the website. The foreign limited partnership must attach to its registration a certificate of good standing (sometimes called a certificate of status) from the state or province where the foreign limited partnership is formed.

A foreign limited partnership also must obtain a Minnesota tax identification number. If the foreign limited partnership has employees, even if those employees are members of a partner's family, it must obtain an unemployment insurance employer account number and workers' compensation insurance covering its employees.

## **FORMING A MINNESOTA BUSINESS CORPORATION**

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A corporation is a separate legal entity that is owned by one or more shareholders. The shareholders elect a board of directors which is responsible for the management and control of the corporation. As a separate legal entity, the corporation is responsible for the debts and obligations of the business. In most cases the shareholders are insulated from personal liability for claims against the corporation.

A corporation is formed according to the laws of the state in which it is organized. In Minnesota the business corporation statute is Minnesota Statutes Chapter 302A. The following material describes the process for incorporating a business in Minnesota and some of the post-incorporation issues faced by new corporations. The formation of a state bank or trust company with the Minnesota Department of Commerce is beyond the scope of this publication. Other issues are described in the sections of this Guide on choosing the form of business organization, business taxes, and issues for employers.

### **ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION**

A corporation is formed by one or more incorporators filing articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State and paying the filing fee. Incorporators must be at least 18 years of age. Minimum requirements are satisfied by an articles of incorporation form that is available from the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the office. Incorporators may, in the articles of incorporation, add to or modify many of the basic statutory provisions set forth in the Minnesota Business Corporation Act. If the incorporators choose to modify the statutory provisions, they must draft their own articles of incorporation; they cannot use the form provided by the Secretary of State. An attorney can assist in determining whether modifications are needed and in drafting articles of incorporation.

#### **Corporate Name**

Requirements for the corporate name are discussed in the section on naming the business entity, earlier in this Guide.

#### **Registered Office**

A corporation must maintain a registered office located in the state of Minnesota. The address of a registered office must set forth the complete office address (not a post-office box). This address may be a street address, a rural route and rural route box or fire number, or directions from a landmark. If directions are given, a mailing address in the same town or in an adjacent area must also be given. All addresses must have a zip code.



## **Registered Agent**

The corporation is not required to name a registered agent in the articles of incorporation, but if the corporation decides to name an agent, the articles must list the name of the agent and the agent must be located at the registered office.

## **Corporate Seal**

The corporation is no longer required to have a corporate seal.

## **Number of Authorized Shares of Stock**

A corporation may authorize any number of shares of stock. The articles of incorporation require only the total number of shares authorized. Neither a par value nor a stated value is required, although the articles may include par value if shares are to have a par value. Corporations that plan to do business in another state should consider including a provision specifically stating that shares have a par value of one cent per share for franchise fee purposes. This is a restatement of Minnesota Statutes § 302A.401, subd. 2(c) and may enable the corporation to avoid paying excess franchise fees in other states.

Note: While the number of authorized shares is fixed in the articles, the decision to issue shares is up to the directors, who may reserve shares for later issuance. The board must approve each issuance and ensure that the corporation receives fair value for its shares.

## **Names, Addresses and Signatures of Incorporators**

The articles must list the names and complete mailing addresses, including zip codes, of each of the incorporators. There must be at least one incorporator. Each incorporator must be a natural person of at least 18 years of age and must sign the articles.

## **Other Provisions**

There is no publication (i.e., no “legal advertisement”) requirement for corporations incorporated under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 302A. There is also no statutory minimum capital requirement for these corporations.

There are a number of provisions of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 302A that may be altered or adopted in the articles of incorporation, but that need not appear in the articles in order to properly form a corporation. A brief description of each of these provisions appears in Minnesota Statutes § 302A.111, subdivisions 2, 3 and 4. Some of these provisions include:

- The power to adopt, amend, or repeal the bylaws is vested in the board of directors (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.181);
- Directors serve for an indefinite term that expires at the next regular meeting of shareholders (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.207);

- A corporation must allow cumulative voting for directors (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.215);
- Absent directors may be permitted to give written consent or opposition to a proposal (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.233);
- A larger than majority vote may be required for board action (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.237);
- The affirmative vote of a majority of directors present is required for an action of the board (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.237);
- A written action by the board taken without a meeting must be signed by all directors (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.239);
- All shares have equal rights and preferences in all matters not otherwise provided by the board (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.401);
- A shareholder has certain preemptive rights, unless otherwise provided by the board (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.413);
- The transfer or registration of transfer of securities may be restricted (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.429);
- Regular meetings of shareholders need not be held, unless demanded by a shareholder under certain conditions (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.431);
- Unless otherwise provided by law not less than ten days notice is required for a meeting of shareholders (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.435, subd. 2);
- The affirmative vote of the holders of a majority of the voting power of the shares represented and voting at a duly held meeting is required for an action of the shareholders, except where this chapter requires the affirmative vote of a majority of the voting power of all voting shares (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.437, subd. 1);
- A larger than majority vote may be required for shareholder action (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.437);
- The number of shares required for a quorum at a shareholders meeting is a majority of the voting power of the shares entitled to vote (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.443);
- A corporation may agree to submit a matter to its shareholders whether or not the board of directors determines, at any time after approving the matter, that the matter is no longer advisable and recommends that shareholders reject it (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.439);
- Indemnification of certain persons is required (Minnesota Statutes § 302A.521).

## **Amending the Articles of Incorporation**

A corporation may amend its articles of incorporation to include or modify any provision that is required or permitted to appear in the articles or to omit any provision not required to be included in the articles. Amendments are required when any changes are made in the articles of incorporation. Common reasons for amending the articles include: changing the corporate name or registered address; increasing the number of authorized shares; and changing other provisions affecting the rights of shares and shareholders.

A corporation amends its articles of incorporation by submitting the amendment to the shareholders at a regular or special meeting called with proper notice and having the amendment approved by the required number of votes. Proper notice means the corporation mailed information on the

meeting time and other agenda items and a brief description of the amendment to each shareholder entitled to vote at least ten days before the meeting, unless other laws or the articles or bylaws permit a shorter time for notice.

Electronic meetings and participation by electronic means are permitted in Minnesota. Consult your attorney for further information on how to properly set up a virtual meeting, do corporate business by electronic mail, or allow electronic participation in physical meetings.

The amendment may be approved by the holders of a majority of the voting power unless the articles require a larger majority or the amendment will either increase or reduce a majority already required in the articles or required by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 302A. In that case the amendment must receive the approval of the higher of the two, if the corporation is not publicly held. A publicly held company requires the approval of a simple majority.

The articles of amendment must include the name of the corporation (which must be identical to the name on file with the Secretary of State), the text of the amendment, and a statement that the amendment was adopted pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Chapter 302A. There is a filing fee. Amendment forms are available at the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State's office.

A corporation may also restate its articles of incorporation in their entirety. In addition to stating the name of the corporation and reciting that the restatement was approved pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Chapter 302A, all articles are presented in the language as amended. In other words, all changes are combined in one document. A restatement that includes substantive amendments must be approved by the shareholders in the same way any other amendment is approved. If the purpose of the restatement is only to combine all previous changes into one document, only the board of directors need approve it.

Articles of amendment must also be signed by a person who has been authorized by the corporation to sign corporate documents.

### **Change of Registered Office or Registered Agent**

The registered office or registered agent may be changed by amending the articles of incorporation that sets forth the registered office or registered agent. To do this, the corporation must follow the procedure for amending articles of incorporation.

Every time a corporation moves or changes its registered office or agent it must file a Statement of Change of Registered Office or Agent with the Secretary of State. The Statement of Change of Registered Office or Agent must state the name of the corporation; the new address of the registered office, if the registered office is being moved; the name of the new registered agent, if a new agent is being appointed; and that the change of office or agent was approved by the board of directors. Change of Registered Office or Agent forms are available at the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State's office.

The statement must be signed by an authorized representative of the corporation. There is a filing fee.

## POST-INCORPORATION ISSUES

### General Considerations

When a corporation is formed, it becomes a legal entity that is separate from the owners or shareholders. The corporation can only act, however, through the individuals who are the incorporators, officers, directors, or shareholders. As part of the process of organizing the corporation, those individuals address a number of organizational matters, such as planning the capitalization, choosing the state of incorporation, selecting and reserving the corporate name, and drafting articles of incorporation and bylaws. Once the corporation is formed, those individuals will need to start up and operate the corporation. Specific guidance may be obtained from the firm's legal and tax advisors. In general, start-up and maintenance tasks include:

- Obtaining federal and state tax identification numbers and an unemployment insurance employer account number for the corporation.
- Issuing shares of stock in conformity with the articles of incorporation; note also that federal and state securities laws apply to the issuance of corporate shares. Corporate shares may be represented by share certificates or may be "uncertificated." Uncertificated shares do not have certificates but are still reflected on the records of the corporation. As stated elsewhere in this Guide, these laws are complex, and the advice of knowledgeable professionals should be obtained before attempting to issue corporate securities.
- Setting up a maintaining corporate books and records, including books of account, shareholder records, and corporate minute books.
- Calling and conducting the initial meeting of the board of directors or shareholders in conformity with the articles of incorporation and applicable laws.
- Assuring that all actions taken and decisions made by the corporation through its directors, officers and shareholders conform with the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and applicable law. All actions and decisions should be recorded in the corporation's minute book.

### Annual Registration

Minnesota corporations must file an annual corporate registration with the Secretary of State which will provide corporations with a reminder-to-file notice. Failure to file an annual registration for any calendar year will trigger an administrative dissolution of the corporation.

### Business Activities Report

Every corporation that does business in Minnesota must annually file with the Department of Revenue a business activities report. Corporations are exempt from this requirement if they:

- File a Minnesota corporate income tax return on time;
- Possess a certificate of authority to do business in Minnesota;
- Are a tax-exempt corporation;
- Are engaged solely in secondary market activity in Minnesota; or

- Are financial institutions that annually conduct business with fewer than 20 persons, and have total assets and deposits of less than \$5 million.

A corporation that is required to file a business activities report and fails to do so is prohibited from prosecuting any cause of action upon which it may bring suit under Minnesota law. In addition, those corporations generally are barred from using Minnesota courts for contracts executed and causes of action arising during the violation period. The Commissioner of Revenue may disclose to litigants whether a business activities report has been filed by a party to a lawsuit.

Copies of Form M-4R, the Business Activities Report, may be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Revenue, Forms Distribution Office at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **SUBSIDIARIES**

When a corporation extends into a new product line or a new geographic area, it frequently establishes a “subsidiary” corporation. A subsidiary corporation is a separate legal entity which happens to be controlled by another corporation (its “parent”) that owns enough shares of the subsidiary’s stock to dictate policy. Some subsidiaries are wholly-owned, some are not. As a separate entity, separate records and management are required, although consolidated financial and tax reporting may be possible under certain circumstances. Subsidiaries may also serve to insulate the parent corporation from liability for the action of the subsidiary under certain circumstances.

## **FOREIGN CORPORATIONS DOING BUSINESS IN MINNESOTA**

A corporation that is organized under the laws of a state other than Minnesota that transacts business in Minnesota must apply for a certificate of authority before doing business in Minnesota. The requirements for obtaining the certificate of authority are specified by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 303, and are set forth on a required form available from the Secretary of State’s website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State’s office. A recently-issued (within the past 90 days) certificate of existence from the state of incorporation must accompany the application.

The term “transacting business” is not clearly defined in statute, but the standard used in making the determination is the “minimum contacts” standard used in determining jurisdiction. Under this standard the facts are analyzed to determine whether the business or its local agents have conducted a continuous course of business in Minnesota or with Minnesotans sufficient to justify being governed by Minnesota law. This analysis will not be performed by the Secretary of State’s office or any other state executive agency; each business is responsible for performing its own analysis on the topic.

Neither the Secretary of State’s office nor any other state agency will make a determination as to whether a particular organization should register as a foreign corporation. As a general rule, doubts should be resolved in favor of registering the organization. Minnesota Statutes § 303.03 establishes certain activities as exceptions to the registration requirement. Corporations organized

outside Minnesota should consult with their legal counsel to determine whether any of the exceptions apply.

A foreign corporation also must file with the Secretary of State an annual registration and pay a \$135 fee. Annual registration forms are sent by the Secretary of State to the registered agent and office address of the corporation in Minnesota. The forms are also available at the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State's office. However, foreign nonprofit corporations are exempt from this requirement. Failure to file the annual registration in a calendar year will result in revocation.

In addition to obtaining the certificate of authority, a foreign corporation must obtain a Minnesota tax identification number from the Department of Revenue. If the corporation will have employees in Minnesota, it also must obtain a Minnesota employer withholding tax number and an unemployment insurance employer account number and arrange for workers' compensation insurance. The procedure for obtaining these numbers is described in the section of this Guide on business taxes and the Checklist for Hiring an Employee.

Foreign corporations also must obtain any state and local business licenses necessary to conduct business operations. Information on business license requirements may be obtained from the Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

Finally, the Minnesota Department of Revenue has the power to order the Secretary of State of Minnesota to revoke a foreign corporation's certificate of authority to do business in Minnesota if that corporation "fails to comply with any tax laws" administered by the Department of Revenue.

## **FORMING A MINNESOTA LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY**

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A limited liability company is a form of business organization that generally combines the limited liability of a corporation with the tax status of a partnership. The formation and operation of a Minnesota limited liability company is governed by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 322B.

As with a partnership, business income and losses of the limited liability company are passed through to the owners of the business (except for single-member limited liability companies that elect to be taxed as corporations). As with a corporation, liability for business debts and obligations generally rests with the entity rather than with individual owners. Except for single-member limited liability companies that elect to be taxed as corporations, the limited liability company's income is taxed at the owners' individual tax rate, rather than at the entity level, eliminating the double taxation of profits that occurs with a C corporation. A limited liability company is not subject to many of the restrictions that apply to S corporations, such as a maximum of 75 shareholders, a single class of stock, and limited types of non-individual shareholders. Unlike a limited partnership, all members of a limited liability company may participate in the active management of the company without risking loss of limited personal liability. As of 2009, when a single member LLC taxed as a disregarded entity fails to pay federal unemployment taxes, the LLC, not the owner is now liable.\*

*\*This is an update to the print version of the A Guide To Starting A Business In Minnesota 28th Ed., January 2010.*

Like a corporation, which may have only one shareholder, a limited liability company may have only one member or may have two or more members. A limited liability company's life ends more easily and may happen at the occurrence of an outside event. For example, the life of a limited liability company formed before August 1, 1999, ends at the death, retirement, resignation, bankruptcy, or expulsion of any member. Once dissolution has occurred, the members of the limited liability company need to wind up the affairs of the limited liability company and terminate the organization's existence. Termination can be avoided if there are two or more members remaining and they agree to continue the business of the limited liability company. An attorney can assist in assuring the limited liability company's existence will continue following an event of termination.

Under the entity classification rules set out in certain Treasury Regulations, it is generally possible for the organizers of a limited liability company to choose how that entity will be treated for tax purposes. Those Regulations appear at 26 C.F.R. section 301.7701-1 et seq. The Minnesota legislature has determined that a Minnesota limited liability company should file the same type of return for Minnesota purposes as it does for federal purposes and it will be classified for Minnesota purposes in the same way it is classified for federal purposes. Anyone interested in a limited liability company is strongly advised to seek the advice of tax counsel.

A limited liability company that transacts business in a jurisdiction that does not recognize limited liability companies risks the possibility that the other jurisdiction will treat the company as a partnership and thus not accord its owners the immunity from personal liability that Minnesota grants to owners of limited liability companies.

## **ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION**

A limited liability company is formed by filing articles of organization with the Secretary of State and paying the filing fee. Minimum requirements for the articles of organization are provided on an articles of organization form that is available from the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State's office. The articles of organization may add to or modify many of the basic statutory provisions set forth in the Minnesota Limited Liability Company Act. An attorney can assist in drafting articles of organization to assure that the needs and desires of the members, as well as legal requirements, are met. Organizers of a limited liability company must be at least 18 years of age.

### **Limited Liability Company Name**

Requirements for the limited liability company name are discussed in the section on naming the business entity, earlier in this Guide.

### **Registered Office**

A limited liability company must have a registered office located in the state of Minnesota. The registered office may be the place where the business is located or it may be in a different location. The registered office address must be the address of a physical location where a person who

represents the limited liability company can be found. A registered office address cannot be a post office box. Acceptable registered office addresses include a complete street address, a rural route and rural route box or fire number or directions from a landmark to the office location. If directions are given, a mailing address in the same or an adjacent town must be given. All addresses must have a zip code.

## **Registered Agent**

The limited liability company is not required to name a registered agent in the articles of organization, but if the limited liability company decides to name an agent, the articles must list the name of the agent and the agent must be located at the registered office.

## **Names, Addresses and Signatures of Organizers**

The articles of organization must list the names and complete mailing addresses, including zip codes, of each of the organizers. There must be at least one organizer. Each organizer must be a natural person who is at least 18 years old. Each organizer must sign the articles.

## **Other Provisions**

There are a number of provisions that may be altered in the articles of organization but need not appear in the articles in order to properly form a limited liability company. A brief description of each of these provisions appears in Minnesota Statutes § 322B.104 subdivisions 2, 3, and 4. Some of these provisions include:

- The power to adopt, amend or repeal the operating agreement is vested in the board of governors (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.201);
- Governors serve for an indefinite term that expires at the next regular meeting of the members (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.606);
- A limited liability company must allow cumulative voting for governors (Minnesota Statute § 322B.610);
- Absent governors may be permitted to give written consent or opposition to a proposal (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.615);
- A larger than majority vote may be required for board of governor action (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.617);
- The affirmative vote of a majority of governors present is required for an action of the board of governors (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.617);
- A written action by the board of governors taken without a meeting must be signed by all governors (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.618);
- All membership interests have equal rights and preferences in all matters not otherwise provided for by the board of governors (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.401, subdivision 5, clause 2);
- A member has certain preemptive rights, unless otherwise provided by the board of governors (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.310);



- The voting power of each membership interest is in proportion to the value reflected in the required records of the contributions of the members (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.318);
- Members share in distributions in proportion to the value reflected in the required records of contributions of the members (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.501);
- Members share in profits and losses in proportion to the value reflected in the required records of the contributions of the members (Minnesota Statutes § 322B.309).

## **Amending Articles of Organization**

A limited liability company may amend its articles of organization to include or modify any provision that is required or permitted to appear in the articles or to omit any provision not required to be included. Amendments are required when any changes are made in the articles of organization. The amendment form is available at the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State's office.

Articles of organization may be amended by submitting the amendment to the members at a regular or special meeting called with proper notice. Proper notice means that information on the time, location and meeting agenda and a brief description of the amendment is mailed to each member at least ten days before the meeting, unless other laws or the articles or bylaws permit a shorter time for notice. The amendment must be approved by a majority of the voting power of the members unless the articles require a larger majority or the amendment will increase a majority already required in the articles of a closely held limited liability company. If this larger majority is to be adopted, the amendment must be approved by this higher majority.

Electronic meetings and participation by electronic means are permitted in Minnesota. Consult your attorney for further information on how to properly set up a virtual meeting, do corporate business by electronic mail, or allow electronic participation in physical meetings.

The articles of amendment must include the following provisions: the name of the limited liability company as it appears in the records of the Secretary of State; the text of the amendment; and a statement that the amendment was adopted pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Chapter 322B. There is a \$35 filing fee.

A limited liability company also may restate its articles of organization in their entirety. In addition to stating the name of the limited liability company and reciting that the restatement was approved pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Chapter 322B, all articles are presented in the language which the limited liability company now wishes to use. In other words, all changes are combined in one document. A restatement that includes substantive amendments must be approved by the members in the same way as any other amendment is approved. If the restatement is only to combine all previous changes into one document, only the board of governors need approve.

Articles of amendment must be signed by a person who has been authorized by the limited liability company to sign such documents.

## **Change of Registered Office or Registered Agent**

Every time a limited liability company moves or changes its registered agent, it must report the new information to the Secretary of State on a change of address/agent form which is available at the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State's office. The form states the name of the limited liability company, the new address of the registered office, the name of the new registered agent, if one is being appointed, and that the change was approved by the board of governors.

If a registered agent is appointed, the registered agent must be physically located at the registered office address. The statement must be signed by an authorized representative of the limited liability company. There is a filing fee.

The registered office address and agent information can also be changed using the amendment procedure described above.

## **POST-ORGANIZATION ISSUES**

### **General Considerations**

After the limited liability company is formed, it must perform certain start-up tasks, such as obtaining federal and state tax identification numbers, obtaining an unemployment compensation identification number, setting up and maintaining the books and records of the business, calling and conducting the initial meeting of the board of governors or members, and taking other actions. All actions taken and decisions made by the limited liability company through its governors, managers and members must conform with the articles of organization, operating agreement, and applicable law. All actions and decisions should be recorded in the company's minute book. Specific guidance on post-organization issues may be obtained from the company's legal and tax advisors.

### **Annual Registration**

Both Minnesota and non-Minnesota limited liability companies must register with the Secretary of State once every year. The Secretary of State's office will send a registration form to the limited liability company at its registered office. The form is also available at the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State's office. The registration is due before the end of the calendar year. Failure to file will result in administrative termination. Reinstatement may occur within one year of the date of the administrative termination by filing the registration form and paying a \$25 reinstatement fee.

### **Operating Agreements**

Many aspects of business can be controlled by a document called an operating agreement, which is similar in function to a corporate shareholder agreement. Operating agreements are fact-specific

to the circumstances of each limited liability company, and limited liability company members should consult with legal counsel in creating or signing such agreements.

## **FOREIGN LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANIES DOING BUSINESS IN MINNESOTA**

A limited liability company that is organized under the laws of a state other than Minnesota that transacts business in Minnesota must obtain a certificate of authority before doing business in Minnesota. The requirements for obtaining the certificate of authority are specified by Minnesota Statutes § 322B.90 to 322B.955, and are set forth on forms available from the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State's office. A certificate of status or certificate of good standing from the state or province of organization must accompany the registration form.

The term "transacting business" is not clearly defined in the law, but the standard used in making the determination is the "minimum contacts" standard used in determining jurisdiction. Under this standard the facts are analyzed by the limited liability company to determine whether the business or its local agents have conducted a continuous course of business in Minnesota or with Minnesotans sufficient to justify being governed by Minnesota law.

Neither the Secretary of State's office nor any other state agency will make a determination as to whether a particular limited liability company should register as a foreign limited liability company. As a general rule, doubts should be resolved in favor of registering the organization. Minnesota Statutes § 322B.945 establishes certain activities as exceptions to the registration requirement. Limited liability companies organized under the laws of a state other than Minnesota should consult with their legal counsel to determine whether any of the exceptions apply.

In addition to obtaining the certificate of authority, a foreign limited liability company must obtain a Minnesota tax identification number from the Department of Revenue. If the company will have employees in Minnesota, it also must complete the Department of Revenue's withholding tax forms and arrange for workers' compensation insurance. The procedure for obtaining these numbers and forms is described in the section of this Guide on business taxes and the Checklist for Hiring an Employee.

If the foreign limited liability company changes the name or address of its registered agent or other statements made in the application for the certificate of authority become inaccurate, the foreign limited liability company must file an amended certificate of authority with the Secretary of State. A foreign limited liability company also must obtain any state and local business licenses necessary to conduct business operations. Information on business license requirements may be obtained from the Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **SPECIAL TYPES OF BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS**

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### **S CORPORATIONS**

Both “S” and “C” corporations are created by filing articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State, after which the shareholders must decide whether to treat the corporation as an S corporation or as a C corporation for tax purposes. An S corporation is a corporation which meets Internal Revenue Service criteria for tax treatment as an S corporation rather than as a C corporation, and whose shareholders unanimously choose to be so treated. An S corporation is taxed under Subchapter S of the Internal Revenue Code, whereas C corporations are taxed under Subchapter C of the Internal Revenue Code. A corporation that has a valid election to be taxed as an S corporation for federal purposes is also an S corporation for Minnesota tax purposes.

The S corporation is taxed in much the same manner as a partnership, i.e., the S corporation files an information tax return, Form 1120S, to report its income and expenses, but it is not separately taxed. Income (including, if certain requirements are met, capital gains) and expenses of the S corporation flow through to the shareholders in proportion to their shareholdings, and profits are taxed to the shareholders at the shareholders’ individual tax rates. For Minnesota purposes, the S corporation also pays a minimum fee, based on its Minnesota-sourced property, payroll and sales. See the Tax Rates section of this Guide.

By contrast, the C corporation is a separate taxable entity. The C corporation reports its income and expenses on a corporation income tax return and is taxed on its profits at corporation income tax rates. Profits are taxed to the C corporation before dividends are paid. Dividends, when paid, are taxed to shareholders who then report them as income. This results in double taxation of profits which are paid as dividends. By choosing S corporation status, this double taxation of corporate profits can be avoided.

An S corporation is defined by statute as a domestic corporation (i.e., a corporation organized under the law of one of the states of the United States) which:

- Does not have more than 100 shareholders;
- Does not have any non-individual shareholders (other than estates, certain trusts, and certain tax exempt entities);
- Does not have a nonresident alien as a shareholder, and
- Does not have more than one class of stock.

Certain corporations by statute are ineligible for S corporation status. If the corporation qualifies for S corporation status, the shareholders must formally choose to be so treated for tax purposes. This is accomplished by filing Form 2553 with the Internal Revenue Service on which all shareholders consent in writing to have the corporation treated as an S corporation. The election must be made in a timely manner, as prescribed by the Internal Revenue Service.

The election is valid for the taxable year for which it is made, and for all succeeding taxable years of the corporation, until the election is terminated. Statutory procedures determine how the termination is accomplished. In general, S corporation status is terminated when it is revoked by vote of the shareholders, or when the corporation no longer meets the statutory criteria for S corporation status. S corporation status also may be terminated when passive investment income (income from interest, rents, royalties, dividends and the like) exceeds a certain statutorily defined threshold.

Because of the possibility that S corporation status may be inadvertently terminated, persons planning to establish an S corporation are strongly encouraged to consult in advance with legal and tax counsel in order to properly structure the corporation and its capitalization. In some cases, formation of a limited liability company, rather than an S corporation, may better suit the owners' business and tax objectives. See the discussion of limited liability companies in the sections of this Guide titled Choosing the Form of Business Organization and Forming a Minnesota Limited Liability Company.

## **PROFESSIONAL ENTITIES**

The Minnesota Professional Firms Act, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 319B, was enacted in 1997 and authorizes practitioners of certain licensed professions to elect to be professional firms under any one of three different forms of organization: corporations (either for-profit or nonprofit); limited liability companies; and limited liability partnerships. In the absence of the Minnesota Professional Firms Act and its predecessors, members of such professions would not be able to practice under these forms of organization because the ethics rules of their respective licensing boards prohibit organizing in a way that limits the professional practitioner's professional liability towards clients. The Minnesota Professional Firms Act does not affect a practitioner's liability for her or his own malpractice or other wrongful conduct directly arising from the rendering of professional services, but permits the professional to have limited liability for debts or obligations of the business itself to the extent that the generally applicable governing law for the chosen form of organization permits.

Professional firms are subject to the law under which the entity has been formed as well as the Professional Firms Act which contains additional restrictions; where the two conflict, the Professional Firms Act will control. Members of the professional firm are also subject to the laws, regulations and licensing requirements of their respective licensing boards.

In order to practice a profession in any form other than sole proprietorship or general partnership, professionals must comply with the Professional Firms Act, except as the rules of the respective licensing board provide otherwise.

Members of the following professions may elect to be professional firms: medicine and surgery; chiropractic; registered nursing; optometry; psychology; social work; marriage and family therapy; dentistry and dental hygiene; pharmacy; podiatric medicine; veterinary medicine; physician's assistants; architecture; engineering; surveying; landscape architecture; geoscience; certified interior design; accountancy; and law.

In order to operate as a professional firm, a Minnesota entity must first be formed under the chosen statute: the Minnesota Business Corporation Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 302A); the

Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 317A); the Minnesota Limited Liability Company Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 322B); or the Minnesota Limited Liability Partnership Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 323A). An existing non-Minnesota entity wishing to practice a profession in Minnesota should register under the Minnesota Foreign Corporation Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 303) or the foreign registration provisions of the Limited Liability Company or Limited Liability Partnership Acts.

Then, either as an addendum to the original documents of formation for the entity or as a later amendment or update to those documents, the firm must file with the Secretary of State language stating:

- that the firm elects to be covered by the Minnesota Professional Firms Act (Minnesota Statutes, sections 319B.01 to 319B.012);
- that the firm acknowledges that it is subject to those sections; and
- specifying from the list of professions set forth above the profession or professions to be practiced by the firm.

A non-Minnesota firm must state in addition to the above that to the extent that it's generally applicable governing law differs from or conflicts with Minnesota Statutes, sections 319B.01 to 319B.12, that it has made the necessary changes to the agreements and other documents controlling its structure, governance, operations and internal affairs so as to comply with those sections.

Such a filing constitutes an election to be a professional firm. These entities may rescind such elections, may again elect professional status, and may change the designated practiced profession freely, subject to the regulations of the appropriate governing board(s).

Health professionals (including medicine and surgery; chiropractic; registered nursing; optometry; psychology; dentistry and dental hygiene; pharmacy and podiatric medicine) are specifically authorized to practice in the same professional firm; others should consult their licensing boards for further information on whether joint practices are permitted. Where they are not, a professional firm can provide only those professional services listed in the election described above.

The name of a professional firm which is a corporation must include one of the following designations or abbreviations; Professional Corporation, Professional Service Corporation, Service Corporation, Professional Association, Chartered, Limited, P.C., P.S.C., S.C., P.A., or Ltd.

The name of a professional firm which is an LLC must include Professional Limited Liability Company, Limited Liability Company, P.L.L.C., P.L.C., or L.L.C.

The name of a professional firm which is an LLP must include Professional Limited Liability Partnership, Limited Liability Partnership, P.L.L.P. or L.L.P.

The internal governance of professional firms is governed by the same statutes that apply to non-professional firms. For example, a professional LLP and a non-professional LLP are bound in virtually all respects by the same statutes. The only difference is that the professional LLP may provide professional services as listed above and the non-professional LLP may not.

## **NONPROFIT CORPORATIONS**

A Minnesota nonprofit corporation is defined by statute as a corporation which:

- Is formed for a purpose not involving pecuniary gain to its members (other than members that are nonprofit organizations or governmental units), and
- Pays no dividends or other pecuniary remuneration, directly or indirectly, to its members as such (other than to members that are nonprofit organizations or governmental units).

Thus, a business corporation (regardless of whether it actually makes a profit) cannot be a nonprofit corporation because a primary purpose of every business corporation is to remunerate its shareholders.

A nonprofit corporation may be formed under the Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 317A, for any lawful purpose, unless another statute requires incorporation for a different or specific purpose. The nonprofit corporation is managed by a board of directors, which must consist of at least three individuals. The nonprofit corporation must have at least two officers, a president and a treasurer. One person may perform both of these functions. The Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation Act does not apply to cooperative associations, public cemetery corporations and associations, and private cemeteries. Religious corporations may be formed under the Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation Act or under the Minnesota religious corporation statute, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 315. Nonprofit corporations are required to file an annual registration with the Secretary of State once each calendar year, on a registration form mailed to the corporation's registered office address. Failure to file in a calendar year will result in statutory dissolution, but non-profit corporations may be reinstated at any time upon filing the annual registration. The registered office address may be updated without charge.

A nonprofit corporation may qualify for tax exempt status for some or all of its income, for federal or state tax purposes, or both. Donors to the tax exempt organization may qualify for a tax deduction on their contributions to the organization. Application for tax exempt status must be made with the Internal Revenue Service and the exemption must subsequently be established with the Minnesota Department of Revenue. Additional specific language may be required in the articles of incorporation by the Internal Revenue Service before an application will be granted. Annual federal and state informational filings also are required, and if the organization solicits funds in Minnesota, it also must register with the Charities Division of the Minnesota Attorney General's office. The formation and tax treatment of nonprofit corporations are highly technical areas which should not be attempted without competent advice from qualified professionals.

Forms for non-profit corporation filings are available at the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State's office.

## **COOPERATIVES**

A cooperative is a form of business organization in which the business is owned and controlled by those who use its services. A cooperative may be organized as a legal entity or it may be an unincorporated association. Cooperative associations are organized as legal entities under and

governed by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 308A. Non-Minnesota cooperatives that wish to do business in Minnesota register under Chapter 303.

Cooperatives are organized primarily for the purpose of providing service to their user-owners, rather than to generate profit for investors. Although cooperatives had their origins in Minnesota in the agricultural sector, in recent years many consumer cooperatives have been established. Some of the more common purposes for which cooperatives are formed are:

- To supply members with agricultural production components such as fuels, fertilizers, feed and chemicals;
- To provide members with an organizational structure for jointly handling and marketing their products;
- To provide services to members, like housing, electricity, telephone, insurance, and health care.

Cooperatives have several features that distinguish them from for-profit business corporations. These include control of the cooperative by user-owners, services provided at cost, and limited return on equity capital.

Cooperatives are required to file a periodic registration in every odd-numbered year. Failure to file this registration will result in dissolution. The cooperative will have one year to reinstate by filing the registration and paying a \$25 fee.

### **User-owner Control**

Cooperatives are owned and controlled by their members. By statute in Minnesota, members each have one vote, rather than multiple votes based on their capital investment in the cooperative. In some other states, proportional voting based on a member's volume of business with the cooperative is allowed. Operations generally are conducted by a board of directors elected by members, and by management hired and supervised by the board.

### **Service at Cost**

Cooperatives stress providing services to members at the lowest responsible cost. After setting aside reserves to protect the cooperative's financial security and growth, any remaining net margin is distributed to members as a patronage refund, according to the business volume each has done with the cooperative during the year.

### **Limited Return on Equity Investment**

Cooperatives are designed primarily to provide services to members, rather than to produce a profit for investors. Accordingly, the return on investment in the form of dividends is limited. Minnesota statutes permit, but do not require, the payment of dividends on capital stock. Dividends may be paid only when the net income of the cooperative for the previous fiscal year is sufficient, and dividends may not be cumulative.



## **New Investors**

In an effort to encourage capital investment, all forms of cooperatives in Minnesota are allowed to take on investor-members in addition to the traditional patron-members. Investor members may not necessarily purchase products from the cooperative but join the cooperative to earn a profit from an investment and to provide capital funds for cooperative expansion. In allowing for investor-members, the law largely combines portions of the traditional cooperative statute with portions of the limited liability statute.

## **FRANCHISES**

A franchise is an agreement or contract between two or more persons by which the franchisor, for a fee, gives the franchisee the right to engage in the business of offering or distributing goods or services using the franchisor's trade name, trademark, service mark, logotype, advertising, or other commercial symbol. Both the franchisor and the franchisee must have a community of interest in the marketing of the goods or services.

Franchising is a method of distributing and marketing goods or services. It is not a separate form of business organization. The franchisor's business and the franchisee's business each will take one of the forms of organization previously discussed.

Franchises are regulated in Minnesota by the Department of Commerce, and anyone contemplating the sale of a franchise should check with that office for registration and filing requirements and exemptions that may apply. Regulatory requirements applicable to franchises are discussed further in the section of this Guide on Franchise Registration.

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## **FILING DOCUMENTS WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

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### **DRAFTING THE DOCUMENT**

Standard forms are available without charge from the Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=331) or by fax from the Fax Forms library at (651) 296-2803 or by mail from the Secretary of State's office. While these forms are designed to meet minimum requirements of the law, they are not intended to address every possible situation. Consultation with an attorney can help the business owner draft a document that reflects the needs and desires of the parties and understand the legal effects of the filing.

Documents must be legible. The Secretary of State's office permanently records all documents; this process demands a legible copy. Thus, documents that are illegible are not accepted for filing. Copies and legible fax transmissions are acceptable. Original signatures are acceptable if legible, but are not required; in most cases a copy will suffice.

The proper fee must accompany the document. A current fee schedule appears at the end of this section. Information regarding payment methods is available on the Secretary of State's website: [www.sos.state.mn.us](http://www.sos.state.mn.us).

## **TIME REQUIRED FOR FILING AND PROCESSING DOCUMENTS**

Documents are usually reviewed the day they are received by the Secretary of State's office. In cases of complex documents or heavy seasonal workloads, review may take place the day following receipt. Non-expedited drop-offs are reviewed the business day following drop off.

## **COMMON REASONS WHY DOCUMENTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED FOR FILING**

A document may be returned unapproved and not accepted for filing by the Secretary of State's office for a number of reasons. Some of these include:

- An incomplete address is submitted. Documents must state the full street address, city or town and zip code number.
- The filing fee submitted is not correct.
- The signatures of the required parties are incorrect or incomplete. All incorporators of a corporation or organizers of a limited liability company must sign the original articles. Other filings must be signed by a person who is authorized by the business entity to sign those documents. The business entity's attorney can assist in determining who is authorized to sign documents.
- The name submitted for a corporation, limited liability company or limited liability partnership is not distinguishable from an existing corporate or assumed name, trademark or service mark, limited liability company, limited partnership or limited liability partnership name.
- The name referred to in an amendment or subsequent filing is incorrect. In submitting amendments or any other subsequent filings the name of the corporation or other business entity must be identical (in spelling and punctuation) to the legal name on file with the Secretary of State.

## **ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND ONLINE SIGNATURES**

The 2008 Legislature provided the Office of the Secretary of State authorization to receive acknowledgements electronically. This provides the submitter the document image or acknowledgement faster.

2009 legislation provides that any document submitted to the Office of the Secretary of State online may be signed by any person as agent of the person whose signature is required by law. The signing party must indicate on the application that they are acting as agent of the person whose signature would be required and that they have been authorized to sign on behalf of the applicant. The name of the person signing, entered on the online application, constitutes a valid signature by such an agent.

## SECRETARY OF STATE FEE SCHEDULE FOR BUSINESS ENTITY FILINGS

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The following fees are effective as of the date this Guide was printed. Questions may be directed to the Secretary of State's office at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

See note at the end of fee schedule section regarding temporary surcharges.

### Business Services Filings Fees

<b>Filing Type</b>	<b>Fee</b>
<b>Minnesota &amp; Foreign Limited Liability Partnership</b>	
<i>Minnesota Statutes Chapter 323A</i>	
Statement of Qualification Registration	\$135.00
Partnership Statement filings	\$135.00
Annual Business Renewal	\$135.00
Annual Renewal Reinstatement	\$160.00
<b>Partnership Statements</b>	
<i>Chapters 323A, 322A &amp; 333</i>	
Statement of Partnership Authority	\$135.00
Statement of Denial	\$135.00
Statement of Dissociation	\$135.00
Statement of Merger	\$135.00
Statement of Dissolution	\$135.00
Statement of Amendment/Cancellation	\$135.00
<b>Limited Partnership</b>	
<i>Chapter 321</i>	
Certificate of Limited Partnership Registration	\$100.00
Amendment	\$50.00
Annual Business Renewal	\$0.00
Annual Business Renewal Reinstatement	\$25.00
Resignation of Agent	\$35.00
Statement of Amendment	\$35.00
Statement of Dissociation	\$35.00
Statement of Dissolution	\$35.00
Statement of Withdrawal	\$35.00
Statement of Termination	\$35.00
Election/Merger/Conversion filings	\$50.00

## Business Services Filings Fees

<b>Filing Type</b>	<b>Fee</b>
<b>Foreign Limited Partnership</b>	
<i>Chapter 321</i>	
Certificate of Authority Registration	\$100.00
Amendments	\$50.00
Annual Business Renewal	\$0.00
Annual Business Renewal Reinstatement	\$25.00
Resignation of Agent	\$50.00
Cancellation/Merger filings	\$50.00
<b>Business Corporations</b>	
<i>Chapters 302A, 300 &amp; 319B</i>	
Articles of Incorporation	\$160.00
Amendment/Dissolution filings	\$35.00
Dissolution Filings	\$35.00
Merger	\$60.00
Annual Business Renewal	\$0.00
Annual Business Renewal Reinstatement	\$25.00
Conversion to Limited Liability Company- (Chap. 302A & 319B only)	\$35.00
<b>Nonprofit Corporations</b>	
<i>Chapter 317A</i>	
Articles of Incorporation	\$70.00
Change of Registered Office only	\$0.00
Change of Registered Agent and Office	\$35.00
Amendment/Merger/Dissolution filings	\$35.00
Annual Business Renewal	\$0.00
Annual Business Renewal Reinstatement	\$0.00
<b>Foreign Corporations</b>	
<i>Chapter 303</i>	
Certificate of Authority Registration	\$225.00
Amendment/Merger/Withdrawl filings	\$50.00
Non-Profit Certificate of Authority	\$75.00
Reinstatement	\$350.00
Annual Business Renewal	\$135.00
Resignation of Agent filings	\$50.00

## Business Services Filings Fees

<b>Filing Type</b>	<b>Fee</b>
<b>Foreign Limited Liability Company</b>	
<i>Chapter 323B</i>	
Certificate of Authority Registration	\$185.00
Amendment/Merger/Withdrawal filings	\$35.00
Annual Business Renewal	\$0.00
Annual Business Renewal Reinstatement	\$25.00
<b>Limited Liability Company</b>	
<i>Chapter 322B</i>	
Articles of Organization	\$160.00
Amendment/Termination filings	\$35.00
Merger	\$60.00
Conversion to Business Corporation	\$35.00
Annual Business Renewal	\$0.00
Annual Business Renewal Reinstatement	\$25.00
<b>General Filings</b>	
Articles of Correction	\$35.00
Name Reservation	\$35.00
Consent	\$35.00
<b>Cooperatives</b>	
<i>Chapters 308A &amp; 308B</i>	
Articles of Incorporation	\$60.00
Amendments	\$35.00
Merger	\$60.00
Periodic Renewal	\$0.00
Periodic Renewal Reinstatement	\$25.00
<b>Business Trusts</b>	
<i>Chapter 318</i>	
Declaration of Trust	\$150.00
Business Trust Amendment	\$50.00
<b>Trademarks</b>	
<i>Chapter 333</i>	
Trademark Registration	\$50.00
Renewal	\$25.00
Assignment	\$15.00
Cancellation	\$0.00

## **Business Services Filings Fees**

<b>Filing Type</b>	<b>Fee</b>
<b>Assumed Names</b>	
<i>Chapter 333</i>	
Certificate of Assumed Name Registration	\$25.00
Amendment?Renewal filings	\$25.00
Cancellation	\$25.00
<b>Service of Process</b>	
Minnesota Entities	\$35.00
Non-Minnesota Entities	\$50.00
<b>Legal Newspaper Registration</b>	\$25.00
<b>Express Service (per transaction)</b>	\$10.00

Starting July 1, 2007, the Office of the Secretary of State embarked on a project to make it possible to do the major filings for business entities online. This effort is being funded by a temporary technology surcharge which is being dedicated to this project and which will expire on June 30, 2011. The surcharge will increase the fees as follows:

- for articles of incorporation, from \$135 to \$160
- for articles of organization for a limited liability company, from \$135 to \$160
- for filing an application for a foreign corporation for a certificate of authority to do business in Minnesota, from \$200 to \$225
- for filing an annual report for a non-Minnesota corporation, from \$115 to \$135  
for reinstatement for a non-Minnesota corporation, from \$300 to \$350. partnership is not distinguishable from an existing corporate or assumed name, trademark or service mark, limited liability company, limited partnership or limited liability partnership name.
- the name referred to in an amendment or subsequent filing is incorrect. In submitting amendments or any other subsequent filings the name of the corporation or other business entity must be identical (in spelling and punctuation) to the legal name on file with the Secretary of State.



## REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

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### SECURITIES REGISTRATION

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Broadly defined, a security is an interest in, or an obligation of, the business entity that issues the security. Examples of securities are corporate stock, interests in a limited partnership, and corporate bonds and debentures. Note that the label assigned to an interest in a business is not necessarily determinative, and that the definition of a security is a very broad one; note that many seemingly innocent activities, such as the use of a website can constitute the “offer” of securities.

**A business owner who is giving or selling ownership interests in a business to other persons, even to friends and family members, is strongly advised to seek the advice of counsel.** This is true whether the ownership interests are transferred when the business is organized or later in its life. In general, securities must be registered with the federal Securities and Exchange Commission and the Minnesota Department of Commerce before they legally can be advertised or sold to investors unless the security or transaction qualifies for an exemption under state or federal laws. A security or transaction may qualify for a federal exemption but not a state exemption or vice versa. Again, given the highly technical laws, regulations, and judicial decisions in this area, as well as guidance from the SEC (such as that issued on the use of electronic media), the advice of counsel is very important.

The basic purpose of both state and federal securities laws is to protect the investor. Therefore, sales in violation of these laws, even if done through inadvertence or in good faith reliance, can create civil and criminal penalties on both the state and the federal level. If interstate sales are involved, civil and criminal penalties in multiple states may apply. The anti-fraud provisions of these laws apply even if the securities or the transaction are exempt from registration.

Securities registration is a sophisticated area requiring the services of experienced professionals. In some cases these professionals may be able to assist in structuring the offering and sale to qualify for an exemption. In other cases their services may be necessary to register and to sell the securities. In all cases involving the offer or sale of securities, discussing the matter with legal counsel is the best starting point.

Some of the common exemptions to the registration requirements of the federal and state laws are discussed below. Readers should be aware that this is not a comprehensive list of the exemptions. Minor changes in fact circumstances may result in the loss of the exemption. Also, both the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Minnesota Department of Commerce periodically amend their regulations in a way that may affect available exemptions. The business person contemplating the offer and sale of securities should consult with experienced professionals to determine the availability of any exemptions.

Further information on federal securities registration requirements and a pamphlet may be obtained from the publications office of the United States Securities and Exchange Commission.



Information on state regulations may be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Commerce Registration and Analysis Division. The addresses and telephone numbers of these agencies are provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

The Minnesota legislature adopted the Uniform Securities Act.

See the section below on Minnesota Blue Sky Laws.

## **FEDERAL EXEMPTIONS (15 UNITED STATES CODE § 77)**

### **Small Offerings – Regulation A**

Regulation A (17 Code of Federal Regulations § 230.251 to § 230.262) permits the offering of up to \$5 million of securities in a year without complying with all registration and disclosure requirements. If the Regulation A exemption is available, a shorter form of federal registration is permitted. Full state registration may be required, however.

A simplified disclosure form may be used. Although the federal securities laws generally do not permit advertising prior to registration, recent amendments to Regulation A allow small companies to test investor interest through a written solicitation of interest document before proceeding with a full, and costly, registration.

### **The Intrastate Exemption**

The intrastate exemption applies to securities offerings which are confined to a single state and which are purely local in nature. The scope of the intrastate exemption is extremely narrow, and even though the offering is exempt from federal regulation, it is subject to state law requirements. To qualify for the intrastate exemption, the securities must be part of an issue that is offered and sold only to residents of a single state. The issuer must be a resident of the same state and must have its principal place of business there. If the issuer is a corporation it also must be incorporated in that state. There are restrictions on subsequent sales of the securities, and the issuer must take certain precautions against interstate offers and sales.

### **Private Placements and Limited Offerings – Regulation D Exemption**

The Regulation D exemptions (17 Code of Federal Regulations § 230.501 to § 230.508) authorize the offer and sale of securities through certain private placement transactions. There are restrictions on the number and amount of sales, and on publicity, advertising or solicitation, and resale. Notice of Regulation D offerings must be filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, but the full registration and disclosure requirements of a public offering need not be met.

Regulation D includes three exemptions:

- **Rule 504** provides an exemption for offerings up to \$1 million during the twelve months before the start of and until the completion of the offering. Purchasers need not meet any suitability test and there is no limit on the number of purchasers to whom the offerer can sell.

- **Rule 505** provides an exemption for offerings up to \$5 million during the twelve months before the start of and until the completion of the offering. Sales may be made to an unlimited number of accredited investors (defined below), but may not be made to more than 35 non-accredited investors.
- **Rule 506** permits a company to sell an unlimited dollar amount of securities. Sales may be made to an unlimited number of accredited investors, but may not be made to more than 35 non-accredited investors, each of whom must be a “sophisticated investor.”

For the purpose of **Rules 505** and **506**, an “accredited investor” includes:

- certain types of financial institutions such as banks, broker-dealers and investment companies;
- entities with total assets in excess of \$5 million (not formed for the purpose of investing in the offering);
- any director, executive officer or general partner of the company;
- any natural person whose net worth (alone or jointly with spouse) exceeds \$1 million;
- any natural person whose individual income exceeds \$200,000 (or jointly with spouse, \$300,000) for each of the past two years, and is expected to exceed that amount in the current year;
- any trust with assets greater than \$5 million that are managed by a sophisticated trustee (and not formed for the specific purpose of investing in the offering); and
- any entity in which all of the equity owners are accredited investors.

## MINNESOTA BLUE SKY LAWS

A company selling securities to residents of the state of Minnesota must comply with federal and state securities laws. State securities laws are collectively and individually referred to as “Blue Sky Laws.” These Blue Sky Laws vary among the states, sometimes to a significant degree. It is important to note that the Minnesota Legislature recently enacted a version of the Uniform Securities Act, which provides for substantial revisions to the current version of the Minnesota Securities Act. The Minnesota Uniform Securities Act (“MUSA”) became effective in August 2007. This section highlights the most frequently used exemptions from the securities laws of the state of Minnesota and summarizes certain changes that will result from the enactment of MUSA, where applicable.

The securities laws of Minnesota require registration with the Minnesota Department of Commerce of all offers and sales of securities made to residents of Minnesota unless a particular exemption is available. If registration is required, it should be noted that, prior to the passage of MUSA, Minnesota was a “merit” review state, Minnesota is now a “disclosure” only state. Generally, this means that as long as the issuer satisfies the information disclosure requirements under MUSA, the Minnesota Department of Commerce cannot prohibit the issuer from selling its securities within the state.

## **Isolated Sales and Limited Offerings**

Sales by a nonissuer of securities to no more than ten purchasers in Minnesota during any period of twelve consecutive months are exempt from registration as are nonissuer transactions by or through a broker dealer where the security has been in the hands of the public for at least 90 days. The exemption covers sales or offers to sell to an institutional investor; an accredited investor; a federal covered investment advisor, or any other person exempted by rule promulgated by the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Commerce.

Sales by a company to no more than 35 persons in Minnesota during any consecutive twelve month period are exempt from registration if the following conditions are met:

- the company reasonably believes that all the buyers in Minnesota (other than institutional investors) are purchasing for investment;
- no commission or remuneration is paid or given directly or indirectly to a person other than a broker-dealer or a registered agent for soliciting a prospective purchaser in Minnesota;
- no general solicitation or general advertising is made in connection with the sale or offer to sell the security; and
- notice has been filed with the Minnesota Department of Commerce at least ten days in advance of any sale or such a shorter period as permitted by the Department. However, an issuer who makes sales to ten or fewer purchasers in Minnesota during any twelve consecutive months is not required to provide this.

## **SCOR (SMALL CORPORATE OFFERING REGISTRATION)**

The Small Corporate Offering Registration (SCOR) is a simplified procedure for registering stock offerings which enables small, start-up companies to raise up to \$1 million in a 12-month period.

### **SCOR: Access to Capital for Small Businesses**

#### **Increased Access to Capital**

ASCOR offering is a tool for small businesses to raise capital without the prohibitive costs involved in traditional stock offerings.

#### **Regulatory Relief and Streamlining**

Because the offering is registered solely with the state, multiple reporting requirements are eliminated. In addition, the enhanced form U-7 disclosure document is simply formatted into 50 detailed questions designed to satisfy the necessary disclosures without burdensome requirements.

## **Completing the Form U-7**

The process of completing a SCOR offering is centered around the form U-7. The Form U-7 is less complex than traditional stock prospectuses. The Form U-7 consists of 50 detailed questions designed to provide the state and the investor with important information regarding the company's operations. The questions in the U-7 form consist of items such as the company's history; its business and properties; risk factors facing the company; use of the offering proceeds; description of the securities being offered; dividend history; key personnel; principal stockholders; and pending or threatened litigation.

Answering the Form U-7 questions adequately and completely will satisfy the required disclosures in law.

Once the Form U-7 is completed, it is submitted, along with reviewed or audited financial reports, and the required fee to the State of Minnesota Department of Commerce Registration Division. The Department reviews and provides comments on the documents. So long as no stop order is in effect and no proceeding is pending under Minnesota Statutes section 80A.13 a SCOR registration statement becomes effective automatically at 5:00 p.m. on the twentieth full business day after the filing of the registration statement, or the last amendment of it, or at some earlier time determined (by order) by the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Commerce.

For purposes of a nonissuer transaction, other than a transaction by an affiliate of the issuer, all outstanding securities of the same class identified in the small corporate offering registration statement as a security registered under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 80A are considered to be registered while the small corporate offering registration statement is effective. The registration statement is effective for one year after its effective date or for a longer period designated by an order of the Commissioner of Commerce. The registration statement may be withdrawn only with the approval of the Commissioner of Commerce.

An issuer can raise up to \$1 million in a 12 month period, and offerings must sell for at least \$1 per share.

## **FRANCHISE REGISTRATION**

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### **DEFINITION OF FRANCHISING**

Franchising is a method of marketing and distributing goods and services. Franchises are offered and sold for many types of businesses, including services, retail trade, finance, real estate, transportation, and communications.

A franchise is broadly defined as a contract or agreement between two or more persons by which the franchisor (the seller), for a fee, gives the franchisee (the buyer) the right to engage in the business of offering or distributing goods or services using the franchisor's trade name, trademark, service mark, logotype, advertising or other commercial symbol. Both the franchisor and the franchisee must have a community of interest in the marketing of the goods or services.

Under the Minnesota franchising statute, a franchise also includes business opportunities in which the seller sells or leases products or services to the purchaser **and** represents that the seller will find or assist in finding locations; or represents that the seller will purchase the products made; or guarantees that the purchaser will make a profit.

### **FRANCHISE REGISTRATION AND REGULATION**

Any proposed offer or sale of a franchise that meets the above definition may be subject to the registration and other requirements of the Minnesota Franchise Act (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 80C) and rules of the Department of Commerce, Minnesota Rules 2860.0100-2860.9930. Unless there is a specific statutory exemption, a proposed franchise must be registered with the Department of Commerce and must be effective before any offers or sales are made.

The Minnesota Franchise Act and rules define franchises and exemptions; establish registration criteria, procedures, and fees; set requirements for public offering statements; define unfair and prohibited practices; mandate the keeping of books and records; establish enforcement standards, and provide for imposition of civil liability for violations. The Act and rules also address issues like termination and notice periods for non-renewal of franchises, liquidated damages, termination penalties, arbitration, security deposits and governing law.

Minnesota accepts franchise applications which comply with the Uniform Franchise Offering Circular (UFOC) Guidelines of the North American Securities Administrators Association. The UFOC Guidelines prescribe disclosures that a franchisor must make available to prospective franchisees, and require that franchisors supply prospective franchisees with audited financial statements and copies of all proposed contracts and agreements pertaining to the proposed franchise relationship.

## **COMMERCE DEPARTMENT ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS**

The Enforcement Division of the Minnesota Department of Commerce investigates complaints against companies selling franchises and business opportunities. Action can be taken only when a violation of the Minnesota Franchise Law (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 80C) has occurred. Enforcement actions can be viewed on the Commerce Department website under Consumer Information & Services at the website address in the resource directory section of this guide.

## **OTHER ENFORCEMENT AND INFORMATION ASSISTANCE**

In addition to the regulation done by the State of Minnesota, the United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has regulatory authority over the sellers of franchises and business opportunities. Pursuant to Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, the FTC has issued its filing complaints about franchises and business opportunities. The NFIC assists the FTC and state Attorneys General by entering complaints into a computerized database to help track and identify operators of frauds.

Along with its enforcement activities, the FTC issues a number of publications designed to educate potential buyers and sellers of franchises and business opportunities. Examples are: Franchise and Business Opportunities, a discussion of a buyer's rights under the Franchise and Business Opportunity Rule, along with suggestions on where to complain about a seller of a franchise or business opportunity; A Consumer Guide to Buying a Franchise; Business Opportunities: Avoiding Vending Machine and Display Rack Scams; Guide to the FTC Franchise Rule; and Work-at-Home Schemes. Many of the FTC's publications are available on its website, at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov). Also available there is a Summary of Recent Enforcement Cases, a list of the lawsuits the FTC has initiated, including the names of the parties against which the FTC has filed a legal complaint and the docket number of each case.

## **EXEMPTIONS**

There are eight registration exemptions available under Minnesota Statutes § 80C.03. These include sale of a franchise by a franchisee-owner; sales by an executor, administrator, sheriff, trustee in bankruptcy, guardian or conservator; sales to a bank or insurance company; sales of registered securities; a single isolated sale of a franchise under specified conditions; the sale of a franchise to a franchisee with specified experience in the business and who derives 80 percent or more of its sales from other sources; sale of a foreign franchise to a nonresident of Minnesota under specified conditions; and sales exempted by order of the Commissioner of Commerce. It is strongly recommended that anyone considering the offer or sale of a franchise consult a knowledgeable attorney before relying on an exemption.

## **FRANCHISING IN OTHER STATES**

Although many states regulate franchises in a manner similar to Minnesota, each state's laws are different. Accordingly, franchisors who plan to offer or sell franchises in other states should check with appropriate officials in those states regarding their franchising laws and requirements.

## **INTERPRETIVE OPINIONS**

Under Minnesota Statutes § 80C.18, subd. 2, a company may request an interpretive opinion from the Department of Commerce on whether a business being offered is a franchise, whether registration is required, and whether an exemption is available. An opinion fee is required.

## **FEES**

Fees charged by the Department of Commerce for franchise-related transactions are: initial application fee, \$400; annual report (renewal) fee, \$200; amendment fee, \$100; and opinion fee, \$50.

## **QUESTIONS AND FURTHER INFORMATION**

Questions concerning franchise registration should be directed to the Minnesota Department of Commerce at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

The Minnesota Franchise Act is available at [www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us](http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us). The rules are available at [www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/arule/2860](http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/arule/2860). The UFOC Guidelines (including forms) can be downloaded from a link on the Commerce website [www.commerce.state.mn.us](http://www.commerce.state.mn.us).

## **EVALUATING A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY**

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### **SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

When buying an existing business, investing in a franchise, or beginning a new business, the entrepreneur should thoroughly evaluate the business opportunity he or she is considering. This step is very important but often overlooked; many times, a person's hopes for a business cloud his or her judgment. It is not uncommon for an entrepreneur to invest a substantial sum in a business without analyzing whether the business opportunity is a viable one. In addition, it is not uncommon for an unscrupulous business promoter to take advantage of such an entrepreneur.

Although there are no foolproof steps to take in evaluating a business, this section of this Guide will offer guidance on the types of questions to ask, and sources of information to review, before investing in a new business (whether or not it is a franchise) or buying an existing business. Assuming that after evaluating the opportunity the entrepreneur still wants to proceed, the sections of this Guide on Accounting for the New Business – Income Forecasting Techniques, and on Business Plans, should be consulted.

It is worth emphasizing here that an entrepreneur's analysis and evaluation should occur before he or she makes any kind of commitment (even oral), whether contractual or financial, to the business, or makes any payment, of any size, in connection with the business. In any event, a potential entrepreneur should carefully avoid obligating himself or herself to participating in any business opportunity, in any way, without first evaluating that opportunity.

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

One source of information is the Minnesota Attorney General's office, at (651) 296-3353, and the Better Business Bureau, at (651) 699-1111, to determine if any complaints have been filed in connection with that business. Also, the National Fraud Information Center (NFIC) is a private, nonprofit organization that operates a consumer hotline to provide service and assistance in filing complaints against unscrupulous business operators. The NFIC helps the FTC and state Attorneys General by entering complaints into a computerized database to help track and identify operators of business frauds. Contact the NFIC at (800) 876-7060, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., EST, Monday through Friday. These are prudent, but not foolproof, steps in evaluating any business opportunity.

Note that the FTC is another potential source of information about the offeror. The FTC's Internet site ([www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)) contains a summary of each of the FTC's legal actions against offerors of franchises and business opportunities, along with information on specific types of fraudulent business opportunities that the FTC has become familiar with. Also, that Internet site contains a copy of the FTC's brochure, *Franchise and Business Opportunities*, which summarizes the types of protections provided to entrepreneurs by the FTC's Rule on Franchising and Business Opportunity Ventures, 16 C.F.R. section 436 (the FTC Rule). Remember that, as discussed in more detail in the Franchise Registration section of this Guide, the Minnesota Department of Commerce also will have copies of the registration statement made by the offeror of any franchise or business opportunity that is a franchise within the meaning of the Minnesota Franchise Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 80C.

## **SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO SEEK FROM THE OFFEROR**

If the franchise or business opportunity is a franchise under the Minnesota Franchise Act, the offeror is required to make certain filings, including the Uniform Franchise Offering Circular (UFOC) with the Minnesota Department of Commerce, before offering that franchise or business opportunity to anyone. See the section of this Guide on Franchise Registrations. Note that although the UFOC will contain certain detailed information on the business opportunity or franchise, including audited financial statements, it is not the job of the Minnesota Department of Commerce, or any other government agency, to assess the merits, completeness, or even accuracy of any of the information contained in a UFOC. That work is for the entrepreneur.

Similarly, if a franchise or business opportunity does not meet the definition of a "franchise" for Minnesota state law purposes, it nevertheless may be subject to the FTC Rule. Similar to the Minnesota regulation of franchises and business opportunities, the offeror of a business venture covered by the FTC Rule must provide certain information to the prospective offeree. Also, and again similar to the Minnesota system of regulation, it is not the job of the FTC to assess the merits, completeness, or even accuracy of the information mandated by the FTC Rule.

Even for ventures not regulated by the Minnesota Department of Commerce or the FTC, the FTC in its *Franchise and Business Opportunities* brochure recommends that an entrepreneur seek the following information before investing or committing to a franchise or business opportunity:

- Talk to any persons named as owners or investors in the opportunity. Don't rely on persons listed as "references", unless it is clear that they are truly owners or investors.



- Carefully and thoroughly investigate any claims made about potential earnings. Seek written information on this topic, not just oral statements, and seek the most detailed information available (i.e., do not rely on broad claims such as “we are a ten billion dollar industry”). Independently analyze, if possible, the written basis for those claims. For example, the entrepreneur could hire his or her own CPA to independently audit that information.
- Seek similar information from the business competitors of the offeror. For instance, seek the UFOCs from other offerors of similar franchises or business opportunities.
- Be aware of high pressure sales tactics, and consider why they are being used; if the offeror does not have any other way to sell the franchise or business opportunity, do you really want it? Be wary of any oral statement that differs from any statement made in writing. Also be wary of any presentation that promises “easy money”. Successful entrepreneurs almost always agree that there is no “easy money”, and that owning one’s own business, while rewarding, takes a great deal of time and energy.

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## **BUSINESS LICENSES AND PERMITS**

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### **IN GENERAL**

The startup, operation or expansion of a business in Minnesota may involve securing one or more business, occupational or environmental licenses or permits. Those licenses and permits fall into a number of categorical groupings according to purpose:

- Licenses and permits to ensure the competency of practitioners of a business, trade or profession.
- Licenses and permits to ensure the safety and efficacy of a product or process.
- Licenses and permits to prevent fraud or ensure the financial solvency of parties to a business transaction.
- Licenses and permits to control access to markets or to encourage or restrict competition in a specific industry.
- Licenses and permits to regulate activities in pursuit of broad social goals like clean air, clean water.
- Licenses and permits to ensure the appropriate and responsible use of natural resources, particularly non-renewable natural resources.
- Licenses and permits to control the development and implementation of new technology.
- Licenses and permits to authorize a business to serve as the state’s agent for collection of revenue.

The Bureau of Business Licenses provides information about federal, state and local licenses and assistance in securing them. The Bureau also publishes, free of charge, the State of Minnesota Directory of Licenses and Permits which contains a complete list of regulated activities, licenses and permits, and the appropriate state agency contact. It is reprinted at the end of this Guide.

A list of licenses and permits with more extensive information on requirements, schedules, fees and the like appears on the License Minnesota website at [www.license.mn.gov](http://www.license.mn.gov).

From the "License Minnesota" website, a business can access licensing information on over 500 licenses administered by state agencies in Minnesota. This includes information on permits, registrations, certifications, credentialing and other forms of approval granted by state agencies and boards as a condition of doing business: conducting a trade, profession or occupation, or pursuing a recreational activity in Minnesota. This includes equipment and vehicles and the right to operate them. This site is easy to use and conveniently lets you access licensing information by activity, administering agency, name of license, or with a keyword search.

The Bureau, together with the Small Business Assistance Office makes recommendations to state departments and the Legislature for eliminating, consolidating, simplifying, expediting, or otherwise improving licensing and regulatory practices affecting business undertakings.

Note that Minn. Stat. 645.44, subd. 19 makes explicit that monies paid to a government entity for a business or individual to engage in trade, profession, or business or to improve private property are a tax not a fee.

## **LOCAL LICENSURE**

In addition to the licensing requirements imposed by the state, some local governments also require certain kinds of business activity to be licensed on the local level. In some cases this local licensure may take the form of a general business license involving no more than registration and payment of a fee. In other cases it may involve compliance with local ordinances specific to a particular type of business. For example, current state law imposes no license requirements on commercial building contractors. Many municipalities, however, require registration and bonding of these contractors before the municipalities will issue necessary building permits or conduct necessary inspections.

Larger cities like Minneapolis and St. Paul have licensing departments. Smaller municipalities usually rely on the city clerk to direct licensing activities. A call to either of these early in your business planning will help avoid confusion and delay later. In addition, the city clerk can in most cases give you information on local zoning requirements. Municipal offices are usually listed in the blue pages of the telephone book under the name of the municipality.

## **LOCAL ZONING**

Zoning is the process by which a local community enacts ordinances to regulate and control the uses of privately owned land and structures within the community. In practice this process involves the creation of districts or zones within the community and restriction on the use of land, and the use, height and area of buildings within these districts. Zoning serves to promote and conserve the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the community.

The local zoning board or planning commission should be contacted early in your business planning to determine the regulations regarding any space in which you plan to operate your business. This is true especially if you plan to operate your business out of your home.

The zoning ordinances of each local community detail the procedure for establishment of zones and the procedures for petition for variances.

Note that the Legislature enacted modifications to certain statutes that, speaking generally, prohibit counties and municipalities from using “amortization” to eliminate or terminate a particular use of land. In this context, the term “amortization” occurs when a local government asserts that a once-lawful use of land is no longer allowed, so that the unit of government can take or condemn that land under the theory that it has no value.

## **BONDING**

A bond is a contract, similar to an insurance policy, between a bonding company (called a “surety”) and the business that purchases the bond. The bond runs in favor of a third person to protect that person against financial loss caused by the act or default of the business. Surety bonds guarantee the performance of various types of obligations assumed by contract or imposed by law. Fidelity bonds guarantee against loss (e.g. theft of money or property) due to the dishonesty of employees.

A surety bond often is required of a business which is licensed by the state of Minnesota or by a unit of local government. Businesses that contract to provide goods or services to the state or other public agencies within the state generally must be bonded. These bonding requirements are established by statute. A private firm may by contract require bonding as well. Such bonds are most common in the construction industry.

Bonds are obtained through insurance agents or through a bonding company. The cost of a bond is a portion of the face amount of the bond, and will depend in part on the risk to the bonding company in covering the potential loss.

### **The Minnesota Federal Bonding Program**

The Minnesota Federal Bonding Program provides individual fidelity bonds to employers for job applicants who may be denied coverage.

The Fidelity Bond insurance is issued as a policy of Travelers Property Casualty. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development is an authorized agency for the issuance of bonds to cover persons who make application for seeking employment at Minnesota WorkForce Centers. Either the job applicant or the prospective employer (on the applicant’s behalf) may make the initial contact with a local WorkForce Center to apply for the issuance of bond insurance coverage.

Bond coverage becomes effective when the WorkForce Center certifies the bond (usually the day the job offer is made) to take effect the day that the applicant begins work. MBP coverage is provided at no cost to the employer or the job applicant. The duration of the bond is six months.

A listing of WorkForce Centers can be found in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. Additional information on the bonding program is available on the Department of Employment and Economic Development website.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS**

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The Legislature has declared in statute that each person in Minnesota has a right to the protection, preservation and enhancement of air, water, land and other natural resources, and that each person also has the responsibility to contribute to the protection, preservation and enhancement of those resources. To secure and advance that right a number of state agencies have responsibility and authority for policy development, standard setting, permitting and enforcement in environmental areas. These agencies include the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Department of Health, and others. The Directory of Licenses and Permits at the back of this book lists the appropriate regulatory agency by regulated activity.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Certain projects (for example, the construction or expansion of commercial or industrial facilities) can trigger specialized environmental review intended to prevent damage to environmental resources as a result of private or public development projects. This preventive planning approach helps identify and mitigate possible environmental problems while the project is still in the planning stages before permits are issued and construction or operation begins.

Those reviews are conducted by a legally defined “responsible governmental unit” and are of two types: an Environmental Assessment Worksheet and an Environmental Impact Statement. An Environmental Assessment Worksheet is a preliminary review to evaluate the potential for significant environmental effects from a project. An Environmental Impact Statement is a more comprehensive environmental review. The size and nature of certain projects trigger a mandatory Environmental Worksheet and/or an Environmental Impact Statement while in other cases the nature of review is at the discretion of the responsible governmental unit. For more information, contact the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board or the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency at the address and telephone numbers listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

### **THE MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY**

As noted above, several state agencies have responsibilities for environmental protection. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is the agency specifically charged with efforts to eliminate, reduce or control the levels of pollution in the environment. It is the principal agency for permitting associated with air quality and water quality, for the management of hazardous and solid waste, and for the enforcement of pollution control statutes and regulations.

Permit requirements, application procedures, schedules and other procedural requirements vary with the facility or activity involved. Most permits require a 30-day public notice. If members of the public object to issuance of the permit, and/or ask for a public hearing before a state administrative law judge, there may be further evaluation of the application and delay in issuance of the permit. The MPCA always has the option of denying a permit if the proposed facility or activity may result in some significant potential for pollution that cannot be corrected.

Non-compliance with MPCA rules or permit requirements could result in MPCA enforcement action involving administrative penalties, stipulated damages, civil or criminal legal action, and revocation of the MPCA permit. As a practical matter, MPCA permit holders should ensure that they have adequate and appropriate operating practices and qualified personnel in place to meet permit requirements and avoid enforcement action.

## **HAZARDOUS WASTE**

Minnesota has an extensive program for the “cradle-to-grave” management of hazardous waste. Every business in Minnesota is responsible for determining if the waste it produces is hazardous. Many types of businesses, organizations, non-profit groups and governments generate hazardous waste in the course of providing their products or services, including but not limited to the following: cleaning and maintenance; chemical manufacturing and formulating; construction; equipment repair; health care providers; furniture manufacturing and refinishing; wood preservation; laboratories; laundries and dry cleaning; metal manufacturing; electroplating; transportation; electronics; textile, plastics, and leather manufacturing; pesticide manufacture and application; printing and photography; schools and colleges; vehicle repair and auto body shops; and utilities.

Wastes may be hazardous by either exhibiting a hazardous-waste characteristic or by being listed as a hazardous waste.

Characteristic wastes include:

**Ignitable waste.** A liquid is ignitable if it has a flash point less than 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Check the product’s label or Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for this information. A nonliquid waste is ignitable if, at a standard temperature and pressure it can cause a fire through friction, absorption of moisture, or spontaneous chemical changes, and burns so persistently that it creates a hazard.

**Oxidizing waste.** An oxidizer adds oxygen to a reaction or fire in the absence of air. Oxidizing wastes often have chemical names beginning with “per...” or ending with “...oxide” or “...ate” (for example: persulfate and chlorate). Many oxidizing wastes also contain nitrogen or halogens such as fluoride, chlorine, bromine, and iodine.

**Corrosive waste.** Any water-based waste having a pH of 2 or less (an acid) or 12.5 or more (a base) is corrosive. Check the product’s label or MSDS for this information. A corrosive waste may also be a liquid that is able to corrode greater than one-fourth of an inch of steel per year at 130 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Reactive waste.** Unstable or explosive wastes, wastes that react violently when brought in contact with water, and wastes that release toxic vapors (such as hydrogen cyanide or hydrogen sulfide) are considered reactive and hazardous (example of reactive waste: unspent lithium batteries greater than 9 volts).

**Lethal waste.** Lethal wastes exhibit oral or dermal values (LD50) or inhalation values (LC) below a certain lethal threshold. If the health hazard data on the MSDS or other information leads you to suspect a waste may be lethal, contact your metropolitan county (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott or Washington) or MPCA district office hazardous waste staff for assistance.

Toxic waste. Wastes are considered toxic if using the Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP), they leach metals or organics at or above certain threshold values. A list of T.C. chemicals and their maximum allowable concentrations is available on the MPCA website at [www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us) under Waste Publications.

Listed hazardous wastes are printed in Minnesota Rules 7045.0135 and include the following:

- Many spent chlorinated solvents used for degreasing (carbon tetrachloride, methylene chloride, trichloroethane, trichloroethylene, and others);
- Many other waste solvents, cleaners and strippers (acetone, butyl alcohol, carbon disulfide, cresol, ethyl acetate, methyl ethyl ketone (MEK), methyl isobutyl ketone (MIBK), methyl or wood alcohol, toluene, xylene, and others);
- Certain wastes derived from products containing ten percent or more of the above solvents;
- Residues from distillation units (or other similar systems) used to recover the above solvents;
- Most wastes from electroplating operations (cleaning and stripping tank solutions, plating bath solutions and sludges, and sludges from pre-treatment of wastewater);
- Certain wastes from the heat treatment of metals;
- Wastes produced during specific manufacturing processes (certain chemicals, explosives, inks, and pigments), petroleum refining and steel finishing (pickle liquor);
- Many unusable or off-specification commercial products: aniline, certain antibiotics, arsenic compounds, benzenes, chloroform, creosote, cyanide compounds, formaldehyde, hydrofluoric acid, hydrogen sulfide, lead compounds, mercury compounds, naphthalene, many nitrogen compounds, many pesticides, and pentachlorophenol (penta);
- Phenols and pyridine; and
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) at concentrations greater than 50 parts per million.

The four lists of hazardous waste (F, K, P and U) are available on the MPCA website at [www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us) under Waste Publications.

Hazardous waste must be managed in accordance with Minnesota hazardous-waste rules. The generator requirements are summarized as follows:

- Obtain a hazardous waste identification number (formerly called an EPA identification number) (at no cost) by filling out the Notification of Hazardous-Waste Activity and sending it to the MPCA. This form, instructions, and assistance for completing the form may be obtained from the MPCA or the appropriate metropolitan county hazardous-waste program.
- Next, a company may have to apply for a hazardous-waste generator license from the MPCA (for businesses located in greater Minnesota) or from the appropriate metropolitan county (for businesses located in the seven-county metropolitan area).
- Hazardous-waste containers must be properly marked and labeled. As soon as a waste is put in a container, it must be marked with the words "hazardous waste," an accumulation start date, and an easily understood description of the waste.

- Prior to off-site shipment, most hazardous wastes must be placed in specific Minnesota Department of Transportation (DOT) containers and labeled with a DOT hazard label and hazardous-waste label. For more information, contact the MPCA or your metropolitan county office.
- Store hazardous waste properly and restrict its accumulation time and amounts to specified limits as noted below.

Indoor storage of hazardous waste is regulated by fire prevention and building codes, in addition to hazardous-waste rules. Containers must be stored closed, with adequate aisle space between them for easy access and inspection. Floor drains must not allow waste to escape.

Hazardous waste stored outdoors must be in an area where access is restricted. The waste must be stored on a curbed, impermeable surface, and, if ignitable, must also be protected from direct sunlight.

### **Very Small Quantity Generators (VSQG)**

If less than 220 pounds (or 100 kilograms) of hazardous waste is generated each month, the generator can accumulate up to 2,200 pounds (1,000 kg) indefinitely. Once this amount (about four drums of liquid) has accumulated, the generator has 180 days to have it transported off-site to a storage, treatment, or disposal facility within 200 miles. If the designated facility is farther away than 200 miles, the generator has an additional 90 days to ship the waste.

### **Minimal Quantity Generator (MQG)**

A sub-classification of VSQGs is MQGs, which generate 100 pounds (about 10 gallons liquid) or less of hazardous waste per year. However, if any acute hazardous waste is generated, the MQG classification can not be applied. The generator can accumulate up to 550 pounds indefinitely. Once this amount (about one 55 gallon container) has accumulated, the generator has 75 days to have it transported off-site. The MPCA does not require MQGs to apply for a license, however metropolitan counties may. Some counties do not recognize the MQG classification.

### **Small Quantity Generators (SQG)**

If between 220 and 2,200 pounds (or 100 to 1,000 kilograms) of hazardous waste is generated each month, the generator must ship the waste to a storage, treatment, or disposal facility within 180 days of the accumulation start date, provided the receiving facility is within 200 miles. If the facility is farther away than 200 miles, the generator has 270 days to ship the waste.

### **Large Quantity Generators (LQG)**

If more than 2,200 pounds (1,000 kg) of hazardous waste is generated each month, the generator must ship all accumulated hazardous waste off-site to a storage, treatment, or disposal facility within 90 days of the accumulation start date. If the 90-day deadline is not met, the generator must obtain a hazardous-waste storage facility permit.

## **Licenses**

Licenses must be renewed annually and fees are based on the amount of hazardous waste generated and the disposal method. Permit fees are also assessed if generators need an MPCA permit for their waste treatment, storage or disposal activities. For more information contact the MPCA or the metropolitan county hazardous-waste office.

It is the generator's responsibility to know the rules that apply to the management of a particular hazardous waste. Copies of the hazardous-waste rules can be obtained from the Minnesota Bookstore at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **STORAGE TANKS**

Tank owners are required to register their tanks with the MPCA. Owners of regulated underground storage tanks (USTs) and above ground storage tanks (ASTs) must report information such as tank age, size, and contents within 30 days after installation of a new tank, or within 30 days after any changes in tank ownership, use, or contents. The agency provides forms for this purpose. Septic tanks and some pipeline facilities are excluded from tank regulations but are regulated under other rules.

The MPCA must receive 10 days advance notice, in writing, prior to the installation, removal, or repair of regulated USTs. Only MPCA certified contractors can perform UST installation, repairs and removal projects. The agency provides a list of these certified contractors. Contractors are not required to be certified or provide advance notice for installation, removal, or upgrade of ASTs or non-regulated USTs. However, individuals and companies doing AST work must follow applicable standards outlined in Minnesota Rules, Chapter 7151. MPCA does not regulate USTs with a capacity of 110 gallons or less, residential or farm USTs storing 1,100 gallons or less of motor fuel (used for non-commercial purposes), and USTs storing 1,100 gallons or less of heating oil (used to heat the property where the tank is located).

## **UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS (USTs)**

According to Minnesota Rules, Chapter 7150, most new and existing regulated USTs must have spill, overfill, and corrosion protection. USTs that do not have these safeguards must immediately be taken out of service and either, replaced, removed, or abandoned-in-place with fire marshal approval. Regulated USTs were required to have leak detection on or before 1993 based on the age of the tank.

The MPCA has made changes to certain requirements for operating UST systems. While most rules remain the same, there are changes that may affect you as the owner of a regulated UST.

All new underground tanks, as well as any associated piping must be double-walled and fuel dispensers, and submersible pump heads, must have a secondary containment design, meaning a liquid-tight barrier to capture and detect leaks. Existing piping, fuel dispensers and submersible pump heads, when repaired may require replacement.

For double-walled tanks, you will need to check monthly for liquids in the interstice between the walls, and document the check. If the interstice has a continuous automatic liquid sensor with



alarm, you will just need to perform an annual function check of the sensor.

Drop tubes extending to within 12 inches of the tank floor are required for all tanks. New gasoline tanks must have a drop tube extending to within six inches of the tank floor if the facility has greater than 10,000 gallons monthly throughput.

Secure anchoring of breakaway valves under dispensers must be maintained.

*Monthly* checks of all sump areas (fill pipe spill buckets, submersible pump sumps, and under-dispenser sumps) are now required. If you have a submersible pump sump with liquid-tight containment and a liquid sensor alarm that is function tested annually, then the sump may be checked *annually*. Checking the sump means lifting the lid and looking for spilled or leaked product, water, or debris, and cleaning out the sump if necessary. Keep a record of sump checks. A checklist is available from the MPCA, or owners can make their own.

All automatic line leak detectors must be function tested annually. Testers must be MPCA-certified contractors, have received testing approval from the manufacturer, or be specifically qualified by reason of training or experience. Owners may not perform the tests unless they are qualified. Obtain the test result record from the contractor and keep it. A publication, *What Tank Owners need to know about the New Underground Storage Tank Rules* ([www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/t-u1-19.pdf](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/t-u1-19.pdf)) is available from MPCA.

If you have an impressed current type of cathodic protection system, then the system's rectifier must be checked every 60 days. Check that current is being delivered and record the volt and amp readings. Owner-operators may do this. A corrosion expert must inspect the system for effective protection at least annually, rather than every three years as previously.

If your cathodic protection is sacrificial anode they must be tested every three years. If your system is designed with external testing stations, the three-year tests and post-repair tests may be performed by the owner/operator, using a voltmeter. Record and maintain the results. External test stations must test all piping as well; if they are not designed to do this, use a qualified cathodic protection tester.

If you have a high level alarming system for protection during tank fills it must be audible to the fill driver. It is recommended that the alarm be tested for proper function at least annually, and must be audible to the fill operator.

For tanks with internal linings, due to lining failure concerns, these tanks must be emptied, entered, and internally inspected by a qualified third-party inspector at least *every* five years. New requirements cover pre-notification, inspection techniques, and reporting. Very minor repairs are allowed; however, if the lining ever fails, the tank must be permanently closed.

After *90 days* of inactivity, temporary closure is required. This means the tanks must be completely emptied and a notification form must be filed with the MPCA. Any rectifier must be kept on, and any cathodic protection system must be tested every year or three years, as applicable. After one year of inactivity, the tank owner must request and receive written approval to extend the temporary closure period, otherwise the tanks must be permanently closed. This means closed-in-place (filled with an inert substance) or removed from the ground. After five years of inactivity, all tanks must be permanently closed.

Prior to closing the transaction of selling or purchasing property with USTs, the seller must notify the purchaser of the purchaser's duty to notify the MPCA. Purchaser must file a notification form with the MPCA for the change in ownership, and must certify that all operators, including lessees, have read the UST rules and know how to operate and maintain UST systems.

## **ABOVE GROUND STORAGE TANKS (ASTs)**

With a few exceptions, all new and existing AST facilities with a total storage capacity of less than one million gallons must have corrosion protection, overfill protection, secondary containment, and substance transfer area protection according to Minnesota Rules, Chapter 7151. Monitoring and leak detection requirements also exist for these ASTs. A general permit is no longer required for these regulated AST facilities. Some tanks excluded from these regulations include farm ASTs, ASTs with a capacity of 500 gallons or less, residential ASTs storing 1,100 gallons or less of motor fuel (used for non commercial purposes), and ASTs storing 1,100 gallons or less of heating oil (used to heat the property where the tank is located).

If an AST holds more than 10,000 gallons, a spill response plan is required. This plan describes the steps the tank owner will take if there is a spill or another type of accident. Call the MPCA at the telephone number listed in the Resource Directory of this Guide for the content requirements of a spill response plan.

AST facilities with total storage capacity of greater than or equal to one million gallons must obtain an individual permit for their tanks. The individual permit addresses tank inspection and maintenance, spill containment, tank gauging, overfill protection, corrosion protection, and tank upgrades. Permits are issued for up to five years. To obtain an individual site permit for your facility, please call the MPCA's AST program.

Tank owners and operators can participate in an environmental audit program. This program allows tank owners to make improvements to their site before fines or violation notices are issued or enforcement action is taken. The environmental audit cannot be used at facilities where serious and repeat violations have occurred.

More information about tanks is available by calling the MPCA or by reviewing the MPCA website at [www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us). Click on programs and select "Aboveground Storage Tank Systems" or the "Storage Tank Compliance and Assistance Program".

## **WATER QUALITY REQUIREMENTS**

Businesses may need a permit or certificate from the MPCA if they:

1. Discharge any wastewater into surface waters (including storm sewers);
2. Operate an agricultural feedlot;
3. Operate a disposal system which land-applies wastewater, or by product;
4. Operate a large on-site drain field; or
5. Operate any one of a class of categorical industries.

6. Discharge storm-water from an industrial or construction site.
7. Plan to dredge, fill, inundate or drain a wetland to the extent that a United States Army Corps of Engineers permit would be required. The MPCA must then certify that permit.

Businesses requiring an extension of a sanitary sewer system will be affected by the MPCA requirement that any municipality must have a Sewer Extension Permit before extending its sanitary sewer lines. For more details, please see the MPCA factsheet found at [www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us), then click on Permits, then click on Water Permits. There is a sewer extension permit application fee.

## **Feedlot Permits**

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency regulates the collection, transportation, storage, processing and disposal of animal manure. The Feedlot Program implements rules governing these activities. MPCA is the principal agency for regulating feedlots in Minnesota. In addition, 54 counties administer the program for feedlots under 1,000 animal units. A National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit is required for all feedlots that meet or exceed the threshold for large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) under the Code of Federal Regulations, or with 1,000 animal units or more.

The feedlot rules apply to all aspects of livestock manure and process wastewater management including the location, design, construction, operation and management of feedlots and manure handling facilities and the land application of manure and process wastewater.

Information on feedlot permits, regulations and related issues is available from the MPCA at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide, or on their website at [www.pca.state.mn.us/hot/feedlots.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/hot/feedlots.html).

## **National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permits**

NPDES permits are required for any discharge of wastewater into surface waters, including non-contact cooling water and air-conditioning or heat-pump water. NPDES permits are not required if the discharge is to a publicly-owned sanitary sewer system. However, local permits may be required – check with your local municipality.

NPDES permits are required for feedlots that either exceed the large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) threshold (i.e. 700 dairy cows, 2,500 swine, 1,000 beef, etc.) or have a capacity of 1,000 animal units or more.

Permit applications are available from the MPCA at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. Applications must be submitted 180 days before the planned activity commences. There is an application fee, and an annual permit fee. Except for the categorical industries listed below, there are no such fees if the discharge goes to a sanitary sewer. Applicants should be prepared to provide information on the location, quantity and quality of the proposed discharge. NPDES permits are issued for a period of up to five years.

## **Storm-Water Discharge Permits**

Certain types of industrial facilities must apply for a storm-water discharge permit from the MPCA. In addition, storm-water permits may be required for certain construction activities. Minnesota's storm-water permitting program is designed to help improve the quality of the state's waters by reducing or eliminating the chemicals and sediments carried into surface waters with storm-water runoff.

All required industrial facilities must apply for a general storm-water discharge permit from the MPCA. In addition, an industry-specific permit may be required depending on the environmental risk of storm-water runoff from the facility. Construction projects disturbing one or more acres must apply for a general NPDES storm-water permit from the MPCA. Storm-water permits may require the preparation of a plan for managing storm-water runoff, potentially including construction of holding basins or diversion structures.

The program has broadened due to new federal regulations, so, if you have potential discharges find out if your industrial facility requires a storm-water permit. The MPCA and EPA have websites with information on the storm water permit programs. Check the MPCA home page and EPA storm-water page for information.

## **State Disposal System Permits**

State disposal system permits are required for disposal of wastewater other than to surface waters, including large septic tank and drainfield systems and spray irrigation of wastewater. The need for an SDS permit may be satisfied by certain construction or operating practices; these must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Only domestic sewage should be discharged to drainfields.

Process wastewater, washwater and other wastewater should be discharged to a city sewer system. This may be a major consideration when siting a new industry.

Application forms are available from the MPCA at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. Applications should be submitted 180 days ahead of the anticipated beginning of construction. SDS permits are issued for a period of up to five years. There is an application fee and annual fees, which depend on the size of the facility.

## **Permits for Categorical Industries**

Certain types of industries are required to be regulated under the Clean Water Act even if they discharge their wastewater to a municipal sanitary system. Examples of these industries are: pulp and paper mills; most food processing plants; textile mills; chemical manufacturing plants; electroplating companies; plastics and other synthetics manufacturers; fertilizer plants; metal manufacturing plants; steam power plants; companies producing leather, glass, asbestos, rubber, and timber products.

Requirements for categorical industries are set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In most cases, a prospective permit holder cannot contest these requirements. Categorical industries are subject to U.S. EPA pretreatment regulations.

A number of large sanitary districts and cities have been delegated authority to issue categorical-industry permits. These include the Metropolitan Council, Environmental Services, the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District, Winona, Rochester, Albert Lea, Owatonna, St. Cloud, Mankato and Red Wing.

Categorical-industry permits are issued for other cities by the MPCA for a period of up to five years. Application forms may be obtained from the MPCA. There is a \$350 application fee and an annual fee for categorical industry permits. Permit applications should be submitted 180 days ahead of the commencement of the proposed activity. Questions about water quality permits should be directed to the MPCA. Addresses and telephone numbers are listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

### **Underground Disposal Control**

Disposal of industrial wastewater in underground sewage treatment systems is not allowed.

## **AIR POLLUTION CONTROL REQUIREMENTS**

Minnesota businesses must comply with MPCA rules to protect air quality. Some rules apply even though the business will not have air emissions requiring permits.

### **Motor Vehicle Emission Controls**

Owners of businesses that operate motor vehicle fleets should be aware that it is contrary to state rules and federal regulations to remove or disable the air pollution control equipment on motor vehicles, and it is illegal to operate motor vehicles unless the pollution control equipment is in place and is in operating condition.

### **Notification of Emergency Air Releases**

The MPCA must be notified immediately of any releases to the air that might endanger human health, damage property or create a public nuisance. The business must take the steps necessary to prevent such releases.

### **Air Emissions Facility Permits**

An air-emissions facility permit will be required if the business has the potential to emit more than the following airborne pollutants in a single year (in tons/year): lead 0.5; fine particulate matter < 10 microns, 25; single hazardous air pollutant 10; two or more hazardous air pollutants 25; sulfur dioxide 50; nitrous oxides, 100; carbon monoxide 100; particulate matter 100; volatile organic compounds 100. There is an application fee and an annual permit fee. Under certain circumstances, local health and welfare problems have to be addressed through an air emission facility permit even though the business would otherwise be exempt under Minnesota rules. This may be because of toxic air emissions or dust from the proposed business.

Although not all will require air-emissions permits, business operators who should be aware of MPCA air quality rules are those whose businesses include the use of boilers, incinerators, electrical generators and solvent-borne coatings. Other businesses whose operations fall under air quality rules are those that create emissions such as dust, including grain elevators, concrete batch plants, sand and gravel operations and building demolition operations.

Permit applications should be submitted before construction is to begin. Applicants will need to know the characteristics of the exhaust gas stream before and after, any emission control equipment, type and design of emission control equipment, the relation of emission points to nearby structures and other information. The permitting process may be delayed if information is inadequate, if the facility is proposed in an area where the air quality is already below standards, or if public demands result in scheduling public hearings.

Business operators in doubt about the need for a permit should call the MPCA. Businesses that have fewer than 100 employees and are independently owned and operated may call the MPCA's Small Business Environmental Assistance Program at the telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **Asbestos Removal**

Prior to any renovation or demolition work in a commercial space, a survey for the presence of asbestos is required. This survey must be conducted by an inspector that is certified by the Minnesota Department of Health. An asbestos abatement contractor licensed by the Minnesota Department of Health may be required for removal depending on the type and quantity of asbestos affected by the project. Notifications must be submitted to the MPCA prior to all demolition and most asbestos abatement projects. Business owners should be aware that asbestos removal is also regulated by the Asbestos and Lead Compliance Unit of the Minnesota Department of Health and the Occupational Safety and Health Division of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. The respective addresses and telephone numbers for information on these requirements is listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. For further information, contact the MPCA Asbestos Unit.

## **SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**

### **County Waste-Management Plans**

The Minnesota Legislature gave primary responsibility for solid-waste management to the state's 87 counties. Contact the county solid-waste officer for details about the county waste-management plan, which outlines waste disposal options for businesses and for information about relevant ordinances. This plan, developed by the county and approved by the MPCA, may have specific business-related requirements. Cities may also have local solid-waste ordinances, and those plans should be reviewed as well.

The Legislature also gave direction to counties about the most preferred methods of waste management, a hierarchy from the most to the least environmentally beneficial. Since waste generation has increased one to two percent each year for more than 30 years, it pays for government and businesses to reduce wastes as much as possible, thereby reducing garbage bills,

specific business solid-waste fees, and the percentage of taxes going toward waste-disposal costs.

The waste management hierarchy is:

- Reduce and reuse – the best waste is, of course, none at all, so it is prudent to reduce waste by wise purchasing, good inventory management, and reuse of waste products.
- Recycling – by separating out those wastes with intrinsic value, disposal costs will be reduced. Among wastes local governments may collect (or you may decide to collect and recycle yourself): glass, aluminum, tin, some plastics, white office paper, mixed paper, cardboard, paperboard, Tyvek envelopes, newsprint, printer cartridges, and more. Also, by establishing business policies that promote recycling, such as separating white office paper, and purchasing recycled paper and packing, markets are created for those materials that otherwise might be discarded.
- Composting – yard wastes and some food products can be composted into beneficial soil amendments.
- Incineration – a waste-to-energy incinerator consumes solid waste and produces energy, but has possible air-quality impacts, costs more than landfilling and produces its own waste – ash.
- Landfilling – shipping wastes to a permitted landfill safely isolates wastes, but does not normally produce any side benefit (except in rare cases where methane is recovered for energy use) or reduce solid-waste volume.

Counties' integrated waste-management systems use a combination of these waste-management techniques. By considering these various options along with the county's plan, a business can demonstrate concern for community needs and enhance its reputation as a business that cares about the environment.

### **Solid-Waste Taxes for Business Wastes**

Businesses pay different solid-waste taxes from households in the same area. The tax rate is 9.75 percent on residential garbage service and 17 percent on commercial garbage service. Businesses that produce construction, demolition debris, medical waste, or nonhazardous industrial waste will pay a tax of 60 cents per cubic yard of collection capacity. The Department of Revenue collects the taxes, which are used to support cleanup of old landfills and grants for waste-reduction and recycling programs.

### **Solid-Waste Permits and Enforcement**

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency permits and regulates solid-waste facilities, including landfills (mixed municipal solid waste, demolition debris, and industrial types), transfer stations, incinerators, composting facilities and more. In addition to state permits, local units of government (such as counties, cities or townships) may also have ordinances or licenses required for certain activities or facility types. These requirements attempt to assure that any solid wastes disposed of in Minnesota facilities will not become a source of liability later. If your wastes go to other states, it makes sense to find out whether you could be held liable for cleanup of those wastes later.

The MPCA has permit application processes to build or operate a solid-waste facility as part of a business, or to dispose of nonhazardous industrial wastes by land application (lime residues applied to agricultural land, for example). Concerns about illegal dumping of solid waste on a property can be directed to the county solid waste officer, the MPCA or the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, all of which have certain authorities that may be of assistance.

## **Specific Materials Banned From the Waste Stream or Requiring Specific Disposal**

Some wastes are banned or must be disposed of according to state laws or MPCA rules. Among those things that are banned from normal disposal are: waste tires; yard and tree waste; motor oil and filters, as well as other vehicle fluids; lead-acid batteries; nickel-cadmium batteries or other rechargeable or nonremovable battery packs; major appliances, including removal of items containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), such as old transformers; computer monitors; telephone books; all mercury including fluorescent and high-intensity discharge lamps and mercury switches (building, automotive); lead paint waste; chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) refrigerants; and petroleum-based sweeping compound. To find out more about disposal or recycling options for these materials, contact your solid-waste officer, call the MPCA or visit the MPCA website at the address listed in the Resource Directory Section of this Guide, to look at a copy of the Minnesota solid waste rules.

### **Electronic Waste**

Electronic waste, or E-waste, is any waste that has a circuit board or cathode ray tube (CRT). This includes items that businesses use every day, such as computers, televisions, telephones and fax machines. Because of their potential lead content, when these items become a waste a business must then to be hazardous unless supporting test data is available proving otherwise. Businesses can either have the e-waste recycled or handled as a hazardous waste.

Minn. Stat 115A.1310 - 115A.1330 impacts retailers, collectors, recyclers, and manufacturers of video display devices sold to households (for example, televisions and computer monitors, including laptops). Among its requirements, this law requires retailers to only sell products of registered manufacturers. Registration and reporting requirements also apply to businesses that collect, recycle, or manufacture video display devices. For more information on these requirements, call the MPCA or visit the MPCA website at [www.pca.state.mn.us/oea/stewardship/electronics-law.cfm](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/oea/stewardship/electronics-law.cfm).

### **Heavy Metals in Products**

Minnesota law prohibits the use of heavy metals (lead, cadmium, mercury and hexavalent chromium) in all packaging and certain products. If the business produces, purchases, uses or distributes a product or packaging using these metals, contact the MPCA to determine whether the business is in compliance with regulations. Certain legal products containing mercury, such as thermometers, thermostats, and automobile switches, are among the materials with restricted distribution or disposal. Contact the MPCA if you have questions about heavy metals in products or packaging.



## **Buying Recycled Products**

Businesses that buy recycled products help to create better markets for recyclables. Through wise purchasing of recycled products or those using less toxic constituents or less packaging, a business makes a statement about its commitment to the environment, can reduce solid-waste fees and makes its collected recyclables increase in value.

## **Recycling Space Requirements for Building Owners**

Minnesota state law requires buildings of 1,000 square feet or more to provide “suitable space” for the separation, collection, and temporary storage of recyclable materials (Minn. Stat. 16B.61). The law applies to new or significantly remodeled commercial structures.

In addition to the requirements of state law, specific numeric standards for recycling space have been adopted in the Minnesota Uniform Building Code (UBC). The UBC requires a certain percentage of space to be set aside for recycling, depending on how the space is used.

## **Labeling and Purchasing Recycled Products**

The recycling logo is one way to signal that the business produces a product that contains recycled materials or is packaged in recycled materials to the consumer. While there are no specific regulations governing use of the recycling logo, the preferred practice is to use the logo, percent of recycled content, and percent of recycled content made up of post consumer waste (i.e., materials recycled by consumers).

## **Food Wastes**

The MPCA and several other organizations currently assisting businesses seeking to reduce, recycle or compost food wastes. If the business produces food wastes, there are several cost-saving and environmentally sound methods of reuse or disposal. Contact the MPCA for more information.

# **COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE**

## **MPCA Publications**

The MPCA offers free fact sheets to assist the regulated community. For a list of available fact sheets, contact the MPCA or access it on the MPCA website at [www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us) under Publications within the program pages. In addition, the MPCA publishes an “Environmental Guide for Small Business in Minnesota,” created to give small manufacturers a user-friendly guide to Minnesota’s environmental regulations. That publication addresses air quality, hazardous waste, water quality, emergency response, storage tanks, cleanup and remediation, pollution prevention, OSHA, and agriculture issues. Copies are available by contacting the MPCA’s Small Business Environmental Assistance Program at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of the Guide. Copies are also available on the internet at [www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us).

## **Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP)**

This business assistance program helps industrial-waste generators improve process efficiency while minimizing their impact on human health and the environment. MnTAP is a nonregulatory program that offers free, confidential assistance to help business comply with environmental regulations by evaluating pollution prevention strategies before offering other waste management suggestions. For more information, contact MnTAP at the telephone number listed in the State Government section of the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **Superfund and Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup (VIC)**

The federal and state Superfund programs deal with hazardous-waste sites where contamination threatens public health and the environment. The Minnesota Environmental Response and Liability Act (MERLA), Minnesota's Superfund law, gives the MPCA the authority to require those responsible for the contamination to undertake investigation and cleanup.

The Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup program provides guidance and technical assistance to parties who want to voluntarily clean up a property contaminated with hazardous substances. For more information about the state or federal Superfund programs or the VIC program, call the number listed in the Resource Directory for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

## **One-Stop Program**

The MPCA One-Stop program helps businesses navigate through the various environmental regulations they may face in the expansion or creation of their business. The goal is to make regulatory compliance in all environmental medias a smoother, friendlier, more efficient experience for Minnesota businesses. The program includes multimedia assistance in hazardous waste, air quality, stormwater, wastewater, and pollution prevention. This program offers environmental assistance at all stages of planning. However, the greatest environmental benefit can be achieved if environmental considerations (such as low impact development, green building design, water and energy conservation, waste and pollution prevention) can be incorporated into the earliest design stages of a new or expanding business possibly resulting in less burdensome regulations or permits.

## **Small Business Environmental Assistance Program/Environmental Rules and Regulations**

Small businesses with limited resources can get help understanding Minnesota's environmental rules and regulations through the Small Business Environmental Assistance Program at the MPCA. The purpose of this program is to help small businesses understand the environmental rules and regulations that may apply to their business; assist in completing permit applications; inform the businesses of their rights and responsibilities regarding environmental rules and regulations; and provide assistance so that the businesses may comply with environmental rules and regulations even when a permit is not required.

Businesses requesting this confidential service should contact the MPCA's Small Business Environmental Assistance Program at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

### **Small Business Ombudsman**

The Small Business Ombudsman serves as a representative, or a liaison, for small businesses in their interactions with the MPCA. The Ombudsman offers the following services: confidential assistance to small businesses involving regulations and compliance; resolution of complaints or disputes involving regulations and small businesses; help in identifying funding sources to purchase equipment that meets or exceeds environmental regulations; and coordination of small business input during rule development. The Ombudsman also solicits feedback from small businesses and trade associations for the development of assistance activities tailored to small business needs.

The ombudsman is located at the MPCA at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

### **The Small Business Environmental Improvement Loan Program**

For existing businesses, the Small Business Environmental Improvement Loan Program offers low interest loans of up to \$50,000 for financing environmental projects such as equipment or process upgrades and costs associated with the investigation and clean-up of hazardous materials. More information and an application are available by calling the Small Business Ombudsman at PCA at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

### **Potential Environmental Problems with Property**

Real-estate transactions have consequences for property buyers, sellers, developers, lenders, insurance companies, landlords and tenants. These parties have an interest in limiting the potential liability involved with the transfer of land that has been affected by hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants. As a result, the MPCA receives requests from many businesses for assistance with evaluating and dealing with known or suspected land contamination.

The state has a range of services to assist those involved in land transfers in dealing with potential problems. In most cases, potential land buyers or developers will request or be willing to perform an environmental assessment of the property before sale. If contamination is discovered, then decisions need to be made about who will pay for further investigation or cleanup and how health or environmental risks will be minimized or eliminated. The following programs can be helpful to those involved with land transactions, including environmental consulting firms hired to help businesses assess or clean up property.

### **Properties Where Environmental Assessments Have Not Been Completed**

Over the past few years, it has become standard practice for those involved in land transfers to perform an environmental assessment of the property before sale. Buying or developing land,

particularly in former or current industrial-use areas, can pose problems if all parties involved do not know whether the property has been affected by its former use. Past disposal practices did not take into account what we now know are the problems posed by hazardous substances. It pays to follow the general rule “buyer beware.”

The first step in performing an assessment is usually hiring an environmental consulting firm with the expertise to conduct an environmental assessment of the property. While the MPCA does not recommend specific consulting firms, the agency does have lists of environmental consultants who can be hired to assess property. The agency’s Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup (VIC) Program also has a series of fact sheets which outline the features of a good environmental assessment. These can be accessed on the web page at [www.pca.state.mn.us/cleanup/vic.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/cleanup/vic.html). If the business performing the assessment wants legal assurances that the property poses no or limited liability, the business can sign up for the VIC Programs. The staff will oversee the environmental investigation and cleanup, if needed, and work to provide the necessary assurances. Voluntary parties pay the cost of MPCA review, oversight and preparation of assurances of the assessment.

If petroleum chemicals are the contaminants most likely to be found on site, the MPCA Petroleum Brownfields Program can assist with review and oversight and provide closure letters. If agricultural chemicals are involved, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture provides similar review and oversight services.

The environmental assessment involves seeking existing information about the property, its past uses, and its enforcement or permitting history, if any. It also includes an inspection of the site, noting areas where further testing is needed.

The environmental investigation involves actual testing of soil, ground water, surface water, tank contents or other possible contamination areas. The results of the testing may indicate the need for another round of testing or may be sufficient to make a determination about whether the site is contaminated and, if so, where and with what substances at what levels. If the assessment indicates site contamination, the business and/or consultant performing the assessment has the duty to notify the MPCA (through the Minnesota Duty officer), no matter whether the land transfer takes place or not. The land owner may also have the responsibility of filing an affidavit with the county where the property is located prior to a transfer of ownership. However, the business discovering environmental problems is not necessarily the party who is required to perform further work to clean up the site.

### **“Brownfields” Sites**

“Brownfield” is a term for industrial or commercial properties that are candidates for redevelopment but sit idle due to actual or suspected contamination. Cities, development agencies, counties and other groups have identified land that would be attractive to developers if information about environmental status of these sites were available. For sites where no voluntary party has come forward, the state and federal governments have developed several initiatives that will allow interested parties to obtain environmental information about sites. The MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the MPCA all are involved in various efforts to assess and, if needed, clean up brownfield sites. Contact the MPCA or DEED to find out more information about brownfields initiatives.

## **Superfund: Sites Posing Imminent Risks, Abandoned Sites, and Enforcement Approaches**

There are certain sites that are not good candidates for voluntary approaches, and the state and federal Superfund programs are designed to handle these problem sites. Among the types of sites most appropriate for Superfund:

- Sites that pose an imminent risk to public health or the environment, where the state must act quickly to assure that the public or environment is protected;
- Sites that pose risks, and have no responsible parties that can fund investigation and cleanup activities; and
- Sites where responsible parties are known, but are unable or unwilling to undertake necessary investigation and cleanup actions.

Under Superfund law, responsible parties are defined, in part, as site owners, facility operators who handled wastes on the site, transporters who brought wastes to the site, and generators whose wastes end up on the site. If a risk to public health or the environment is identified, a site can be assessed by the MPCA and placed on the state Superfund list. Listed sites are eligible for use of the funds appropriated for site investigations and cleanups under the state Superfund law. The MPCA can also utilize these funds to perform removal work or emergency actions if an imminent risk to public health or the environment does exist.

If responsible parties are known but refuse to undertake cleanup, both state and federal laws can be used to enforce action. Usually, this non-cooperative approach is more expensive, time-consuming and difficult for both the regulatory agency and the responsible party.

## **Other Land Contamination Programs**

The state has other special programs or laws dealing with contaminated land, a few of which are listed below:

- **Contamination Tax:** The Minnesota Legislature has established a contamination tax on properties affected by hazardous substances to allow for a deduction in the value of the property based on contamination present. The tax ratio varies depending on whether the tax payer is a responsible party and has a MPCA approved Response Action Plan. This law is designed to provide a tax incentive to landowners who clean up contaminated property. Contact the Minnesota Department of Revenue for more information.
- **Contamination Cleanup Grants:** The Legislature provides money for Contamination Cleanup Grants for cities, housing and redevelopment authorities, economic development authorities and port authorities. To qualify for a grant, the applicant must provide the Commissioner of DEED with a site description, approved response action plan, detailed estimate of cleanup costs, appraisal of the market value of the property, description of planned land use, and explanation of how the applicant plans to pay for its share of the project. The applicant must be willing to pay at least 25 percent of the project cost. Contact DEED for more information.

- **Drycleaner Legislation:** A special fund has been established to deal with land contamination from former dry-cleaning operations. Funds for investigation and cleanup activities come from annual registration fees and fees on some dry cleaning chemicals. Contact the MPCA for more information.
- **Guidance Documents and Technical Assistance:** The MPCA provides guidance documents for investigation and cleanup of contaminated land, fact sheets on state and federal Superfund programs, site-specific fact sheets on some sites, and other brochures and newsletters on contaminated property issues. Contact the MPCA for more information.

## **Environmental Audit Program**

Environmental auditing is a process of examining a facility to determine how well its operations are complying with local, state and federal environmental regulations. This program encourages businesses and other organizations to conduct their own environmental audits and correct any problems they may discover. The intent of the program is to focus on the goal of achieving greater environmental compliance, rather than on fines or other penalties. In addition to involving more people in helping to protect the environment, the program also allows businesses to discover and correct minor problems before they become major liabilities, and, in most cases, to avoid enforcement penalties that might otherwise be assessed.

Any business or governmental unit that is regulated by an environmental law or rule in Minnesota can conduct an environmental audit, using either on-site personnel or an outside firm if desired. The MPCA provides free audit checklists to assist organizations in conducting their audits. After the audit, the organization must submit a report that includes a summary of the results, a schedule for any corrective actions that must be taken (subject to MPCA approval if greater than 90 days), and either a statement that pollution-prevention opportunities have been examined (for smaller facilities) or a certification that pollution-prevention requirements have been met (for larger facilities).

Generally, participants in the audit program are then given protection from enforcement fines or other penalties for any violations found, unless they are repeat violations or involve either criminal activities or activities that cause serious harm to the environment or public health. Audit forms need not be submitted to the MPCA (although they may be requested by the agency if there is probable cause to believe that a crime occurred), but participants should be aware that their summary reports are considered public documents and will be placed in the agency's files, subject to public review under Minnesota's Data Practices Act.

The Environmental Audit Program is designed to help both business and government work actively and cooperatively in protecting our environment. When a participant successfully meets the requirements of the program, that facility can display a "Minnesota Green Star" award for a period of two years after completing the audit and any required corrective or cleanup work. For more information and/or copies of fact sheets and checklists, call the MPCA or check the agency's website at [www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us) and look under Waste/Waste Prevention/ Environmental Auditing Project, or Programs/Environmental Audit Program.

## **USING PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS**

Even before beginning that evaluation, the entrepreneur often will decide whether to perform that evaluation himself or herself, or engage an accountant or attorney to assist him or her. Professional advisors, such as attorneys and accountants, can greatly enhance an entrepreneur's review of a potential business. This is true for at least two reasons. First, those professionals will have no emotional attachment or stake in that review process; their objectivity may serve as an important counterbalance to an entrepreneur's enthusiasm. Second, those professionals should be able to provide thorough review of financial or intellectual property information provided, and should be knowledgeable of any potential obstacles to the success of the business (such as the need for licenses or permits). For instance, it is important that someone thoroughly evaluate financial information supplied by a seller or offeror, or pro forma information prepared by the entrepreneur, and in many cases a professional is best suited to that task.

## **ACCESS TO THE REGULATORY PROCESS**

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The Legislature delegates to state administrative agencies, commissions and boards, the authority to make rules to implement the laws administered and enforced by the agencies commissions and boards. (Note that the Governor has the power to veto all or part of an adopted rule.) The process by which these rules are adopted is governed by the Minnesota Administrative Procedure Act (MnAPA). This process includes broad public access to information about proposed regulations and opportunities for public participation in the rulemaking process. Agencies must maintain a current public rulemaking docket containing a listing of each possible proposed rule currently under active consideration and each pending rulemaking proceeding.

Before publication of a notice of intent to adopt a rule, or a notice of public hearing on a proposed rule, agencies are required to solicit comments from the public on the subject of the rule under consideration. That solicitation must be published in the weekly State Register and must include a description of the subject matter of the proposal, the types of groups and individuals to be affected, the procedures for comment, and how drafts of any proposal may be obtained.

By the time notice of a proposed rulemaking is published and mailed, the agency must prepare, review and make available for public review a statement of need and reasonableness (SONAR) regarding the rule under consideration. That SONAR must contain a description of the classes of persons likely to be affected; the probable costs to the agency of implementation and enforcement of the rule; a determination of whether there are less costly or intrusive means of accomplishing the purpose of the proposed rule; a description of any alternatives considered together with the reasons for their rejection; the probable costs of compliance; and an assessment of any differences between the proposed rule and existing federal regulations and a specific analysis of the need for and reasonableness of each difference. When a state agency proposes a rule change, the SONAR must specify the portion of the total costs of the rule that will be borne by identifiable categories of affected parties, such as separate classes of government units, businesses or individuals. The cost of not adopting the proposed rule change must also be specified. In 2004, the Minnesota Legislature added the requirement that agencies also had to evaluate the fiscal impact and benefits of proposed rules on local government.

The SONAR must describe how the agency considered and implemented the legislative policy supporting performance-based regulatory systems when developing rules. The policy requires agencies to develop rules and regulatory programs that emphasize superior achievement in meeting the agency's regulatory objectives and maximum flexibility for the regulated party and the agency in meeting those goals. In addition, the SONAR must describe the agency's efforts to notify persons or classes of persons who may be affected by the proposed rule or they must explain why these efforts were not made.

Over the course of the entire rulemaking process, agencies are required to maintain the official rulemaking record for every rule adopted under the MnAPA. This record constitutes the official and exclusive agency rulemaking record with respect to agency action on or judicial review of the rule. The official rulemaking record contains: copies of all publications in the State Register pertaining to the rule; all written petitions, requests, submissions, or comments received by the agency or the administrative law judge pertaining to the rule; the SONAR for the rule; the official transcript of the hearing if one was held; or the tape recording of the hearing if a transcript was not prepared; the report of the administrative law judge, if any; the rule as submitted to the administrative law judge; the administrative law judge's written statement of required modifications, if any; other documents required by applicable rules of the office of administrative hearings; the agency's order adopting the rule; the revisor's certificate approving the form of the rule; and a copy of the adopted rule as filed with the Secretary of State. The official rulemaking record is available for public review.

Agencies are also required to maintain a current, public rulemaking docket and have the docket available for the public. The public rulemaking docket must contain a listing of each rule currently under active consideration by the agency for proposal and include the following: the subject matter of the proposed rule; a citation to all published notices relating to the proceeding; where comments may be inspected; the time during which comments may be made; the names of persons requesting a hearing; where those requests may be inspected and the time and location of any hearing; the current status of the proposed rule; the timetable for agency decisions or other action; the date of the rule's adoption and the date of filing with the Secretary of State; and the date the rule will become effective.

Agencies may withdraw a portion of a rule before it takes effect. State agencies are allowed to give rulemaking notices via e-mail or regular mail.

Any person may submit a written petition (contents are specified) to an agency for relief from a rule adopted by that agency. Such variances can be either discretionary or mandatory, and must be granted or denied in writing within sixty days of the receipt of the completed petition (unless the petitioner agrees to a later date). Mandatory variances are granted if the agency finds that the application of the rule, as applied to the petitioner, would not serve any of the purposes of the rule. Discretionary variances are granted if the agency finds that: (1) application of the rule would result in hardship or injustice; (2) variance would be consistent with public interest; and (3) variance would not prejudice substantial legal or economic rights of any person. Failure of an agency to act within that sixty-day time (unless the petitioner agreed to a later date) results in automatic approval of that petition. Note also that these changes require that in addition to any notice required by other law, an agency is required to make "reasonable efforts to ensure that persons or entities who maybe affected by the variance have timely notice of the request for the variance. The agency may require



the petitioner to serve notice to any other person or entity in the manner specified by the agency.” Also, agencies are authorized to issue rules setting forth general standards under which an agency will grant mandatory or discretionary variances from its rules.

With respect to the opportunity to receive relief from what is referred to as an “unadopted rule,” persons may petition the Office of Administrative Hearings for an order of an administrative law judge “determining that an agency is enforcing or attempting to enforce a policy, guideline, bulletin, criterion, manual standard or similar pronouncement as though it were a duly adopted rule.” Note also that “an agency determination is not considered an unadopted rule when the agency enforces a law or rule by applying the law or rule to specific facts on a case-by-case basis.”

An agency has ten working days to respond to such a petition. In some circumstances the agency will be responsible for the costs of the Office of Administrative Hearings associated with the petition.

### **SMALL BUSINESS EXEMPTION FROM RULES**

Minn. Stat. 14.127 provides a procedure for small businesses or small cities to claim exemption from certain state rules. Under the statute, an agency must determine if the cost of complying with a proposed rule in the first year after the rule will take effect will exceed \$25,000 for a business with less than 50 full-time employees or a statutory or home rule charter city with less than 10 full-time employees. [Note that under Minnesota’s administrative Procedure Act any proposed amendments to existing rules constitute a proposed rule. The statute is unclear in that context as to what would constitute “the cost of complying” with an amended rule. Specifically, it is silent as to whether the \$25,000 figure is for incremental (that is, new costs) only or whether those incremental costs can be added to existing costs of compliance with the existing rule to reach the \$25,000 threshold.] That determination must be made before the close of the rulemaking hearing or, in cases where there is no hearing, before submission of the record to the administrative law judge. If the agency determines that the costs will exceed \$25,000 or if the administrative law judge disapproves the agency’s determination that the costs do not exceed \$25,000, the above defined business or city may file a written statement with the agency claiming exemption from the rules. Upon filing the statement, the rules do not apply to the business or city until the rules are approved by a law enacted after the agency’s determination or the administrative law judge’s disapproval. The law applies to any rule for which the record has not closed before July 1, 2005. Certain exemptions apply (e.g., Minn. PUC rulemaking).

### **ENHANCED FEDERAL COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE**

The federal Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act was amended to require federal agencies that develop and publish rules for which a regulatory flexibility analysis is required by federal law to publish one or more guides to assist small entities in complying with the rule. The compliance guides, which are to be posted on the agency’s website and distributed to industry contacts of those potentially affected by the rule, shall include a description of the actions needed to meet the requirements of the rule to enable a small entity to know when such requirements are met and shall also include, if determined by appropriate by the agency, a description of possible procedures-such as tests-that may assist small entities in meeting the requirements.

# **PROTECTING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY: PATENTS, TRADEMARKS, AND COPYRIGHTS <sup>1</sup>**

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## **BASIC TYPES OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION**

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There are four basic types of intellectual property protection: patent, trademark, copyright, and trade secret, and each will be discussed in order.

### **PATENT PROTECTION**

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The United States patent system was created to help achieve various socially desirable goals. By providing an inventor with an exclusive right to exclude others from making, using, or selling an invention for a limited period of time, a patent rewards an inventor for the time and effort expended in developing the invention, thereby encouraging further creative efforts. Also, most new inventions have uncertain commercial value, and the patent system provides a degree of protection from competition for a limited period of time, thus encouraging investment in new technology. Additionally, the patent system encourages inventors to make their inventions known rather than to maintain them in a state of secrecy, thereby increasing the amount of technological knowledge available to the public. Finally, the patent system helps to aid in the sale or transfer of technology both within the United States and in foreign countries, by giving a commercially tangible form to otherwise intangible ideas.

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR PATENTABILITY**

There are several major hurdles an inventor must overcome before patent protection can be obtained. First, the applicant for patent must be able to demonstrate that he or she has developed a new, useful, and not obvious process or product. Since a patent cannot be obtained unless the invention is new, the invention must not have been known or used by others in the United States or patented or described in a publication in the United States or any foreign country before the invention was made by the applicant. In addition, if the invention was patented or described in a publication anywhere in the world or in public use or sale in the United States more than one year prior to the date of filing the application, the patent will be denied.

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<sup>1</sup> This material is reprinted from A Guide to Intellectual Property Protection, a collaborative publication of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and Merchant and Gould, P.C., copyright January 2006. This material is not intended as legal advice regarding an individual's conduct of intellectual property affairs. Patent, trademark and copyright laws change constantly. For advice on these subjects, for interpretation of the law and for guidance, a lawyer trained in these areas should be consulted. The publication, A Legal Guide to the Internet which deal with these subjects in greater detail, are available without charge from the Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office, 1st National Bank Bldg., Suite E200, 332 Minnesota Street, St. Paul MN 55101-1351, telephone (651) 556-8425 or 1-800-310-8323 or at [www.positivelyminnesota.com/sbao](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/sbao).

The invention must also be capable of some beneficial use, and cannot be “frivolous, fraudulent, injurious to morals, health or good order.” The invention must also not be obvious, which is the most common reason for Patent Office rejection. It may well be that the invention is something that has never before existed; but, if the Patent Office determines that a mythical person having access to all the available information concerning that particular field of technology would have “known” how to make the invention, then the invention is rejected as being obvious.

A simplified example of an obviousness rejection is as follows:

Suppose a person invents a coffee cup having a square rather than a rounded handle. It may be that such a product has never before existed. However, if the Patent Office finds that a square handle has been used previously on some other device, such as a suitcase, it may well determine that putting a square handle on a coffee cup would have been obvious to an imaginary person who is knowledgeable about all publicly available information.

The invention must also fit into one of the categories of patentable subject matter. Thus, the invention must be new, useful, and non-obvious, and be either a:

- Process;
- Machine;
- Manufactured article;
- Composition; or
- An improvement of any of the above.

The term “process” means a process, art, or method, and it includes a new use of a known process, machine, manufactured article, composition of matter, or material. A process may also be defined as one or more steps or acts performed on materials to produce a result. An example of a process would be the use of DDT to kill insects. The term “machine” includes mechanical devices or combinations which perform some function and produce a certain effect or result. Examples of machines include carburetors, vacuum cleaners, and lawn mowers. A “manufactured article” refers basically to any product or thing made by industry or man. Examples of manufactured articles would be carpets, toothbrushes, and purses. A “composition” is matter formed by the mixture of two or more ingredients. Examples of compositions are drugs, insecticides, adhesives, and electroplating solutions. An “improvement” is an addition, simplification, or variation relating to an existing machine, process, manufactured article, or composition of matter.

Several Court decisions have provided further guidance on subject matter which is included in the categories of patentable subject matter. For example, the Courts have determined that both software and certain business methods are patentable. (*Diamond v. Diehr*, *In Re Alappat*, *State Street Bank and Trust v. Signature Financial Group, Inc.*)

The type of patent described thus far is known as a utility patent. The term of utility patents was changed after passage of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) as follows:

**1. For utility patents filed on or after June 8, 1995:**

Term of twenty years from the date of filing. However, see further details below.

## **2. Issued and enforceable patents which issued prior to June 8, 1995:**

The term of these patents is automatically modified to the longer of: (a) twenty years from the date of filing; or (b) seventeen years from the date of issue.

## **3. Patents issuing on or after June 8, 1995 from an application which was filed prior to June 8, 1995.**

The term of these patents is the longer of: (a) twenty years from the date of filing; or (b) seventeen years from the date of issue.

When calculating the twenty (20) year rule, if the application relies on an earlier filed application, then the earlier application's filing date is used.

As indicated above, a twenty-year term from the date of filing (or priority date if earlier) is the current term of recently filed U.S. patents. The American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 introduced an opportunity to increase the term based on administrative and other delays on the part of the U.S. Patent Office. Any increase in the term is offset by delays by the applicant to engage in reasonable efforts to conclude prosecution. This new provision applies to all applications filed after May 29, 2000. Note that you cannot have a negative adjustment to the term (e.g., you cannot reduce the term to less than 20 years under the provision).

Examples of delays by the applicant which will reduce any term extension are:

- failure to file a response to a U.S. Patent Office Action within (3) months;
- filing supplemental responses; and
- using specific types of certificates of mailing.

The list of delays is quite lengthy, but the common thread running through the delays is that responses to U.S. Patent Office inquiries must be made timely and thoroughly.

A second type of patent is known as a design patent, which is available for anyone who invents any new, original, and ornamental design for an article of manufacture. In other words, design patents cover only the specific appearance of the article, rather than the concept of the article itself. Patents for designs are granted for a term of 14 years. Examples of articles for which design patents have been obtained are lamps, vases, and furniture.

A new third type of patent application was introduced by the GATT based changes to the U.S. laws.

This third type of application, known as a "provisional application" is intended to provide a method for an applicant to gain an early U.S. filing date relatively inexpensively. For example, currently, the Patent Office filing fees for a provisional application are \$75 to \$150. The life of the provisional application is one year for the date of filing and is non-extendible. During this time period, the application is not examined. Also, the twenty (20) year term of any patent issuing from the application does not begin to run-unless a direct conversion to a utility patent is made. In other words, so long as a regular utility application is filed claiming priority to the provisional application, instead of filing a direct conversion application, then the twenty year term is not affected by the provisional application.

Like a regular utility application, the application must list inventors, provide drawings (if necessary for an understanding of the invention), and comply with disclosure and best mode requirements, among others. However, no claims are required in the provisional application.

If the applicant wishes to maintain the benefit of the provisional application, a regular application must be filed while the provisional application is pending (e.g., before the expiration of the one-year life). In addition to adding claims and complying with other matters, the regular application must also include at least one inventor who was listed as an inventor on the provisional application.

Although the pendency of the provisional application may not begin the twenty year term of a U.S. patent, the filing does commence the one-year Paris Convention priority period for filing foreign applications. Therefore, foreign filings must be filed by the first anniversary of the earliest provisional application. Because these are general rules, you should be sure and discuss the strategies, as well as the pros and cons, of filing a provisional application with your attorney before doing so.

## **PATENT APPLICATION COMPONENTS**

A patent application can only be filed with the Patent Office by the actual inventor or his or her representative. The basic elements of a patent application are as follows:

- A specification, including a claim or claims;
- An oath or declaration;
- Drawings, when necessary; and
- A filing fee.

A specification is a written description of the invention or discovery that must clearly and concisely describe the manner and process of making and using the invention. It must be specific enough to enable a person who is knowledgeable in the particular area to which the invention relates to make and use the invention. In addition, the specification must describe the invention in such a way as to distinguish it from other previously known inventions.

The specification must conclude with a claim or claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his or her invention or discovery. The claims legally define the patentable features of the invention. Each claim is a single sentence describing precisely what new, useful, and nonobvious features constitute the actual invention. The claims are the most important part of an application since the monopoly granted by a patent covers only the material appearing in the claims. An example of a claim for a type of billiard table having a novel cushion is as follows:

A playing table comprising: a playing surface and a raised marginal edge portion surrounding said surface, said raised marginal edge portion having a longitudinally extending recess therein, and a cushion consisting only of a base disposed in said recess and a downwardly accurately extending cantilevered lip integral with said base and extending away from substantially the top of said base.

The applicant is required to furnish a drawing of his or her invention when necessary for understanding the nature of the invention. In other words, if it is possible to draw the invention, a drawing must be included. As many drawings as are necessary to fully describe the invention are required.

An oath or declaration must be signed and filed with the application, stating that the named inventor is believed to be the original inventor of the invention which is claimed. The oath must also acknowledge the applicant's duty to disclose any information known to or later discovered by the inventor which is relevant to the examination of the application by the Patent Office.

The Patent Office also requires the submission of an Information Disclosure Statement by the applicant. An Information Disclosure Statement contains a listing of patent publications and other information of which the applicant is aware and which is relevant to the examination of his or her application. An applicant must submit this document in order to comply with the duty of candor and good faith toward the Patent Office. Failure to do so could later enable another party to invalidate the issued patent.

## **EXAMINATION OF THE PATENT APPLICATION BY THE PATENT OFFICE**

An application filed in the Patent and Trademark Office is assigned for examination to a group of patent Examiners having responsibility for the category of inventions to which the application relates. The Examiner is charged with making a thorough study of the application and all of the available public information pertaining to the subject matter of the claimed invention.

It is the Examiner's job to determine whether the invention is patentable as claimed, so the Examiner determines whether the invention is new, non-obvious, and useful. In addition, the Examiner determines whether the application complies with certain formalities and various other statutory requirements. After the initial examination is completed, the applicant is notified of the Examiner's decision in a communication known as an "Office Action". The Examiner may allow claims, reject claims, object to formal matters, or any combination thereof.

If an Examiner allows a claim, it means that he or she believes the claim is patentable and that a patent should be issued incorporating that claim. If the invention is not considered patentable, or not considered patentable as claimed, the claims will be rejected, and the Examiner will give reasons and cite references to explain the decision.

Examiners sometimes issue an objection, which is a refusal to allow a claim because its form is improper or because some other part of the application is defective. An objection, as opposed to a rejection, is usually easily overcome.

As stated earlier, the Examiner will inform the applicant of the reasons for any adverse action taken on the application. He or she will also provide the applicant with any information or references on which the decision is based. If the Examiner's action is adverse in any respect, and the applicant wishes to persist in the application for a patent, the applicant must reply to the Examiner's comments and request reconsideration. In particular, the reply must specifically point out the supposed errors in the Examiner's action and respond to every ground of objection and rejection. The applicant may choose instead to amend the application and state how his or her amendments avoid the references or objections raised by the Examiner. After a response is filed by the applicant, the application will be

reconsidered, and the applicant will then be notified of the Examiner's decision in the same manner as was done after the first examination. On the second or any later examination or reconsideration, the rejection or other action may be made "final." The applicant's response is then limited to an appeal to the Patent Office Board of Appeals (in the case of the rejection of any claim), a petition filed with the Commissioner of the Patent and Trademark Office (in the case of objections or requirements not involving the rejection of any claim), or a continuing application (discussed below).

### **THE EXAMINER'S INCENTIVES**

The Patent Office evaluates its patent Examiners primarily according to the number of applications they process. Examiners, therefore, have no incentive to spend very much time on any one application, as it is to their benefit to process applications as quickly as possible.

The Examiner typically does not take the time to read and study an application at length. An Examiner usually does a quick search to discover all of the relevant patents and other public information pertaining to the claims in an application. The Examiner then typically sends the applicant a letter (Office Action) rejecting the claims as being obvious in view of the material he or she has discovered during his or her search. The applicant must then respond by carefully explaining and distinguishing each cited reference, thereby demonstrating to the Examiner that a patent should be issued. This routine saves the Examiner time since the applicant has spent his or her own time figuring out why the references cited by the Examiner are not particularly relevant — instead of the Examiner taking the time to do so. Thus, claims that are originally rejected by an Examiner may be frequently later allowed after the Examiner has had the opportunity to read the applicant's response distinguishing the invention from the cited references.

### **THE EXAMINER'S EXPERTISE**

Patent Examiners all possess some type of technical training, and a particular category of inventions is assigned to each examiner. Some categories are very narrow, and one Examiner, for example, may only handle applications based on the manufacture of electronic circuit boards. Such an Examiner will thus acquire a great deal of expertise on the subject of such circuit boards.

However, some Examiners are assigned a broad category of inventions to examine. This is simply due to the fact that the inventions can only be divided up into so many categories. Hence, it is very likely that such an Examiner will be dealing at times with inventions with which he or she is not very familiar. Thus, part of the application process may necessarily include educating the Examiner as to the particular problems or advantages addressed by the invention to which the application relates.

## **OPTIONS AVAILABLE AFTER RECEIVING A FINAL REJECTION**

### **Continuing Application**

A continuing application is basically an original patent application that is refiled. The second application is entitled to the benefit of the filing date of the first application, and must be filed as a separate application before termination of proceedings on the prior application. Thus, after an applicant has received a final rejection, but before the examination proceedings have been terminated, an applicant can file a continuing application and start the examination process all over again. A continuing application is appropriate where the original application contained patentable subject matter but did not clearly identify or distinguish it from prior inventions. This procedure can be continued over several or more continuations, but it does involve the payment of additional fees by the applicant. The filing of a number of continuations may also significantly shorten the ultimate enforceable term of a resulting patent.

A more streamlined continuation application is also available. This type of application is known as a Request For Continued Examination (“RCE”). While the fees are similar to a regular continuation application, the advantage is that an RCE application retains its place in the Examiner’s queue and is examined again more rapidly. However, in order to file this type of continuing application, the Applicant must respond to each of the Examiner’s objections and rejections raised in the original application.

### **Continuation-in-Part**

A continuation-in-part is an application filed during the lifetime of an earlier application by the same applicant, repeating some substantial portion or all of the earlier application and adding matter not disclosed in the earlier case. The continuation-in-part application is entitled to the benefit of the filing date of the earlier application as to the common subject matter. A continuation-inpart application is appropriate when a patentable improvement of the original invention is developed after the original application is filed.

### **Board of Appeals**

After the claims in an application have been rejected twice, or after a final rejection has been received, an applicant may, upon the payment of a fee, appeal the decision of the Examiner to the Patent Office Board of Appeals. Such an appeal is appropriate when the applicant feels that the Examiner’s rejection is clearly incorrect.

### **Federal Court**

Any applicant dissatisfied with the decision of the Board of Patent Appeals may appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. This is an unusual and expensive procedure that can only be justified for inventions having substantial commercial potential.



## **PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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### **IDENTICAL INVENTIONS DEVELOPED BY TWO SEPARATE INVENTORS**

An “interference” is a proceeding instituted in the Patent and Trademark Office when two or more inventors are claiming the same patentable invention. An interference may be declared between two or more pending applications, or between one or more pending applications and one or more unexpired patents. In the United States, the first party to invent, not the first party to file an application, is entitled to receive the patent for the invention. Thus, although there is a presumption that inventions are made in the order of their respective filing dates, it is possible for a person with a later filing date to show that he or she was the first party to invent.

In an interference proceeding each party must submit evidence to the Patent Office to prove his or her actual date of invention. The Patent Office will then determine which party was the first to invent. In making this determination, the Patent Office will consider the following factors: the date on which each inventor mentally conceived the invention, whether the inventors were diligent in reducing their inventions to practice, and the date on which each inventor actually reduced the invention to practice.

This is another area of U.S. law that was amended after GATT.

As noted above, the United States patent system is based on a “first to invent” standard, while most other countries award patents based on “first to file.” Previously, U.S. patent law provided that activities which occurred outside of the United States could not be relied upon to prove a date of invention. Most often this worked to the detriment of foreign applicants because they were severely limited on the activities which they could use to prove a date of invention. However, after the effective dates of this portion of the GATT (and NAFTA) legislation, applicants can rely on activities which occur in World Trade Organization countries after January 1, 1996 to prove dates of inventorship. For NAFTA countries, activities after December 8, 1993 in NAFTA countries can be relied upon. These changes are not retroactive, but instead apply only to applications filed after the above dates.

### **ONE YEAR GRACE PERIOD**

An inventor has a grace period of one year (in the United States) in which to file a patent application. During that one year period, an inventor may place his or her invention in public use or on sale without losing his or her right to apply for U.S. patent protection.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All U.S. applications filed after November 29, 2000, will be published at eighteen (18) months from the filing date (or priority date if earlier). Because of this rule, applications now filed are being held to higher standard with regard to format, completeness, and legibility. One benefit of the publication rule is that the applicant will have “provisional rights” with regard to the published claims. This means that if the claims which eventually issue in the patent are “substantially

identical” to those published, then additional damages may possibly be obtained against certain types of infringers for the time period between publication and issuance.

The main reason for not wanting to publish the application is that the invention will be disclosed and so cannot be maintained as a trade secret.

After publication, the entire contents of the application, other papers and responses filed by the Applicant, and Office Actions by the Examiner will be made available to third parties. Also, third parties can then submit patents and other materials which they believe are relevant to the patentability of the application. While this latter issue sounds ominous, in fact it may be beneficial to the applicant since any resulting patent will be stronger having been issued over additional closely related patents and materials.

For unpublished applications, no information concerning the application is given to anyone without the permission of the applicant except in special limited circumstances. If the applicant decides at some point not to continue the attempt to obtain a patent, the contents of the application will forever be kept in confidence by the Patent Office. It is only after a patent is actually issued that the information contained in the application is made public.

For cases filed after November 29, 2000, there is still an opportunity to avoid publication. This requires certification by the applicant that the U.S. Application will not be foreign filed. An applicant can change his or her mind, and file corresponding foreign applications, but the U.S. Patent Office must immediately be advised of this change. If the U.S. Patent Office is not advised within the prescribed time, the Application will be considered abandoned.

## **EXPERIMENTAL USE**

A patent will be denied if an invention was in public use or on sale more than one year prior to the date of application. However, there is an exception to this rule known as “experimental use.” The “experimental use” exception permits some public use of the product by an inventor in order to enable him or her to perfect the invention before applying for a patent. The exception does not apply to situations where the use or sale of the device is mainly for profit and commercial purposes and the experimentation is merely incidental. For example, market acceptance testing is not considered to be an experimental use.

Any public experimentation should be no more extensive than reasonably necessary for the perfection of the invention. It is up to the Examiner to determine whether the scope and length of the experimental activity is reasonable in terms of the intended purpose of the tests and the nature of the subject matter involved.

## **PATENT PENDING**

The words “patent pending” can be placed on an invention once the inventor has filed a patent application. After a patent issues, the patent number should be placed on the invention. Failure to mark the product with the patent number can lead to reduced damages when enforcing the patent. Accordingly, marking is strongly encouraged.

In some ways, the words “patent pending” can be a more powerful deterrent to a competitor than the actual patent which later issues.

When a competitor sees the words “patent pending” on a product, it has no idea what feature or features of the invention are being claimed in the pending patent application. Suppose for example, that the applicant places the words “patent pending” on a vacuum cleaner. The patent application may contain claims directed to a certain type of switch mechanism. However, a competitor would have no way of knowing this until the application publishes or the application issues as a patent in the case of a non-published application. The competitor might think that the applicant’s invention relates to the brush mechanism, the type of motor, or the hose assembly, and therefore, avoid copying any of these features.

Once the application publishes or the patent issues, however, the competitor will be able to obtain a copy of the application or patent almost immediately. It can then determine exactly what the inventor has claimed as the invention. Once the competitor discovers that the application or patent applies only to the switch mechanism, for example, the competitor can freely copy the other features of the vacuum cleaner without worrying about possible infringement. Keep in mind that an inventor cannot prevent “infringement” of his or her invention until a patent issues.

However, note that the provisional rights described above may apply in this situation under the new laws — thereby increasing the risk to the competitor.

## **COST TO OBTAIN PATENT PROTECTION**

The expenses associated with obtaining patent protection fall into two general categories: patent attorney fees and government fees, both of which are discussed below.

### **Patent Attorney Fees**

Patent attorney fees include the cost of (i) drafting the patent application, (ii) completing the necessary formal documents, and (iii) drafting responses to the Examiner’s Office Actions issued during the examination of the application. The cost of drafting a patent application, including completion of the attendant documents, is highly dependent upon the complexity of the invention, but typically runs between about \$6,000 and \$15,000. The cost of drafting a response to an Examiner’s Office Action depends upon the complexity of the Action but typically runs between about \$1,500 and \$3,000. The patent application may be allowed on the first Office Action which would, of course, eliminate the cost of drafting a response. Patent attorneys typically work on an hourly fee basis. Very few are willing to work for a fee contingent upon profits to be derived from the patented invention. Further, patent attorneys typically require the prepayment of a substantial portion of the application costs. Patent attorney fees can be eliminated completely if the applicant drafts and prosecutes the patent application himself or herself. The Patent and Trademark Office does allow an applicant to file and prosecute his or her own patent application, and various publications are available to assist those wishing to file their own application.

## **Government Fees**

At the time of printing this edition, the government fees include (i) a basic filing fee of \$300, a search fee of \$500 and an examination fee of \$200, (ii) an issue fee of \$1,400 (and a publication fee of \$300), and (iii) periodic maintenance fees which start at \$900, and later escalate to \$2,300 and finally to \$3,800. Government fees may be reduced by one-half if the applicant qualifies as a “small entity” which is defined as (i) an individual, (ii) a business with 500 or fewer full-time, part-time and temporary employees (weighted average), or (iii) a qualifying non-profit organization or institution. Whether the invention is licensed to an entity that would not qualify as a “small entity” is also considered in the determination of the appropriate fees to pay.

The basic filing fee is due and payable upon filing of the patent application. Several controllable factors such as the existence of more than 20 claims, the existence of more than 3 independent claims, the late filing of necessary attendant documents, etc., may increase the basic filing fee. The issue fee is due and payable when and if the Examiner allows the application. The maintenance fees are due and payable 3-1/2 years after issuance (\$900), 7-1/2 years after issuance (\$2,300), and 11-1/2 years after issuance (\$3,800). Failure to pay any of the government fees when due can result in abandonment of the application and/or patent.

There is also a publication fee that must be paid. Although, this fee is due only if the patent issues.

In summary, the total cost of filing and prosecuting a patent application typically runs between \$7,500 and \$18,000, and must be expended without any guarantee of success.

## **ENFORCEMENT OF PATENT RIGHTS**

A patent entitles the patent owner to prevent others from making, using or selling the patented invention within the United States for the term of the patent. While others may make the patented invention outside of the United States, they are not permitted to sell or use the patented invention within the United States. Similarly, others are not allowed to make the invention in the United States for use or sale outside of the United States.

By bringing a court action against an infringer, the patent owner may seek both an injunction against the infringer, and the recovery of monetary damages. The scope of the injunction, as well as damages will be determined on a case by case basis and should be adequate to compensate the patent owner for the acts of infringement. In no event should the damages be less than a reasonable royalty for the use made of the invention by the infringer.

An alternative to bringing an action against an infringer is to offer the infringer a license to make the patented invention. Such a license may include an initial base payment, as well as a royalty for each unit of the patented invention that the licensee would make, use or sell.

A patent may have method, apparatus or product claims, or a combination of all three. If the patent includes apparatus or product claims, other persons will be prevented from making, using or selling the specific product or apparatus. If method claims are granted, others will be prevented from using the same method, but would not be prevented from making the same end product by a different method.

The United States Patent and Trademark Office is responsible for examining and issuing patents to eligible inventors. For all practical purposes the role of the Patent Office ceases upon issuance of the patent. The Patent Office does not monitor commercial transactions for the presence of potential infringement, nor does it enforce patent rights against potential infringers once their presence is made known. It is the duty of the owners of the patent to protect their patent rights at their own expense. Moreover, the Patent Office does not guarantee the validity of a patent. A patent may be found by a court to be invalid and hence unenforceable at any time during its lifetime.

The financial cost of enforcing a patent against a potential infringer is highly dependent upon the complexity of the case, but legal expenses alone can easily reach \$30,000-\$70,000 and often reach hundreds of thousands of dollars. Very few attorneys are willing to litigate such cases for a fee contingent upon winning the case. It is of course possible to recoup part or all of the legal costs should the patentee win, but this prospect is never certain in advance of the court action.

It is possible to avoid the costs associated with litigation by arbitrating an infringement dispute, but arbitration requires both parties (i.e., the patentee and the potential infringer) to agree to arbitrate. Generally speaking, the chance of getting such an agreement is poor.

Patent protection offered by a valid United States patent extends only to the making, using and selling of the patented invention in the United States. A third party may make, use or sell the patented invention in any other country without infringing the U.S. patent. To obtain patent protection in foreign countries it is necessary to file a patent application in each of the countries where protection is desired. Each of these countries has its own set of rules and regulations which must be followed. Should the inventor contemplate obtaining foreign protection he should seek help from a patent attorney before disclosing, selling or attempting to sell the invention anywhere, including the United States.

### **A PATENT IS NOT A GUARANTEE THAT THE PATENTED INVENTION DOES NOT INFRINGE OTHER PATENTS**

The issues of patentability and infringement are entirely separate. A patent granted by the U.S. Patent Office confers upon the owner the exclusive right to exclude others from “making, using, and selling” the patented invention. The issuance of the patent does not confer upon the owner the right to make, use, and sell the patented invention. One reason for this distinction is that the patented invention may be an improvement over a prior, valid patented invention. In that case, making, using, and selling the improvement is subject to the prior patent. For example, assume that a first inventor develops a fixed blade knife (e.g., a knife having a handle and a blade). The first inventor applies for and obtains a patent. Later, during the term of the patent, a second inventor develops a pocketknife that is identical in every way to the fixed blade knife — with the exception that the blade rotates and folds into the handle. On these facts, it is possible that the first inventor’s patent may be broad enough to cover the second inventor’s pocketknife. This is true regardless of whether the second inventor applies for and/or receives a patent from the U.S. Patent Office. The question of whether a license is required is based on the claim language of the first inventor’s patent — not the patent status of the second inventor’s invention.

## **TIME REQUIRED TO OBTAIN PATENT PROTECTION**

On average, it takes between one to four years from the filing date of a patent application to obtain an issued patent. Some patent applications remain pending for decades. However, the U.S. Patent Office has set a three (3) year period as its maximum target for reviewing a patent application (not counting continuation applications or other specified events). If the time period exceeds three years, then the patent term extension discussed above would be applicable. The applicant can also control to some extent the speed with which the application is processed by filing a very complete application and responding quickly to the Examiner's Office Actions. The number of Office Actions issued will usually be limited to two, because the Examiner will denote the second Office Action as a final action. The applicant will then be required to either (i) prepare the application for issuance of any allowed subject matter, (ii) appeal the case to the Patent and Trademark Board of Appeals, or (iii) file a continuing application starting the examination and response process over again. At any time beginning with the first Office Action, the Examiner may find allowable subject matter and allow the application. The applicant may abandon the application at any time, even after allowance.

## **FINDING SOMEONE TO MANUFACTURE AND DISTRIBUTE YOUR INVENTION**

Minnesota Statute 325A.04 requires invention marketing services soliciting businesses in Minnesota to disclose how many individuals who have come to that service for help have made money on the invention after contracting for the service. This number is usually quite small, such as 1 out of 500 or 1,000 people. If the service refuses to provide you with this information or such information seems to be too good to be true, be skeptical and demand proof of their claims.

Among other states, California has a related provision (California Business and Professional Code 22370) which prohibits the activities of most typical invention marketing organizations.

The services typically offered by invention marketing services include patentability searches, patent application drafting and prosecution, direct mailings to businesses that might be interested in selling your invention, review of trade directories and census documents to determine the potential market for your invention, presenting a written description of your invention at trade shows, and furnishing their client with the names of potential manufacturers. Generally, patentability searches and patent applications prepared by the services tend to be of good quality. However, the value of the other services offered is questionable. It is strongly recommended that an inventor contemplating using such services carefully review what he or she is getting for his or her investment, as well as the usefulness of the information and services received.

A better alternative to employing invention marketing services (and, in many cases, to immediately filing a patent application) is for the inventor to utilize the money that would have been spent on those services to directly contact and meet with potential marketers of the invention. In practice, this is the most successful strategy for independent inventors with limited financial resources.

A patent may bring economic benefit to the patent owner by the outright sale of the patent, licensing the patent to others, or by commercially exploiting the patented invention itself. In order for the independent inventor to attempt either the sale or licensing of the patent, he or she must first identify the potential buyers/licensees. Once a potential buyer is located, one must then

place a value on the patent. If the product covered by the patent has not yet been commercially produced, it may be quite difficult to determine accurately the value of the patent. Therefore, the patent owner may wish to license the patent and obtain a royalty on the future commercial exploitation of the patent. The specific terms of each individual license would have to be negotiated with the licensee. A typical license agreement might include a lump sum payment to be made immediately upon the licensing of the patent, as well as a royalty to be paid for each patented product produced. A license may be exclusive, granting all the patent rights to a single licensee. Alternatively, a license may be nonexclusive, so that the patent owner may license several different licensees. The length of the license can be for any term agreeable between the parties, not to exceed the life of the patent.

## **SUMMARY**

A patent, as previously indicated, gives one the exclusive right to prevent others from making, using or selling the patented invention. In essence, it is a government created monopoly that allows only the patent owner to make, use or sell the patented invention, subject to any other existing patents.

The life of a granted U.S. utility patent filed on or after June 8, 1995 is 20 years from the date of filing. In other words, third parties would not be able to begin making, using or selling the patented invention until after the 20 year period expired. Thus, the patent owner would have a number of years to establish a market share as the sole supplier of the patented invention.

## **TRADEMARK PROTECTION**

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A trademark is a word, name, symbol or device used by a manufacturer or merchant to identify his or her goods and distinguish them from others. A service mark is a word, name, symbol or device used by one offering a service in order to identify his or her service and distinguish it from others. Therefore, trademarks and service marks act as a source of origin of goods and services, as well as indicating the quality. For purposes of the following discussion, the word "trademark" will be used to refer to both trademarks and service marks. Trade names identify business entities and will not be discussed.

Federal or state registration does not create a trademark. Trademark rights can only be acquired by actually using the trademark in association with particular goods or services. However, as of November 16, 1989, a trademark can be "reserved" prior to actual use by filing a federal trademark application based upon an intent to use the trademark.

For most practical purposes, state registration of a trademark is meaningless. Since this area of law is controlled primarily by federal statute (the Lanham Act), existing state laws do not provide comprehensive trademark protection, if they provide any protection at all. Federal registration of a trademark, on the other hand, gives the registrant substantial procedural advantages if the trademark owner should ever be faced with the task of stopping a potential infringer. Filing an application for federal registration of a trademark typically costs approximately \$500 to \$1,000 if the services of an attorney are used. An individual may apply for federal trademark registration directly to the United States Patent and Trademark Office without using an attorney. The

government fee for filing a trademark application is currently \$335 per class of goods and services.

In order to obtain federal registration of a trademark, the mark must first be used in commerce. Use of the mark must be substantially continuous if rights in the mark are to be preserved, even after registration is obtained. Federal registration cannot be obtained until the trademark has actually been used on the goods and services in interstate commerce. Proper trademark use requires that the mark be placed on the goods directly, or their containers, or displays associated with the goods, or tags or labels that are affixed to the goods. If the mark is used in association with services, the mark must be used or displayed in association with the sale or advertising of the service.

As long as a trademark is being used properly, the trademark rights will last indefinitely, and any federal registration of the trademark may be renewed indefinitely. Proper use of a trademark requires that it always be used as an adjective, and never as a noun. For example, the word “zipper” was once a registered trademark and denoted a particular type of fastener. Proper use of that trademark would have been to always refer to the fastener as the “zipper fastener” and never simply as a “zipper.” Since this trademark was used improperly as a noun referring to the fastener itself, the word “zipper” lost its trademark status and simply became the “generic” word identifying a product, thereby giving anyone the right to use the word “zipper.”

Once a trademark has been federally registered, it should be identified either with the word “registered” or with the symbol ®. An unregistered trademark should be identified with the letters ™ placed in close association with the word or symbol which comprises the mark.

### **“RESERVATION” OF A TRADEMARK**

As of November 16, 1989, trademark applicants also have the option of “reserving” a trademark, without actually having used the mark in commerce, by filing for federal application of trademark. The applicant can apply based upon a good faith intention to use the proposed mark in commerce within a reasonable period of time. However, use of the trademark in an actual business context is required before a mark can be federally registered. Whether filing based on actual use or proposed use of a trademark, it is advantageous to file an application as quickly as possible.

### **TRADEMARK SELECTION**

The selection of a trademark can be very important in terms of the trademark owner’s ability to obtain registration and prevent others from using the mark. Trademarks can generally be classified into four basic categories: (i) generic, (ii) descriptive, (iii) suggestive, and (iv) arbitrary. A generic trademark is really not a trademark at all. An example of a generic trademark is the word “zipper,” discussed earlier, which has lost its trademark significance and has come to be used by everyone speaking the English language to describe not the brand of a product, but rather the whole class of products. Thus, when choosing a trademark, it would be improper to choose a word which is defined in a dictionary to mean the type of product on which the trademark is used. In other words, if you develop a type of motor vehicle, don’t choose a trademark such as “car” or “automobile” and expect to be able to prevent others from using your “trademark.”



Descriptive trademarks are also usually poor choices if you intend to be able to prevent others from using an identical trademark. A mark is descriptive if it simply tells the public what the product is. For example, if your product is a telephone which may be used in an automobile, the trademark "car phone" would be considered descriptive, since it merely describes what you are selling. Similarly, a trademark such as "Minnesota Mineral Water" would be considered geographically descriptive. since any product coming from the state of Minnesota may be identified with the prefix Minnesota. There is generally no way that a person could prevent others who make a similar product in Minnesota from so identifying their product.

This is not to say that either generic or descriptive words cannot be used as trademarks, but rather, no exclusive trademark rights will be created. If one merely wishes to describe what it is they are selling, and is not particularly interested in uniquely identifying themselves as the source of that product, the generic and descriptive trademarks would be perfectly acceptable. Additionally, the strength of descriptive trademarks may be enhanced by establishing "secondary meaning," which indicates consumer awareness of the trademark as an indication of source. The term "secondary meaning" simply means that a trademark is made up of a word that might be interpreted as merely descriptive, but because it has been used as a trademark for such a long time by a particular manufacturer, the public has come to associate that particular mark with the manufacturer in spite of its descriptive quality. An example of such a mark would be "Kentucky Fried Chicken®" which has come to signify chicken from a certain franchising organization, rather than as descriptive of all fried chicken originating in Kentucky. Since this particular trademark has acquired "secondary meaning" through use in the marketplace, other distributors of fried chicken, even if they are actually located in Kentucky, may not use this trademark which is, at first glance, merely a descriptive phrase.

Suggestive trademarks are stronger trademarks, especially if they hint at some quality of the product without actually telling exactly what the product is. For example, the trademark "hercules" might be a suitable trademark for a variety of goods since it conveys or suggests an image of durability and strength, but does not indicate what the product is that is being offered.

Arbitrary or fanciful trademarks are the best choice from a legal protection view point. These are words that have absolutely no meaning in the English language prior to their adoption by a particular manufacturer for use with their goods or services. These marks instantly become identified with the particular manufacturer and the exclusive right to use the mark is easily asserted against potential infringers. An example of an arbitrary or fanciful trademark is the trademark "KODAK®" for cameras.

The entire purpose of a trademark is to serve as a unique indicator of the origin of a product or service. Thus, members of the public will come to associate a particular trademark with a particular manufacturer of a product and will ask for the product by that particular name, thus giving the trademark great commercial importance. Therefore, when choosing a trademark, one should try to select a name that will lend itself to the task of serving as a unique identifier of a particular manufacturer in a competitive marketplace.

## **THE FEDERAL TRADEMARK REGISTRATION PROCESS**

The registration of a trademark is not a mere formality. The applicant must first have used the trademark in association with goods or services in interstate commerce. The application process involves filing with the United States Patent and Trademark Office a fee, specimens of the trademark as it is actually used, and various required statements outlining when the mark was first used and the types of goods and services on which the mark is used.

Trademarks are categorized for registration purposes into several different classes, such as, for example, cosmetics, toys, or clothing. If a trademark is to be registered in more than one class, that is, it is used on both toys and clothing, then a separate registration fee must be paid for each class in which registration is sought.

Once the application is filed, the application is examined by Trademark Office personnel referred to as Trademark Examining Attorneys. The examination process is designed to determine if any other trademark is federally registered for similar goods and services which may be “confusingly similar” to the trademark in the application. One must keep in mind that trademark infringement may occur even if an identical mark is not being used. The legal standard states that a trademark is infringing if it is “confusingly similar” to an existing trademark used on similar goods and services, and so the Trademark Office bases all of its examinations on this particular standard.

If a Trademark Examining Attorney determines that the trademark is not confusingly similar to an already registered mark, the mark is “published” in a government magazine called the Official Gazette. This official publication gives members of the public an opportunity to “oppose” the registration of the mark if they feel that it is confusingly similar to some trademark that they are using, even if their mark is not already federally registered. After a waiting period of thirty days has elapsed, the trademark is granted federal registration (unless the mark was “reserved”, which would then require that a statement be filed that the trademark has actually been used). The trademark registration may still be canceled at a later time if it is not used properly, or if a prior user of the mark discovers only after the registration is granted that someone else is using its trademark. Commercial use is required to maintain a registration. A trademark registration issued after November 16, 1989 is good for an initial term of ten (10) years. If the mark is still in use in connection with the goods and/or services with which it is registered, then the registration can be renewed for additional ten year terms.

An important point to remember in selecting and using a trademark is that the adoption of a new trademark can entail a substantial expenditure of money. Therefore, prior to adopting and using a mark, it is usually a good idea to perform a “trademark search” to determine if a similar mark is being used anywhere in the country. Various organizations are available which can perform a professional trademark search, the cost typically being between \$400 and \$1,000. If the results of the trademark search are positive, use of the mark should begin immediately, including interstate use, so that the trademark can be registered federally.

## **TRADEMARK INFRINGEMENT**

A trademark can be infringed even if the infringer is not using an identical mark. Trademark infringement occurs when another trademark is confusingly similar to the original trademark. Whether the two trademarks are confusingly similar depends on a number of factors, including:

- The existence of actual confusion in the marketplace between the trademarks;
- Similarity of the appearance, sound and meaning of the trademarks;
- Similarity of the goods and services being identified by the trademarks;
- The degree of secondary meaning acquired by the trademarks;
- The sophistication of the consumers who buy the particular products or services;
- The similarity of the channels of distribution of the products or services (that is, are they both sold in the same types of stores);
- The degree of commercial competition between the two trademark users; and
- The distinctiveness of the trademarks (that is, are they somewhat descriptive or are they arbitrary and fanciful).

Since trademark rights are created by use of the trademark, one's rights in the trademark prior to federal registration or reservation are limited to those areas of the country where the mark has actually been used. Thus, in the absence of federal registration or reservation, it is perfectly permissible for two organizations to use identical marks on identical goods if each of them occupies mutually exclusive geographic market areas.

As with patents, the United States Patent and Trademark Office has no program for monitoring for the potential infringement of registered marks, and will not enforce trademark rights on behalf of the owner of a federally registered trademark. Once a trademark owner determines that someone else is potentially infringing his or her trademark, the trademark owner must bear the expense of remedying the situation. Frequently, a simple letter to the infringer requesting that they cease use of the mark is sufficient. However, if the infringing party is not cooperative, the controversy is likely to end up in a federal court with all of its attendant legal expense. The commercial value of the trademark must necessarily be fairly substantial to justify the expense involved in conducting a full scale trademark infringement suit in federal court. Again, it must be emphasized that a descriptive trademark, even one having substantial secondary meaning, is much more likely to be successfully infringed than arbitrary or fanciful trademarks. Also, an arbitrary or fanciful trademark is likely to be much less expensive to defend in any legal battle, since its ownership will be more readily apparent to a court deciding the issue of infringement.

In addition to preventing others from using a confusingly similar mark within the United States, the owner of a registered trademark may also utilize the United States Customs Service for preventing products bearing confusingly similar trademarks from being imported into the United States.

## **SUMMARY**

The owner of a trademark may prevent others from using a mark which is confusingly similar to the owner's mark. To determine whether or not another mark is confusingly similar, it is necessary to look at the sound, appearance and meaning of the trademark as well as the goods/services for which the mark is used. A trademark can be quite valuable in that it identifies the products/services carrying the mark as originating from a certain source. The public will begin to recognize a trademark as standing for a certain level of quality and may very well build an allegiance towards purchasing those products/services in the future.

## COPYRIGHT PROTECTION

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A third type of intellectual property is the copyright. A copyright protects literary and artistic “expression” as well as other types of informative media that derive their value from the particular manner in which the information is expressed. Books, musical works, plays, computer programs, paintings, sculptures, and movies are among the types of works which are eligible for copyright protection. Generally, any work which is fixed and which includes an artistic or expressive component can be the subject of a copyright.

A copyright generally protects only a work’s appearance or “expression”. Copyrights are different and separate from patents and trademarks. You cannot copyright an invention; you patent an invention. You cannot copyright the name of a product; but you can establish trademark rights in a product name. However, you cannot patent or trademark a book, which is the particular expression of an idea, and is protectable only by copyright.

A copyright arises in a work if at least a portion of the work is original (not copied from something else) and the work includes some literary or artistic expression. Copyright only protects particular expressions of ideas, not the ideas themselves. For example, although a copyright exists in a particular painting of a lighthouse, the copyright only protects that particular painting and does not prevent others from painting the lighthouse. Painting the lighthouse is the “idea” and is not protectable; the particular painting of the lighthouse is an “expression” of the idea, and is protectable.

A copyright automatically attaches to a work at the time it is written down or otherwise fixed or recorded. There is no need to sell a copy of the work (as in the case of trademarks). Nor is it necessary that the work be registered with the federal government (as in the case of patents).

In order to best preserve the copyright in a work, all publicly distributed copies of the work should have a copyright notice affixed to them. The notice should include the familiar © symbol (or the word “copyright” or “copr.”), the year of first publication, and the name of the owner of the copyright. Thus, a sufficient copyright notice might be: © 1996 Norman Smith. As of March 1, 1989, the copyright notice is no longer a legal requirement, but it is still recommended. Within three months after publication, two copies of the best edition of a work should be deposited in the Copyright Office.

In addition, the copyright in a work can be registered with the Federal Government at any point during the life of the copyright. One copy (if the work is unpublished) or two copies (if the work is published) of the work, along with a completed registration form and a \$30 fee are submitted to the Copyright Office. Typically, the Copyright Office will process the registration within a few months after receiving the application. The copy or copies which are submitted with the registration application fulfill the deposit requirement mentioned above.

Since registration with the copyright office is not required, failure to register will not invalidate a copyright. However, registration is highly recommended for a variety of reasons, including a presumption of validity. Also, if infringing activities occur after registration of the work, then statutory damages and attorneys fees may be available. Registration is inexpensive (\$30) and maybe easily performed by the individual without consulting an attorney.

The owner of a copyrighted work has the exclusive right to do and to authorize any of the following:

- Copying of the work;
- Adaptation of the work (e.g., making a movie based on a copyrighted book);
- Distribution of copies of the work to the public, by sale, rental or otherwise;
- Public performance of the work; and
- Public display of the work.

There are many limitations to the exclusive rights listed above. Two of the most common are the “fair use” and “first sale” limitations. Also, in contrast to a trademark, a copyright only has a limited lifetime.

### **FAIR USE**

Other people can use (copy, perform, display, etc.) a copyrighted work for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, or research without infringing the copyright. Fair use is determined on a case-by-case basis. Whether a use is indeed a “fair use” depends largely on the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

### **FIRST SALE**

The owner of a lawful copy of a copyrighted work can sell, rent or otherwise dispose of that copy. Some exceptions to this rule are limitations on the rental and/or leasing of sound recordings and computer software.

### **DURATION**

Generally, a copyright lasts for the author’s lifetime plus 70 years for those works which were created after January 1, 1978. Thus, a copyright lasts considerably longer than a patent (20 years from the filing date for a utility patent) but not as long as a trademark, which can theoretically last forever. In the case of a “work for hire” e.g., a work created for a company by an employee the term is 95 years from the date of publication.

Over the years a number of amendments and extensions have been made to copyright terms. Accordingly for works created prior to 1978, an attorney familiar with the myriad of rules should be consulted.

### **SUMMARY**

According to statute, the owner of a copyright has the exclusive right to do any of the following:

- To reproduce the copyrighted work in copies or in phonorecords;
- To prepare derivative works based upon the copyrighted work;
- To distribute copies or phonorecords of the copyrighted work to the public by sale or transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease, or lending;
- In the case of literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, motion pictures and other audio visual works, to perform the copyrighted work publicly; and
- In the case of literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, pictorial, graphic, or sculptural works, including the individual images of a motion picture or other audio visual work, to display the copyrighted work publicly.

With the exceptions noted above, anyone who violates any of the exclusive rights of the copyright owner is an infringer. Remedies for infringement include injunctions, impounding and disposition of infringing articles, damages and profits, costs and attorneys fees. Further, importation of infringing copies may be prevented.

## **TRADE SECRET PROTECTION**

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A trade secret is any formula, pattern, device, process, tool, mechanism, or compound of peculiar value to its owner (and his or her employees) which is not protected by a patent and is not known or accessible to others. Trade secret protection is governed exclusively by state law, but for all practical purposes, every state makes theft or unauthorized dissemination of a trade secret an unlawful act.

The requirements for trade secret protection are that the trade secret must not generally be known, its owner must gain an economic advantage from the trade secret, and its owner must take steps to preserve the confidential nature of the trade secret.

One of the major benefits of a trade secret is that there is no limitation as to length of time that the trade secret may be kept confidential. With a patent, the patent owner only has exclusive rights for the period of time after the patent issues until 20 years from the filing date of the application for patent, and there may be problems with policing one's patent rights. With a trade secret, as long as it is kept confidential, it will benefit only the owner of the trade secret. One good example of a trade secret is the formula for Coca-Cola®.

The courts will protect trade secrets if they are truly secret, substantial, and valuable. This type of protection is appropriate only for products or processes that cannot be discovered by any sort of "reverse engineering." In other words, the secret must still be undiscoverable even after the product is placed in the hands of the ultimate consumer and subjected to a thorough analysis.

This ability of others to reverse engineer trade secrets points out the main disadvantage of trade secret protection compared to patent protection. For example, if an invention is patented, even if others reverse engineer the product or obtain a copy of the patent, the patent gives the rights to exclude others from making, using and selling the patented invention. On the other hand, in the case of the trade secret protect, others may freely attempt to discover a trade secret by reverse engineering the invention.

## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONCERNING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

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1. What is the difference between a design patent and a utility patent?

A utility patent covers the concept or idea behind a device or process, whereas a design patent protects only the appearance of the article. After issuance, a utility patent has a term of 20 years from the date of filing. A design patent is good for 14 years. A design patent application consists primarily of a drawing, whereas a utility patent application includes drawings accompanied by a detailed text and carefully written claims.

2. What are the three requirements for patentability?

The invention must be new, useful and non-obvious. Most patent applications are rejected on the ground that the invention would have been obvious to an imaginary person skilled in that particular area of technology who is aware of all printed material and patents that have ever been published relating to that particular field.

3. If I develop a new idea, must I apply for a patent before I begin selling my product?

No. Although sales or other public disclosures of your invention prior to filing a U.S. patent application can cause the loss of foreign patent rights, you may file a U.S. patent application within a year of your first sale, offer for sale, or other public disclosure, whichever occurs first.

4. How long does it take to get a patent after I apply?

Although some patents issue within a few months, a typical patent takes between 1 and 4 years to issue, assuming it is ever granted. Some patent applications remain pending for decades (although the U.S. Patent Office is discouraging such practice).

5. Can I apply for a patent without going through an attorney?

Yes. Several publications exist to assist inventors in filing their own patent application, including "The Inventor's Notebook" by Fred Grissom and David Pressman and "Patent It Yourself" by David Pressman. (Nolo Press Books, Berkeley, CA 94710.)

6. Is it possible to obtain a patent for an improvement made on a device or process which has already been patented?

Yes. The issues of patentability and infringement are entirely separate. Therefore, one may obtain patent protection for an improvement to a device, yet, to build the improvement and market it in conjunction with the original device would infringe the original patent.

7. If I find out that someone is infringing my patent, what will the Patent Office do to protect my rights?

Nothing. The Patent Office plays no role in discovering or prosecuting infringers of valid U.S. patents. The patent owner is entirely responsible for bearing the burden and expense of protecting his or her patent rights.

8. If two people invent the same thing independently, does the first person to file a patent application receive the patent?

Not necessarily. If two patent applications are filed claiming the same subject matter, the Patent Office begins a special proceeding, known as an "interference," in order to determine who was the first actual inventor. Factors considered by the Patent Office in determining who receives the patent include (i) the first to conceive of the invention; (ii) the diligence with which each inventor attempted to reduce the idea to practice; and (iii) who was the first inventor to actually reduce the invention to practice.

9. Do most people who receive patents end up making money on them?

No. A patent is issued for any idea that is new, useful, and non-obvious. The issuance of a patent is not an indication that there is any reasonable commercial use for the invention.

10. If I develop a new product and begin selling it without applying for a patent, can't someone else obtain a patent on the idea and prevent me from making my own product?

No. Only the original inventor may apply for a patent.

11. Can more than one person be named as the inventor in a patent?

Yes. Multiple inventors are quite common, and indeed, it is a legal requirement that all contributors to the inventive concept claimed in the patent be named as inventors.

12. If one of my employees invents something in the course of his duties, can I apply for the patent?

No. Only the true inventor can apply for a patent. However, if the employee develops the invention as part of his or her job duties, the employee generally has a legal duty to assign the entire right in the invention to the employer.

13. If I develop a new, useful and non-obvious method of making something that is already known, can I obtain a patent on the method only?

Yes. Method or process patents are quite common, especially in the fields of chemistry, materials and data processing.

14. If I have a United States patent on some particular apparatus or device, can I prevent someone abroad from making the device and exporting it for sale in the United States?

Your United States patent will not permit you to prevent someone from manufacturing or using your device abroad, but will prevent the device from being sold or used in the United States, regardless of where it is manufactured.

15. Can I obtain trademark protection without registering the trademark?

Yes. Trademark rights are based on the extent of actual use of a mark in commerce, but the federal trademark registration is prima facie evidence of use of the mark throughout the United States.



16. Can I reserve a trademark that I intend to use in the future but have not yet actually begun using?

Yes. By filing a federal trademark application along with the required “intent to use” statement.

17. If I reserve a corporate name with the Secretary of State, does that give me trademark rights in that name?

No. A corporate name can never take on trademark status until that name is used in association with specific goods and services.

18. If I am using a trademark that is not identical to someone else’s trademark, can I still be guilty of trademark infringement?

Yes. Trademark infringement occurs whenever two trademarks are “confusingly similar” to each other. Thus, if the two trademarks are similar enough to confuse the average consumer as to the origin of the products or services, then trademark infringement has probably occurred.

19. If I obtain a state trademark registration, does that registration guarantee that I have exclusive rights to use the trademark in that state?

No. State trademark laws vary from one state to another, but generally the state performs only a cursory examination to determine if your mark is similar to other marks registered in that state. Some states perform no examination whatsoever, and it is quite possible to obtain a state trademark registration for a trademark that is identical to an already existing federally registered trademark. In such a case, a state trademark registration is of little or no value.

20. After I create some literary or artistic work, what do I have to do to obtain a copyright on my creation?

Nothing. Copyright protection attaches at the moment the work is fixed in tangible form (e.g., written down). In order to preserve your copyright, you should (but are no longer required to) mark it with a copyright notice, which includes the word “copyright” and or the symbol ©, the year of creation, and your name. Therefore, an appropriate copyright notice could appear: © 1996 William Smith.

21. Why would I want to register a copyright if copyright protection comes into being automatically when I create the work?

Registering a copyright offers procedural advantages if you should ever attempt to prevent the unauthorized copying of your work. Copyright registration may be accomplished by filling out a form available from the register of copyrights, Library of Congress and submitting it along with appropriate specimens and fees (usually \$30).

22. If I manufacture a product by a secret process and one of my customers discovers that process by analyzing the product, can I recover damages for the theft of my trade secret?

No. A trade secret loses its status as a secret if it can be discovered by members of the public by inspection and analysis of the product. No action may be taken against anyone

discovering the trade secret by such methods.

23. What is the address, telephone number and website for the Copyright Office?

Copyright Office 1  
Library of Congress  
101 Independence Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20559-6000  
(202) 707-3000  
[www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov)

24. What is the address, telephone number and website for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office?

General mailing address for patents:

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450  
(571) 272-1000  
(800) 786-9199

General mailing address for trademarks:

Commissioner For Trademarks  
P.O. Box 1451  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1451

Current physical location:

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office  
Randolph Building  
401 Dulany Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
[www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov)

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The US Patent and Trademark Office maintains a helpful website with information regarding patents, trademarks and copyrights. This site is designed to help small businesses consider the benefits of intellectual property protection, both in the United States and abroad. This site includes information on whether and when to file for intellectual property protection, what type of protection to file for, where to file, and how to go about it. Their website is found at [www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov).

The USPTO also maintains a STOP! hotline, which is part of the Strategy Targeting Organized Piracy initiative. Callers on the hotline (1-866-999-HALT) receive information from USPTO IP attorneys with regional expertise on how to protect and enforce patents, trademarks, copyright, and trade secrets in domestic and overseas markets.

## **PATENT AND TRADEMARK DEPOSITORY LIBRARY**

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The Minneapolis Public Library has a complete file of U.S. patents from 1790 to the present; it is the only patent depository library in Minnesota. The collection was established in 1981 and is located in the Technology/Science/Government Documents Department of the library at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory Section of the Guide under Government Document Depository Libraries and Inventors.

The collection contains:

- Utility Patents, 1790 - date. These are housed on DVDs in order of issuance.
- Design Patents, 1842 - date. This is a complete file, also on DVDs in order of issuance.
- Plant Patents, 1931 - date. This is a complete file in paper copy, many with color illustrations, filed in order of issuance.
- Reissue Patents, 1832 - 1972. These are republication of defective patents on DVD.
- CDR file, 1973 - date. This contains corrections, disclosures and the continuation of the reissue file, on DVD.
- Official Gazette, Vol. 1, 1872 - date. This is a weekly publication listing patents granted and official notices of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The library has the paper volumes from the first to September 2002. It is now distributed in the DVD format and is also available on the USPTO website.

### **Patent Classification and Search Materials:**

- Index to the U.S. Patent Classification. An annual alphabetical index to patents that lists patent classes and subclasses is available on the USPTO website.
- Manual of Classifications. A “family tree” of patent classifications, arranged by class and showing interrelationships between subclasses. Most recent versions are on the USPTO website.
- U.S. Patent Classification Definitions. Expands on the Manual of Classification by defining both classes and subclasses for utility patents. Most recent versions are on the USPTO website.
- CASSIS CD-Rom. This regularly updated multi-disk set is useful for preliminary prior art patent searching. Categories for searching include: inventors, assignees, class/subclasses of art, patent titles, and abstract summaries. Search results list patents by number. The full text of the patent is on DVD and at the USPTO website.
- Trademarks are also searchable on CASSIS. Two bimonthly updated disks include registered and pending works.
- Web-based Search Tool (Pub WEST). This is the public version of WEST that is available exclusively at the downtown Minneapolis Public Library. It can search U.S. patents for names and keywords back to 1920. Offers more sophisticated searching options than the USPTO website.

The patent collection and accompanying resources are available for self-service use during regular library hours. Library staff will provide assistance in the use of the materials. An introductory lecture on how to do a preliminary patent search is offered once a month. Contact the library for more information.

# **BUSINESS PLAN**

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One of the first steps in a new venture is the development of a business plan. The business plan describes the business: its product or service, market, people and financing needs. A well-prepared business plan serves several purposes:

- For the new business, it helps the owner determine the feasibility and desirability of pursuing the steps necessary to start a business.
- For the company seeking financing, it is an important sales tool for raising capital from outside investors.
- For an existing company, the business plan forms the basis of a more detailed operational plan and thus becomes an important management tool for monitoring the growth of the firm and charting future directions.

This outline represents a generalized approach. Business plans always should be tailored to the specific circumstances of the business and should emphasize the strengths of the proposed venture and address the potential problems and challenges to be faced. Although it is possible to prepare a business plan by merely “filling in the blanks” from a template (such as those available on the Internet), the likelihood of achieving desired results from doing so is small (e.g., how often do you respond to form letters?). Business plans prepared in connection with a loan application or for the purpose of obtaining venture capital financing will emphasize financial data and characteristics of the management team. The business plan should comply with the format requirements of the lender or venture capitalist.

Several organizations offer assistance in preparing business plans. These include Small Business Development Centers, SCORE organizations, Small Business Management programs and others described in the section of this Guide titled “Sources of Information and Assistance.” Addresses and telephone numbers of these organizations are provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **SAMPLE BUSINESS PLAN FORMAT**

### **Summary**

The summary should concisely describe the key elements of the business plan. For the firm seeking capital, the summary should convince the lender or venture capitalist that it is worthwhile to review the plan in detail. The summary should briefly cover at least the following items:

- Name of the business.
- Business location and plan description.
- Discussion of the product, market, and competition.
- Expertise of the management team.
- Summary of financial projections.
- Amount of financing requested (if applicable).

- Form of and purpose for the financing (if applicable).
- Purpose for undertaking the project (if financing is sought).
- Business goals.

## **The Company**

This section provides background information on the company. It commonly includes a general description of the business, including the product or service and may describe the historical development of the business, legal structure, significant changes in ownership, organizational structure, products or lines, acquisitions, subsidiaries and degree of ownership, and the principals and the roles they played in the formation of the company.

## **The Product or Service**

This is a detailed description of product or service lines, including the relative importance of each product or service to the company. Include sales projections if possible. If available, include product evaluations, comparison to competitors' products or product lines, competitive advantages over other producers, and the elasticity or inelasticity of demand for this product (i.e., does demand respond to factors other than price?). Possible sources of information for this section include competitors' websites, business directories and census data like that published in the U.S. Industrial Outlook.

## **The Project**

If financing is sought for a specific project, describe the project, the purpose for which it is undertaken, its cost, and the amount, form and use of the financing.

## **Management**

Discuss the firm's management. Provide an organizational chart. Discuss key management and supervisory personnel having special value to the organization. Describe their responsibilities and provide resumes describing their skills and experience as they relate to activities of the business. State their present salaries, including other compensation such as stock options and bonuses. Discuss planned staff additions. Describe other employees, including the number of employees at year end, total payroll expenses for each of the previous five years (break down by wages, benefits, etc.), method of compensation, and the departmental or divisional breakdown of the workforce.

## **Ownership**

Provide names, addresses, and business affiliations of principal holders of the firm's common stock and other types of equity securities. Discuss the degree to which principal holders are involved in management. Describe principal non-management owners. Provide the names of the board of directors, areas of expertise, and the role of the board. Specify the amount of stock currently authorized and issued.

## **Marketing Strategy/Market Analysis**

Describe the industry and the industry outlook. Identify the principal markets (commercial/industrial, consumer, government, international). Include industry size currently as well as its anticipated size in the next ten years. Explain the sources of your projections. Describe major characteristics of the industry and the effects of major social, economic, technological or regulatory trends on the industry.

Describe major customers, including names, locations, products or services sold to each, percentage of annual sales volume for each customer over previous five years, duration and condition of contracts in place.

Describe the market and its major segments. Describe principal market participants and their performance. Identify the firm's target market. For each customer, include the requirements of each and the current ways of filling these requirements. Also include information on the buying habits of the customers and the impact on the customer of using the product or service.

Describe the companies with which the business competes and how the business compares with these competitive companies. This is a more detailed narrative than that contained in the description of the product or service, above.

Describe prospective customers and their reaction to the firm and any of the firm's products or services they have seen or tested.

Describe the firm's marketing strategy, including overall strategy; pricing policy; method of selling, distributing and servicing the product; geographic penetration, field/product support, advertising, public relations and promotion; and priorities among these activities.

Describe how the firm will identify prospective customers and how and in what order the firm will contact the relevant decision-makers. Also, describe the sales effort the firm will have (e.g., sales channels and terms, number of salespersons, number of sales contacts, anticipated time, initial order size) and estimated sales and market share.

Sources of information include census data (on both industries and on consumer demographics), business directories, specific industry reports (either from government or private sources), and competitors' websites.

## **Technology**

Describe the technical status of your product (i.e., idea stage, development stage, prototype stage, etc.) and the relevant activities, milestones, and other steps necessary to bring the product into production. Discuss the firm's patent or copyright position. Include how much is patented and how much can be patented (i.e., how comprehensive and effective the patents or copyrights will be). Include a list of patents, copyrights, licenses or statements of proprietary interest in the product or product line.

Describe new technologies that may become practical in the next five years which may affect the product. Also describe new products the firm plans to develop to meet changing market needs.

Describe regulatory or approval requirements and status, and discuss any other technical and legal considerations that may be relevant to the technological development of the product. Include a discussion of research and development efforts and future plans for research and development.

### **Production/Operating Plan**

Explain how the firm will perform production or deliver its service. Describe capacity and status in terms of physical facilities: are they owned or leased; size and location; sales volume and unit capacity; expansion capabilities; capital equipment. Include a facilities plan and description of planned capital improvements and a timetable for those improvements.

Describe suppliers including name and location of principal suppliers; length of lead time required; usual terms of purchase; amounts, duration and conditions of contracts; and subcontractors. Also describe the current and planned labor supply, including number of employees; unionization; stability (seasonal or cyclical); and fringe benefits (insurance, profit sharing, pension, etc.).

Provide a profile of key patents and describe technologies and skills required to develop and manufacture the products. Provide a cost breakdown for material, labor, and manufacturing overhead for each product, plus cost vs. volume curves for each product. Provide block and workflow diagrams of the manufacturing process where appropriate, and provide a schedule of work for the next one to two years. Describe the production or operating advantages of the firm. Discuss whether they are expected to continue.

### **Financial/Administrative**

Provide name and address of key advisors, including auditor, legal counsel, and banker.

Describe financial controls including the cost system and budgets used. Describe cash requirements, now and over the next five years, and how these funds will be used. Specify financial needs to be raised from debt and from equity. Discuss plans to “go public.” Relate this to future value and liquidity of investments.

Provide financial statements and projections for next five years. These should include profit and loss or income statements by month at least until breakeven and then by quarter; balance sheets

as of the end of each year; cash budgets and cash flow projections; capital budgets for equipment and other capital acquisitions; include key assumptions you have made in your pro formas and how these assumptions reflect industry performance.

If financing is sought, most lenders and venture capitalists will require a funding request indicating the desired financing, capitalization, use of funds, and future financing; a financial statement for the past three years; current financial statements; monthly cash flow financial projections including the proposed financing for two years, and projected balance sheets, income statement, and statement of changes in financial position for two years including the proposed financing.



# **ACCOUNTING FOR THE NEW BUSINESS**

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## **BASIC ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES**

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Accounting is the process of collecting, organizing, maintaining, reporting and interpreting financial data about a business.

That financial information is useful both to the business owners and managers in operating a business in a profitable and efficient way, and to outsiders like investors or creditors who require a picture of the business' financial position and performance. In both cases the information is intended to make decision making easier: decisions inside the business about the use of resources and structuring transactions for the lowest tax liability, and decisions by outsiders about subjects like the granting or continuing of credit to the business.

The information collection, organization and maintenance parts of accounting are called bookkeeping. The reporting and interpreting parts are called statement preparation. The complexity and sophistication of bookkeeping and statement preparation depend on the size and nature of a business and the size and nature of its markets and are beyond the scope of this publication. It is valuable here, however, to understand the way in which any accounting system, small or large, handles financial information.

Accounting is the formal process performed according to a set of generally accepted accounting principles. In many cases the business can choose the principles to be used as long as they are consistently applied and any changes in the principles used are disclosed to users of the business' financial statements. Certain industries have specialized accounting principles specific to businesses in those industries.

Because both internal and external users will rely on accounting information, accounting systems contain definitional concepts and principles which both define and limit the nature and use of the information they contain.

The business entity concept provides that for accounting purposes every business is separate and distinct from both its owners and from other businesses. Defining the business entity that way prevents distortion of the financial position of the business which might occur if information on the business owners or other related businesses were included.

The going concern concept assumes that a business on which accounting information is being prepared will continue in existence and is not about to be liquidated. As a result the financial information provided offers only a snapshot of the business based on historical data and ongoing reporting rather than reflecting current market values.

The stable dollar concept requires reporting of accounting information in dollar units which remain stable in value with no adjustment for inflation or the purchasing power of money.

The accounting period concept requires that financial reports showing changes in financial position be produced at fixed annual reporting periods.

The cost principle requires that all costs be recorded at the actual acquisition cost regardless of what the asset acquired might be perceived as being “worth.” The cost recorded is the actual exchange price.

The objectivity principle requires that costs be objectively established and verifiable: guesses or estimates are not acceptable.

The revenue recognition principle requires that revenue be entered in the accounting records only at the time it is earned and not before.

The matching principle requires that expenses be matched with the revenue they produced.

The full disclosure principle requires that no significant information be omitted or concealed and that statements be prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

The materiality principle provides for an exception from full disclosure for transactions with insignificant economic effect.

The consistency principle requires that the same accounting principles be followed from period to period to allow for comparison of financial performance.

The conservative principle requires that in presenting financial information, accounting procedures should be used which present the least favorable view of the firm’s owners’ equity.

These concepts and principles taken together produce a periodic picture of the financial position of the business expressed in constant dollars. While all the information which goes into the system is “real,” the accounting principles used can change the way transactions are structured and reported and the effects – like tax consequences – of the transaction.

In addition, an accounting system imposes a set of internal controls on the business to ensure appropriate and consistent control of financial operations.

As noted above, the substance of any accounting system will vary with the size, complexity and sophistication of the business. The choice of an accounting system, the use of bookkeeping services or broader accounting services, and the use of mechanical or computerized systems or recordkeeping aids are best discussed with an accounting professional.

## **INCOME FORECASTING TECHNIQUES**

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One of the most important steps in the construction of a written plan for your proposed business is the development of meaningful financial projections. No business enterprise should be undertaken without a clear plan of profit potential and an understanding of the sales volume needed to achieve this profit. Experienced entrepreneurs recognize such projections as necessary

for the success of any new business, and potential investment and lending sources will insist upon reviewing your financial projections before any serious discussion can take place. To be of maximum value in the planning process, your projections should accurately reflect the potential of your business and must not be influenced by wishful thinking.

Maintaining a high level of objectivity while researching the potential for a new business can be difficult. The difficulty results from the fact that many prospective business owners select the type of business to enter for a variety of quite personal reasons. They may choose a type of operation because the very nature of the work involved appeals to them. Others may work for someone else in a similar business and now would like to be their own boss. Some may have spent time acquiring the necessary technical skills or may have simply observed that a particular enterprise appears enjoyable or profitable. When combining any of these personal reasons for entering business with the complex task of analyzing the market, it is not uncommon for a prospective business owner to start up an operation with unrealistic expectations of the potential returns.

It is suggested that in your planning efforts you use the desired income approach to help determine the feasibility of your idea. This approach recognizes that, for the investment of time and effort and the assumption of risk, you are entitled to a fair monetary return. If this business were not started, your money could be invested to earn a return elsewhere and your time and effort could be devoted to working for someone else. The desired income approach allows you to select the minimum desired return and build on this to determine the level of sales required to achieve this return. If this sales level cannot be reasonably supported by market analysis, you would probably be better off working for someone else or investigating a different business opportunity.

To begin, you must first ascertain the minimum acceptable level of profit. To do this, it is necessary to explore the uses of profit. Profit can be used to support personal living needs, to pay back borrowed funds, or to reinvest in the company. Since we are attempting to determine the minimum level of profit, we will not be concerned with reinvestment which involves a use of profit over this minimum.

To determine personal living requirements, you must consider the minimum amount you will need to withdraw from the proposed business. If there is substantial personal income available from other sources, the amount required from the proposed business may be reduced. If there is no other source for personal income, then the proposed business should be recognized as the sole source for providing a living. Obviously, this desired draw will vary by individual needs and must be arrived at by thoughtful personal planning.

If it is necessary to borrow funds to begin the proposed enterprise, it must be realized that these borrowed dollars will have to be repaid from earnings of the business. This is of special importance to prospective lenders. It is the reason why a presentation of a projected income statement is required when seeking outside financing for a business. To determine the level of profit necessary to repay a loan, you need to determine the dollar amount to be borrowed, the term of the loan and the percentage of interest likely to be charged.

The loan amount usually is the total amount of money needed to begin the business less the amount supplied by you in the form of equity. The term of the loan is based on the use of the proceeds and the percent of interest reflects the general risk involved. It is advisable to speak with lenders and those offering business advice to help determine realistic terms and current interest rates for your situation.

For our example, we will use \$30,000 as the amount of the loan requested and a term of five years at 15 percent annual interest rate.

The calculation of the annual payment is as follows:

\$30,000 over five years at 15 percent

$\$30,000 / .023790^* = \$713.70/\text{month}$

$\$713.70 \times 12 \text{ months} = \$8,564.40/\text{year}$

\*(.023790 comes from loan amortization tables which are available at local bookstores or in most finance textbooks.)

This \$8,564.40 represents the total interest and principal repaid on the loan the first year of operation. If we round this figure to \$8,600 and estimate personal living expenses to be withdrawn from this business at \$15,000, we have a total of \$23,600 which must be generated to sustain our personal needs and keep current with the lender.

The next step is to determine the level of sales necessary to earn the \$23,600. From industry statistics, we can ascertain average performance data for various types of business operations. One of the most commonly used sources for this information is Annual Statement Studies, published by The Risk Management Association, [www.RMAHQ.com](http://www.RMAHQ.com). Other sources can be found in the library and include Dun and Bradstreet, Industry Norms and Key Business Ratios™, the Almanac of Business and Industrial Financial Ratios (Prentice Hall) and local and national trade associations. Be sure to determine that the industry standard being applied includes the owner's draw as a part of profit. If it does not, this withdrawal amount will have been deducted as a salary expense in the operating statement and will have to be added to the stated profit to get an accurate indication of the total percent of sales available as profit to the business owner. For our example we will assume the industry sources show that, for the type of business under consideration, the average profit, including the owner's draw or salary, is 11 percent of sales.

To determine required annual sales volume:

\$23,600 is 11 percent of X

X = minimum required annual sales

$.11 X = \$23,600$

$X = \$214,500$

We have now determined that, if our proposed business is assumed to be average, we will need to sell \$214,500 of our products or services to cover expenses, keep our loan current through the first year and withdraw the desired \$15,000. This in no way implies that we will sell \$214,500, of products or services, but this dollar amount serves as a goal that must be met. We now have available a minimum target sales figure to test and verify through the techniques of market analysis. For some, it will be readily apparent that the required sales target is not realistic. For others, careful market research will be necessary before any conclusion can be drawn.

The desired income approach of determining required sales can help us answer the question of whether we would start a particular business, begin the business as we have it conceptualized or whether the idea we have is likely not to grant the desired return. It gives a benchmark that must be met. It provides a realistic financial goal that must be achieved. If our research shows that this goal is attainable and that estimated sales are likely to meet or surpass this level, we can enter

business with that much more confidence. If our market investigation does not thoroughly support the minimum required sales level, we can rethink our position. We can consider changes to our business plan which will make the concept more realistic or we can search for another, potentially more profitable business opportunity. The desired income approach allows us to start up a business operation with knowledge of what must be achieved and the level of return we can expect for our efforts.

To verify whether your target minimum sales are attainable, it is necessary to thoroughly investigate your potential market. Market research is an imprecise science, but basic research can be performed by most prospective entrepreneurs. Stated simply, market research is the orderly and objective gathering of facts about your market. It involves finding out how things are, not how you think they are or would like them to be. Much raw data already exists, but before this data will be of use to you, it is necessary to develop some basic definitions regarding your proposed business.

The first of these definitions involves describing in detail the business you wish to establish and the industry it will operate within. Concerns here relate to the image you wish to project and the products and services to be offered. Your business image is the single most important factor in achieving target sales. Be careful to design an image that addresses a perceived market need, and do not select an image that appeals solely to you. Industry influences are also important and involve an assessment of firms currently operating within your industry and major historical trends. In addition, you should examine and define significant outside influences on your business such as government regulation, energy concerns, inflation and other economic factors. Many of these forces will be beyond your control, but they must be recognized and planned for.

A full and complete analysis of your production capabilities should be developed. Your ability to satisfy market demand will be directly limited by your ability to produce, finance, sell and service. It is of little value to determine from the market that potential revenues can meet or exceed your target minimum sales volume if your production cannot match this needed output. Similarly, sales revenues are limited by the availability of working capital and by your ability to negotiate sufficient sales transactions. Indeed, you may determine that a substantial market potential exists, but you will need to consider the restricting impact of these internal factors.

Next, you will need to define the actual market segment you wish to enter. Attempt to describe in detail the target customer most likely to be interested in your product or service. There is a definable portion of the population to whom the output of your business will be of special interest. This is your target customer and the focus of your market analysis. Target customers can be defined in terms of some demographic descriptor. Examples could include income level, home ownership, sex, marital status, age, occupation, education or any of a host of market-related characteristics. You will need to spend considerable time researching and defining a target customer profile, but this process is critical to further market analysis.

Once you have arrived at a definite category of customer, you can begin investigating where your potential customers are and in what numbers. Basic demographic data outlining population size, density, distribution and other vital statistics is readily available from a variety of sources. A list of such sources would include the following: U.S. Bureau of Census, Chambers of Commerce, colleges and universities, James J. Hill Reference Library (St. Paul, MN), and your local library, which contains sources for locating trade journals, directories and local and national trade associations. You will also need to develop a trade area based on geographic considerations.

Defining your trade area involves making a determination of how far you can reasonably and profitably take your product or service out into the marketplace or how far you can expect to draw customers to your place of business. This trade area is related to the type of business you are investigating and can range from a segment of a community to international dimensions. Within this trade area you will need to examine the population data you have researched to determine how many target customers are available. Of course, not all these potential customers will do business with you. The market deals with people and their constantly changing likes and dislikes which are affected by hundreds of influences.

Competition within and adjacent to your trade area should be thoroughly examined. Attempt to describe who your competitors are and compare strengths and weaknesses with the business you want to operate. Become familiar with your competitors' pricing policies and overall method of operation. You will be competing head-on for the limited number of opportunities within your selected trade area and you must have as much knowledge of your competition as possible. Do not neglect to analyze future competition. Market dynamics are not static and freely allow others to enter your market and to change and improve on products or services you will be offering.

Keep in mind throughout all of your research efforts that verification of your target minimum sales is your goal. Ask basic questions about your business. How much does the average customer spend in a typical sales transaction? How many sales transactions are required to meet your target minimum sales? Does your knowledge of the market indicate that there is a sufficient customer base to generate the needed sales revenue? As mentioned previously, market research is an inexact process, but, with a desired income as your target and an orderly approach to gathering data, you can become aware of the magnitude of market opportunities. This knowledge will then assist you in making rational and intelligent decisions regarding your proposed business.

## **BUSINESS GRANTS**

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### **THE TRUTH ABOUT SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS IN MINNESOTA**

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The number of companies and outright scams – all selling information about “government grants” or guides to government grants—is growing through Internet spam and telemarketing. All of these offers are built on the false idea that individuals are eligible to receive thousands of “unclaimed” dollars from the government – money that can be used for almost anything, including personal expenses or starting a business.

In reality, both the state government and the federal government prefer to invest in small businesses by operating loan programs or assistance programs that involve some sort of shared contribution rather than handing out “free money”.

Television ads and Internet sites use the word “grant” to describe any kind of payment from the government. Most of the “hidden government money” comes from public assistance for low-income families, the elderly or the disabled. These are largely entitlement programs—not competitive grants. Generally speaking, government grants are not made to individuals. For individual benefit programs, the federal government provides a comprehensive list at [www.govbenefits.gov](http://www.govbenefits.gov), [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and [www.govloans.gov](http://www.govloans.gov).

Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. We encourage entrepreneurs to visit the state’s website at [www.deed.state.mn.us](http://www.deed.state.mn.us) to find out about legitimate government resources to help their small business get started or expand.

Government grant scams will continue as long as people believe the government is handing out free money. Do not be victimized by these scam artists. Assistance in exploring financing options is available free to entrepreneurs in Minnesota.

# BUSINESS LOANS

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## Debt Financing

There are many sources of debt financing: banks, savings and loans, commercial finance companies and government agencies are most common. State and local government have developed many programs in recent years to encourage the growth of small businesses. Family members, friends and associates are all potential sources, especially when the capital requirements are small.

Typically, banks have been the major source of small business funding. Their principal role has been as a short-term lender offering demand loans, lines of credit, and single-purpose loans for machinery and equipment. Banks generally have been reluctant to offer long-term loans to small firms. The SBA guaranteed lending program encourages banks and non-bank lenders to make long-term loans to small firms by reducing their risk and leveraging the funds they have available.

In addition to the traditional term loans and revolving lines of credit most often provided by commercial banks, other types of debt financing arrangements, such as asset-based financing from business financing companies, lease and equipment financing and sale and leaseback arrangements, have gained popularity.

Historically, it is extremely difficult to start a business with 100 percent debt. Private lenders and government loan programs often require 20 to 50 percent equity participation by the owner. The exact percentage depends on the project, the financial resources of the owners, the type of industry the use of funds and the financial institution's general loan policy. In addition to equity considerations, lenders commonly require the borrower's personal guarantees in case of default. This ensures that the borrower has a sufficient personal interest at stake to give paramount attention to the business.

Most traditional lenders prefer manufacturing or industrial operations where funds will be used to purchase fixed assets, i.e. land, building, or production equipment. These items offer the type of collateral often required to secure the debt.

## Loan Packaging

Before inquiring about debt financing, an entrepreneur should assess such things as:

Do you actually need more capital or can you manage existing cash flow more efficiently?

How do you define your need? Do you need money to expand or as a cushion against risk?

How urgent is your need? Do you want money to expand or as a cushion against risk?



How great are your risks? All businesses carry risks, and the degree of risk will affect cost and available financing alternatives.

In what stage of development is the business? Needs are most critical during transitional stages.

For what purpose will the capital be used? Any lender will require that capital be requested for very specific needs. 1

What is the state of your industry? Depressed, stable, or growth conditions require different approaches to money needs and sources. Businesses that prosper while others are in decline will often receive better funding terms. 1

Is the business seasonal or cyclical? Seasonal needs for financing generally are short term. Loans advanced for cyclical industries such as construction are designed to support a business through depressed periods.

How strong is the management team? Management is one of the most important elements assessed by money sources.

Perhaps most importantly, how does the need for financing mesh with the business plan? If you don't have a business plan, make writing one your first priority. All capital sources will want to see your plan for the start-up and growth of your business.

An example of a business plan is included in this Guide. A business advisor such as a Small Business Development Center counselor can review the plan and help you determine the amount of financing your projections will likely support. The counselor can also help you identify potential sources of financing and help you prepare a loan package. You will then need to approach potential lenders to explain your project in detail and apply for the loan. It may be helpful to contact several lenders prior to preparing loan documents to learn about their lending practices and determine the feasibility of applying for financing.

Regardless of the specific type of loan or credit facility, almost every debt financing instrument will contain specific terms and conditions or "rules" relating to how the borrower uses the funds and conducts its business until the debt is repaid. These rules are contained in the credit agreement and ancillary documents, primarily in sections referring to "representations and warranties" and "covenants." The borrower's compliance with these covenants also serves as the means by which the lender monitors the loan and assures itself of a return on its investment. Compliance with covenants also serves as the means by which lenders demonstrate to federal and state regulators that they are in compliance with the rules and regulations applicable to the types of loans they are permitted to make.

The Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office has a free book "Loan Documentation: An Introduction for Small Businesses" which provides an overview of how loan documents are structured and discusses common terms contained in most credit agreements. Representations, warranties and covenants are discussed as are security interests, guarantee agreements and other forms of collateral commonly required to secure a loan. A discussion of the consequences of failure to comply with loan covenants and a lender's rights upon borrower default is also included in the book. A free copy is available from the Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office.

## **Past Credit Problems**

In starting a business, your personal credit history is a key factor in any lender's decision to make a loan. If your credit report shows a history of late payments, judgments or tax liens, it will be very difficult to obtain a loan until the adverse entries are removed from the credit report. If you have ever declared bankruptcy or defaulted on a student loan or other federal loan, you may be permanently ineligible to obtain a federal loan such as an SBA-guaranteed loan.

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## **PUBLIC SOURCES OF FINANCING – FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

### **U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA)**

Small Business Administration (SBA)  
210-C Butler Square Building  
100 North Sixth Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
(612) 370-2324  
[www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has financial assistance programs which provide access to debt and equity primarily from banks or other private sources. The various types of SBA financing programs are briefly explained below. The qualifications for these programs change from time to time, and it is recommended that you check with SBA for the most recent criteria.

SBA evaluates each loan application on two levels. The first is for eligibility which varies by industry and SBA program. The second evaluation is based on the credit merits of the application. The SBA uses the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) instead of SIC codes for this purpose. For information about the NAICS and tables see the SBA's website.

### **Eligibility**

**Eligible Applicants-Size Standards.** SBA's size standards for eligibility are based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). The size standards table applies to most of SBA's programs and to many other federal government programs and actions where eligibility as a small business is a factor or consideration. SBA's Table of Small Business Size Standards can be accessed at [www.sba.gov/services/contractingopportunities/officials/size/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/services/contractingopportunities/officials/size/index.html).

**Ineligible Applicants.** Most small businesses in Minnesota are eligible for SBA financial assistance, provided they are independently owned and operated, are not dominant in their field and can show that they are unable to obtain private financing on reasonable terms without SBA assistance. The Small Business Act, however, does exclude certain businesses, namely the following:

## **INELIGIBLE BUSINESSES AND ELIGIBLE PASSIVE COMPANIES**

Businesses ineligible for SBA business loans

The following types of businesses are ineligible:

- Non-profit businesses (for-profit subsidiaries are eligible);
- Financial businesses primarily engaged in the business of lending, such as banks, finance companies, and factors (pawn shops, although engaged in lending, may qualify in some circumstances);
- Passive businesses owned by developers and landlords that do not actively use or occupy the assets acquired or improved with the loan proceeds (except Eligible Passive Companies under § 120.111);
- Life insurance companies;
- Businesses located in a foreign country (businesses in the U.S. owned by aliens may qualify);
- Pyramid sale distribution plans;
- Businesses deriving more than one-third of gross annual revenue from legal gambling activities;
- Businesses engaged in any illegal activity;
- Private clubs and businesses which limit the number of memberships for reasons other than capacity;
- Government-owned entities (except for businesses owned or controlled by a Native American tribe);
- Businesses principally engaged in teaching, instructing, counseling or indoctrinating religion or religious beliefs, whether in a religious or secular setting;
- Consumer and marketing cooperatives (producer cooperatives are eligible);
- Loan packages earning more than one third of their gross annual revenue from packaging SBA loans;
- Businesses with an associate who is incarcerated, on probation, on parole, or has been indicted for a felony or a crime of moral turpitude;
- Businesses in which the lender or CDC, or any of its associates owns an equity interest;
- Businesses which:
  - Present live performances of a prurient sexual nature; or
  - Derive directly or indirectly more than de minimis gross revenue through the sale of products or services, or the presentation of any depictions or displays, of a prurient sexual nature;
- Unless waived by SBA for good cause, businesses that have previously defaulted on a federal loan or federally assisted financing, resulting in the federal government or any of its agencies or departments sustaining a loss in any of its programs, and businesses owned or controlled by an applicant or any of its associates which previously owned, operated, or controlled a business which defaulted on a federal loan (or guaranteed a loan which was defaulted) and

caused the federal government or any of its agencies or departments to sustain a loss in any of its programs. For purposes of this section, a compromise agreement shall also be considered a loss;

- Businesses primarily engaged in political or lobbying activities; and
- Speculative businesses (such as oil wildcatting).

## **Credit Merits**

The SBA places its primary emphasis for loan consideration on the demonstrated ability of the business to repay all business-related debt, including the new loan obligation. Additionally, a reasonable “at stake” equity injection by the applicant is required. Each application is individually considered based on earnings potential, collateral, track record and/or projections, management, and the type of businesses in the same field. While SBA’s standards are designed to be more relaxed than those of commercial lenders the SBA will not approve loans to businesses with unsatisfactory profit history, inadequate equity investment, unsupported projections, or, unacceptable credit histories.

## **SBA Loan Programs**

SBA’s four basic loan programs are as follows:

- Guaranteed Loans
  - Regular Guaranteed Loans
    - International Trade
    - Express
    - Patriot Express Loan
    - Small and Rural Advantage
    - Community Express
  - Short-term Guaranteed Loans
    - Contract Loan Program
    - Seasonal Line of Credit
    - Export Working Capital Program
    - Asset-based
    - Floor Planning Loans
- Certified Development Company Loans or 504 Loan Program
- Small Business Investment Companies
- Microloans
- America’s Recovery Capital Loans

## Guaranteed Loans

### Regular Guaranteed Loans

This is SBA's most frequently used loan program. A guaranteed loan is one made by a commercial lending institution (usually a bank) to a small business customer. The SBA provides the bank with a guarantee that will pay the bank a portion of the unpaid balance on loans that are not paid in full by the customer. Every bank has its own internal credit standard and policy for approval of its loans. The SBA's guarantee permits a bank to broaden its own criteria to accommodate additional lending because of the federally-backed assurances. While the guaranty extends the range of credit available through commercial lenders, it will not cover unsubstantiated repayment, poor collateralization, or improperly documented requests. Therefore, it is incumbent on the applicant to find out if the request has a chance and then work with the bank to submit all required documentation first, so that the bank may evaluate the proposal and make its decision. Under this program, the bank analyzes the credit and makes one of three decisions: to approve it entirely by itself; to approve subject to an SBA guaranty; or to decline the loan. Should the second method be chosen, the bank will submit the application to SBA on behalf of both the borrower and itself. Keep in mind that the applicant is the bank's customer and the bank is SBA's customer. The prospective borrower does not need to contact the SBA.

**General Information.** Under the guaranty program, the lender provides all of the money. The SBA can guarantee loans up to \$2 million; the guarantee is 75 percent of a loan over \$150,000 and 85 percent of a loan up to \$150,000. A small business may have more than one SBA loan, but the SBA's share cannot exceed \$1.5 million. The SBA will charge a fee for guaranteeing the loan; fees will run from 2% on loans up to \$150,000 to 3.5 percent on those over \$750,000, but if the loan has a term of less than a year the fee may be as low as  $\frac{1}{4}$  percent. SBA does not provide grants to start or grow a business.

**Note:** Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 the available guarantee that a lender may request is increased to 90 percent of a 7(a) loan for loans approved on or after March 16, 2009 through December 31, 2009. The SBA upfront guarantee fee is also eliminated for loans approved after February 17, 2009 through December 31, 2009. As this publication went to press Congress had made no determination about an extension of either the guarantee or fee elimination into 2010 and beyond. There were also at that time congressional proposals to expand the upper limit of guaranteed loan amounts to \$5 million. Please check with the SBA at the address and phone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

**Terms of Loan.** The bank and its client (small business) negotiate the terms within the parameters described in the following paragraphs.

**Interest Rate:** There are two rate structures available on SBA guaranteed loans: fixed and variable. Variable rate loans can be adjusted monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually, and float with the prime rate. Fixed-rate loans do not change during the life of the loan. The maximum allowable rate for both types of loans is 2.75 percent over prime for loans of seven years and longer, and 2.25 percent over the prime rate for loans up to seven years. This prime rate is the minimum New York prime rate as published in The Wall Street Journal. Loans under \$50,000 may have a higher rate.

**Maturity:** The length of a loan is determined by the use of the loan proceeds. Working capital loans are generally limited to seven years. Machinery and equipment loans are based on the life of the machinery and equipment, but not to exceed ten years. Real estate loans have maximum

maturity of 25 years. These are the maximum terms. The bank may request shorter terms.

**Use of Proceeds:** A business may borrow for anything on the balance sheet such as inventory, receivables, land, buildings, machinery, equipment, furniture, fixtures, autos, trucks, accounts payable. Funds may be used to purchase a business. Generally funds may not be used to effect a change of ownership among family members. If part of the funds are to be used to pay debts owing to the participating bank, additional collateral may be required from the bank.

**Collateral:** Collateral are those assets which secure a loan in the event of a default. Collateral can consist of the following: land, buildings, machinery, equipment, furniture, fixtures, autos, trucks, inventory, accounts receivable, mortgages on fixed assets held personally, or an assignment of the interest in a contract for deed. SBA can take a second position, if necessary. The collateral offered should be reasonably adequate to secure the loan.

**Equity:** An applicant must have an adequate capital investment in its own business. For existing businesses, SBA uses the business ratios provided by Dun and Bradstreet and Robert Morris Associates. The SBA considers all credit factors before making a decision.

**Repayment:** SBA and the bank expect a loan to be paid out of the profits of the business. The bottom line of any credit decision is whether a business can repay the loan and other obligations from earnings. This is determined by analyzing all the facts presented in an application; primarily, management ability, equity invested, financial statements of owners, and detailed justification of projected earnings.

**Small/Rural Lender Advantage.** The Small/Rural Lender Advantage Initiative is part of SBA's 7 (a) loan program and encourages smaller and /or rural lenders (making 20 or fewer SBA loans a year) to offer SBA loans by streamlining SBA's loan application and approval process.

The key features include: the maximum loan size is \$350,000; an SBA guarantee of 85 percent is available for loans of \$150,000 or less, 75 percent if the loan is larger; and the loan has a short, simplified application, a quick processing time (average 5 days) and fillable PDF application forms that can be faxed or e-mailed. Only limited, key financial documents are required.

**International Trade Loans.** This program operates under the Guaranteed Loan Program and utilizes the same credit criteria and conditions. SBA may guarantee 90 percent to a maximum of \$2 million for fixed asset acquisition and 85 percent to a maximum of \$250,000 for working capital. No consolidation of existing debt or refinancing is allowed.

The applicant must establish that the loan proceeds significantly expand existing exports, develop new export markets or must show substantial adverse impact by imports.

**SBAExpress.** This program allows lenders to make credit decisions directly, without SBA input. Lenders also use all their own documents including the note, security agreement and mortgage. SBAExpress provides a fast turnaround on credit decisions. SBAExpress loans also contain a revolving feature with a seven-year term. SBA guarantees 50 percent of the loan, rather than the 75 to 85 percent under the normal 7(a) program.

SBAExpress interest rates can be higher than those allowed under the basic 7(a) program. Interest rates are determined by the market, but with this program the lender is allowed to charge a rate higher than the  $2\frac{1}{4}$  and  $2\frac{3}{4}$  percent over prime that is normally allowed. The loan limit under this

program is \$350,000. Lenders need to be approved by SBA for participation in the program. All other eligibility criteria remain the same.

SBA Community Express Loans provide a greater guaranty percentage if the lender agrees to provide technical assistance to the borrower for the term of the loan. SBA Export Express loans also allow a greater guaranty to the lender if the borrower is involved in exporting products or services.

SBA Express loans may be used as a revolver with a limit of seven years.

**Patriot Express Loans.** The Patriot Express Loan Initiative is a new loan program for veterans and members of the military community wanting to establish or expand a small business.

The program is open to veterans, service-disabled veterans, active-duty service members, participating in the military's Transition Assistance Program, Reservists and National Guard members, current spouses of any of the above, and the widowed spouse of a service member or veteran who died during service or of a service-connected disability.

The Patriot Express Loan program is a 7(a) loan program offered by the SBA. Loans are available up to \$500,000 and qualify for SBA's maximum guarantee of 85 percent for loans of \$150,000 or less and 75 percent for loans over \$150,000 up to \$500,000. This contrasts with the maximum 50 percent SBA guarantee that applies to all other SBA Express loans. Also, the maximum loan amount under the Patriot Express Loan program is \$500,000 compared to the maximum amount of \$350,000 available under SBA Express. For loans above \$350,000, lenders are required to take all available collateral. Maximum interest rates for Patriot Express loans are the same as those allowed for the 7 (a) program, as opposed to the higher interest rates allowed under the SBA Express program. SBA will allow revolving lines of credit under the Patriot Loan Express Loan program.

The Patriot Express loan can be used for most business purposes, including start-up, expansion, equipment purchases, working capital, inventory or business-occupied real-estate purchases.

Patriot Express loans generally offer 2.25 percent to 4.75 percent over prime depending upon the size and maturity of the loan.

The Patriot Express Loan Program will operate through December 31, 2010.

### **Short-term Guaranteed Loans**

Contract Loan Program. The purpose of this program is to provide working capital needed to handle short-term contracts. A business must have been in operation for 12 months preceding the date of application. Any small business which constructs, manufactures, or provides a service under an assignable contract is eligible. An application must be filed for each contract. More than one contract may be outstanding at any one time. All disbursements must be supported by invoices and/or time sheets. Maturity is generally not more than 12 months. Applicant's ability to cost the work, bid, and perform is a prime requisite. Cash flow projections are mandatory. SBA requires an acknowledged assignment of the contract proceeds as collateral, however, the lender is expected to take such additional collateral as prudent lending practices dictate. Proceeds or an agreed-upon percentage must be applied to the loan balance. The percentage must be set forth in the loan authorization and note. If bonding is necessary and the surety requires an assignment of the contract, SBA will consider only other collateral that is worthwhile. The guarantee fee is one

quarter of 1 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan.

**Seasonal Line of Credit.** The Seasonal Line of Credit program is used to finance working capital needs arising from the seasonal upswing of a business. Typical uses are to build up inventory and to pay for increased labor costs. Loans are repaid from the cash flow of the business. This program may have a limited revolving feature and is only available under the bank guarantee program. To be eligible, a small business must have been in operation for the previous 12 months and have a definite pattern of seasonal activity. Only one seasonal line of credit may be outstanding at one time and followed by an “out of debt to the SBA” period of at least 30 days. The applicant must be current on payroll taxes and have in operation a depository plan for payroll taxes. A cash flow projection showing the business’ ability to provide for its needs is required. Maturity may not exceed 12 months. As a minimum, collateral will consist of inventory and accounts receivable. The guaranty fee is one quarter of one percent. These loans may not be sold on the secondary market.

**Export Working Capital Program.** Under this program, the SBA guarantees short-term working capital loans made by participating lenders to exporters. Proceeds of loans guaranteed under this program may not be used to purchase fixed assets, but can be used to finance the acquisition and production of goods and services being exported, or the accounts receivable of export sales.

Proceeds guaranteed under this program can be used for single or multiple export sales, and the underlying loan can be a revolving one. The maximum maturity is one year. Eligibility requirements with respect to the size of the borrower, the amount of the guarantee and the loan are the same as for the SBA’s regular guaranty program. The borrower must have been in business for at least 12 continuous months before filing an application.

**Asset-Based.** This program provides a guarantee of a short-term revolving line of credit, based upon the value of the borrower’s accounts receivable and inventory.

The maximum term of an Asset-Based loan is five years, and the balance of the line of credit can revolve, in that it can be drawn upon and repaid as the borrower’s cash cycle dictates, so long as the outstanding balance does not exceed the approved amount of the Asset-Based account. Under this program, the SBA can guarantee up to \$1 million of the line of credit, and the SBA’s guarantee cannot exceed 75 percent of the total line of credit. Generally, any business eligible under the SBA’s regular guaranty program will be eligible.

The SBA uses the same interest rate structures as under its regular guaranty program. Unlike the regular guaranty program, under the Asset-Based program no lender’s fee restrictions apply, although the lender must disclose all fees charged in connection with the loan through its final payout. Personal guarantees are required of each person who owns 20 percent or more of the borrowing business.

Participating lending banks must have reached a 750 agreement with the SBA and completed a lender’s registration (different from the Low-Doc registration) with the SBA. The lender must conduct field examinations of borrowers, both initially and at least semi-annually during the term of the line of credit, including an analysis of accounts receivable, inventory, accounts payable, and financial statements and accounts. The lender, however, can hire a third-party server.

In the event of default, the SBA will pay on the guaranty after the pledged assets have been liquidated, but the SBA will pay only the interest that has accrued more than 120 days after the date of default.



**Dealer Floor Planning.** Under this pilot program, SBA provides loan guarantees for lines of credit through its 7(a) program. Loans are made through SBA lenders only for inventory that can be titled, such as autos, RVs, manufactured homes, boats and trailers. **The pilot program runs through September 30, 2010, at which time SBA will determine whether to extend the program.**

Loans are available for a minimum of \$500,000 up to \$2 million allowable under the 7(a) program, with a maximum repayment term of five years. These loan guarantees will be from 60-75 percent, depending on the type of collateral and the lenders advance rate against the wholesale price of the inventory. Lenders may advance up to 100 percent of the wholesale price.

### **Certified Development Company Loans or 504 Loan Program**

Offered through the Small Business Administration, the 504 loan program makes joint federal and private-sector financing available to small businesses. The purpose of the program is to stimulate growth and expansion of small businesses within cities, regions and states having an SBA-approved Certified Development Company, thereby creating more jobs, increasing the local tax base, and expanding business ownership opportunities.

This program provides long-term fixed-asset financing for small businesses. This type of loan is made by a Certified Development Company (CDC) in conjunction with a second loan from a commercial lender in order to meet a majority of the total financing requirements of a specific project. An eligible project's purpose is to assist small businesses with financing plant acquisition, construction, conversion or expansion including acquisition of land, existing buildings and leasehold improvements for an identifiable small business, and machinery and equipment with a minimum 10-year economic life. Loan proceeds cannot be used for working capital or debt repayment. Financing for the 504 program is provided jointly by the federal government and the private sector. The CDC loan amount will vary between 30 and 40 percent of the total project, not to exceed \$1.5 million on most loans, but under specific circumstances for small manufacturers, rural areas, and to meet certain public policy goals, it may go as high as \$4 million, with the balance coming from non-governmental sources. Usually, 50 percent is lent directly by a bank and 10 to 20 percent originates from the applicants themselves. The CDC obtains its funds from the sale of a debenture, which is fully guaranteed by the SBA, and then again lends these funds to the borrower. Maturities of debentures are for 10- and 20-year periods. The useful life of the asset determines the term of the debenture. The interest rate is set at the time of the sale of the debenture. The benefits of this program are a favorable interest rate mix and a longer pay back period.

This program has certain unique requirements such as a measure of economic impact through the job generation potential of each project, so it is recommended that any interested party discuss the application directly with the 504 company serving its area.

A list of Certified Development Companies is available from the Minnesota Center for Community Economic Development or the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. Both addresses and telephone numbers can be found in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **Small Business Investment Companies**

The SBA licenses, regulates and provides financial assistance to privately owned and operated Small Business Investment Companies (SBICs) whose major function is to make venture investments by supplying equity capital and extending unsecured loans and loans not fully collateralized to small enterprises which meet their investment criteria. SBICs are privately capitalized and obtain financial leverage from the SBA. The administration of the SBIC program is handled by the SBA Central Office in Washington, D.C. A list of the Minnesota SBICs can be found in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **Microloans**

The purpose of the SBA's Microloan program is to assist women, low-income individuals, minority entrepreneurs and business owners, and other individuals possessing the capability to operate successful business concerns and to assist small business concerns in those areas defined by the SBA as economically distressed areas.

The SBA is authorized under this program to make direct loans to eligible and qualified intermediary lenders who will use those loan proceeds to make short-term, fixed-interest rate loans to start-up, newly established and growing small business concerns. The loans can range in amount from a few hundred dollars to as much as \$35,000. Further, the SBA may make grants to the eligible and qualified intermediary lenders to be used to provide intensive marketing, management, and technical assistance to their borrowers.

In Minnesota, six intermediaries have been approved and can be contacted regarding the details of their respective programs. The name, address, telephone number, and service areas of each such intermediary is listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **Americas' Recovery Capital (ARC) Loans**

Under this program authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 participating lenders may make SBA guaranteed loans of up to \$35,000 to a borrower that is a viable business but experiencing immediate financial hardship. The loans are only for payment of principal and interest on existing business debt. The loans will be offered as long as federal funding is available or until September 30, 2010, whichever comes first. The loans may not be used to make payments on a loan made or guaranteed by SBA before February 12, 2009. A Congressional proposal to allow for use of ARC funds for payment of loans made before that date passed the U.S. House of Representative on September 23, 2009, but no Senate action has occurred as this publication went to press. Please check on the status of this program with the SBA at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource directory section of this Guide.

## USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural Business-Cooperative Service  
375 Jackson Street, Suite 410  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1853  
(651) 602-7791  
[www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn)

A list of USDA Rural Development Field offices can be found in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

### **Renewable Energy for America (REAP)**

Loans, loan guarantees and grants are available to help agricultural producers and rural small business purchase renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements. Rural is defined as an area of less than 50,000 in population or its immediately adjacent incorporated communities.

Renewable energy means energy derived from wind, solar, biomass, hydro-power or a geothermal source; or hydrogen derived from biomass or water using one of those energy sources. Biomass includes agricultural crops; trees grown for energy production; wood waste and wood residues; plants (including aquatic plants and grasses); residues; fibers; animal wastes and other waste materials; and fats, oils, and greases. Biomass does not include paper that is commonly recycled or unsegregated solid waste.

The amount of the grant cannot exceed 25 percent of the cost of the activity funded under this program. To be eligible for a grant, the applicant must demonstrate financial need. Applications for renewable energy systems must be for a minimum grant request of \$2,500, but no more than \$500,000. Applications for energy efficiency improvements must be for a minimum grant request of \$1,500, but no more than \$250,000. Individual applicants must be citizens of the U.S. or reside in the U.S. after being legally admitted for permanent residence.

### **Value-Added Producer Grants**

Grants help producers expand their customer base by entering into emerging markets for their products or commodities and ensure that a greater portion of the revenues derived from the value-added activity is available to the producer.

Independent producers, farmer-owned cooperatives, agricultural producer groups and majority-controlled producer-based groups are eligible to apply. For reserved funds competition additional eligibility requirements are: beginning farmer or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher, mid-tier value chain/local or regional supply network or possible advantages to HTVC projects.

Five categories are considered value-added under this program.

- Ventures in which agricultural producers add value to their products through changing the physical state or form of the product (processing wheat into flour, corn into ethanol, slaughtering livestock).

- Producing products in a manner that enhances its value demonstrated in a business plan (organic carrots).
- Physical segregation of an agricultural commodity or product in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that product.
- Any agricultural commodity or product that is used to produce renewable energy on a farm or ranch (methane digesters, wind turbines).
- Aggregation and marketing of locally produced agricultural food commodities or products (less than 400 miles from where produced and in the same state).

Planning grants can be awarded for such activities as conducting feasibility analyses, developing business and marketing plans. Working Capital grants may be used for expenses associated with operations while the venture develops cash flow. Some things that grant funds cannot be used for:

- the development or acquisition of land, buildings or other facilities,
- to purchase, rent, or install fixed equipment,
- pay costs incurred prior to receiving the grant,
- pay expenses associated with agricultural production

The maximum allowable grant amount is \$100,000 for planning grants and \$300,000 for working capital. Grant recipients must provide 1-to-1 matching funds. Projects must be completed within two years.

### **Business and Industry Loan Guarantee Program**

These are loan guarantees with an upper limit of \$10 million. Some high-priority projects may be guaranteed up to \$25 million by the administrator in Washington.

Most business purposes are eligible, e.g. building and equipment purchase or development, working capital (no lines of credit); aquaculture; commercial nurseries; tourist and recreation facilities (except golf courses); hotels and motels; community facility-type projects; facilities for lease to private businesses; and housing development sites. Eligible borrowers may generally be an individual, cooperative, corporation, partnership, non-profit corporation, Indian tribes or public body. Applications are made by the lender and business to USDA.

Rates and terms are negotiated between lender and borrower. A minimum of 20 percent tangible balance sheet equity is required on a new business and 10 percent on an existing business.

## **PUBLIC SOURCES OF FINANCING – STATE PROGRAMS**

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Under State legislation (Minn. Stat. sections 116J.993 to 116J.995), business receiving a “business subsidy” will be required, among other things, to enter into a “business subsidy agreement” that will include goals for wages and jobs to be offered and paid by that business. If those goals are not met within a certain period of time, in almost all cases the business will be required to repay the amount of the subsidy, plus interest.

### **MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development  
1st National Bank Building, Suite E200  
332 Minnesota St.  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1351  
(651) 259-7114  
(800) 657-3858  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

#### **Minnesota Investment Fund**

(651) 259-7430

Contact: Office of JOBZ and Business and Finance, Business and Community Development Division, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

The purpose of the Minnesota Investment Fund is to assist expanding businesses in creating and retaining high quality jobs, with an emphasis on manufacturing, technology and professional services employment. Through this program, administered by the Business and Community Development division of DEED, funds are awarded to local units of government to help them create quality employment opportunities and assist with business expansions. Businesses receiving assistance under this program from those local units of government are required to meet job creation and wage goals.

Funds for the Minnesota Investment Fund originate from two sources. The first source is a portion of the federally-funded Small Cities Development Program; the second source of funds is the state’s Minnesota Investment Fund appropriation, authorized by the Minnesota legislature.

This program is not intended to substitute for conventional business financing techniques, nor should it be used in place of programs, such as local revolving loan funds and the Small Business Administration programs described elsewhere in this Guide, which may be better suited to meet specific project needs. Instead, funds from this program are intended to be used in situations in which a funding gap exists and alternative sources of public and private financing are not adequate.

Grants are awarded to local governments which, in turn, make loans for specific business projects. Those loans may be used to finance building construction or renovation, property acquisition or

equipment or infrastructure improvements necessary to support businesses located or intending to locate in Minnesota. A local unit of government may receive up to \$1 million in economic development grants per state fiscal year.

**Application Process:** The first step in accessing a Minnesota Investment Fund grant is for the local unit of government to submit a preliminary inquiry with the office of JOBZ and Business Finance Business and Community Development application to DEED. The applicant and the business may meet with the appropriate loan officer at DEED to further discuss the proposal. If the project meets the program criteria, a final application package is given to the local unit of government to complete. Some of the items that must be included in the final application are:

- A project description and cost breakdown along with a description of the use of funds and jobs to be created.
- For an existing firm, financial statements for the previous three years plus three years of financial projections.
- For a proposed business, a business plan, including three years of financial projections.
- Resumes and personal financial statements of all principals of the business.
- Marketing and management plan.
- Sources of equity and other private financing. (Generally there must be \$3 or \$4 of private financing for every \$1 of state assistance requested.)
- Letters of commitment from all financial participants.
- Resolution of application from the local unit of government.
- Public hearing minutes.

Applications may be submitted anytime.

**Loan Repayment:** Loan repayment terms are negotiated between the applicant and the business and are approved by DEED. If state funds are used, the unit of government may keep up to 20% but not more than \$100,000 of principal repayment and all accrued interest to reuse on future economic development projects. Where federal money is the source of the grant, all repayment proceeds may be kept by the unit of government for use in future economic development activities.

### **Small Business Development Loan Program**

(651) 259-7430

The Minnesota Agricultural and Economic Development Board (MAEDB) makes small business loans, the funds for which come from industrial development bonds issued by the Board. Eligible businesses are those manufacturing and industrial businesses located or intending to locate in Minnesota and which meet the small business size standards of the U.S. Small Business Administration; eligible purposes of loan proceeds include the acquisition of land, building, machinery or equipment; building construction or renovations. Loan proceeds may not be used to meet working capital or refinancing needs.

Loans are made in amounts ranging from \$1 million to \$5 million.

## **Urban Initiative Program**

(651) 259-7424

The Urban Initiative Board has established partnerships with local and neighborhood organizations in the Twin Cities to provide loans to new and expanding businesses in St. Paul, Minneapolis, and suburbs (Anoka, Blaine, Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Columbia Heights, Crystal, Fridley, Hopkins, Lauderdale, Lexington, New Hope, Osseo, Richfield, St. Anthony, St. Francis, St. Louis Park, Spring Park, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul). State funds are generally used to match other private sources.

Loans are in the range of \$1,000 to \$150,000. Loans may be made to retail businesses but state participation is limited to \$25,000. The program will focus on minority business enterprises, defined by statute to include minority and women owned and operated enterprises and other businesses creating jobs for minority and other persons in low-income areas.

Eligible enterprises include start-up and expanding businesses, particularly manufacturing enterprises and others which create quality wages for their employees. Loan funds may be used for normal business expenses such as machinery and equipment, inventory and receivables, new construction, working capital, renovation and site acquisition. Funds cannot be used to refinance existing debt.

Community partners of the Urban Initiative Program are also connected to management training and other sources of assistance available to businesses. Contact the Urban Initiative Program at the number above to identify the group or groups which might best suit your needs.

Ineligible businesses are liquor stores, bars, smoke shops and adult entertainment.

## **Minnesota Indian Business Loan Program**

(651) 259-7424

The purpose of the Indian Business Loan Program (IBLP) is to support the development of Indian owned and operated businesses and to promote economic opportunities for Indian people throughout Minnesota. Applicants must be an enrolled member of a federally recognized Minnesota-based band or tribe. Businesses can be located anywhere in the state, although the bulk of the loans are made to businesses on a reservation.

Entrepreneurs may apply for a loan to finance the start-up and expansion of a for-profit business. Start-up and expansion costs, including normal expenses such as machinery and equipment, inventory and receivables, working capital, new construction, renovation, and site acquisition are eligible. Financing of existing debt is not permitted.

Each band or tribe is allocated funds from the Indian Business Loan Fund, based on the number of enrolled members. Loans may not exceed the funds available to any one tribe. Loan amounts are limited to 75 percent of the total project cost. Owners must provide a portion of the financing needed to undertake the project. The amount varies between 5 percent and 10 percent depending on the requirements of each band or tribe.

Interest rate may be between 2 percent and 10 percent. Terms for real estate purposes are limited

to no more than 20 years. Non-real estate loans are limited to no more than 10 years.

The department accepts applications on an on-going basis, subject to the availability of funds. These applications are forwarded to the appropriate Tribal Council for further consideration. The department administers this program and services many of the loans.

### **Military Reservist Economic Injury Loan Program**

(651) 259-7523

The purpose of the Military Reservist Economic Injury Loan Program is to provide relief, via interest-free loans, for small businesses which suffer substantial economic injury as a result of an essential employee being called to active military service for 180 days or more. Eligible businesses must be small businesses as defined by Minn. Stat. 645.445, which specifies that it must be a for-profit business entity with either 20 or fewer full-time employees or less the \$1 million in gross sales (unless a technical or profession service business, for which gross sales are capped at \$2.5 million). An essential employee must be a military reservist and either an owner of the small business or an employee of the small business who has managerial or technical expertise critical to the day-to-day operations of the business. The small business must be sustaining or likely to sustain economic harm, meaning it cannot meet its obligations as they mature, or pay its ordinary and necessary operating expenses, or provide a product or service as it has ordinarily done.

The department accepts applications on an on-going basis, subject to the availability of funds. One-time loans of \$5,000 to \$20,000 are available. The loan term is 4 1/2 years, with no repayment for the first 1 1/2 years and equal monthly payments over the remaining 3 years. The loans are interest-free. A Fact Sheet and a Loan Application Form for the program are available on the DEED website.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)

Prevention and Assistance Division

520 Lafayette Road, 2nd Floor

St. Paul, MN 55155-4100

(651) 296-6300

(800) 657-3864

The Prevention and Assistance division of the MPCA offers environmental assistance grants and loans that could help existing businesses move toward environmentally sustainable projects or practices. Projects must focus on pollution and waste prevention, recycling market development, environmental education, sustainable community development and/or resource recovery.

**Eligible Projects and Costs.** Projects that lead to source reduction, reuse or recycling of waste materials, develop markets for recyclables or compost, or result in better processing of waste materials are eligible for environmental assistance loans and grants. Also eligible are projects or practices that prevent or reduce toxic pollutants or hazardous substances, or that implement resource conservation or environmental education.



Funding is available for the development and/or implementation of specific project activities not already underway within organizations. In general, the costs of researching, developing, or implementing eligible projects qualify for environmental assistance grants. State agencies are not eligible to apply for OEA grants. Costs incurred before the execution of a grant agreement and the costs of purchasing real property are not eligible for funding. Start up businesses are not eligible for the loan program.

Priority projects or targets for funding may be accentuated in individual funding “rounds.” Priority projects will be identified in a Request for Proposals (RFP) issued at the onset of each competitive funding cycle and published in the State Register. The RFP may also identify additional restrictions on eligible costs or applicants that relate to specific funding priorities. Contact the MPCA for additional information at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

### **SMALL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT LOAN PROGRAM**

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)  
Small Business Ombudsman  
520 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 282-6143  
(800) 657-3938  
[www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbomb\\_loan.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbomb_loan.html)

This program provides financial assistance to help existing small businesses to help cover the costs of conduct of environmental projects such as capital equipment or the investigation and cleanup of hazardous materials. Special considerations maybe given to businesses that are sources subject to Clean Air Act Standards; undergoing site investigation and cleanup; doing a facility-wide environmental compliance and pollution-prevention project; or are part of an MPCA outreach priority.

**Eligibility:** To be eligible for the program, a borrower must be making an equipment purchase that meets or exceeds environmental standards, or doing a site investigation and cleanup; be a small business corporation, sole proprietorship, partnership or association; have fewer than 50 full-time employees; have an after-tax profit of less than \$500,000; and have a net worth of less than \$1 million.

**Terms:** The conditions of the loans available through the program are: loan amounts of not less than \$1,000 and not more than \$50,000; an interest rate of four percent or one-half the prime rate, whichever is greater; and a repayment term of not more than seven years. Collateral is required.

## **PUBLIC SOURCES OF FINANCING – LOCAL PROGRAMS**

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Various governmental units at different levels are currently providing some form of assistance to entrepreneurs. This assistance may be in the form of financial services and loan packaging or technical assistance, tax credits, and the like. To learn more about the variety of programs, contact the planning or business services unit of the county, municipality or township where the proposed business will be located.

In Minneapolis, contact the Community Planning and Economic Development Agency, Business Finance Unit, Crown Roller Mill, Suite 200, 105 Fifth Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55401, telephone (612) 673-5072. Request: Loan and Grant Publication.

In St. Paul, contact the Business Resource Center, 25 West Fourth Street, St. Paul, MN 55102, telephone (651) 266-6600 or [www.StPaulbusiness.org](http://www.StPaulbusiness.org). The Business Resource Center is the city of St. Paul's point of contact for business information and resources, including financial, management and technical assistance.

Note that the Resource Directory section of this Guide contains information on other sources of local, public financing.

## **PRIVATE SOURCES OF FUNDS**

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### **VENTURE CAPITAL FIRMS**

Venture capital firms provide equity capital to emerging and growth-oriented businesses that have high market potential. Their major function is to assess management ability, determine market potential and provide equity capital to businesses evidencing growth potential and anticipated high returns of venture investments. The listing of major venture capital firms in Minnesota can be found at your local business library.

### **MINNESOTA INITIATIVE FUNDS**

Minnesota initiative funds are charitable, private non-profit organizations funded with a McKnight Foundation allocation supplemented with funds from various public and private sources. Funds are distributed in grants and loans for human services, economic and business development, education, leadership development, health, community services and administration. The six initiative funds are separate entities and each has its own programs, funding levels and guidelines. Four of the six initiative funds (Northwest, Northeast, Central and Southwest) now refer to themselves as Foundations, which they feel more accurately describes their functions. Initiative funds, the counties they serve, and the office addresses are provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **COMMUNITY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS**

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are privately owned community development agencies serving a predefined geographic area. CDCs are usually organized as non-profit corporations in order to obtain funds from sources interested in economic development such as federal or state governments. CDCs address the development needs of a geographically defined area and investment emphasis will vary by locality. The one requirement for a CDC investment is that the venture be located in the community being served. Examples of programs operated by CDCs include economic and business development programs, including programs that provide financial and other assistance to start, expand, or locate businesses in or near the areas served so as to provide employment and ownership opportunities for residents of such areas; community development and housing activities that create new training, employment and ownership opportunities and which contribute to improved living conditions; and manpower training programs. Most CDCs can assist new or expanding businesses in developing a business plan, management or financial plans including assistance in qualifying for a loan, putting the paperwork together and presenting a proposal to a financial institution.

Information on Community Development Corporations can be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. Addresses and telephone numbers for both are listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

# INSURANCE

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Before you begin your business, you should thoroughly investigate your business insurance needs. The insurance industry today can tailor an insurance package to meet the general and specialized needs of almost every business.

Because the insurance problems and needs of each business differ, no general insurance program can be outlined to fit every business. To be completely satisfactory, it should be tailored to fit the individual needs of each business. You should consult with an experienced insurance agent or broker.

## TYPES OF INSURANCE

Business insurance is a matter of good business judgment. It is difficult to conceive of a sound business not carrying insurance custom-tailored to its individual needs. Among the basic kinds of coverage you should consider are:

**Property Insurance.** This protects the owner of the property (or the mortgagee) against loss caused by the actual destruction of a part or all of the property by fire, windstorm, explosion, falling aircraft, riot and other perils.

**Business Interruption Insurance (and Other Time Element Coverages).** These protect a business against loss of earnings resulting from an interruption caused by damage to or destruction of the physical property. Business interruption insurance will pay you approximately what you normally would have earned. The premiums, especially when part of a complete insurance package, are low. There is also similar insurance which provides coverage if you are hospitalized and have to shut down business.

**Liability Insurance (Including Business Automobile).** This protects a business against loss arising out of legal liability for death, injury or damage to the person or property of others caused by negligence. Included are obligations to pay medical, hospital, surgical and disability benefits to injured persons, and funeral and death benefits to dependents, beneficiaries or personal representatives of persons who are killed, irrespective of legal liability.

**Bonds.** Fidelity bonds guarantee against loss due to the dishonesty of employees. Surety bonds guarantee the performance of various types of obligations assumed by contract or imposed by law. Surety bonds are most often used in the construction industry and are often required on public construction projects.

Information on the Minnesota Bonding Program which provides individual fidelity bonds to employers for job applicants who may be denied coverage can be found earlier in this Guide in the section Business Licenses and Permits.

**Workers' Compensation Insurance.** This provides for payment of compensation benefits, as established by state law, to injured employees of a business. See the section in this Guide on Workers' Compensation for additional information.

**Group Insurance for Employees.** Group life insurance and group health insurance provided as employee benefits must conform to standards established by state and federal statute. These requirements are described in greater detail in the section of this Guide on Employee Benefits.

**Product Liability.** This refers to insurance coverage for any product manufactured by the insured. Coverage applies to the product once it leaves the manufacturer's hands and covers the manufacturer in case the ultimate user of the product sues for bodily injury or property damage.

**Social Networking.** Technology continues to change the landscape of potential employer liability. With the increasing popularity of online social networking Web sites, organizations should be aware of how employees use such technologies, especially in the workplace. Networking can be valuable, but employers must realize the potential risks and weigh the costs and benefits of allowing access to Web sites like MySpace and Facebook in the workplace. For assistance in navigating any of these issues, contact your insurance agent or legal counsel.

## **E-INSURANCE FOR COMPANIES WITH AN ONLINE PRESENCE**

With the growth of the Internet and e-commerce, the law regarding business insurance is evolving as coverage is being extended to new areas. Both the insurance industry and the courts are starting to sort out how existing insurance products apply to e-commerce.

Businesses that operate on the Internet face the possibility that their activities may subject them to liability in other jurisdictions. Since the Internet transcends geographical boundaries, one may be subject to a lawsuit in another state or even another country. It is fair to say that any company doing business on the Internet should consider that it is essentially a global business that might be sued in any court and in any territory where its business presence becomes known.

Companies with operations on the Internet are in the business of information publishing, vulnerable to liabilities that typically plague media companies such as defamation, invasion of privacy and intellectual property infringement claims. While these causes of action are not new, an Internet company's assets are more vulnerable to theft or business interruption. Damages associated with intangible assets, such as data theft or loss of business capability, pose risks unique to Internet companies.

As with all insurance, a business must make sure of what is and is not covered by their current insurance before investigating the variety of Internet-specific policies.

## **HELP FOR BUSINESSES UNABLE TO OBTAIN LIABILITY INSURANCE**

The availability and cost of business insurance, particularly professional liability and general

commercial liability coverage, have attracted substantial recent attention. To help remedy this problem, two state programs assist businesses that are experiencing difficulty in obtaining liability insurance. These programs are the Joint Underwriting Association (JUA) and the Minnesota Market Assistance Plan (MMAP) program.

The JUA was created to provide liability insurance coverage only to persons or entities unable to obtain insurance through ordinary methods if the insurance is required by statute, ordinance or otherwise required by law, or is necessary to earn a livelihood or conduct a business and serves a public purpose. The legislature specifically authorized the JUA to provide insurance coverage to day care providers, foster parents, foster homes, developmental achievement centers, group homes, sheltered workshops for mentally, emotionally, or physically disabled persons and certain citizen participation groups. The eligibility of other classes of business for JUA coverage is determined on a class by class basis.

The JUA is specifically prohibited by statute from issuing either product liability coverage or environmental impairment coverage. Further, the JUA cannot issue coverage to any business which is conducted substantially outside the state of Minnesota unless the insurance is required by statute, ordinance, or otherwise required by law. The JUA may reject high risk clients and risks it deems hazardous.

After having been unable to find an insurer willing to write the coverage sought, application may be made to the JUA. A copy of each application is forwarded to the Minnesota Market Assistance Program. MMAP has 30 business days to produce a quote for an applicant before the JUA can extend coverage. Upon receipt of an application, the JUA will make a determination whether the risk falls within a class for which the Association has already been activated to provide assistance. The Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Commerce may publish notices of activation of the JUA for specified new classes of business each week in the State Register. The JUA has the authority to insure classes of business for 180 days from the time the notice is published. A public hearing may be held with each notice of activation in order to receive testimony from a class of business to determine whether statutory requirements for JUA coverage have been met.

The actual time frame for issuing a policy is dependent on several factors including whether:

- The appropriate policy form has been approved for use by the JUA Board of Directors;
- A rate schedule has been adopted for that class;
- The class or particular applicant requires committee or Board review prior to quoting;
- The 30-day MMAP period has expired and no quote for coverage has been offered;
- The applicant's current coverage has expired;
- The MMAP has reported to the JUA that no market can be found; or
- The applicant is quoted by MMAP a premium rate ten percent or more in excess of the JUA's rates for similar coverage.

## ISSUES FOR EMPLOYERS\*

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### WHO IS AN EMPLOYEE?

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#### IN GENERAL

Many laws affecting the worker/employment relationship will require the business owner to first determine whether an individual who performs services for the business is an “employee” for purposes of the particular law. **Business owners who use “independent contractors” may think they do not have employees and, therefore, employment laws do not apply to them. An individual’s status as an independent contractor, however, is not determined by agreement or by what he or she is called; the individual’s status is determined by what he or she does.**

The relationship between the business and the individual may be that of:

- A common law employee.
- A statutory employee.
- An independent contractor.

If the individual is a common law employee, the business by law must obtain workers’ compensation coverage, withhold FICA (Social Security and Medicare) and income taxes, pay the employer’s share of the FICA tax and pay federal and state unemployment taxes. Fair labor standards laws, occupational safety and health requirements and a variety of other federal and state laws also may apply.

If the individual is a statutory employee, the business does not withhold federal or state income tax. The employer should consult with an attorney or other competent tax advisor with respect to withholding Social Security and Medicare taxes and paying unemployment tax. Fair labor standards laws will probably apply.

An independent contractor is himself or herself a sole proprietor of a business, and not an employee of the firm who contracts with them. The tax requirements for sole proprietorships are discussed in the “Choosing the Form of Business Organization – Tax and Non-Tax Considerations” section of this Guide.

The question of whether a worker is an independent contractor or an employee may be determined by common law rules (definitions fashioned by the courts based on specific cases) or by statute. An person may be an employee for certain purposes but not for others. If a question arises, the employer is strongly urged to seek professional advice.

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\*A comprehensive discussion of employment issues is provided in the publication *An Employer’s Guide to Employment Law Issues in Minnesota*, available without charge from the Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office, 1st National Bank Building, 332 Minnesota St., Suite E200, St. Paul, MN 55101-1351. Another employment-related publication available from the Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office: *Why and How to Conduct a Human Resources Audit in Minnesota*. The text of each of these publications can be found at [www.positivelyminnesota.com/sbao](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/sbao).

## COMMON LAW EMPLOYEES

Under common law rules, courts balance a number of factors to determine whether an employer-employee relationship exists. The employer's right to control the manner and means of performing the work is the most important factor distinguishing an employer-employee relationship. It does not matter that the employer gives the employee substantial discretion and freedom to act, so long as the employer has the legal right to control both the method and result of the service.

Some of the other factors examined by the courts in determining whether an employment relationship exists include:

- **Mode of payment.** Workers who are paid on a regular basis, e.g., hourly or bi-weekly, are more likely to be considered employees than are persons who are paid a fixed amount for a specific service, regardless of the amount of time taken to complete the task. Withholding for taxes and providing fringe benefits such as medical insurance are considered typical of an employer-employee relationship.
- **Materials and tools.** A person who furnishes his or her own materials and tools and equipment and has a significant investment in the tools and equipment used in connection with providing the service is less likely to be considered an employee than is a person who uses tools and materials furnished by the hiring entity.
- **Control of the premises.** An employer-employee relationship is more likely to be found where the hiring entity owns or controls the premises where the work is performed. Premises controlled by the service provider or by a third person are considered more characteristic of an independent contractor relationship.
- **Right of discharge.** The ability of the hiring entity to terminate or discharge the worker and/or the ability of the worker to leave before the task is completed without becoming liable for nonperformance under the contract or agreement also are factors examined in determining whether an employment relationship exists.

It is important to note, however, that none of the above factors, standing alone, will determine whether an employment relationship exists. The most important factor is the hiring entity's right to control the manner and means of completing the work. Doubtful situations generally are resolved by examining the facts of the specific case in light of all relevant factors.

If an employment relationship exists, the legal requirements placed on employers will apply regardless of what the parties call the worker, regardless of how payments are measured or made, and regardless of whether the person works part time or full time, unless a statutory exception applies to the situation.

In some cases, an employment relationship may exist between the employee and more than one employer, creating a situation of joint employment. A common example of this is when businesses obtain employees on contract from a temporary employment agency. It is important for employers to know that when they are in a situation of joint employment, both employers are jointly responsible to ensure that the employee is paid in accordance with the federal Fair Labor Standards Act as described in the Labor Standards section of this chapter. Note also that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued guidance on the application of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Equal Pay Act (EPA) to individuals placed in job assignments by



temporary employment agencies and other staffing firms (the EEOC refers to such individuals as “contingent workers”). In that Guidance, the EEOC states that either the staffing firm or the client (i.e. the business to which the contingent workers have been supplied), or both, may properly be considered an employer. If either or both has “control” over the contingent worker’s work, that party will be an employer under Title VII, the ADA, the ADEA, and the EPA. Also, even if either lacks such “control”, it will be considered an employer of that contingent worker, if it has enough other employees so as to be subject to those laws.

## **STATUTORY EMPLOYEES**

Even if a worker is not an employee under common law rules, he or she may be considered an employee for certain statutory purposes, such as FICA (Social Security and Medicare) tax, federal and state unemployment insurance taxes, workers’ compensation, Fair Labor Standards Act compliance, occupational safety and health requirements, and other statutory programs. Likewise, a federal or state statute may exempt certain employers or employees from its application.

Because both federal and state statutes define employees covered by their respective laws, both sources must be consulted before concluding a legal requirement is not applicable to a specific situation. Special rules apply to certain occupations, such as salespersons, and to special situations such as family owned businesses that employ family members.

The definition of “employee” often involves a legal determination. For this reason, particularly in unclear cases, it is important to consult an attorney before concluding an individual is not an employee.

## **INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS**

Persons who follow an independent trade, business or profession in which they offer their services to the general public usually are considered independent contractors and not employees. However, whether such persons are employees or independent contractors depends on the law and facts applicable to each case. For example, Minnesota law considers nonresidents who perform personal or professional services in Minnesota to be employees for certain purposes, such as income tax withholding. This is true even though under federal law they would be considered self-employed independent contractors. Similarly, certain individuals such as direct sellers and real estate agents are by statute considered independent contractors for federal tax purposes if certain conditions are met.

In general, the individual will be considered an independent contractor if the business entity obtaining the person’s services has the legal right to control the result of the work but does not have the legal right to control the manner and means of accomplishing the result.

Independent contractors offer their services to the public through the exercise of an independent business enterprise. An independent contractor is responsible for making his or her own estimated tax payments and paying self employment (Social Security and Medicare) tax. The business that obtains the independent contractor’s services generally is not required to obtain workers’ compensation insurance, withhold taxes or pay employment taxes on behalf of the independent

contractor. Independent contractors generally do not receive benefits such as paid holidays, health insurance or sick pay from the business that obtains their services.

## **INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

Effective January 1, 2009, Minn. Stat. 181.723, requires individuals (not corporations, LLCs or partnerships) who work as independent contractors in public or private commercial or residential building construction to obtain from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry an Independent Contractor Exemption Certificate (ICEC). For purposes of state's workers compensation, unemployment insurance, wage and hour, and occupational safety and health laws, individuals doing building construction work without an ICEC will be employees of the contractor for whom they are working.

To obtain an ICEC, individuals must complete and submit an application that establishes that they meet the conditions required to operate as an independent contractor. To operate as independent contractors, individuals must be able to meet the conditions set out in the new law's nine-factor test.

An ICEC permits individuals to work as independent contractors. Certificate holders, however, may work as either independent contractors or as employees. Whether a certificate holder is working as an employee or an independent contractor will depend on the conditions of the particular work relationship. To be an independent contractor, in addition to having the ICEC, the conditions of the work relationship must also meet the nine-factor test:

1. maintains a separate business with the independent contractor's own office, equipment, materials, and other facilities;
2. holds or has applied for a federal employer identification number or has filed business or self-employment income tax returns with the federal Internal Revenue Service based on that work or service in the previous year;
3. operates under contracts to perform specific services or work for specific amounts of money and under which the independent contractor controls the means of performing the services or work;
4. incurs the main expenses related to the service or work that the independent contractor performs under contract;
5. is responsible for the satisfactory completion of work or services that the independent contractor contracts to perform and is liable for a failure to complete the work or service;
6. receives compensation for work or service performed under a contract on a commission or per-job or competitive bid basis and not on any other basis;
7. may realize a profit or suffer a loss under contracts to perform work or service;
8. has continuing or recurring business liabilities; or
9. the success or failure of the independent contractor's business depends on the relationship of business receipts to expenditures.

Applications for the ICEC are available from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry

([www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/ICEC.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/ICEC.asp)). The application and renewal fee for the certificate is \$150. Independent contractors will be required to renew their certificate every two years.

Contractors are obligated to verify that the workers with whom they enter into agreements as independent contractors have a current exemption certificate. Contractors are required to maintain a copy of these certificates for five years. The DLI will maintain a list of certificate holders on its website, and certificates for those individuals will be available for download.

Contractors who employ individuals who do not have an ICEC will face penalties if they do not provide workers' compensation and unemployment insurance to these individuals, and do not properly withhold state and federal taxes from their employee's pay.

## **INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS IN THE TRUCKING AND MESSENGER/COURIER INDUSTRIES**

A new state law, Minn. Stat. 176.043, effective August 1, 2009, lays out the criteria for when an operator in the trucking and messenger/courier industry is considered an employee or an independent contractor. There are seven factors that must all be present for a worker to be considered an independent contractor. Some of the factors include when the individual:

- owns the equipment or holds it under a bona fide lease agreement;
- is responsible for the equipment's maintenance;
- pays for the operating costs;
- substantially controls the means and manner of the service performance; and
- enters into a written contract specifying that the relationship is one of an independent contractor and not that of an employee.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

In addition to consulting a professional advisor, more detailed information on "Who is an Employee" for various purposes may be obtained from the following sources, at the addresses and telephone numbers listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. See also the section of this Guide titled "Checklist for Hiring an Employee."

- **Federal income, withholding and FICA (Social Security and Medicare) tax:** Publication 15 – Circular E, **Employer's Tax Guide**; Publication 15A, **Employer's Supplemental Tax Guide**; Publication 1779 – **Employee or Independent Contractor**; and Form SS-8, **Determination of Employee Work Status for Purposes of Federal Employment Taxes and Income Tax Withholding**, available from the Internal Revenue Service.
- **Minnesota income tax:** **Minnesota Income Tax Withholding Instructions and Tax Tables**, available from the Minnesota Department of Revenue or on its website: [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us).
- **Workers' Compensation:** Information on the Minnesota Worker's Compensation System is available from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. The Department of Labor and Industry has adopted rules addressing the conditions under which workers will be

considered employees or independent contractors for workers' compensation purposes. These rules can be found at Minnesota Rules Chapter 5224. Minnesota Rules is available at law libraries and many public libraries. A general information sheet on independent contractor/employee questions is available from the Department of Labor and Industry's Legal Services Unit, many public libraries, and on the Department's website: [www.doli.state.mn.us](http://www.doli.state.mn.us).

- **Federal Fair Labor Standards Act:** U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration. Fact Sheet #13, Employment Relationship Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, [www.dol.gov/ESA](http://www.dol.gov/ESA).
- **Minnesota Fair Labor Standards Act:** Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, Labor Standards Division.
- **Human Rights:** Minnesota Department of Human Rights.

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## EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS

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### EMPLOYMENT AT WILL

The doctrine of employment at will generally states that an employment relationship may be terminated at any time by either party. In the absence of a collective bargaining agreement or other contract, the employer may discharge an employee at any time for any legal reason, or for no reason, with or without notice. Likewise, the employee may resign at any time for any reason, with or without notice. Minnesota follows this general rule.

The employment at will relationship can be contrasted with a contractual relationship, in which the rights and duties of the parties are governed by specific contractual provisions. The courts in recent years have identified several situations in which an employment at will relationship is changed to a contractual relationship, or where for public policy reasons the employment at will rule will be disregarded. These situations are discussed in the section on Employment Contracts, below.

### EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

Employment contracts may be written or oral. Employment contracts may be provided to employees who would not otherwise accept employment without the security of a contract, or in cases where the employer wishes to secure certain protections, such as the protection of confidential information or trade secrets. Employment contracts typically set forth the term or length of employment, compensation and benefits, job duties, and circumstances for termination. Some contracts also may include provisions relating to confidentiality, assignment of intellectual property rights like patents or copyrights, and non-compete agreements.

In recent years, Minnesota courts have used contract-based theories to carve out exceptions to the employment at will doctrine for public policy reasons. For example, the courts have found a contract to exist where the employee provides something of value, in addition to performing the job, in exchange for a promise of continued employment. A contract also has been found where the employee, in reliance on an offer of employment, gave up another job to accept employment. Most recently, Minnesota courts have determined that statements in a personnel handbook may

create an enforceable contract if the terms are sufficiently definite, are communicated to the employee, and the employee accepts the terms and provides value by continuing to work. Implied contracts may be found to exist in other situations.

In cases where employees are represented by a union, the employer and the collective bargaining agent negotiate a contract which governs the relationship of the parties throughout its term.

## **PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

Minnesota law protects employers' confidential information and trade secrets in several ways. First, an employee has a generally recognized duty of loyalty to not disclose trade secrets or proprietary information of the employer. Second, the statutory Uniform Trade Secrets Act, adopted by Minnesota, prohibits misappropriation of trade secrets. And third, employers may require employees to execute nondisclosure agreements to prevent release of trade secrets or confidential information during or after their employment.

To be protected as a trade secret under the Uniform Trade Secrets Act, the information must not be generally known or readily ascertainable by the general public, it must provide economic value to the employer, and the employer must make reasonable efforts to maintain its secrecy.

Confidentiality agreements must be supported by "adequate consideration," i.e., the employee must be given something of value in exchange for the promise not to disclose the information. Examples of adequate consideration vary from case to case but might include the initial hiring of the employee in exchange for the agreement, promotions, salary increases or cash payments. Continued employment, without more, generally is not recognized as adequate consideration to support a confidentiality agreement.

## **ASSIGNMENT OF PATENTS AND INVENTIONS**

An employer may require an employee, as a condition of employment, to assign the employee's rights in certain inventions to the employer. Under state law, such an assignment must exclude inventions for which no equipment, supplies, facilities or trade secret information of the employer were used, and which were developed entirely on the employee's own time, and which do not relate directly to the employer's business or its actual or demonstrably anticipated research or development, or which do not result from any work performed by the employee for the employer.

# **LABOR STANDARDS**

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## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Wages, overtime pay and record keeping requirements are regulated at the federal level by the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 USC § 201 et seq.; 29 CFR parts 510 to 794 and at the state level by

the Minnesota Fair Labor Standards Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 177. Each act specifies the employers and employees to which it applies, but where the Minnesota act and the federal act are different, the law providing more protection for the employee or setting the higher standard applies. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is administered by the Wage and Hour Division of the Employment Standards Administration at the U.S. Department of Labor ([www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)). The Minnesota Fair Labor Standards Act is administered by the Labor Standards Division of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry ([www.dli.mn.gov](http://www.dli.mn.gov)).

This section discusses provisions of the federal act and the Minnesota act pertaining to persons covered, minimum wage and overtime requirements, prevailing wage requirements, and wage records.

Before August 2004 and the implementation of federal regulations affecting the definition and compensation of executive, administrative, professional, computer and highly compensated outside sales employees, federal statutes and regulations set the higher standard for overtime compensation. Under current federal regulations, however, Minnesota statutes and regulations may set the higher standard. In that situation employers who formerly were required to pay overtime under federal law may no longer be required to do so but will be required to pay overtime under Minnesota law.

Employers should familiarize themselves with the federal and state requirements for labor standards in general, and the new overtime standards in particular, by visiting the websites of the United States Department of Labor, [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov) (Compliance Assistance information and assistance), and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry [www.dli.mn.gov](http://www.dli.mn.gov). In particular the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry has put up on its website an excellent “Recommended Analysis” tool for employers to use in determining which standards of overtime – federal or state – apply. That analysis is found at the “Labor Standards” section of the above referenced website.

Additional addresses and telephone numbers for direct contact with the U.S. Department of Labor and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry are provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

Employers should still assume that they are covered by the federal act unless they are told otherwise by legal counsel.

## **PERSONS COVERED**

### **Federal Act**

The federal act covers all workers employed by: 1) hospitals and residential care facilities; 2) public or private preschools, elementary or secondary schools, and institutions of higher education; 3) enterprises with annual gross sales of \$500,000, or more, whose workers are engaged in interstate commerce, produce goods for interstate commerce, or handle, sell, or otherwise work on goods or materials that have been moved in or produced for interstate commerce; and 4) public agencies.

Other employees will be covered by the federal act if they are individually engaged in interstate commerce, the production of goods for interstate commerce, or in any closely related process or

occupation directly essential to such production. Such employees include those who: work in communication and transportation; handle, ship or receive goods moving in interstate commerce; regularly use the mails, telephone, fax, or e-mail for interstate communication or who keep records on interstate transactions; regularly cross state lines in the course of their work; and perform clerical, custodial, maintenance or other work for firms engaged in interstate commerce or in the production of goods for interstate commerce. Due to the broad nature of this category, an employer that wishes to assert that its employees are not involved in interstate commerce should seek the advice of counsel.

Exceptions to the federal act are discussed in the section on “Federal Act Exemptions” below.

The federal Fair Labor Standards Act (and other federal employment laws, such as the Occupational Safety and Health Act, unemployment insurance, and anti-discrimination laws) apply to working welfare recipients in the same manner as it applies to other workers. The welfare law does not exempt welfare recipients from these laws. Welfare recipients would probably be considered covered employees in many, if not most, of the work activities under the welfare law, and in “workfare” arrangements. Exceptions are most likely to include individuals engaged in activities such as vocational education, job search assistance, and secondary school attendance, because these programs are not ordinarily considered employment under the federal act.

Further information on the federal act may be obtained by contacting the United States Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division at the local address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. If you have a question about the federal act and welfare recipients, a Wage and Hour publication entitled “How Workplace Laws Apply to Welfare Recipients” is available through the Wage and Hour Division, and can be found in the compliance information section of the Wage and Hour Division website.

## **Minnesota Act**

The Minnesota act generally applies to all employers and employees in Minnesota who are not covered by the federal act. Also, the Minnesota Act will apply to employers and employees subject to the federal act when the Minnesota Act would provide more protection to the employee or would set a higher standard. Exceptions to the Minnesota act are discussed in the section on “Minnesota Act Exemptions” below.

## **EXEMPTIONS**

### **Federal Act Exemptions**

The federal act exempts some employees from federal minimum wage or overtime requirements, or both. These exemptions are carefully defined and applied on a workweek by workweek basis. A business that wishes to pay a worker as an exempt employee should carefully check the exact requirements to make sure the exemption is applicable. The fact that an employee is paid a salary or commission rather than an hourly wage does not by itself determine that an employee is exempt from overtime or minimum wage requirements. A job title is also insufficient for determining exempt or non-exempt status. All of the specific requirements for the exemption must be met in order for the employee to be classified as exempt.

**Exemptions from Federal Minimum Wage and Overtime Requirements.** In general, the following are exempt from both the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the federal act: executive, administrative and professional employees and outside sales persons, employees in certain computer related occupations, employees of certain seasonal or recreational establishments, employees engaged in fishing operations, and farm workers employed by anyone who used no more than 500 work-days of farm labor in any calendar quarter of the preceding calendar year. Casual babysitters, and persons employed as companions to the elderly or infirm in a private residence may also be exempt from the minimum wage and overtime requirements.

**Exemptions from Federal Overtime Pay Requirements Only.** Most exempt employees fall into one of four classifications: executive, administrative, professional, or outside salesperson.

To qualify as an exempt executive, administrative or professional employee, an employee generally must meet certain tests regarding his or her job duties and be paid on a salary or fee basis at not less than \$455 weekly (\$23,600 annually), exclusive of board, lodging, or other facilities. The salary requirements do not apply to teachers, employees practicing law or medicine, or outside sales employees.

### **Executive Exemption**

To qualify for the executive employee exemption, all of the following tests must be met:

- The employee must be compensated on a salary basis (as defined in the regulations) at a rate not less than \$455 per week;
- The employee's primary duty must be managing the enterprise, or managing a customarily recognized department or subdivision of the enterprise;
- The employee must customarily and regularly direct the work of at least two or more other full-time employees or their equivalent; and
- The employee must have the authority to hire or fire other employees, or the employee's suggestions and recommendations as to the hiring, firing, advancement, promotion or any other change of status of other employees must be given particular weight.

### **Administrative Exemption**

To qualify for the administrative employee exemption, all of the following tests must be met:

- The employee must be compensated on a salary or fee basis (as defined in the regulations) at a rate not less than \$455 per week;
- The employee's primary duty must be the performance of office or non-manual work directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer or the employer's customers; and
- The employee's primary duty includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance.

### **Professional Exemption**

To qualify for the learned professional employee exemption, all of the following tests must be met:

- The employee must be compensated on a salary or fee basis (as defined in the regulations) at a rate not less than \$455 per week;
- The employee's primary duty must be the performance of work requiring advanced



knowledge, defined as work which is predominantly intellectual in character and which includes work requiring the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment;

- The advanced knowledge must be in a field of science or learning; and
- The advanced knowledge must be customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction.

To qualify for the creative professional employee exemption, all of the following tests must be met:

- The employee must be compensated on a salary or fee basis (as defined in the regulations) at a rate not less than \$455 per week;
- The employee's primary duty must be the performance of work requiring invention, imagination, originality or talent in a recognized field of artistic or creative endeavor.

### **Computer Employee Exemption**

To qualify for the computer employee exemption, the following tests must be met:

- The employee must be compensated either on a salary or fee basis (as defined in the regulations) at a rate not less than \$455 per week or, if compensated on an hourly basis, at a rate not less than \$27.63 an hour;
- The employee must be employed as a computer systems analyst, computer programmer, software engineer or other similarly skilled worker in the computer field performing the duties described below;
- The employee's primary duty must consist of:
  - 1) The application of systems analysis techniques and procedures, including consulting with users, to determine hardware, software or system functional specifications;
  - 2) The design, development, documentation, analysis, creation, testing or modification of computer systems or programs, including prototypes, based on and related to user or system design specifications;
  - 3) The design, documentation, testing, creation or modification of computer programs related to machine operating systems; or
  - 4) A combination of the aforementioned duties, the performance of which requires the same level of skill.

### **Outside Sales Exemption**

To qualify for the outside sales employee exemption, all of the following tests must be met:

- The employee's primary duty must be making sales (as defined in the FLSA), or obtaining orders or contracts for services or for the use of facilities for which a consideration will be paid by the client or customer; and
- The employee must be customarily and regularly engaged away from the employer's place or places of business.

### **Highly Compensated Employees**

Highly compensated employees performing office or non-manual work and paid total annual compensation of \$100,000 or more (which must include at least \$455 per week paid on a salary or fee basis) are exempt from the FLSA if they customarily and regularly perform at least one of

the duties of an exempt executive, administrative or professional employee identified in the standard tests for exemption.

### **Blue Collar Workers**

The exemptions provided by FLSA Section 13(a)(1) apply only to “white collar” employees who meet the salary and duties tests set forth in the Part 541 regulations. The exemptions do not apply to manual laborers or other “blue collar” workers who perform work involving repetitive operations with their hands, physical skill and energy. FLSA-covered, non-management employees in production, maintenance, construction and similar occupations such as carpenters, electricians, mechanics, plumbers, iron workers, craftsmen, operating engineers, longshoremens, construction workers and laborers are entitled to minimum wage and overtime premium pay under the FLSA, and are not exempt under the Part 541 regulations no matter how highly paid they might be.

### **Police, Fire Fighters, Paramedics & Other First Responders**

The exemptions also do not apply to police officers, detectives, deputy sheriffs, state troopers, highway patrol officers, investigators, inspectors, correctional officers, parole or probation officers, park rangers, fire fighters, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, ambulance personnel, rescue workers, hazardous materials workers and similar employees, regardless of rank or pay level, who perform work such as preventing, controlling or extinguishing fires of any type; rescuing fire, crime or accident victims; preventing or detecting crimes; conducting investigations or inspections for violations of law; performing surveillance; pursuing, restraining and apprehending suspects; detaining or supervising suspected and convicted criminals, including those on probation or parole; interviewing witnesses; interrogating and fingerprinting suspects; preparing investigative reports; or other similar work.

### **Other Laws & Collective Bargaining Agreements**

The FLSA provides minimum standards that may be exceeded, but cannot be waived or reduced. Employers must comply, for example, with any Federal, State or municipal laws, regulations or ordinances establishing a higher minimum wage or lower maximum workweek than those established under the FLSA. Similarly, employers may, on their own initiative or under a collective bargaining agreement, provide a higher wage, shorter workweek, or higher overtime premium than provided under the FLSA. While collective bargaining agreements cannot waive or reduce FLSA protections, nothing in the FLSA or the Part 541 regulation relieves employers from their contractual obligations under such bargaining agreements.

### **Minnesota Act Exemptions**

Like the federal act, the Minnesota act exempts certain workers from its coverage. A business that wishes to rely on any of the exemptions should check the law carefully to be sure that the exemption is applicable to the firm’s situation.

Exemptions from Minnesota Minimum Wage and Overtime Requirements. The Minnesota act covers all employees of an employer unless there is a specific statutory exemption. The following

are some of the more common exemptions for for-profit employers.

- Individuals employed in a bona fide executive, administrative, or professional capacity, or a sales person who conducts no more than 20 percent of sales on the premises of the employer. This exemption is discussed more fully under “Exemptions from Minnesota Overtime Pay Provisions” below.
- Taxicab drivers.
- Individual babysitters.
- Retail or service employees paid on a commission basis if the regular rate of pay exceeds one-and-one half times the minimum wage.
- Some salaried farm employees and farm employees under age 18 except corn detassellers and hand field workers when one or both of the minor's parents or physical custodians also are hand field workers. (Corn detassellers under age 18 are exempt from the state minimum wage provision, but must be paid for overtime.)

Other exemptions apply to certain employees of governmental units, nonprofit organizations and religious groups. Information on these exemptions may be obtained from the Labor Standards Division of the Department of Labor and Industry.

**Exemptions from Minnesota Overtime Pay Requirements.** The requirement for employers to pay employees premium pay for overtime is determined by whether the worker is an exempt or nonexempt employee. The fact that an employee is paid a salary or commission rather than an hourly wage does not by itself determine whether overtime pay is required. The specific requirements of the law must be met. Four types of workers are exempt from overtime pay requirements. They are: executive, administrative, professional, and outside sales workers.

- **Executive:** An employee who is paid no less than \$250 a week in salary may qualify for exemption from overtime if: (1) the work consists mainly of the management of the business or management of a department or some other division of the company, and (2) if the employee regularly supervises and directs the work of at least two employees in the department or division (working foremen do not qualify.)
- **Administrative:** An employee who is paid no less than \$250 a week in salary may qualify for exemption from overtime if: (1) the work performed is office or nonmanual work directly involved in management policy or the general operations of the company or its customers, and (2) if the work calls for use of discretion and independent judgment. An employee must have enough authority to make policy decisions.
- **Professional:** An employee who is paid no less than \$250 a week in salary may qualify as an exempt employee if: (1) the majority of the work is in performance of tasks which assume a knowledge in an advanced field of learning, teaching or science, with consistent use of discretion and judgment; or (2) if the work performed is in a field of artistic endeavor, such as invention or use of imagination or talent. Generally, an advanced degree is a requirement of the job.
- **Outside Sales Worker:** This person is hired for, and is usually away from the place of business for, the purpose of making service calls or obtaining orders and contracts for products or services provided by the employer. The working hours require spending at least 80 percent of the workweek outside the employer's premises. In addition the outside work may not be conducted at any one fixed place, even if not owned by the employer.

Employees earning less than the amounts specified in each category above may still qualify as exempt, but they must fulfill work requirements more detailed than indicated above.

Other employees subject to the Minnesota act but exempt from overtime requirements are:

- Seasonal employees of a carnival, circus, fair, or ski resort.
- Construction workers of on-farm silos or installers of appurtenant equipment who are paid on a unit or piece rate.
- Salesperson, parts person, or mechanic paid on a commission or incentive basis if employed by a non-manufacturing establishment primarily engaged in selling automobiles, trailers, trucks or farm implements to ultimate purchasers.
- Employees of a retail or service establishment if the regular rate of pay is in excess of one and one half times the minimum wage and more than half the compensation represents commissions on goods or services.

## **MINIMUM WAGE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Federal Minimum Wage Requirements**

The federal minimum wage to be paid by covered employers is \$7.25 an hour effective July 24, 2009. These employers include businesses that produce or handle goods for interstate commerce; businesses with annual dollar volume of business of \$500,000 or more; and certain other businesses, including hospitals and nursing homes, private and public schools, and federal, state and local government agencies.

### **Minnesota Minimum Wage Requirements**

The Minnesota minimum wage is \$5.25 for small employers (annual sales volume of less than \$625,000) and \$6.15 for large employers (annual sales volume of more than \$625,000); a \$4.90 training wage may be paid to new employees under the age of 20 during their first 90 days of employment.

There is no longer a lower rate for minors. By state law, there is no tip-credit allowance.

In cases where an employee is subject to both the state and federal minimum wage laws, the employee is entitled to the higher of the two minimum wages.

Minimum wage rates apply to all hours work, whether part time or full time. Employers are required to pay for all hours worked including waiting time, call time, training time and any other time the employee is restricted to the premises of the employer.

### **Updating Wage Postings**

Employers are required to post a current (updated) notice of the applicable federal minimum wage rates and related obligations. Existing notices containing the prior federal minimum wage rate will be outdated and noncompliant. Failure to post an updated notice may result in fines of

up to \$10,000. Updated posters may be downloaded free of charge from the U.S. Department of Labor at <http://www.dol.gov/compliance/topics/posters.htm>.

## **Wages Using Payroll Card Accounts**

Employees in Minnesota may receive their wages via a payroll card.

Payroll debit cards allow an employee's net pay to be applied to a payroll account. The employee can then use the card to make purchases and withdraw cash at ATMs. Payroll accounts allow wages to be electronically transferred, eliminating the need for check cashing charges.

Before using payroll card accounts, employers first must file the required Department of Labor and Industry's registration form found at <http://workplace.dli.mn.gov/paycard/>. In addition before using payroll card accounts, an employer must provide employees written disclosure, in plain language, of all the employee's wage payment options. The disclosure must also include certain information, such as fees that would apply.

Use of a payroll card account cannot be a condition of hire or of continued employment, and employers may use the accounts only for those employees who voluntarily consent in writing on the disclosure form. The employer must retain the signed disclosure and provide a copy to the employee.

Employers must not charge employees any initiation, participation, loading or other fees to receive their wages via payroll card accounts, and payroll card issuers must not impose inactivity or dormancy fees. Also, any allowable fees imposed by the employer or the payroll card issuer that were not disclosed to the employee at the time of providing written consent may not be deducted or charged.

The law requires that an employee must be able to withdraw, by a free transaction, wages transferred to the account on the employee's regular payday. Employers are required to provide employees, upon request, one free transaction history each month.

The linking of payroll cards and accounts with credit, including loans against future pay and cash advances, is prohibited. Employers are also prohibited from using personal information generated by an employee's use or possession of the card or account for any purpose other than processing transactions and administering the account.

Employers may continue to pay employees via cash, paycheck and direct deposit. Employees may opt out of direct deposit by written objection to the employer. Employer's must give employees wishing to switch from payroll card accounts to another payment method a written form on which to indicate the change; the employer has 14 days to implement the new requested method.

## **OVERTIME PAY REQUIREMENTS**

### **Federal Overtime Pay Requirements**

The Federal act requires that covered non-exempt employees receive overtime pay at a rate of one and one-half times their regular rate of pay after 40 hours of work in a workweek. Exemptions from the federal overtime pay requirements are addressed above.

A workweek is a period of 168 hours during seven consecutive 24-hour periods. It may begin on any day of the week and any hour of the day established by the employer, but the established workweek must remain consistent. For purposes of computing overtime pay, each workweek stands alone; there can be no averaging of two or more workweeks (except for hospital or nursing home employees on an "8 and 80").

Overtime pay must be based on the regular rate. Generally, the regular rate includes all payments made by the employer to or on behalf of the employee (i.e., non-discretionary bonuses, incentive pay, shift differentials), although some statutory exceptions may apply. To calculate the regular rate, divide all pay received by all hours worked in the work week.

Overtime compensation must be paid in cash wages. There is an exception for public sector employees who can accrue hours worked over 40 as compensatory time to be paid out at a rate of time and one-half, in lieu of cash wages.

### **Minnesota Overtime Pay Requirements (Minnesota Statutes § 177.25)**

As a general rule, employers covered by the Minnesota act are required to pay nonexempt employees time and a half for all time worked in excess of 48 hours in one workweek. Each workweek stands by itself. The employer may not average the worker's hours over the two weeks. A special overtime law, Minnesota Statutes § 177.25, Subd. 2, applies to hospitals and the health care field.

Exemptions from the Minnesota overtime pay requirements are addressed earlier in this section. An exception to the 48 hour rule for payment of overtime appears at Minnesota Statutes § 177.41-177.44. This statute, the Minnesota Prevailing Wage Law, requires that employees who work on state-funded construction projects be paid time-and-one-half for all time worked in excess of eight hours per day and 40 hours per week.

Premium pay need not be made for a period when no work is performed, such as sick days, holidays, and vacations. Overtime applies only after 48 hours of actual work, not hours paid.

## **PREVAILING WAGE LAWS**

Both the federal government and the State of Minnesota by law require contractors who are awarded government funds for public works projects to pay their employees the prevailing wage for the locality in which the project is located. The Minnesota Legislature extended the provisions of its prevailing wage law to recipients of state funds for certain economic development projects.

The law applies to three forms of state financial assistance:

- Economic development grants where a single business receives \$200,000 or more of the grant proceeds;
- Loans made by a state agency for economic development purposes where the loan recipient receives \$500,000 or more of the loan proceeds, and
- Sales tax reductions or abatements made for economic development purposes in certain geographic areas.

Economic development is defined as financial assistance provided to a person directly or to a local unit of government or nonprofit organization on behalf of a person who is engaged in the manufacture or sale of goods and services, except for financial assistance provided for certain housing projects.

The law requires the person receiving or benefiting from the financial assistance, as a condition of receiving the assistance, to certify to the Commissioner of Labor and Industry that laborers and mechanics assigned to the project will be paid the prevailing wage rate for the area. The prevailing wage rate is determined periodically by the Department of Labor and Industry.

The federal government enforces the Davis-Bacon and related acts, which require the payment of prevailing wage rates and fringe benefits on federally-financed or assisted construction, and the Service Contract Act, which requires the payment of prevailing wage rates and fringe benefits on contracts to provide services to the federal government.

The prevailing wage rate is defined as the hourly basic rate of pay plus the employer's contribution for health and welfare, vacation, pension, and other economic benefits paid to the largest number of workers engaged in the same class of labor in the area. Area is defined as the county or other locality from which labor for any project normally is secured.

Current prevailing wage rates are available on the website of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry at [www.dli.mn.gov/LS/PrevWage.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/LS/PrevWage.asp).

## **RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS**

### **Federal Record Keeping Requirements**

Federal employer record keeping requirements are specified by regulation of the U.S. Department of Labor. Most of the information is of the kind generally maintained by employers in ordinary business practice and in compliance with other laws and regulations. The records do not have to be kept in any particular form and time clocks need not be used. The following records must be kept on all employees subject to the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the federal act.

The following is a listing of the basic records that an employer must maintain.

- Employee's full name and social security number.
- Address, including zip code.

- Birth date, if younger than 19.
- Sex and occupation.
- Time and day of week when employee's workweek begins.
- Hours worked each day.
- Total hours worked each workweek.
- Basis on which employee's wages are paid (e.g., "\$6 an hour", "\$220 a week", "piecework").
- Regular hourly pay rate.
- Total daily or weekly straight-time earnings.
- Total overtime earnings for the workweek.
- All additions to or deductions from the employee's wages.
- Total wages paid each pay period;
- Date of payment and the pay period covered by the payment.

Records required for exempt employees differ from those for nonexempt workers and special information is required on employees working under uncommon pay arrangements or to whom lodging or other facilities are furnished. Firms that employ industrial home workers must keep records in handbooks supplied by the Department of Labor.

In addition to the record keeping requirements imposed for records relating to employee compensation, a number of federal statutes impose record retention requirements on documents associated with employee recruitment and selection. These records include job postings and advertisements, test papers, interview records, lists of applicants, applicant resumes, ranking and evaluative criteria and other records. Requirements range from six months to five-year retention. Each year a comprehensive update of federal record retention requirements is published in the Federal Register. A business or government reference librarian can direct employers to the latest compilation.

### **Minnesota Record Keeping Requirements (Minnesota Statutes § 177.30)**

Employers covered by the Minnesota act are required to make and retain for at least three years the following records for every worker:

- Employee's name and home address;
- Occupation and rate of pay;
- Amount paid each pay period to each employee;
- Hours worked each day and each workweek, including starting and ending hours each day, with both morning and afternoon designations.

The above records must be available for inspection by a representative of the Department of Labor and Industry or must be submitted to the Commissioner on request. The employer is subject to a penalty of up to \$1,000.00 issued by the Commissioner and may also be subject to a civil action for each failure to submit or deliver records or failure to post a summary of the Minnesota Act or failure to maintain records.



## ADDITIONAL MINNESOTA REQUIREMENTS

### Statement of Wages

At the end of each pay period, the employer must give each employee a written earnings statement covering that pay period. The earnings statement may be in any form determined by the employer, but must include all of the following:

- The employee's name.
- Hourly rate of pay (if applicable; not applicable if the employee is paid on a basis other than hourly).
- Total number of hours worked by the employee, unless the employee is exempt from Minnesota Statutes Chapter 177 (e.g., bona fide executive, administrative, professional or outside sales person).
- Gross pay earned by the employee during the pay period.
- List of deductions made from the employee's pay.
- Net amount of pay after all deductions are made.
- The date on which the pay period ends.
- The legal name of the employer and the operating names of the employer if different from the legal name.

### Payment of Wages

**General Rule.** All employers are required by statute to pay all wages due an employee at least once every 31 days on a regular pay day designated in advance by the employer. Wages earned during the first half of the first 31-day period become due on the first regular payday following the first day of work.

**Discharged Employees.** When an employer discharges an employee, wages and commissions earned and unpaid at the time of discharge become immediately due and payable at the demand of the employee. If the employee is not paid within 24 hours following the demand, the employer may be liable to the employee for an additional sum equal to the employee's average daily earnings, for every day up to 15 days that payment is not made.

If a discharged employee collected, disbursed or handled money or company property, the employer has 10 calendar days after termination of employment to audit the employee's accounts and check in property before making final payment.

Commission salespersons must be paid within three working days if they are discharged or if they resign with at least five days written notice. If no notice was given before a resignation, the salesperson must be paid within six working days. If the discharged, or resigned salesperson collected, disbursed, or handled money or property, the employer has 10 working days to audit the accounts before the sales person can demand commissions earned through the last day of work.

Employees who work on any project that requires them to live away from home must be paid at intervals of not more than 15 days at the place of employment or in close proximity to the place of employment. When work that requires employees to live away from home ends, either by the completion of work or by the discharge or quitting of the employee, the employee's wages must be paid within 24 hours. If wages are not paid within 24 hours, the employer is liable for the employee's reasonable expenses of remaining away from home. If wages are not paid within two business days, an employer is liable for two times the employee's average daily wage from termination until payment is made, in full, regardless of how long it takes.

In 2006, the Minnesota Court of Appeals ruled that "wages" includes compensation for accumulated but unused vacation time for a discharged employee.

**Employees Who Quit or Resign.** An employee who quits or resigns and who did not have a contract for a definite period of service must be paid in full not later than the next regularly-scheduled payday after his or her last day of work. If that payday is fewer than five days after employee's last day of employment, the wages may be paid at the next regularly-scheduled payday, as long as that payday is no more than twenty days after the last day of employment. Wages not paid during this time period are immediately due upon the employee's request, and if not paid upon that demand the employer is liable to the employee for an amount equal to the employee's average daily wage for each day the wages are unpaid, up to fifteen days.

An exception is made for migrant workers; they must be paid within five days after they quit or resign. Also, an employee subject to a collective bargaining agreement will be subject to terms of payment contained in that agreement.

## **Penalties Relating to Payment of Wages**

Chapter 386 provides penalties for violations of many Minnesota statutes relating to the payment of wages by employers to employees. First, the penalties for an employer's failure to submit or deliver the employment records required by Minnesota Statutes section 177.27, subdivision 2, is \$1,000. Second, the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry has the power to issue compliance orders in connection with additional Minnesota statutes that speak to the payment of wages.

In terms of the Commissioner's enforcement powers, the Commissioner may issue cease and desist orders with respect to violations of any of the statutes listed in Minnesota statutes section 177.27, subdivision 4, or of the rules adopted under Minnesota statutes section 177.28. Also, with respect to the same violations, the Commissioner may take whatever steps he or she determines necessary to effectuate the purposes of the rule or statute violated, and also order the employer to pay the employee back pay, gratuities, compensatory damages (net of any amounts already paid to the employee), and liquidated damages. Repeated or willful violations are subject to a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 per violation per employee; Chapter 386 contains factors to be used by the Commissioner in determining the amount of that penalty. Finally, in some instances, an employer can be required to pay the litigation and hearing costs incurred by the Attorney General's office and the Department of Labor and Industry.

Chapter 386 also allows employees to sue directly in district court (without first exhausting administrative remedies) for violations of many of the Minnesota statutes relating to the

payment of wages. Employers found to have violated such statutes are also liable for an employee's reasonable costs, disbursements, witness fees, and attorneys' fees.

## **Deductions from Wages**

**In General.** By Minnesota statute, employers may only deduct certain items from an employee's wages. The employee must authorize the deduction in writing. Deductions authorized by law include deductions for union dues, life insurance premiums, hospitalization and surgical insurance, group accident and health insurance, group term life insurance, group annuities, contributions to credit unions or a community chest fund, contributions to a local arts council, local science council or Minnesota benefit association, contributions to a federally or state registered political action committee, and contributions to an employee stock purchase plan or savings plan. Minnesota Statutes § 181.06, subd. 2.

**Uniforms and Equipment.** Minnesota law limits the deductions directly or indirectly that may be made for uniforms, equipment and consumable supplies used on the job, and travel expenses. No deductions may be made for these items if the deduction would reduce the employee's wages below minimum wage. Deductions for uniforms or equipment may not exceed \$50, and when employment is terminated, the employer must reimburse the full amount deducted. The employer may require the employee to surrender items for which reimbursement is made, but may not hold the employee's last check for failure to return the items. Minnesota Statutes § 177.24, subd. 4 and 5; 181.79.

**Lost or Damaged Property.** An employer may not deduct from wages any amount for lost, stolen or damaged property, or recover any claimed amount owed by the employee to the employer, unless the employee voluntarily authorizes the employer in writing to make the deduction after the loss has occurred, or unless the employee is found liable by a court for the loss or indebtedness. There are specific statutory limits on the amount which may be deducted in each pay period.

**Child Support or Spousal Maintenance and Medical Support Obligations.** The Minnesota Department of Human Services is directed to have employers participate in a centralized work reporting system for child support enforcement purposes. Employers are required to report certain information on newly-hired employees, and on independent contractors, within fifteen days of hiring or engaging that person.

Employers also must ask all new employees whether they have court-ordered medical support or dependent health or dental insurance obligations that must be withheld from income, and the terms of any court order. If medical support must be withheld, the employer must do the appropriate withholding. If the employee is required to obtain dependent insurance the employer must tell the employee about the application process and enroll the employee and dependents in the plan. An employer who willfully fails to comply is liable for the health or dental expenses incurred by dependents during the time they were eligible to be enrolled. The law also requires a court to order the parent with the better health care insurance plan to provide it for the children, if the plan is paid for by the employer or union.

**Garnishment of Wages.** An employer may be required to garnish and pay over money an employee owes to third persons. Certain statutory requirements must be met, and there is a limit on the amount of wages that may be garnished. These requirements and limitations are provided in the garnishment notice. An employer is prohibited by law from retaliating against an employee due

to garnishment. An employer may charge the employee \$3 for each written response the employer must provide for purposes of administering the garnishment of wages.

### **Access to Personnel Records (Other Than Employee Assistance Records)**

Employers who employ one or more employees must allow those workers to review their personnel records and to obtain a copy under certain circumstances.

A worker must request the right to review his or her personnel file in writing, and can only do so once in a six-month period. An employee who separates from service may review the file once a year for as long as the personnel record is maintained. After the employee makes the request, the employer must comply within seven working days if the personnel record is in Minnesota, and within 14 days if the record is outside the state.

The file must be made available for review during the employer's normal hours of operation, but need not be made available during the employee's working hours. For separated employees, this requirement is met if the employee is given a copy of the file. The employer may require that the review be done in the presence of the employer or the employer's designee. After the review and upon the employee's written request, the employer must provide a copy of the record to the employee. The employer may not charge a fee for the copy. A request to review the record may be denied if the employer determines it is not made in good faith.

The law specifies a procedure for removal or revision of information that is disputed by the employee. If the employer and employee cannot agree on removal of disputed information, the employee may submit a written statement of up to five pages specifically identifying the disputed information and explaining the employee's position. The employee's statement must be included along with the disputed information for as long as the information is maintained in the employee's personnel record. A copy of the employee's statement must be provided to any person who receives a copy of the disputed information.

Communication of information obtained through a review of the employee's personnel record cannot be the basis of a defamation action, unless the employer refuses to follow the dispute resolution procedure. The law specifies conditions under which a defamation action may be maintained.

The law specifically prohibits retaliation against an employee for asserting his or her rights under the law. An employee may bring a civil action against an employer for violation of the law. Generally, the employee may recover actual damages and costs. If the employer is found to have unlawfully retaliated against the employee, the employee also may recover back pay, reinstatement or other equitable relief, and reasonable attorney's fees. The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry may also assess a fine of up to \$5000 for violations of the law.

### **Employer References**

Minn. Stat. 181.967, provides that a private employer (defined as an employer "that is not a public entity as defined in Minn. Stat. 13.02") is protected from liability for disclosure of the kinds of information noted below unless the current or former employee demonstrates "by clear and

convincing evidence” that the information was false and defamatory and that the employer knew or should have known that the information was false and acted with malicious intent to injure the current or former employee.

The protection applies to disclosure of information “in response to a request for the information” about:

- 1) dates of employment;
- 2) compensation and wage history;
- 3) job description and duties;
- 4) training and education provided by the employer;
- 5) acts of violence, theft, harassment, or illegal conduct documented in the personnel record that resulted in disciplinary action or resignation and the employee’s written response, if any, contained in the employee’s personnel record.

Any disclosure of the information in number five above must be in writing with a copy sent contemporaneously by regular mail to the employee's last know address.

The protection also applies to liability for written disclosure of the information below when the current or past employee has provided the employer with written authorization for disclosure:

- 1) written disciplinary warnings and actions in the five years before the date of the authorization, and the employee’s written response, if any, contained in the employee’s personnel record; written employee evaluations conducted before the employee’s separation from the employer, and the employee’s written response, if any, contained in the employee’s personnel record;
- 2) written disciplinary warnings and actions in the five years before the date of the authorization, and the employee’s written response, if any, contained in the employee’s personnel record;
- 3) written reasons for separation from employment.

For information disclosed under this section the employer must contemporaneously provide the employee or former employee with a copy of the information disclosed and to whom it was disclosed by mailing this information to the employee or former employee.

The prospective employer or employment agency shall not disclose written information received under this section without the written authorization of the employee.

The protections of the law do not apply to an employee’s action involving an alleged violation of Minn. Stat. 363 (the Minnesota Human Rights Act) nor does the law diminish or impair the rights of a person under a collective bargaining agreement.

### **Access to Personnel Records Relating to Employee Assistance Programs**

When employees avail themselves of an employer’s employee assistance program, Minnesota Statutes section § 181.980 governs what must be done with the resulting records. An employee assistance provider must give, upon written request of a person who has received such services (or

the parent or guardian of a minor person who has received such services), that person an opportunity to review and obtain copies of that person's employee assistance records. No fee may be charged for copies of records, and the employee assistance provider must comply with such a request no later than seven working days after receipt of such request, if the records are located in Minnesota, or fourteen working days if the records are elsewhere. Also, that statute mandates that such records "must be maintained separate from personnel records and must not become part of an employee's personnel file." The statute also prohibits disclosure of such records, or the fact of the participation in such a program, to a third person, including the employer or its representative, absent the prior written authorization of the person receiving the services, or his or her legal representative. There are some exceptions to that prohibition. The statute also provides that its rights and obligations "are in addition to rights or obligations created under a contract or other law governing access to records." Finally, the statute provides that "[i]n addition to other remedies provided by law, the recipient of employee assistance services may bring a civil action to compel compliance with this section and to recover damages, plus costs and reasonable attorney fees."

### **Indemnification of Employees**

Minnesota employers are required by state statute to indemnify their employees for civil damages, fines and penalties arising out of their employment. To receive indemnification, employees must have acted within the scope of their duties and not have engaged in intentional misconduct, willful neglect of duty, or bad faith. Exceptions apply when another law or private agreement provides for indemnification.

## **REST BREAKS AND LEAVE TIME**

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Unless a collective bargaining agreement provides otherwise, employers generally are free to establish their own policies regarding rest breaks and leave time. This section discusses several exceptions to the general rule.

### **REST BREAKS**

Employers must permit each employee who works eight or more consecutive hours sufficient time to eat a meal. The employer is not required to pay the employee during the meal break as long as the employee is completely relieved of his or her duties for 20 minutes or longer (generally 30 minutes under Federal rules). An employer also must allow each employee adequate time within each four consecutive hours of work to utilize the nearest convenient restroom. A collective bargaining agreement may establish different rest and meal breaks.

### **Accommodation for Nursing Mothers**

Minnesota Statutes § 181.939 requires employers to provide "reasonable unpaid break time each day to an employee who needs to express breast milk for her infant child," unless to do so would "unduly disrupt the operations of the employer." The statute also provides that the break time must, if possible, run concurrently with any break time already provided to the employee. Additionally, the employer must make "reasonable efforts" to provide a room or other location, in close proximity to the work area (other than a toilet stall), where the employee can express her milk in private. An amendment to Minn. Stat. § 617.23 makes clear that it is not a violation of the state "indecent exposure" law for a woman to breast feed.

## LEAVE TIME

### Vacation, Holiday, and Sick Leave

Minnesota employers are not required by law to provide vacation, holiday or sick time for their employees. Most employers do provide such leave, however. Employers should provide employees with notice of their vacation, holiday and sick leave policies in an employee handbook, or otherwise communicate these policies to employees in writing. These policies should address whether vacation or sick leave can be carried over from year to year, or whether it is forfeited if unused by the end of the year. The policies also should address whether the employee will be paid for unused leave. If the employer has a policy stating that employees will be paid any unused accrued vacation at termination, failure to make such payments, may result in an employer being found guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

### Family Leave

**Family and Medical Leave (Federal Law).** The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requires employers engaged in interstate commerce or in an industry affecting interstate commerce, of 50 or more employees in 20 or more weeks in the current or prior calendar year to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave or accrued paid leave to eligible employees for certain family and medical reasons. Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least 12 months, and for 1250 hours over the previous 12 months immediately preceding the need for FMLA leave, and are employed at a worksite where the employer employs at least 50 people within 75 miles.<sup>1</sup>

In determining if the business meets the 50 or more criteria, the employer should include those people whose names appear on the employer's payroll, including part-time employees, those currently on approved leaves of absence or disciplinary suspensions and jointly owned (e.g., leased) employees. Employees on long term or indefinite layoff are not counted. Employees whose worksites are outside the United States, its territories or possessions are not covered for purposes of determining employer coverage nor are they protected by FMLA.

Employers must grant leave to employees in connection with the birth, placement or adoption of a child, to care for a spouse, minor or incompetent child or parent who has a serious health condition, or for their own serious health condition that makes them unable to perform their job. A serious health condition according to Regulations promulgated by the U.S. Department of Labor, includes an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either hospital care; absence plus continuing treatment; pregnancy; a chronic condition requiring treatment; permanent long-term supervision; or multiple treatments (non-chronic conditions). Note that many courts, including the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, have been asked to interpret those Regulations; as those courts have reached varying conclusions, anyone with questions in this area is urged to seek the advice of counsel. Employees may be required to provide advance notice of the leave and medical certification as established by the FMLA and Regulations of the U.S. Department of Labor.

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<sup>1</sup>The U.S. Department of Labor's Regulations on the FMLA are at 29 CFR Chapter 825.

The FMLA requires all covered employers to comply with notification requirements, including posting information on the FMLA in a general location where all employees would have an opportunity to see it, providing general written information regarding employee rights under the FMLA to all employees, either in an employee handbook or as a handout, and providing all employees requesting or on FMLA leave with written notice detailing the specific obligations and expectations of the employee, and the consequences of failing to meet such obligations.

Although the law does not require the employer to provide paid leave, in some cases certain kinds of paid leave may run concurrently with FMLA leave. During the leave, employers must maintain group medical insurance coverage under conditions the employer would have provided coverage had the employee continued working. (Employers may in some cases recover premiums paid for maintaining health coverage from employees who do not return to work following the leave.) Upon return from FMLA leave, employees must be restored to their original or an equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits and other employment terms. The FMLA allows employers to deny job restoration to “key employees” (employees who are paid on a salary basis and are among the highest paid ten percent of the workforce) if reinstatement of the employee would cause “substantial and grievous economic harm” to the employer, and if the employer has provided the specific notification as required by the FMLA for “key employees”.

The law does not supersede any state or local law which provides greater family or medical leave rights, nor does it affect greater leave rights provided under a collective bargaining agreement.

Also, employers may adopt policies more generous than those required by the FMLA. Employers must post a notice, available from the U.S. Department of Labor, explaining employee rights and responsibilities under the law. This notice obligation also includes posting notices in languages necessary to accommodate the employer’s workforce.

**Parenting Leave (Minnesota Law).** A Minnesota employer must grant an unpaid leave of absence to certain employees in conjunction with the birth or adoption of a child. The law applies to employers who have more than 21 employees. The employee must have been employed by the employer for 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the request, on at least a half-time basis.

The length of the leave may not exceed six weeks, unless otherwise agreed to by the employer, and must begin at a time requested by the employee. The employer may adopt reasonable policies governing the timing of requests for unpaid leave. The length of leave may be reduced by any period of paid parental or disability leave, but not accrued sick leave, provided by the employer so that the total leave does not exceed six weeks unless otherwise agreed by the employer. The employer may provide additional parental leave benefits.

The employer must not retaliate against an employee for requesting or obtaining a leave of absence, and must continue to make group insurance or health care coverage available to the employee during the leave. The employer is not required to pay the cost of the insurance or health care coverage while the employee is on leave of absence.

If the leave is longer than one month, the employee must give the employer at least two weeks’ notice prior to returning to work.

An employee returning from a leave of absence is entitled to return to employment in the former position or in a position of comparable duties, number of hours, and pay. Certain exceptions



apply to situations where the employer experiences a layoff that would have affected the employee and to collective bargaining situations.

Upon return to work, the employee is entitled to the rate of pay the employee was receiving at the time of the leave, plus any automatic adjustments in the employee's pay scale that occurred during the leave period. The employee retains all accrued preleave benefits of employment and seniority.

An employee who is injured by a violation of this law may sue for damages and to recover attorney's fees, and may seek an injunction or other equitable relief from the courts.

Employers or employees with questions about the interaction of federal and state parenting or family leave laws should seek professional advice.

**Sick Child Leave (Minnesota Law).** Employers with more than 20 employees must allow employees to use personal sick leave benefits for absences due to illness or injury of their children, for reasonable periods of time, on the same terms as the employees are able to use sick leave benefits for their own illness. The child must be under age 18 or under age 20 if he or she is attending secondary school. To qualify for sick child leave, an employee must have worked for the employer for 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the request on at least a half-time basis. Salary continuation and disability payments are not included in determining benefits available for sick child leave. This section applies only to sick leave benefits paid from the employer's general assets, and (presumably) does not apply to sick leave benefits paid by a third-party insurer.

## **School Leave**

Employers with one or more employees must grant leave of up to 16 hours during any twelvemonth period to enable a parent to attend a child's or foster child's school conferences or school-related activities and day care or kindergarten activities if those conferences or activities cannot be scheduled during nonwork hours. Employees are eligible for school leave if they work on at least a half-time basis. Employees need not be paid for school leave, but they may use accrued paid vacation leave or other appropriate leave for this purpose. Where the need for school leave is foreseeable, the employee must give the employer reasonable prior notice and must make a reasonable effort to schedule the leave so as not to unduly disrupt operations.

## **Bone Marrow Donations**

Employers with 20 or more employees must grant paid leaves of absence of up to 40 work hours to an employee who seeks to undergo a medical procedure to donate bone marrow. The employer may not retaliate against the employee for requesting or obtaining the leave. The employer may require a doctor's statement verifying the purpose and length of the leave. If there is a medical determination that the employee does not qualify as a bone marrow donor, paid leave granted prior to the medical determination is not forfeited. There is no requirement that the employee be employed by the employer for a certain period of time before becoming eligible for the leave.

## **Military Leave**

Employers must allow regular employees who are members of the Military Reserve or National Guard or Civil Air Patrol unpaid time off for military duty and training. The employee generally must be reinstated to a position of like seniority, status and pay following discharge or release from active duty.

The federal Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) (38 USC Chap. 43) provides reemployment protection to veterans and employees who perform military service in the active military, the National Guard or Reserves. That law applies to federal, state and local governments and all civilian employers regardless of size. If an employee leaves employment for voluntary or involuntary military service that employee upon his return from active duty is entitled to return to the employee's job, with accrued seniority, provided the employee meets the act's five eligibility criteria: (1) the employee must have held a civilian job with the employer; (2) the employee must have informed the employer that the employee was

leaving for service in the uniformed services; (3) the period of service must not exceed five years; (4) the employee must have been released from the service under honorable conditions; (5) the employee must have reported to his civilian employer in a timely manner or submitted a timely application for reemployment.

The FMLA was amended in 2008 to permit a spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin to take up to 26 workweeks of leave to care for a member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness.

USERRA provides that employees serving in the uniformed services can elect to continue their group health coverage under an employer-sponsored group health plan for a period of up to 18 months. The Act increases that maximum period of group health plan coverage available for employees covered by USERRA from 18 months to 24 months, and applies to continuation coverage elections made on or after December 10, 2004. Employers dealing with service member employment and benefit protections can get more information from the Department of Labor website at [www.dol.gov/vets](http://www.dol.gov/vets). Information on the USERRA Notice Requirement is covered in the section on Posters.

## **Employment Protection for Attendance at Military Events**

Employers can not fire or take adverse employment action against any employee, or keep them from attending certain events relating to military service of the employee's spouse, parent or child to which the employee is invited. This could include departure or return ceremonies, family training or reintegration programs.

The employee must provide reasonable notice to the employer when requesting time off, and the employer must provide a reasonable amount of nonpaid time off for the employee, not to exceed two consecutive days or six days in a calendar year. The employer must not compel the employee to use accumulated but unused vacation for these events.

## **Jury Service**

Under Minnesota law an employer cannot deprive an employee of employment, or threaten or coerce an employee with respect to his or her employment, because the employee is called for, or responds to, a summons for jury service. An employer who violates the statute may be found guilty of criminal contempt and fined up to \$700 or imprisoned up to six months or both.

If the employer discharges an employee because he or she is called for or responds to a summons for jury service, the employee may bring a civil action for recovery of lost wages and reinstatement. The civil action must be brought within 30 days of the discharge. Recoverable damages cannot exceed lost wages for six weeks. An employee who prevails in the civil action may be allowed reasonable attorney fees. Minnesota law does not require an employer to pay the employee during the period of jury service unless salaried.

## **Election Judge**

An employee must be given paid time off to serve as an election judge. The employee must give 20 days written notice. The employer may reduce the pay by the amount paid to the election judge by the appointing authority. The paid time off requirement applies to all state elections unless otherwise provided by law.

## **Time Off to Vote**

Employers must allow their employees who are eligible to vote at a regularly scheduled state primary or general election; an election to fill a vacancy in the office of United States senator or United States representative; and a presidential primary election, to be absent from work for the purpose of voting during the morning of election day, without penalty or deduction from salary or wages because of the absence.

## **Political Convention Leave**

An employee who is a member of the state central committee or executive committee of a major political party, or who is a delegate to a political convention, is entitled to an unpaid leave to attend a meeting of the committee or attend the convention. Employees must provide ten day's written notice to the employer.

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# **EMPLOYEE TESTING AND BACKGROUND CHECKS**

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## **PRE-EMPLOYMENT TESTING**

A Minnesota employer may require an applicant to take a pre-employment test (other than a physical exam or alcohol or drug test) so long as the test is not given for the purpose of discriminating against any member of any protected class. (Protected classes are discussed in the section of this Guide on Human Rights.)

The test must measure only essential job-related abilities and must be required of all applicants for the same position, regardless of disability (except for tests authorized under the workers' compensation law). The test must accurately measure the applicant's aptitude, achievement level or other relevant factors and it may not reflect the applicant's impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills except when those skills are what are being legitimately tested.

Employers who employ at least 15 employees during each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year also must comply with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines for pre-employment tests. Under those guidelines, an employer may be required to prove that its test has no adverse impact on any member of any protected group. Employers who must comply with the EEOC guidelines are advised to seek the advice of counsel.

An employer conducting a pre-employment test should be able to demonstrate that the test truly measures essential job-related abilities. If a facially neutral test or other business practice has a statistically significant, disparate impact within a protected class, such as sex or race, an employer may need to show the practice is job related and, if so, that no comparable, effective practice exists which has a significantly lesser adverse impact. Unless the test is obviously job-related, such as a typing test for an applicant for a typing job, the employer may want to consult an expert to be sure the requirements of the law are met.

## **PRE-EMPLOYMENT PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS**

A Minnesota employer at their own cost, may require an applicant, as a condition of hire, to submit to a pre-employment physical examination, which may include a medical history, if the applicant has first received an offer of employment contingent only upon passing the physical exam; the exam tests only for essential job-related abilities; and the exam is required of all persons conditionally offered employment for the same position, regardless of disability (except for exams authorized under the workers' compensation law). The physical may include a drug and alcohol test if the requirements of the Minnesota drug testing statute are followed.

An employer may not refuse to employ an applicant due to physical inability to perform the job unless the applicant is unable to perform the essential requirements of the job. If it appears, pursuant to competent medical advice, that the applicant may not be able to perform the essential duties of the job, certain employers have an obligation to "reasonably accommodate" the applicant, unless the employer can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose undue hardship on the company. Reasonable accommodation means taking steps to accommodate the known physical or mental limitations of a qualified disabled person. The reasonable accommodation requirement applies to those employers with 15 or more employees. See the section of this Guide entitled "Issues for Employers – Human Rights."

## **EMPLOYEE DRUG TESTING**

By statute, an employer may not require an employee or job applicant to undergo drug testing unless testing is done pursuant to a written drug testing policy that meets statutory criteria, and testing is conducted by an approved laboratory. The statute applies to both alcohol and drug testing.

An employer may not discipline, discharge, discriminate against or require rehabilitation of an

employee on the basis of a positive test unless the test is verified by a confirmatory test. An employee or job applicant who is damaged by violation of the statute may bring a civil action against the employer or laboratory. An action for an injunction or equitable relief such as reinstatement with back pay also may be brought, and attorneys fees may be awarded.

Employers with at least one employee required to hold a commercial driver's license are urged to seek the advice of counsel regarding the potential applicability of federal regulations requiring drug testing.

## **POLYGRAPH TESTING**

State and federal laws prohibit employers from using the results of a polygraph or lie detector test to take adverse employment action against an employee or prospective employee. The federal law requires employers to inform employees of their rights under the law by posting a notice available from the U.S. Department of Labor. The Minnesota law is enforced by the Department of Labor and Industry, and the federal law is enforced by the U.S. Department of Labor. In addition to enforcement actions brought by the government agencies, an employee who is injured by a violation of the law may bring a private civil action against the employer.

## **GENETIC TESTING**

State law prohibits an employer or employment agency from, as a condition of employment, directly or indirectly administering a genetic test or requesting or requiring protected genetic information; that law also prohibits an employer or employment agency from affecting the terms or conditions of employment, or terminating the employment of any person, based on protected genetic information. Likewise, the state law provides that no person shall provide or interpret for any employer or employment agency protected genetic information on a current or prospective employee. Any person aggrieved by a violation of this law may bring a civil action and the court may award up to three times the actual damage suffered due to the violation, plus punitive damages, reasonable costs, attorneys' fees and injunctive or other equitable relief.

Similarly, the new federal Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act provides protection against the misuse of genetic information by employers. Employers may not use genetic information when making employment decisions such as hiring, firing and promotion or any other terms of employment.

## **USE OF CONSUMER REPORTS FOR EMPLOYMENT PURPOSES**

Employers who wish to obtain a consumer report for employment purposes should be aware of notice and consent requirements on employers who seek to obtain credit reports for use in connection with the hiring or promotion process. (A consumer report is a report prepared by a consumer reporting agency bearing on a person's credit worthiness, credit standing, credit capacity, character, general reputation, personal character or mode of living that is used in connection with employment, or eligibility for credit or insurance). Prior to obtaining a report, an employer must fulfill notice and consent requirements. First, the employer must provide notices to the applicant, in "clear and conspicuous" language contained in a separate written disclosure form that discusses only the notice, that a report

may be obtained for employment purposes. Second, the employer must obtain the applicant's written authorization to obtain the report. Third, the employer must certify to the reporting service that it has properly notified the applicant; that a copy of the report and summary of consumer rights will be provided to the applicant if any adverse action is taken based on the report; and that information from the report will not be used in violation of any applicable Federal or State equal employment opportunity law or regulation. Finally, before taking any adverse action based on information in the report, the employer must provide the applicant with a copy of the report and a summary of consumer rights.

Employers who obtain credit reports for job applicants, whether potential or current employees, should develop disclosure and consent documents. The Federal Trade Commission, which implements and enforces the Federal Fair Credit and Reporting Act for most industries, has issued sample notices which are available at <http://www.ftc.gov>.

Federal Trade Commission rules require all businesses that use consumer reports to properly dispose of sensitive information that they receive from the consumer reports. The affected businesses include lenders, insurers, employers, landlords, automobile dealers, and debt collectors. Proper disposal includes burning or shredding paper documents and destroying or erasing electronic media. The destruction can be outsourced if appropriate due diligence is conducted. For further information about the FTC's Disposal Rule, see <http://www.ftc.gov>.

## **TESTING RECORD KEEPING**

The federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act requires retention for one year from date of personnel action of the results of employment and physical testing or examinations. Federal regulations on testing for the use of alcohol or controlled substances impose various record keeping requirements of from one to five years. Each year a comprehensive update of federal record retention requirements is published in the Federal Register. A business or government reference librarian can direct employers to the latest compilation.

## **BACKGROUND CHECKS**

When hiring persons to perform certain jobs, employers are required by statute to perform a background check. For example, employers hiring security guards are required to check their backgrounds with the Minnesota Board of Criminal Apprehension; employers hiring certain counselors are required to check their references for evidence of sexual contact with patients or former patients. Also, other Minnesota laws require rental property owners to request background information from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension before hiring property managers. Likewise, employees, contractors and volunteers of a home health care provider or hospice are subject to background checks.

Employers in other instances may be interested in performing background checks of potential employees. Those employers are strongly urged to seek the advice of counsel before performing those background checks. That is for many reasons, including but not limited to avoid any claims of discriminatory use of background checks and to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Minnesota Human Rights Act, the Fair Credit Reporting Act and the Minnesota Access to Consumer Reports law.

Employers may not require an employee or prospective employee to pay for expenses incurred in criminal or background checks, credit checks or orientation, or to pay for the expense of training or testing that is required by federal or state law or is required by the employer for the employee to maintain the employee's current position, unless the training or testing is required to obtain or maintain a license, registration, or certification for the employee or prospective employee.

## **EMPLOYMENT OF MINORS**

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Minnesota employers generally are covered by the Minnesota Child Labor Standards Act. Federal child labor laws apply if the employer is under the jurisdiction of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and the federal act would provide more protection or set a higher standard. Information on federal child labor laws may be obtained from the United States Department of Labor.<sup>1</sup> Information on state child labor laws may be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. Addresses and telephone numbers for both are listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

### **FEDERAL CHILD LABOR STANDARDS**

The child labor provisions of the federal act are designed to protect the educational opportunities of minors and prohibit their employment in jobs and under conditions detrimental to their health or well-being. The provisions include lists of hazardous occupation orders for both farm and nonfarm jobs declared by the Secretary of Labor as being too dangerous for minors to perform<sup>1</sup>.

Regulations governing youth employment in nonfarm jobs differ somewhat from those pertaining to agricultural employment. In nonfarm work, the permissible kinds and hours of work, by age, are:

- 18 years or older: any job, whether hazardous or not, for unlimited hours.
- 16 and 17 years old: any nonhazardous job, for unlimited hours. (However, the State requirements do not allow 16 and 17 year olds to work after 11 p.m. on the night before a school day, or before 5 a.m. on a school day, subject to some exceptions.)
- 14 and 15 years old: outside of school hours in various nonmanufacturing, nonmining, nonhazardous jobs, under these conditions: no more than three hours on a school day, 18 hours in a school week, eight hours on a nonschool day or 40 hours in a nonschool week. Also, work may not begin before 7 a.m. nor end after 7 p.m., except from June 1 through Labor Day, when evening hours are extended to 9 p.m.
- Under a special provision 14- and 15-year-olds enrolled in an approved Work Experience and Career Exploration Program (WECEP) may be employed for up to 23 hours in school weeks and three hours on school days (including during school hours).

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<sup>1</sup>The U.S. Department of Labor has issued various Regulations on the Federal Child Labor Laws. These can be found in various Chapters in 29 CFR (including Chapters 570, 575 and 579).

- 14 is the minimum age for most nonfarm work. However, at any age, youths may deliver newspapers, perform in radio, television, movie or theatrical productions, work for parents in their solely owned nonfarm business (except in manufacturing or on hazardous jobs), gather evergreens and make evergreen wreaths.

Hazardous occupations which are not permitted for any minor under age 18 are: working with explosives and radioactive materials; operating certain power-driven woodworking, metalworking, bakery, meat processing, and paper products machinery; operating various types of power-driven saws and guillotine shears; operating most power-driven hoisting apparatus such as non-automatic elevators, fork lifts, and cranes; most jobs in slaughtering and meat packing establishments; most jobs in excavation, logging and sawmilling; roofing, wrecking, demolition, and shipbreaking; operating motor vehicles or working as outside helpers on motor vehicles; and most jobs in the manufacturing of bricks, tiles, and similar products. Exemptions from some of the Department of Labor's hazardous occupation orders apply for apprentices and students in vocational education programs.

In addition to the above-listed hazardous occupations for minors aged 18 and under, minors who are 14- and 15-years old may not work in the following jobs: manufacturing, mining, most processing work, and all occupations declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor; operating or tending most power-driven machinery; public messenger service; and work connected with warehousing, storage, transportation, communications, public utilities, and construction (except office and sales jobs when not performed on transportation vehicles or on construction sites).

The Child Labor provisions do not apply to children under 16 years of age employed by their parents in occupations other than manufacturing or mining or occupations declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor. However, this exception only applies when the parent is the sole employer of the minor.

Although an employer is not required by federal law to obtain an age certificate or work permit in order to hire minors, Minnesota law does require an employer to have proof of age of any employee or applicant who is a minor. Employers may, however protect themselves from unintentional violations of the child labor laws by keeping on file an age certificate or work permit for each minor employed. Employers who are found to have violated the federal child labor laws may be fined up to \$10,000 for each violation.

## **MINNESOTA CHILD LABOR STANDARDS**

Under the Minnesota Child Labor Standards Act, a minor under 14 may not be employed, except:

- If at least 11 years old, as a newspaper carrier.
- If at least 12 years old, in agricultural operations with parents' or guardian's permission.
- As an actor or model with approval from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry.
- As an assistant soccer referee.



A minor under 16 may not work:

- Before 7 a.m. or after 9 p.m. except as a newspaper carrier.
- More than 40 hours a week or eight hours in a 24-hour period except in an agricultural operation.
- On school days during school hours, unless an Employment Certificate is issued by the appropriate school officials and kept on file by the employer.

Sixteen- and 17-year old high school students may not work:

- After 11 p.m. on evenings before school days (11:30 p.m. with written permission of a parent or guardian) or
- Before 5 a.m. on school days (4:30 a.m. with written permission of a parent or guardian).

A minor may not be employed in an occupation found by the Commissioner of Labor and Industry to be particularly hazardous or detrimental to the well being of minors. The list of occupations is extensive. Some of the types of occupations that are prohibited for minors include those where the minor may be exposed to hazardous substances; those involving power-driven machinery and equipment; those which involve operation of amusement rides; jobs in processing plants, and jobs in establishments where intoxicating liquors are served. Questions concerning whether a particular occupation is prohibited for minors should be directed to the Labor Standards Unit of the Department of Labor and Industry at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

The following are exceptions to the general rule prohibiting employment of minors in hazardous occupations:

- A minor may be employed at tasks away from or outside of the area of hazardous operation, equipment or materials.
- The law does not apply to a minor employed to do home chores or to babysit or to a minor employed by his or her parents. Home chore work is that which is usual to the home of the employer. Work performed in connection with or as part of the business, trade, or profession of the employer is not a home chore. Home chores are all those variable tasks normal to the running of a household and include but are not limited to mowing lawns, raking leaves, removing snow, light housekeeping, washing clothes or dishes, vacuuming, yard cleaning and food preparation.
- The prohibitions do not apply to a minor training in a state-approved apprenticeship program or a program approved by the Division of Vocational Technical Education, Minnesota Department of Education.
- The prohibitions do not apply to 17-year-old high school graduates.
- The prohibitions do not apply if the corporation the minor works for is totally owned by, and its daily business is supervised by, one or both parents. If the minor's parent is a member of the family farm corporation where the minor works, the prohibitions also do not apply.

Every employer in Minnesota is required to have proof of age of any employee or applicant who is a minor. (Minnesota Statutes § 181A.06.) This must be secured from the minor in the form of an age certificate, a copy of the minor's birth certificate, a copy of the minor's driver's license, or a United States Department of Justice Immigration and Naturalization Service Employment

Eligibility Verification Form I-9.

The Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry may impose a fine of up to \$5000 for each child labor law violation. Misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor charges also may be brought.

## **PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEES WHO REPORT VIOLATIONS OF LAW**

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### **“WHISTLEBLOWERS”**

A Minnesota employer cannot discharge, discipline, threaten, otherwise discriminate against, or penalize an employee regarding the employee’s compensation, terms, conditions, location, or privileges of employment because:

- The employee, or a person acting on behalf of an employee, in good faith, reports a violation or suspected violation of any federal or state law or rule adopted pursuant to law to an employer or to any government body or law enforcement official;
- The employee is requested by a public body or office to participate in an investigation, hearing or inquiry; or
- The employee refuses an employer’s order to perform an action that the employee has an objective basis in fact to believe violates any state or federal law or rule or regulation adopted pursuant to law, and the employee informs the employer that the order is being refused for that reason.
- The employee, in good faith, reports a situation in which the quality of health care services provided by a health care facility, organization, or health care provider violates a standard established by federal or state law or a professionally recognized national clinical or ethical standard and potentially places the public at risk of harm.

An employee whose employment is involuntarily terminated may, within five working days following termination, request in writing that the employer provide the reason for the termination. The employer must provide the truthful reason for the termination in writing within five working days following receipt of the request. If the employee was terminated for “whistleblowing” activities, and the employer fails to provide the written reason for termination within the time period specified by law, the employer may be subject to a civil penalty of \$25 per day per injured employee, up to a maximum of \$750 per injured employee. Communication of the statement furnished by the employer cannot be the subject of a defamation action by the employee against the employer.

The identity of an employee making a report or providing information must be kept confidential by the public official or law enforcement officer unless the employee consents to identification or the investigator determines that disclosure is necessary for prosecution. If disclosure is necessary for prosecution, the employee must be informed prior to the disclosure. The law does not permit an employee to make statements or disclosures knowing they are false or that they are in reckless disregard of the truth. The law also does not permit disclosures that would violate federal or state

law or diminish or impair the rights of any person to the continued protection of confidentiality of communications provided by common law.

Employers must notify employees of their rights by posting a summary of the law. A summary is included on the minimum wage poster available from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry.

## **OTHER STATUTORY PROTECTIONS**

In addition to the protections of the “whistleblower” law discussed above, other Minnesota laws prohibit employers from discriminating, retaliating, or taking adverse action against employees for exercising their legal rights. Some of these laws include the Minnesota Human Rights Act, the federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the state and federal Fair Labor Standards Acts, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Workers’ Compensation laws, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, and the Minnesota Parenting Leave law. Employers also may not take adverse employment action against employees whose wages are subject to garnishment, employees who are required to report child abuse and who do so, employees who participate in a strike, employees who are called to jury duty or who are summoned to court, and employees who request access to their personnel files as permitted by state law.

The Clean Air Act, the federal Water Pollution Control Act, the Energy Reorganization Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, Asbestos School Hazard Detection Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, the Civil Service Reform Act, the Employee Polygraph Protection Act, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, the False Claims Act, the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act, the Financial Institution Reform, Recovery and Enforcement Act, the National Labor Relations Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, the Surface Mine Reclamation And Control Act, the Toxic Substance Control Act and the Whistleblower Protection Program of the Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century all provide specific protections from termination for employees who report violations of these federal laws.

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act protects investors by improving the accuracy and reliability of corporate disclosures made pursuant to the securities laws. The law includes a whistleblower provision aimed at protecting employees of publicly traded companies who report fraud against shareholders. In addition, employees are protected against discrimination when they have filed, testified in, participated in, or otherwise assisted in a proceeding filed or about to be filed against publicly traded companies relating to any securities law or other federal law pertaining to fraud against shareholders or any alleged violation. While Sarbanes-Oxley and the related rulemaking by the SEC and the stock exchanges has profoundly impacted the corporate governance and financial reporting processes at public companies, private companies should also pay attention to the provisions of these regulations and may realize benefits from improving their processes in order to respond effectively to internal or external complaints.

# **HUMAN RIGHTS**

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## **FEDERAL LAWS PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION**

Under Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, it is unlawful for any employer of 15 or more employees to refuse to hire, to discharge, or to treat employees differently in any way because of their race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Employers may not limit, segregate, or classify employees in any manner so as to deprive them of employment opportunities or adversely affect a worker's employment status because of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Note that the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. EEOC and many lower courts have in the past few years issued a number of decisions (and in the EEOC's case, guidance) on sexual harassment. Anyone with questions about this topic is strongly advised to seek the advice of counsel.

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) protects persons age 40 or older from discrimination by employers of 20 or more employees. Under that law, employers also must provide the same level of health care benefits to persons over the age of 65 as offered to younger employees. Note that the EEOC has issued guidance on, and many courts have decided cases involving, the type of waivers of claims under the ADEA that employers may lawfully obtain from their employees.

Minnesota law protects persons age 18 or older from age discrimination in employment.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination because of physical or mental disability and applies to any employer who receives federal financial assistance or is a federal contractor. This law is enforced by the Office of Civil Rights, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Chicago, Illinois and the U.S. Department of Labor. Any employer with a federal contract of \$2,500 or more must comply with an affirmative requirement to employ disabled persons. Alleged violations of this part of the Act are handled by the U.S. Office of Federal Contract Compliance.

The Americans With Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. The employment provisions of this Act are substantially similar to those in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The employment provisions of the Act apply to employers of 15 or more employees. To assist businesses in making structural modifications necessary to make their facilities accessible to disabled persons, both the Internal Revenue Code and Minnesota Statutes allow some or all of these expenses to be deducted in computing income tax.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 prohibits employers from discriminating with respect to the employment, promotion or employee benefits of persons who serve, or apply to serve, in the uniformed services. As that Act is written in broad terms, employers are urged to seek the advice of counsel in this area.

## **STATE LAW PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION**

The Minnesota law prohibiting illegal discrimination (including reprisals against persons who sought relief against discrimination) is the Minnesota Human Rights Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 363. Generally, it has wider application than the federal anti-discrimination laws. It

applies to all employers in the state who have one or more employees, as well as to employment agencies, labor organizations and temporary help agencies.

The state law makes it an unfair employment practice, except when based on a limited, statutory exception or a bona fide occupational qualification, for an employer to refuse to hire, to discharge, or otherwise to treat a person differently with respect to hire, tenure, compensation, terms, upgrading, conditions, facilities or privileges of employment, because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, age, or sexual orientation; or in reprisal for objecting to, or participating in the investigation or litigation of, alleged discrimination or for associating with a disabled person or persons of a different race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation or national origin. Employers may not use these protected characteristics as a factor in making any employment decision. In rare instances, certain jobs may require persons to be chosen on the basis of one of these characteristics, but there is a strict burden of proof on the employer to show that the discrimination was demanded by the job in that all or virtually all persons excluded on the basis of the protected characteristic could not perform the job or that some other compelling business reason exists that justifies the action.

Before hiring, an employer may not require or request from applicants, or from any source, information which pertains to a protected characteristic, including on an application form or in an interview. An employer may, however, seek information to determine whether a person can safely and efficiently perform the duties of the position at issue. This may include requiring or requesting a physical examination, if the requirements of the law are met (see the section of this Guide on pre-employment testing). In general, employers also may, with the consent of the employee, after employment has commenced, obtain additional medical information to assess continuing ability to perform the job or to assess employee health insurance eligibility; for purposes mandated by law; for purposes of assessing the need to reasonably accommodate an employee; or pursuant to the state drug testing law; or other legitimate business reasons not otherwise prohibited by law. With limited exceptions, medical documentation must be collected and maintained on separate forms and kept confidential.

Under the state law, businesses with 15 or more full-time or part-time employees must provide reasonable accommodation for their employees' and job applicants' known disabilities, unless the business can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the business. This requirement is similar to that required by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. "Reasonable accommodation" under the state law generally means making facilities readily accessible to the disabled person, or initiating practices like job restructuring, work schedule modifications, reassignment to a vacant position, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, or providing aides on a temporary or periodic basis. "Undue hardship" is determined by evaluating a number of factors, including the size of the business, the type of operation, work force size and composition, the nature and cost of the needed accommodation, the employer's ability to finance the accommodation, and good faith efforts to explore less restrictive or less expensive alternatives with the employee and individuals or organizations knowledgeable about the needs of disabled persons.

The state law provides that whenever health care records or medical information adversely influence any hiring, firing or promotional decision about an applicant or employee, the employer must notify that person of that fact within 10 days of the final decision. There is no requirement in the state law that the employee must first request the information from the employer.

The Act also makes it a discriminatory practice for an employer not to treat women who are pregnant, or who have pregnancy-related disabilities, the same as other persons who are not so affected, but who are similar in their ability or inability to work. An employer's duty to make reasonable accommodation, as discussed above, also applies to women disabled by pregnancy, childbirth or related disabilities.

The Human Rights Act prohibits a business from refusing to do business with a woman based on her use of her current or former surname; and a business may not intentionally refuse to do business with or contract with, or discriminate in the basic terms of the contract because of a person's race, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation or disability, unless it is for a legitimate business purpose.

Businesses are also prohibited from discriminating in the extension of personal or commercial credit, because of race, color, creed, religion, disability, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, or receipt of public assistance, including medical or rental assistance.

Another Minnesota law (Minnesota Statutes section 181.938) prohibits an employer from retaliating against an employee or prospective employee who engages in the lawful use of food, alcoholic beverages, or tobacco during non-working hours. Exceptions apply for bona fide occupational requirements or to avoid a conflict of interest, and in certain other circumstances.

Valid, voluntary or required affirmative action programs are not prohibited by the Human Rights Act. Obtaining otherwise prohibited information from applicants is allowed for affirmative action purposes, but it must be kept separate and apart from other job application information and not be provided to or considered by any person involved in the selection of an employee, except when an effort is being made to make a hiring decision from among candidates in an underutilized protected group, pursuant to a bona fide affirmative action plan.

The Human Rights Act prohibits advertisements for employment that state a preference for applicants based on any of the protected characteristics, such as race, color, creed, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, or marital status. Employers should avoid using terms which convey a preference for persons of a particular age or gender, e.g., "girl friday," or "maintenance man."

As a place of public accommodation, a business is prohibited from discriminating against the public on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, disability, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or sex. Thus, a business must make reasonable accommodation, including removal of physical barriers and modification of policies, for a person with a disability, unless such access would pose a direct threat. A properly identified service animal, accompanying a person with a disability, must be allowed in a public place, provided the animal is properly leashed.

## **CHARGES OF DISCRIMINATION**

An employee or applicant who feels discriminated against because of his or her age, race, sex, religion or other protected characteristic may file a charge with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights within one year of the occurrence of the discriminatory practice. The Department, after determining jurisdiction and accepting a charge for filing, will gather facts relevant to the

charge and weigh the evidence provided by both sides. While parties to a charge may be represented by legal counsel, every effort is made to keep the procedure simple enough so that neither side will necessarily have to retain an attorney. Both sides are encouraged to settle the matter at any time in the process. In Minnesota, aggrieved parties may bypass the Human Rights Department and go directly to state district court to bring suit against the employer.

If the evidence does not support the charge, the Department will issue a “no probable cause” finding on the merits of the charge. Note also that whether or not the Department concludes that the evidence supports the charging party’s allegations, the Department has the discretion to “dismiss” charges for a variety of reasons, such as not warranting the resources of that Department or a failure of the charging party to submit a rebuttal to the responding party’s answer to the charge. Note that both a finding of “no probable cause” and a “dismissal” may be appealed (although there are different time periods for each appeal). Note again that a charging party, no matter what the Department concludes, may file a private lawsuit in district court. If the charge of discrimination is supported by the evidence, action is taken to stop the discriminatory act or practice and relief is sought for the person who was discriminated against. If relief is not obtained through this conciliation, the Department or the charging party may take the matter to court or to a public hearing.

Relief in employment discrimination cases may include the hiring, reinstatement, or upgrading of a person; up to three times back pay, including compensation for fringe benefits and interest accrued; and adoption of policies or participation in a training program. Relief could also include other compensatory damages, punitive damages, and damages for mental anguish. Violators of the law also may be assessed a civil penalty payable to the state. A person who violates the laws regarding public accommodations discrimination is guilty of a misdemeanor.

Minnesota Rules 5000.2250 requires that an employer charged with discrimination must retain all charge-related documents, under its control, until the Department informs the employer that the charge has been resolved. All job applicant and employment records must be retained by an employer for at least one year after they are made, whether or not a charge has been filed.

In addition, a number of federal statutes govern the retention of records regarding employees’ charges of discrimination, including disability discrimination, improper termination, or violation of civil rights. These impose retention requirements of from one year to final disposition of charges, whichever is later. Each year a comprehensive update of federal record keeping requirements is published in the Federal Register. A business or government reference librarian can direct employers to the latest compilation.

## **GUIDELINES FOR PREVENTING DISCRIMINATION IN HIRING**

When interviewing job applicants, the employer should only ask questions which reasonably relate to the job in question. The burden of proof is on the employer to demonstrate that questions are not used to discriminate. Asking an applicant to supply information that is not job-related or that might reveal an applicant’s protected status could lead to charges of discrimination. Inquiries that may improperly request protected status information include those about age, date of birth, marital status (including identity or situation of spouse), sexual orientation, sex, race, creed, color, religion, national origin, and disabilities.

The employer may ask questions that help assess the applicant's ability to do the job, and which are asked of all applicants for the job. Inquiries that elicit information about the applicant's education, experience, abilities, licenses and certifications that are job related generally are permissible, as are inquiries about willingness to travel, salary expectations, references, and the applicant's interest in the job. It generally is permissible to talk about job duties and responsibilities, the business itself, career growth potential, and opportunities for advancement, so long as these topics are relevant to the job and are presented consistently to applicants, regardless of their individual status within a protected class.

An employer may not use prohibited information obtained from any source for the purpose of making a hiring or job decision. Employers should examine job requirements to ensure that they are not based on assumptions or stereotypes that are unrelated to job performance. Employers with questions in this area may contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

The ADA is a complex piece of federal legislation that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities, such as buying an item at a store, going to the movies, enjoying a meal at a restaurant, exercising at the health club, or having the car serviced at a garage.

To meet the goals of the ADA, the law established requirements for businesses of all sizes. These requirements initially went into effect in 1992 and have been evolving since. Businesses that serve the public must modify policies and practices that discriminate against people with disabilities; comply with accessible design standards when constructing or altering facilities; remove barriers in existing facilities where achievable; and provide auxiliary aids and services when needed to ensure effective communication with people who have hearing, vision, or speech impairments. All businesses, even those that do not serve the public, must comply with accessible design standards when constructing or altering facilities.

Title I of the ADA requires employers of 15 or more employees, to provide qualified individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from the full range of employment-related opportunities available to others. For example, it prohibits discrimination in recruitment, hiring, promotions, training, pay, social activities, and other privileges of employment. It restricts questions that can be asked about an applicant's disability before a job offer is made, and it requires that employers make reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities, unless it results in undue hardship.

Title I with respect to private employers is enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

Title II of the ADA applies the laws on both hiring and access to local, state and federal government agencies and public transportation. Title II (other than transportation) is enforced by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Title III of the ADA prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in places of public accommodation and commercial facilities. Places of public accommodation include privately owned businesses, establishments of all sizes such as restaurants, hotels, theaters, convention



centers, medical offices, retail stores, museums, libraries, private schools, health spas, and day care centers. Commercial facilities are businesses whose operations affect commerce, such as office buildings, factories, and warehouses. Public accommodations must: provide goods and services in an integrated setting, unless separate or different measures are necessary to ensure equal opportunity; eliminate unnecessary eligibility standards or rules that deny individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to enjoy the goods and services of a place of public accommodation; and make reasonable modifications in policies, practices and procedures that deny equal access to individuals with disabilities, unless a fundamental alteration would result in the nature of goods and services provided. (Examples of policies and procedures would be if a store has a policy to exclude all animals, the policy should be changed to permit people who use service animals, such as "seeing-eye dogs" and "hearing-assist-dogs" to enter the store with their service animals. A store that has a special accessible entrance that remains locked during business hours will need to change the policy and keep the door unlocked when the store is open. If security is a problem, an accessible call box or buzzer, identified by a sign and mounted in an accessible location and height, should be installed to enable people with disabilities to call staff to unlock the door. A restaurant that restricts seating of people with disabilities to one area must revise the policy to permit the range of choices enjoyed by others.) They must also ensure effective communication through the use of auxiliary aids and services when necessary, unless an undue burden or fundamental alteration would result. (Examples of auxiliary aids and services include reading written information to a person who is blind or who has low vision or providing large print, audiotape or Braille; and using written notes, sign language interpreters or using captioning to communicate with a person who is deaf, hard of hearing or who has a speech disability.) They must remove architectural and structural communication barriers in existing facilities where readily achievable, and provide goods and services through alternative measures when removal of barriers is not readily achievable. ("Readily achievable" means easily accomplished without much difficulty or expense. The "readily achievable" requirement is based on the size and resources of the business. Larger businesses with more resources are expected to take a more active role in removing barriers than small businesses. The ADA also recognizes that economic conditions vary. When a business has the resources to remove barriers, it is expected to do so; but when profits are low, barrier removal may be reduced or delayed. Barrier removal is an ongoing obligation. Businesses are expected to remove barriers in the future as resources become available.) When public accommodations or commercial facilities design and construct new facilities, or alter existing facilities, they must do so in accordance with the Standards of Accessible Design. (In some cases, existing conditions, limited resources, or both will make it not "readily achievable" to follow the Standards fully. If this occurs, barrier removal measures may deviate from the Standards so long as the measures do not pose a significant risk to the health or safety of individuals with disabilities or others.) Title III is enforced by the U.S. Department of Justice.

To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability or have a relationship or association with an individual with a disability. An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered, recent amendments mandate the definition of "disability" to be construed in favor of broad coverage of individuals. Employers can expect more employees to fall within the definition of "disabled" which will trigger the employer's duty to engage in the interactive process and provide reasonable accommodation more often.

There is a lot of guidance available regarding the ADA. For small businesses, compliance with the ADA is not difficult. To help businesses with their compliance efforts, Congress has established various technical assistance programs to answer questions about the ADA and has provided tax incentives. A listing of the various resources and tax code provisions is included in the Resource Directory Section of this Guide under Federal Government Listings and Additional Resources.

In 2009, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA) became law. The ADAAA significantly broadens the coverage of the ADA so that more employees with less severe impairments will be protected by the definition of “disability”. Employers are strongly encouraged to consult with legal counsel regarding disability assessments and reasonable accommodation issues, particularly in light of the ADAAA amendments.

### **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION REQUIREMENTS FOR GOVERNMENT CONTRACTORS**

Businesses that contract with the government may be subject to affirmative action requirements. Federal, state and local laws each have different criteria to determine if a business must comply with their respective affirmative action or equal employment opportunity requirements.

Under Executive Order 11246 (“Non-Discrimination in Employment by Government Contractors and Subcontractors”), as amended, and its implementing Regulations issued on November 13, 2000, by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), a business with 50 or more employees that has a non-construction contract (or subcontract) with the federal government of \$50,000 or more, or a business receiving in excess of \$10,000 for a federally assisted construction project, must develop an affirmative action plan. Note that those Regulations, according to the OFCCP, refocus compliance emphasis from the development of a written affirmative action plan to the implementation of such a plan into the overall management of the contracting or subcontracting business. Note also that those Regulations place greater emphasis on (and give OFCCP greater/monitoring powers over) whether such businesses are discriminating with respect to employee pay. Compliance with the Executive Order is monitored by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs.

Under Minnesota Statutes § 363A.36, vendors who intend to bid on any purchases or contracts exceeding \$100,000, and have had on any single working day in the past year more than 40 employees in Minnesota, must apply for a Certificate of Compliance from the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. State agencies cannot accept bids or proposals on purchases or contracts exceeding \$100,000 from Minnesota vendors unless the Commissioner of Human Rights has received the vendor’s affirmative action plan for the employment of minority persons, women, and disabled individuals. State agencies cannot make awards exceeding \$100,000 to Minnesota vendors unless the Commissioner of Human Rights has approved the vendor’s affirmative action plan and issued a certificate of compliance to the vendor. Vendors who do not have more than 40 employees in the state in which their principal place of business is located, will be required to certify that the business is in compliance with federal affirmative action requirements in order to receive awards exceeding \$100,000. The Department of Human Rights charges a \$75 fee for each certificate of compliance issued.

The cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul have city ordinances which require compliance with their specific affirmative action requirements. The Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights and the St.

Paul Department of Human Rights are the agencies which enforce the respective city ordinances. Other cities or counties in Minnesota also may have affirmative action or equal employment opportunity requirements for businesses who contract with them. The entity awarding the contract should be able to inform the business of its affirmative action requirements.

## **IMMIGRATION LAW COMPLIANCE**

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The federal Immigration and Nationality Act (18 U.S.C § 1324a) requires employers to verify that all persons they hire are legally authorized to work in the United States. The law also prohibits employers from knowingly hiring or continuing to employ persons not authorized to work in the United States as well as knowingly contracting for work by someone not authorized to work in the United States. The law applies to all employers, regardless of the number of employees they have, and to all individuals hired after November 6, 1986. Note that merely because a person holds a visa authorizing entrance into the United States, that person does not necessarily have authorization to be employed in the United States. It is the employer's responsibility to determine whether a person has that authorization to work in the United States. (Most functions of the former U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service have been transferred to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and divided into separate agencies. INS immigration services are now part of the Bureau of Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) and INS enforcement activities are part of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) within the Directorate of Border and Transportation Security.)

Employment verification is documented on Form I-9, available from the United States Department of Homeland Security or on their website: [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov) or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). The law requires the employer to ensure that every employee completes Section 1 of Form I-9 at the time the employee begins work. The law also requires the employer, within three days of hire, to review the documents establishing the employee's identity and eligibility to work and to properly complete Section 2 of Form I-9. The documents that satisfy the verification requirements are listed on Form I-9.

A self employed person who is a sole proprietor need not complete a Form I-9 on himself or herself. If, however, the business owner is an employee of the business entity (i.e., an employee of a corporation), a Form I-9 is required.

Employers must keep the verification forms on file for three years from the date of hire or for one year following the employee's separation from service, whichever is later. The forms may be inspected by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the United States Department of Labor, and the Office of Special Counsel for Immigration Related Unfair Employment Practices.

The administrative tasks associated with the preparation and storage of Form I-9 have become more flexible as a result of a new electronic signature and storage law passed in 2005. Public Law 108-390 amended §274A of the Immigration and Nationality Act by authorizing the use of electronic signatures by employers and employees to attest verification of identity and eligibility documents when completing Form I-9; maintenance of I-9 forms in PDF format, rather than (or in addition to) the previously accepted paper, microfiche or microfilm formats; and conversion of existing paper I-9 forms into electronic formats.

Sanctions for failure to comply with the law include warnings, cease and desist orders, and civil penalties ranging from \$275 to \$2,200 per violation. Total fines may exceed these amounts. Criminal penalties may be imposed for a pattern and practice of violations.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibit employment discrimination. Employers with four or more employees may not discriminate in the hiring, firing, or recruitment or referral for a fee of employees on the basis of the employee's national origin or citizenship status. In practice, this means that employers must treat all employees the same when completing Form I-9. Employers cannot set different employment eligibility verification standards or require that different documents be presented by different groups of employees. Employees can choose which documents they want to present from the lists of acceptable documents. An employer cannot request that an employee present more or different documents than are required or refuse to honor documents which on their face reasonably appear to be genuine and to relate to the person presenting them. An employer also cannot refuse to accept a document or refuse to hire an individual, because a document has a future expiration date. Penalties may be imposed upon violators. To minimize charges of discrimination, employers are encouraged to make hiring decisions irrespective of the national origin or citizenship status of applicants authorized to work in the United States. Questions like "What is your national origin?" and "Are you a United States citizen?" may be considered discriminatory. It is permissible, however, to ask whether an applicant is legally authorized to work in this country.

## **E-VERIFY**

E-Verify (formerly the Basic Pilot/Employment Eligibility Certification Program) is an online system operated jointly by the Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration (SSA). Participating employers can check the work status of new hires by comparing information from an employee's I-9 form against SSA and the Department of Homeland Security databases.

E-Verify is free and voluntary (with certain exceptions) and is the best means available for determining employment eligibility of new hires and the validity of their Social Security numbers. Federal departments and agencies require contractors to use an electronic system to verify worker's employment eligibility. The use of E-Verify in Minnesota is voluntary except for the Executive Branch of the State, recipients (vendors and subcontractors) of state contracts in excess of \$50,000 and recipients of business subsidy agreements with the State.

E-Verify program information can be found at the address and phone number in the Resource Directory Section of this Guide.

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## **OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Occupational Safety and Health Division of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry

administers the Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Act. The express legislative purpose of this Act is “to assure so far as possible every working man and woman in the State of Minnesota safe and healthful working conditions and to preserve our human resources.”

The Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Rules and Regulations adopt by reference the federal Occupational Safety and Health Standards. In addition, Minnesota has adopted some localized standards that apply to hazards not covered by the federal OSHA standards. Minnesota OSHA standards apply to all places of employment in the state with the exception of those under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government.

All places of employment are subject to inspection to ascertain compliance with published Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Rules and Regulations. Inspections are scheduled following the guidelines of an administrative inspection scheduling plan approved by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration and in accordance with established priorities. Those priorities are: (1) imminent danger conditions; (2) catastrophes/fatalities/ serious injuries; (3) employee complaints; (4) target industry inspections; and (5) follow-up inspections. If violations are found, a citation will be issued specifying abatement dates for all violations. A monetary penalty may also be assessed. Criminal penalties including imprisonment and fines also may be assessed for knowing or willful violations.

## **EMPLOYER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

An employer’s rights and responsibilities under the Act include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An employer must furnish to employees conditions of employment that are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious injury.
- Employers are entitled to participate in the development, revision or revocation of OSHA standards by commenting on proposed standards, participating in hearings concerning standards, or by requesting the development of a new standard.
- An employer may request a variance from the requirements of a particular OSHA standard if the employer is unable to meet the mandates of that standard and wishes to use alternative means of compliance.
- Employers are entitled to protection of trade secrets or other legally privileged communications.
- Employers must post the “Safety and Health Protection on the Job” poster in their places of employment. Posters may be obtained from the Department of Labor and Industry at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide or downloaded from that Department’s website, [www.dli.mn.gov](http://www.dli.mn.gov).
- Employers must provide to their employees all necessary protective equipment required by OSHA standards at no cost to the employee.
- An employer who receives a citation and/or proposed monetary penalty following an OSHA inspection may contest the citation or penalty by submitting a Notice of Contest to the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry.
- Employers may obtain technical assistance from OSHA by writing or calling any of the area

offices listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide or by accessing the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry or federal OSHA on the internet.

Employers can be fined up to \$25,000 if a violation of state standards, rules, or orders results in the death of an employee.

A small employer exception helps protect small companies (fewer than 50 employees) from bankruptcy by allowing the \$25,000 fine to be broken up into five annual \$5,000 installments as

long as the violation is not deemed to be willful or repeated. The state labor and industry commissioner can elect to waive the fine each year after the first if the employer is not cited for any more violations.

Businesses will be exempt from such fines if the owner or an employee with a controlling interest in the company is the one who dies.

Separate provisions of the law lengthen employee notice requirements by requiring employers to post notices of a citation at or near the place where a violation occurred for 20 days. Previous law required 15 days.

## **RECORDKEEPING**

Employers must maintain a log of injuries and illnesses as prescribed in the Minnesota OSHA rules and must post an annual summary of those injuries. The OSHA 300 Form, log of work-related injuries and illnesses, and Form 300A, summary of work-related injuries and illnesses, which are used for this purpose, includes information and instructions for completing the form and are available from the OSHA office of the Department of Labor and Industry. Additionally, employers must keep a record of each incident that appears on the log, using OSHA Form 301, Injury and Illness Incident Report, or the workers' compensation First Report of Injury Form. This injury and illness information must also be made available to an OSHA investigator should an inspection be conducted at the place of employment.

In addition, the Occupational Safety and Health Act imposes record retention requirements on documents relating to employee exposure to toxic substances. These documents include the above noted OSHA Form 300, records of medical examinations, records of exposure monitoring, records of injury from or adverse reaction to toxic substances and other records. The Act provides for retention of such records for periods of from five to thirty years. Each year a comprehensive update of federal record retention requirements is published in the Federal Register. A business or government reference librarian can direct employers to the latest compilation.

## **REPORTING WORK-RELATED FATALITIES**

Employers must report work-related fatalities that result in the death of at least one employee, or incidents that result in the in-patient hospitalization of at least three employees, to Minnesota OSHA within eight hours after the death or hospitalization. Such a report must be made orally, in person or by telephone, to one of the area offices listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. After normal business hours, the report can be made by telephoning (800) 321-6742.

## **WORKPLACE SAFETY PLAN**

Employers in certain industries must develop and implement a written workplace accident and injury reduction program to promote safe and healthful working conditions. Industries where a plan is required are identified by the Commissioner of Labor and Industry by Standard Industrial Classification, based on the industry segment's Bureau of Labor Statistics' injury and illness record. The list is updated every two years and is published in Minnesota Rules section 5208.1500.

An employer who is in a designated industry must develop its written plan within six months following the date the standard industrial classification (SIC) code for the industry is placed on the list. The program must have clearly stated goals and objectives, and must describe responsibility for implementing the program; management participation; methods used to identify, analyze, and control new or existing hazards, conditions and operations; communication of the plan to affected employees; investigation of workplace accidents and corrective action; and enforcement of safe work practices. The employer must conduct and document a review of the workplace accident and injury reduction program at least annually and document how procedures described in the program are met.

## **EMPLOYEE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Although the primary responsibility for compliance with the law rests with the employer, employees are obliged to comply with OSHA standards and regulations which are applicable to their own actions and conduct. Employees cannot be cited or fined for noncompliance; employers must set up their own disciplinary procedures for employees who violate standards or regulations. Employee rights include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Employees have the right to request an OSHA inspection by filing a written complaint with the Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Division describing the hazardous conditions that exist at the work facility. The complaint must be filed by a current employee or an authorized employee representative and must be signed. A complainant's name is not revealed nor is it part of any inspection record made available for review.
- Employees may participate in standards development activities.
- Employees must be notified of a variance request filed by their employer; employees may petition for a hearing on the variance request.
- Employee representatives may participate in the opening conference, walk-around inspection and closing conference conducted as part of an OSHA inspection; employees who exercise this right must be paid their usual wage.
- Employees may not be discriminated against because they exercised any right afforded them under the Minnesota OSHA Act. In addition, note that when an employee sues, alleging discrimination or discharge due to his or her assertion of rights under that Act, any communication between that employee and attorneys representing the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry is, per Minnesota Statutes section 182.669, subdivision 1, "privileged as would be communications between an attorney and a client."

## **EMPLOYEE RIGHT-TO-KNOW ACT**

The Minnesota Employee Right-to-Know Act is intended to ensure that employees are aware of the dangers associated with hazardous substances, harmful physical agents, or infectious agents that they may be exposed to in their workplaces. The Act requires employers to evaluate their workplaces for the presence of hazardous substances, harmful physical agents, and infectious agents and to provide training to employees concerning those substances or agents to which employees may be exposed. Written information on hazardous substances, harmful physical agents or infectious agents must be readily accessible to employees or their representatives. Labeling requirements for containers of hazardous substances and equipment or work areas that generate harmful physical agents are also included.

The Employee Right-to-Know Act applies to all Minnesota employers regardless of size (with the exception of federal agencies). Special provisions apply to certain technically qualified individuals as defined in the standard, farming operations, and waste service employers regulated by the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

Employers should conduct an inventory of their workplaces to determine what hazardous substances, harmful physical agents or infectious agents are present and which employees are at risk of exposure. Once the survey is completed, the employer must obtain, and have accessible to employees, written information on those substances or agents. This written information on hazardous substances is usually in the form of a material safety data sheet (MSDS) which can be obtained from the manufacturer of the substance. Material safety data sheets will provide the basic information that must be presented in the oral training program.

The Employee Right-to-Know Standard is being enforced as part of the Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health program. The standard provides guidelines concerning the type of information that must be included in the written training program, how often training must be provided, requirements for documentation and maintenance of training records, and labeling of hazardous substance containers and equipment that generates a harmful physical agent or infectious agents. The standard also includes lists of hazardous substances, harmful physical agents and infectious agents to assist employers in evaluating their workplaces. A copy of the Employee Right-to-Know Standard may be obtained by contacting the Minnesota Bookstore at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide or through the agency's website at [www.doli.state.mn.us](http://www.doli.state.mn.us). Questions concerning the Employee Right-to-Know Act may be directed to one of the Occupational Safety and Health Division offices, also listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **WORKPLACE SAFETY CONSULTATION**

The Department of Labor and Industry's Workplace Safety Consultation (WSC) unit offers a number of programs, including a grant program, to employers to identify potential hazards at their work sites and improve their safety management systems. For more information on these topics, see [www.dli.mn.gov/WSC.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/WSC.asp).



## **Safety Consultation**

WSC offers free, confidential assistance, on request, to help employers improve their safety and health record, lower the cost of accidents and reduce OSHA-issue citations and penalties. This program targets small, high-hazard businesses. No citations or penalties are issued as a result of using these services, although any problems identified by a WSC consultant that are not corrected by the employer can be reported to MN OSHA Compliance staff for further investigation.

WSC consultants will help employers recognize hazards, make recommendations for solving problems and suggest other sources of help that may be available. In order to receive these services, the employer must commit to the timely correction of any serious safety or health hazard that may be found during the site visit by WSC consultants. Once an employer makes that commitment, the WCS consultant conducts a site visit and issues a report containing recommendations.

## **Minnesota Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (MNSHARP)**

MNSHARP is a voluntary, consultation-based program that assists small, high-hazard employers in achieving safety and health improvements and recognizes them for doing so. Eligibility is limited to employers with up to 250 employees at the work site and not more than 500 at all sites corporation-wide; priority is given to employers with fewer than 100 employees. Participating employers receive a comprehensive safety and health consultation survey that results in a one-year action plan. During that year, participating employers must correct identified hazards and develop and implement an effective safety and health program; all employees must participate in these efforts. When the participating employer has met the requirements of the preceding sentence, and its lost-workday injury and illness rate falls below the national average for their industry, that employer is awarded with a MNSHARP Certificate of Recognition and for the next year that employer is exempted from programmed inspections from MNOSHA. Participating employers can enjoy renewed Certificates, as well as a continuance of their exemption from those programmed exemptions, if an on-site safety and health survey by WSC confirms that the employer is continuing to meet the requirements of MSHARP.

## **MNSTAR Program**

This program is a voluntary one, available to any employer in Minnesota, including small employers who previously successfully participated in MNSHARP. MNSTAR relies mainly on self-assessment by the employer, using the federal Voluntary Protection Program (see OSHA Instruction TED 8.1A, Revised Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) Policies and Procedures Manual). Participating in MNSTAR requires the employer to commit to completing an extensive application, which will include providing WSC with copies of all the written policies and programs of the employer that WSC requests. In addition, the employer's lost workday injury and illness rate must be below state and national levels for its industry.

## **Labor-Management Safety and Health Committees**

All employers with at least 25 employees are required to have a safety and health committee

comprised of representatives from labor and management. Also, any other employer is likewise required to have such a committee if: that employer has a lost workday cases incidence rate in the top ten percent of all rates for employers in the same industry; or the workers' compensation premium classification assigned to the greatest portion of the payroll for that employer has a pure premium rate, as reported by the workers' compensation rating association, in the top 25 percent of premium rates for all classes. If both the labor and management representatives request it, WSC is available to help interpret OSHA standards, offer training in self-inspection techniques, and prepare and assist in the preparation and implementation of educational and training programs.

### **Safety and Health Education Outreach Program**

WSC offers workshops to help educate employers and employees about workplace safety and health hazards and the OSHA standards that address them. The goal of these workshops is to lower injury and illness rates, and reduce workplace injury costs, by helping employers implement and maintain effective safety and health programs.

WSC, in partnership with 13 organizations throughout the state, offers a series of one-day safety and health seminars. Specific topics change each calendar quarter. In addition, upon request WSC will offer safety and health training to individual companies or organizations, by means of either an informal training session accompanied by an on-site consultation, or a formal training session.

### **Safety Grants Program**

The Safety Grant program awards up to \$10,000 to qualifying employers for the cost of projects designed to reduce the risk of injury and illness to their employees. To qualify, an employer must have workers' compensation insurance, be under MNOSHA's jurisdiction; a qualified safety professional must have conducted an on-site safety inspection and issued a written report with recommendations based on that inspection; the project must be consistent with the recommendations of that inspection, it must reduce the risk of injury or disease, and it must be feasible; the employer must be committed to the project's implementation, including an ability to provide funds to match the awarded grant amount, as well as be able to cover all estimated project costs by available funds, and; the project must comply with all federal, state and local laws and regulations. Priority for funds is given first to manufacturing businesses, then to workplaces that have had jobs lost due to safety issues, and then, finally, to all other projects.

## **WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PROTECTION**

Due to the degree to which workplace violence occurs, employers must affirmatively ensure that their own employees are free from job related violence, not only to create a safe working environment for their employees but also to reduce the likelihood of costly litigation and/or compliance settlements arising out of workplace violence issues.

While there is currently no standard that regulates violence in the workplace, OSHA's "general duty clause" (a clause designed to cover hazards where no specific standard exists) is available to place an affirmative duty upon employers to investigate and evaluate workplace hazards, and

to develop and implement preventive programs to curb violence and protect employees. The general duty clause could serve as the basis for a MNOSHA citation related to workplace violence. In addition, federal OSHA has developed guidelines concerning job-related violence in late-night retail establishments, health care and social service industries, and for taxi drivers.

WSC helps employers and employees reduce the incidence of violence in workplaces by providing on-site consultation, telephone assistance, education and training seminars, and a resource center. These efforts are targeted towards workplaces at high risk of violence, such as convenience stores, service stations, taxi and transit operations, restaurants and bars, motels, guard services, patient care facilities, schools, social service industries, residential care facilities and correctional institutions.

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## **WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE**

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### **WHAT IS WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE?**

Workers' compensation insurance provides compensation to employees who have a work-related injury or disease. Compensation includes partial wage replacement and full payment of medical and vocational rehabilitation costs. In case of death, workers' compensation benefits are paid to the employee's dependents. Workers' compensation insurance companies and self-insured employers pay these benefits and collect the premiums. The Minnesota workers' compensation law was designed to standardize benefits, reduce litigation, and encourage early rehabilitation intervention, good employee/employer relationships and return-to-work programs.

### **WHO IS REQUIRED TO HAVE WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE?**

Generally all employers are required to have workers' compensation insurance and display the name of their insurer in a conspicuous place on a poster provided by the Department of Labor and Industry. Under Minnesota Statute 176.021, every employer is liable to pay compensation in every case of personal injury or death arising out of and in the course of employment. Minnesota Statute 176.181, subd. 2. requires employers who have not been approved for self-insurance (through the Minnesota Department of Commerce) to provide workers' compensation insurance for their employees. Employees are generally defined as persons performing services for another for hire including minors and workers who are not citizens.

Some entities, if they have no employees are not employers so they have no one to insure:

- Sole Proprietorships: Individually or family run, non-incorporated businesses owned by one person, including true independent contractors, where any employees are immediate family members (a spouse, parent or child, regardless of age). Note: Once a non-immediate family member is hired, insurance is required.
- Partnerships: Partners in business or farm operations where every employee is a partner or a spouse, parent or child of a partner, regardless of age.

Other categories of employment are excluded from workers' compensation requirement:

- **Closely Held Corporations:** Executive officers owning 25 percent or more of a closely held corporation or spouse, parent or child of the executive officer, regardless of age, are automatically excluded unless the business elects to cover them. To qualify for this exemption, such corporation must have 10 or fewer shareholders and less than 22,800 hours of payroll in the preceding calendar year.
- **Employees of such a corporation** who are more distantly related by blood or marriage to an executive officer of the corporation may also be excluded by filing a written request to be excluded. This includes brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents and grandchildren. Cousins may not be excluded from coverage.
- **Limited Liability Companies:** There are exclusions for managers and members of their families that are similar to the exclusions for closely held corporations.
- **Family Farm Operations:** Persons employed by a family farm which pays or is obligated to pay cash wages during the preceding calendar year of less than the current coverage threshold. The threshold is \$8,000 unless the operation has \$300,000 in total liability coverage and \$5,000 in medical insurance coverage for farm laborers. Where the \$300,000 insurance coverage threshold is not met, the farm operation may pay up to the statewide average annual wage in total payroll to farm laborers in the previous year before workers' compensation insurance is required. The farmer-employer's immediate family members, farmers or their family members exchanging work within the community and their employees are also exempted from coverage. Executive officers of a family farm corporation are excluded.
- **Casual Employees:** An employee who is not working in the usual course of the trade, business, profession or occupation of the employer and both the employee and the employer understand that the employment is meant to be for one time or infrequent rather than permanent or periodically regular.
- **Household Workers:** This includes a domestic worker, a repairer, groundskeeper or maintenance worker at a private household who earns less than \$1,000 cash during a quarter of the year unless more than \$1,000 was earned in any quarter of the previous year.

The Department of Labor and Industry has definition sheets which expand the definitions and criteria above. They can be accessed at the address, phone number or website listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

The Minnesota Workers' Compensation Act provides that insurance coverage may be purchased for many of the above named classes of persons. When coverage is provided, the insured person becomes an "employee" as defined within the statute. When coverage is elected, written notice must be provided to the insurer and becomes effective the day following receipt of the notice or at a later date requested in the notice.

An employer contracting with an independent contractor may also provide insurance for that entity. The provider of the insurance may only charge the independent contractor a fee for the coverage if the independent contractor elects in writing to be covered and is issued an endorsement setting forth the terms of the coverage, the names of the persons covered, the fee charged and how the fee is calculated.

Employers who do not obtain the required insurance face serious consequences including penalties of up to \$1,000 per employee per week and an order prohibiting the employer from

employing any person. In addition, the employer of any nonresidential construction, repair, or remodeling project that fails to provide workers' compensation coverage for employees may be sued for damages by any losing bidder on the project. The losing bidder may be entitled to recover the amount of profit the winning contractor expected to make on the project, as well as costs and attorney fees.

## **WORKER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER**

The DLI Workers' Compensation Division is incorporating a new worker identification – or WID number into its system that may be used instead of a social security number (SSN) to identify claims.

The WID number is person-specific: a unique two- to eight-character number is automatically generated within the Workers' Compensation Division computer system when a claim-generating document is received (such as a claim petition where a First Report of Injury form has not been filed). It may be used rather than the SSN, with the date of the injury, to identify a specific case file.

The WID number is optional for now and will be for some time. Contact the DLI Workers' Compensation Division for more information.

## **WHAT INJURIES AND DISEASES ARE COVERED?**

Workers' compensation insurance covers injuries and diseases that arise out of and in the course and scope of the employment. A work-related injury or disease is generally a physical condition that is caused, aggravated, precipitated or accelerated by the work or the work environment. Covered injuries can occur at the work place or outside the work place if the employee is on an assignment or is in transit between different work sites.

## **EMPLOYEES WHO ARE INJURED OUT OF STATE**

Employees who are hired in Minnesota by a Minnesota employer or generally work here and also work out of state are covered by the Minnesota workers' compensation law. If a worker is employed in another state but is injured on the job in Minnesota, he or she can choose to be covered by the Minnesota workers' compensation law or by the law in his or her resident state.

A special provision for North Dakota employees limits the circumstances under which an employee hired in that state by a North Dakota employer could receive benefits under Minnesota law for injuries while temporarily working in Minnesota. Such an employee, who works in Minnesota fewer than 15 consecutive calendar days, or a maximum of 240 hours in a calendar year, will receive benefits under North Dakota law.

## **WHAT TO DO WHEN AN EMPLOYEE IS INJURED**

When an employee is injured, it is the employer's responsibility – not the employee's – to complete a First Report of Injury form. The employer must give the employee the "Minnesota Workers' Compensation System Employee Information Sheet" at the time the employee is given a copy of the First Report of Injury Form. This form must be sent to the employer's workers' compensation insurance company so that it is received no later than 10 days after knowledge of the injury. The insurance company in turn must send the report to the Department of Labor and Industry so that it is received no later than 14 days after the injury if the injured worker is disabled more than three days. If the report is not filed within these deadlines, the employer or insurance company can be fined by the department. Self-insured employers have 14 days in which to file the report with the department.

It is important that the report is filed promptly so the insurance company will have adequate time to investigate the claim. If the work-related injury is serious or results in a fatality, the Department of Labor and Industry must be notified by telephone within 48 hours. The First Report of Injury form also must be filed.

Completing a First Report of Injury form does not mean that the employer accepts liability for the injury. The insurance company will pay on the claim only after it has been investigated and determined that it is most likely compensable.

## **RETURNING AN EMPLOYEE TO WORK**

Employers are strongly encouraged to bring their injured workers back to work as soon as they can. In cases of serious injuries, this might mean reasonably accommodating employees as they improve or modifying jobs they had before they were injured. Employers are encouraged to establish disability management programs to plan for these cases. The employer's workers' compensation insurer can assist in establishing such a program.

If the employee requests it or if the employee remains (or is expected to remain) off work more than 90 days and a valid request for waiver of rehabilitation services is not filed by the employer/insurer, the employee is entitled to receive a vocational rehabilitation consultation to determine whether the employee is qualified to receive vocational services. A rehabilitation consultation is provided at the request of the employer, the insurer, the employee, or the Department of Labor and Industry and must be conducted by a qualified rehabilitation consultant registered with the Department.

It is important to coordinate these return-to-work programs with the employee's union, if there is one, to see that a return-to-work program does not conflict with seniority provisions in union contracts.

For employers of more than fifteen full-time employees, Minnesota law provides a civil penalty for an employer's refusal without reasonable cause to offer continued employment to an employee when continued employment is available within the employee's physical limitations. That penalty is one year's wages for the employee, up to \$15,000.

## **MAKING A SUITABLE JOB OFFER**

A suitable job offer is the offer of a job that is within the injured employee's medical restrictions and that returns the employee as close as possible to the economic status he or she enjoyed before the injury. Economic status includes not only wages, but also opportunities for promotion and advancement. Employee fringe benefits also may be considered in determining economic status. For example, if the employee had a minor injury, the only appropriate suitable job would be his or her old job or one similar to it. Any job, even a job with another employer, can qualify as a suitable job if it meets the tests of medical appropriateness and economic status, and takes into account the employee's former employment age, education, previous work history, interests and skills.

## **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

The majority of workers' compensation claims are administered without disputes arising. The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry "must make efforts to settle problems of employees and employers by contacting third parties, including attorneys, insurers, and health care providers, on behalf of employers and employees and using the department's persuasion to settle issues quickly and cooperatively." (Minnesota Statute § 176.261).

For this purpose, the Department has workers' compensation specialists and attorneys available to the public either by telephone or on a walk-in basis. The addresses and telephone numbers for both the St. Paul and Duluth offices can be found in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

If informal methods are unable to resolve the problem, the Department and the Office of Administrative Hearings offer administrative conferences and mediation sessions.

The Department offers administrative conferences to try to resolve medical and rehabilitation benefit issues. The judges at the Office of Administrative Hearings conduct conferences to determine if the workers' compensation insurers are to be granted their request to discontinue disability benefits to an injured worker. The holder of an administrative conference will attempt to help the parties reach acceptable resolutions of the issues, but if this is not possible, the Department will issue a decision and order, which is appealable.

Administrative conferences are designed to be fast, informal proceedings to resolve workers' compensation disputes. Attorneys may represent the parties but are not mandatory.

Mediation sessions are also used as a method to expedite the handling of disputed workers' compensation claims. The Department will conduct a mediation session at the request of the parties. All parties must be agreeable to the mediation. Unlike other types of dispute resolution proceedings, the presiding official does not issue a decision. The mediator assists the parties in their efforts to work towards solutions and makes sure the agreements are in conformity with the workers' compensation laws. If the parties are successful in reaching resolutions, the mediator will prepare the mediation award and arrange for it to be properly signed, awarded, served and filed. As with administrative conferences, attorneys may represent the parties, but are not mandatory.

Other dispute resolution services offered at the Office of Administrative Hearings are settlement conferences, small claims court, special terms hearings, attorney fees and cost hearings, and formal hearings on workers' compensation issues. Some decisions are appealable to the Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals and the Minnesota Supreme Court.

## **REDUCING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COSTS**

Workers' compensation insurance rates are set within broad limitations by the insurance company. Rates are adjusted by payroll risk classifications and by the employer's experience rating, which is the history of injuries in the business.

It is difficult to control the payroll risk classification because it is determined by the nature of the business and the type of work employees do. However, there are a number of ways to control the cost of workers' compensation premiums for the future. Employers who have accident prevention programs generally will have lower workers' compensation costs. The employer can take an active role in lowering workers' compensation costs by:

- Developing wellness programs that incorporate physical fitness and health education.
- Providing employee education on proper lifting techniques and appropriate body mechanics.
- Initiating return-to-work policies that include reasonable accommodation.
- Contacting Workplace Safety Consultation at the Department of Labor and Industry, which provides a free, nonenforcement service to assist small private-sector employers in high hazard industries in their voluntary efforts to improve workplace safety and health. The Workplace Safety Consultation Division can be reached at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

Under state law, all high hazard employers and those with more than 25 employees must establish a joint labor-management safety committee to address workers' compensation and workplace safety issues.

The employer's insurance company or agent can provide more information about accident prevention, safety and health programs and return-to-work programs.

## **BUYING WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE**

There are several thousand licensed insurance agents who sell workers' compensation insurance in Minnesota. It is best to contact several agents to review the business and to quote prices for the insurance. In Minnesota, workers' compensation insurance is sold through open competition, which means insurance companies establish rates and compete for business. All workers' compensation policies provide coverage mandated by law; therefore, only the price and quality of service varies, and shopping for insurance can save money. Other factors to consider in choosing a carrier are claims servicing, safety counseling, and the carrier's reputation.

Options other than insurance may be available to cover an employer's workers' compensation liability. For example, some large employers or groups of employers are approved by the Department of Commerce to self-insure, which allows them to directly manage their workers' compensation claims and contain their costs. Many large employers who are approved to self-insure their risk hire a claims administration company.

Occasionally, an employer is unable to obtain workers' compensation insurance on the open market because the business is too small to justify the expense of selling and servicing the account



or because of the nature of the risk involved in the business. In this case, the employer would buy the insurance through the Assigned Risk Pool. Additional information about this type of plan can be obtained from an insurance agent.

## **SEMINARS ON WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry provides speakers and sponsors seminars and programs for employers on controlling workers' compensation costs. Information about workers' compensation seminars may be obtained from the Department of Labor and Industry at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide, or at its website, [www.dli.mn.gov](http://www.dli.mn.gov).

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Additional information on workers' compensation may be obtained by calling the Workers' Compensation Division at the address and telephone numbers provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. The Division also produces a primer about HIPPA (privacy of health information) and workers' compensation which will be helpful to employers.

## **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

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Employers commonly provide some form of health care, life insurance and retirement benefits for their employees. Although employers are not required to provide these plans, if the plans are provided they must comply with federal and state laws.

## **FEDERAL EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT INCOME SECURITY ACT**

At the federal level, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), 29 United States Code §§ 1001-1461, governs pension plans and medical, surgical, sickness, disability and death benefit plans sponsored by employers who are engaged in interstate commerce or in other activities affecting interstate commerce. ERISA establishes standards governing information to be provided participants, eligibility for participation, benefit rights and benefit accrual, vesting, employer and employee contributions, payment of benefits, plan termination and mergers, and survivor benefits. Federal agencies charged with enforcing ERISA include the Department of Labor, the Treasury Department, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Fund. Information on ERISA may be obtained from the Department of Labor's Office of Pension, Welfare, and Benefit Programs at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

ERISA is an extremely complex and technical law. Historically it has been amended frequently by Congress, and been the subject of a great deal of litigation. Failure to conform to its requirements can create civil liability for the employer, and can cause the employer to lose a tax deduction for

amounts contributed to the benefit plan. For these reasons, employers who are contemplating benefit plans covered by ERISA should obtain the advice of experts in this field before setting up the plan.

## **MINNESOTA REQUIREMENTS FOR GROUP HEALTH AND LIFE INSURANCE**

Minnesota employers who offer group health insurance, health maintenance (HMO) coverage, or group life insurance must comply with Minnesota statutes and regulations of the Minnesota Department of Commerce concerning those products. In addition, HMO coverage is also regulated by Minnesota statutes and regulations of the Minnesota Department of Health. This is the case regardless of whether the employer is also covered by ERISA, although in some situations ERISA may preempt state law.

The state statutes and regulations establish minimum standards and requirements in areas like filing and obtaining approval of policy forms and certificates, minimum coverage requirements, content requirements for insurance certificates, limitations on cancellation and conversion procedures on termination of employment.

As with ERISA, the state requirements governing these plans are technical and complex. Expert advice should be sought before establishing any of these plans.

Insurance is regulated in Minnesota by the Minnesota Department of Commerce and, in the case of HMO coverage, by the Minnesota Department of Health. The departments can be contacted at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **RECORD KEEPING**

Both federal and state laws impose record keeping requirements on documents relating to employee benefit plans. These include plan descriptions, participants' elections, worksheets and other documents. Retention periods range from six years to duration of the plan plus one year. Each year a comprehensive update of federal record retention requirements is published in the Federal Register. A business or government reference librarian can direct employers to the latest compilation.

## **COBRA NOTIFICATION**

### **Health Insurance**

The federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA) requires employers who sponsor group health plans to offer covered individuals the right to elect continuation of the group coverage under certain circumstances. Minnesota law imposes additional requirements on employers whose health plans are funded through insurance contracts.

Employers who offer these types of benefits must provide employees (and, if covered, their spouses and dependents) with notice of their continuation rights when an event occurs that would otherwise cause a loss of coverage. The covered individual may elect to obtain for a limited period of time continuation of the coverage they had before the event. The individual may be required to pay up to 102 percent of the cost of the premium for their coverage.

COBRA requirements are complex. Firms that offer group health insurance to their employees should consult with legal counsel to assure that their notice procedures conform to federal and state law.

## **Life Insurance**

There is no right under federal law to continue employer-provided life insurance coverage after employment terminates. Under Minnesota law, however, group term life insurance policies issued within the state must permit covered employees who are voluntarily or involuntarily terminated, incur a reduction in hours to the point where they are no longer eligible for coverage, or are laid off, to elect continuation of the coverage for themselves and their dependents. Coverage ends after 18 months or on the date on which coverage is obtained under another group policy, whichever occurs first. As with health insurance continuation coverage, the employee can be required to pay the cost of the life insurance continuation.

## **HIPAA NOTIFICATION**

Employer group health plans are also subject to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). HIPAA prohibits certain forms of discrimination based on health status and grants certain health plan enrollment rights to employees. The main purpose of HIPAA, however, is to ensure that workers who change jobs will not lose health insurance coverage due to exclusions for pre-existing conditions. Under HIPAA, group health plans may not exclude coverage for pre-existing conditions for longer than 12 months (18 months for late enrollees). In addition, any exclusion period is reduced by an employee's period of coverage under a prior employer's group health plan. To implement these requirements, group health plans must provide "certificates of creditable coverage" to employees who lose coverage, and accept such certificates from other plans.

Insurance companies will often take responsibility for complying with HIPAA's notice and administrative requirements, but employers with insured plans should verify that their insurer is complying with HIPAA. Employers that maintain self-funded health plans are on their own, and should seek assistance from legal counsel to develop the appropriate notices and forms (or contract with a third party administrator for HIPAA compliance services). HIPAA also made changes to COBRA and cafeteria plans, and employers should review related forms and plan documents with the assistance of legal counsel.

## **HIPAA PRIVACY REGULATIONS**

HIPAA identifies three types of "covered entities" that must comply with the privacy requirements: health plans, health care providers that conduct certain transactions electronically, and health care clearinghouses.

For employers, that focus will be mainly on health plans. The regulations define a “health plan” broadly as any individual or group plan, insured or self-insured, that provides or pays for the cost of medical care. This includes group medical plans, dental plans, health care flexible spending accounts, managed care arrangements, and HMOs. If an employer operates an on-site medical clinic (or otherwise directly provides medical services) which conducts transactions electronically, that clinic may be covered under the new HIPAA privacy rules as a health care provider.

The HIPAA privacy regulations do not apply to group health plans with fewer than 50 participants, unless such a plan is administered by a covered entity other than the employer that established it. Plans that provide coverage that is incidental or secondary to medical care also are generally excluded from HIPAA privacy regulations.

Compliance with HIPAA privacy regulations is essential and should be discussed with private counsel.

## **PLANT CLOSINGS**

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### **FEDERAL LAW**

The federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) applies to employers of 100 or more full time employees. Employers with fewer employees are encouraged to comply with the spirit of the law, although they are not bound by it.

The federal law requires employers to provide 60 days’ notice to several entities before ordering a plant closing or massive layoff. These entities include affected employees or their collective bargaining representative, the state dislocated worker unit (in Minnesota, the Department of Employment and Economic Development and its Rapid Response Team, listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide), and the chief elected official of the unit of local government in which the business is located. If the firm is situated in more than one locality, notice must be given to the local governmental unit to which the employer pays the highest taxes.

Employers who violate the law may be liable to employees for back pay and benefits for which they would have been eligible under an employee benefit plan. An employer who fails to notify the local governmental unit of the plant closing may be liable for a civil penalty of up to \$500 per day of violation.

### **MINNESOTA LAW**

Minnesota law requires all employers who must provide notice under WARN to notify the Department of Employment and Economic Development (specifically, its Rapid Response Team) of the names, addresses and occupations of the employees whose jobs will be terminated. The law encourages, but does not mandate, businesses that are considering a plant closing, substantial layoff or relocation of operations outside Minnesota to give early notice of that decision to the Department of Employment and Economic Development, the employees of the affected establishment, any collective bargaining agent representing the employees, and the local

government unit in which the establishment is located. This notice is in addition to any notice required by WARN.

The law directs the Department of Employment and Economic Development to establish a program to help employers, employees and the community to respond quickly to the plant closing or layoff by providing information and technical assistance for dislocated workers. The law also provides information and technical assistance on accessing public and private services and programs for dislocated workers and establishes a grant program for examining the feasibility of alternatives to the plant closing. The Dislocated Worker Program is funded by a special payroll assessment that is paid with unemployment insurance taxes.

A new law provides employers facing economic hardship with an alternative to laying off their employees by participating in a shared work plan with the Minnesota department of Employment and Economic Development.

## **BANKRUPTCY NOTIFICATION**

Under Minnesota law, an employer must notify employees and job applicants that it has filed a petition for bankruptcy or has had an involuntary bankruptcy petition filed against it. Failure to provide the required notice is a misdemeanor.

## **POSTER REQUIREMENTS**

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A number of federal and state statutes require that employers post certain notices in places on the company's premises where employees are likely to see them. Examples of these locations include bulletin boards, entrances and time clocks and other conspicuous places. Where a company has more than one work site, posters must be placed at each site. Poster requirements are listed below. Posters are available FREE from the agencies listed, at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **FEDERAL POSTER REQUIREMENTS**

Please note that posting requirements vary by statute; that is, not all employers are covered by the US Department of Labor's statutes and thus may not be required to post a specific notice. For example, some small businesses may not be covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act and thus would not be subject to the Act's posting requirements. For information on coverage, visit the Department of Labor's "elaws (Employment Laws Assistance for Workers & Small Businesses) FirstStep Employment Law Advisor, FirstStep Poster Advisor" at [www.dol.gov/elaws/posters.htm](http://www.dol.gov/elaws/posters.htm).

## **Fair Labor Standards**

The U.S. Department of Labor requires employers to display posters on the federal minimum wage, overtime and child labor laws, and the Family and Medical Leave Act. Employees also must be notified of their rights under the Polygraph Protection Act of 1988. The Walsh-Healy Federal Contracts Act, the Davis Bacon and Related Acts, and the McNamara-O'Hara Service Contract Act require contractors to provide certain notices to employees working on government contracts. Posters and information are available from the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Information on federal requirements including equal employment opportunity, age discrimination, federal contract compliance, and compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 may be obtained from the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

## **Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)**

Employers are required to provide to persons entitled to rights and benefits under USERRA, a notice of the rights, benefits and obligations of such persons and such employers under USERRA. Employers may provide the notice, "Your Rights Under USERRA", by posting it where employee notices are customarily placed. However, employers are free to provide the notice to employees in other ways that will minimize costs while ensuring that the full text of the notice is provided (e.g. by handling or mailing out the notice, or distributing the notice via electronic mail). Posters and information are available from the U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Services at the website: [www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/poster.htm](http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/poster.htm).

## **STATE POSTER REQUIREMENTS**

### **Fair Labor Standards, Occupational Safety and Health, and Workers' Compensation**

The State of Minnesota requires employers to display posters on the state minimum wage law, including the provision for an employee's right to the reason for termination, and on the state mandatory retirement law. The state also requires employers to display posters on the Occupational Safety and Health law and on workers' compensation rights of employees. All required posters including the unemployment compensation poster described below are available from the Department of Labor and Industry. The worker's compensation poster is available in many languages, including Spanish, Lao, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong and English and can be downloaded from that Department's website, [www.dli.mn.gov/LS/Posters.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/LS/Posters.asp). Posters on parental leave and whistleblower protection are also required.

### **Unemployment Insurance**

Posters on the state unemployment law may be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry or can be printed from the Department's website: [www.dli.mn.gov/LS/Posters.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/LS/Posters.asp).

## CHECKLIST FOR HIRING AN EMPLOYEE

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The following information generally outlines federal and state tax and other requirements that apply to the employment relationship. Detailed descriptions of these requirements, and any exceptions and special requirements that may apply, can be found in information bulletins and instruction booklets published by the agency listed. Addresses and telephone numbers appear in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. For specific advice on individual situations consultation with a qualified professional advisor is strongly recommended.

Note that corporations that are wholly-owned by the person who also performs services for that business are generally considered to be employers, and that owner is likewise generally considered to be an employee. Note also, as explained elsewhere in this Guide, persons working in the construction industry may be treated as employees for purposes of workers' compensation unless certain conditions are met.

### 1. Determine whether the worker is an employee.

Detailed discussion of whether a worker is an employee appears in the section of this Guide titled "Who is an Employee". A worker generally is considered an "employee" if the person who obtains the worker's services has the legal right to control the manner and means of performing the work. A worker may be considered an employee for certain purposes (e.g., payment of FICA taxes) and not for other purposes (e.g., income tax withholding). If a worker is an employee, the requirements described in this checklist will apply whether the person is employed full-time or part-time. Before determining that a worker is not an employee it is advisable to consult with your attorney or with the appropriate agency, e.g., Internal Revenue Service, Minnesota Department of Revenue, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, or the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry.

The following forms and materials are available to assist in determining whether a worker is an employee.

#### **Income tax withholding, FICA and Federal unemployment taxes:**

Form: SS-8, Information for Use in Determining Whether a Worker is an Employee for Federal Employment Taxes and Income Tax Withholding. Publication 15-A, Employers' Supplemental Tax Guide, provides further information.

Available from: Internal Revenue Service.

Filed with: The IRS Service Center designated on the form.

#### **Minnesota unemployment insurance**

Form: Register with the UI office of the Department of Employment and Economic Development via its self-service unemployment insurance reporting system. DEED will make the determination regarding employer liability based on that information.

Available from: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

Filed with: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

### **Workers' compensation**

The Department of Labor and Industry has adopted rules addressing the conditions under which workers will be considered employees or independent contractors for workers' compensation purposes. These rules can be found at Minnesota Rules Chapter 5224. Copies of Minnesota Rules are available at law libraries and many public libraries, and may be purchased from the Minnesota Bookstore.

## **2. Obtain federal Employer Identification Number (EIN).**

Form: SS-4, application for Employer Identification Number. Apply online at [www.irs.gov/businesses](http://www.irs.gov/businesses) and click on Employer Identification Number under topics. Apply by telephone, call toll-free 1-800-829-4933. Have a completed Form SS-4 available before making this call or apply by fax (859) 669-5760 (not toll-free), Attn: EIN Operation.

Available from: Internal Revenue Service.

Filed with: The IRS Service Center designated on the form.

How often: Once, unless business ownership or form of organization changes.

## **3. Obtain Minnesota taxpayer identification number**

Form: ABR, Application for Business Registration. A Minnesota taxpayer identification number can be obtained from the Department of Revenue's website at [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us). It can also be obtained by calling (651) 282-5225.

Available from: Minnesota Department of Revenue.

Filed with: Minnesota Department of Revenue.

How often: Once, unless business ownership or form of organization changes.

## **4. Obtain Minnesota workers' compensation insurance.**

Form: None required.

Available from: Coverage is obtained through the employer's insurance company.

Filed with: Not applicable.

How often: Workers' compensation coverage is required for the entire time the employer has employees. Certain exemptions may exist. For information on these exemptions, contact your insurance company or the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, Workers' Compensation Division.



## 5. Obtain Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Employer Account Number.

Form: Unemployment Insurance Employer Account Number. Paper forms are no longer used by DEED. To register online, use the information on the website [www.uimn.org](http://www.uimn.org). If you do not have access to the Internet, register by telephone at (651) 296-6141.

Available from: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

Filed with: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

How often: Within 10 days after first wages are paid or if you have acquired, purchased, leased or assumed any part of an existing Minnesota business.

## 6. Verify compliance with immigration law

Form: I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, and Form M-274, Handbook for Employers with Instructions for Completing Form I-9. See discussion of E-Verify earlier in this Guide.

Available from: Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Filed with: Form I-9 must be retained by the employer for three years following the date of hire or one year after the individual's employment is terminated, whichever is later.

How often: Generally, a new Form I-9 must be completed each time an individual is hired. An employer who rehires a person within three years of the date the I-9 was originally completed may be able to update and re-verify employment eligibility on the original Form I-9. Details are provided in the Employer Information Bulletin 102, The I-9 Process in a Nutshell, available from the Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

## 7. Obtain employee withholding information (Form W-4; child support and spousal maintenance obligations).

### Form W-4.

Form: W-4, Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate (used for both federal and Minnesota withholding).

Available from: Internal Revenue Service.

Filed with: Employers are required to keep copies of completed W-4 Forms of the employees in their files. The form serves as verification that federal income taxes are being withheld according to the employee's instructions and needs to be available for inspection should the IRS request it.

Previous to 2007, employers had to routinely send the IRS any Form W-4 claiming complete exemption from withholding if \$200 or more in weekly wages was expected or claiming more than 10 allowances. Employers no longer have to routinely submit these W-4 Forms to the IRS. However,

Forms W-4 are still subject to review. Employers may be directed (in written notice or in future published guidance) to send certain W-4 Forms to the IRS.

A copy of the Form W-4 must still be sent to the Minnesota Department of Revenue if the employee claims exemption from withholding and has wages that would normally exceed \$200 per week, claims more than 10 withholding allowances, if the employer “believes” an employee is not entitled to the number of exemptions claimed or the Minnesota Department of Revenue notifies the employer that the Form W-4 must be sent.

If the employee claims fewer allowances for Minnesota purposes than for federal purposes, two separate Form W-4s must be completed. Write “Minnesota Only” across the top of the form showing the Minnesota allowances and “Federal Only” across the top of the form showing federal allowances. An employee cannot claim more allowances for Minnesota purposes than are claimed for federal purposes.

How often: The Form W-4 generally is valid until the employee provides a new one. However, employees who claim exemption from withholding must renew the exemption annually by filing a new Form W-4 by February 15 each year.

Whenever an employee replaces an existing Form W-4 with a new one, the employer must put the new W-4 into effect no later than the start of the first payroll period ending on or after the 30th day after the day on which the replacement Form W-4 is received. If there is no payroll period, the replacement Form W-4 must be put into effect with the first payment of wages on or after the 30th day after the day on which the replacement Form W-4 is received. The replacement Form W-4 can be put into effect sooner, if the employer wishes.

### **Child Support, Medical Support, Spousal Maintenance.**

With respect to the payment of child support, medical support, maintenance and related payments, Minnesota employers are required to report certain information to the Minnesota Department of Human Services on new employees (including seasonal and temporary) and independent contractors, and on rehires, within twenty days of hiring the employee or engaging the independent contractor. (This replaces the former requirement that Minnesota employers had to ask individuals who are hired for employment whether they have court-ordered support obligations that are required by law to be withheld from income, and to ask the terms of the court order.)

Employers must provide the Department of Human Services with employee or independent contractor’s name, address, social security number, and if available, date of birth, along with the employer’s own name, address and federal employer identification number.

In addition to the reporting to the Department of Human Services employers are required to ask all new employees whether they have court-ordered medical support or dependent insurance obligations that must be withheld from income, and the terms of any court order. If amounts for medical support must be withheld, the employer must do the appropriate

withholding. If the employee is required to obtain dependent insurance the employer must tell the employee about the application process and enroll the employee and the dependents in the plan.

Note that employers are required to make such withholdings within a specified time period, and there are limits on the percentage of wages that can be withheld.

## **8. Advance payment of Earned Income Credit tax refund.**

The Earned Income Credit (EIC) is a refundable tax credit for certain low-income workers. Workers who maintain a household, have dependent children and who are eligible for the EIC may elect to receive advance payments of the credit by filing Form W-5 with the employer. The amount of the advance EIC paid to the employee is applied against the employer's payroll tax payment. The amount of the advance EIC payment is recorded on the employee's Form W-2 at the end of the year. Note that the "Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001" made a number of changes to the calculation and availability of this credit.

Moreover, employers must notify employees who do not have income tax withheld that they may be eligible for a tax refund because of the EIC. Copy C (the employee's copy) of the official Form W-2 contains information about the EIC. Employers who use the official Form W-2, or a substitute Form W-2 that contains the exact wording under the heading "Earned Income Credit" on the back of Copy C, will not be required to issue Notice 797, Notice of a Possible Federal Tax Refund Due to the Earned Income Credit. Employers who do not use either the official Form W-2 or a substitute Form W-2 meeting the requirements set forth in the previous sentence are required to issue Notice 797 to their employees. If the employer is required to issue Notice 797 to its employees, the employer must do so within one week before or after the employer provides the employee with his or her Form W-2. Notice 797 is available from the Internal Revenue Service.

Form: Form W-5, Earned Income Credit Advance Payment Certificate.

Available from: Internal Revenue Service.

Filed with: An eligible employee files Form W-5 with the employer.

How often: Eligible employees must file a new Form W-5 with the employer each calendar year.

## **9. Withhold federal income tax and FICA tax (employee share) and**

## **10. Withhold Minnesota income taxes.**

Form: No specific form is required. These are accounting entries on the employer's books. The amounts also must be listed on the employee's pay statement. Tables showing amounts to be withheld are provided by the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue. The taxes are paid through periodic deposits and quarterly tax returns.  
(See Steps 14 and 16.)

Available from: Not applicable.

Filed with: Accounting records are retained by the employer and are subject to inspection by the Internal Revenue Service and Minnesota Department of Revenue.

How often: Withholding must be done each time wages are paid.

## **11. Account for employer's share of payroll taxes.**

Payroll taxes include the employer's share of the FICA (Social Security and Medicare) tax, federal unemployment tax (FUTA) and Minnesota unemployment tax.

Form: No specific form is required. These are accounting entries made on the employer's books each time wages are paid. The taxes are paid through deposits or with quarterly or annual tax returns. (See Steps 12, 13 and 17.)

Available from: Not applicable.

Filed with: These taxes must be deposited in a bank as specified by, or paid directly to, the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. Note that electronic filing of these taxes may be required.

How often: The accounting entries are made each time wages are paid.

## **12. Deposit withheld federal income tax and employer's and employees' share of FICA tax.**

and

## **13. Deposit federal unemployment (FUTA) tax.**

Form: 8109, Federal Tax Deposit Coupon.

Available from: Preprinted deposit coupon payment books (Form 8109) are automatically sent to the employer after the Internal Revenue Service receives the application for an employer identification number. The Internal Revenue Service requires use of the Form 8109 when depositing at a financial institution. Note that EFTPS (Electronic Federal Tax Payment System) may be required (see below).

Filed with: Deposits are made to a financial institution authorized as a federal depository (usually the employer's bank or credit union).

How often: For federal income tax and FICA tax, the accumulated liability usually must be deposited monthly or semiweekly (or by the next day if the liability is \$100,000 or more). For this purpose, the "liability" is the sum of the withheld federal income tax, the employees' and the employer's share of Social Security and Medicare, minus any advanced earned income credit paid by the employer. Generally, employers with a liability of \$50,000 or less accrued during a designated four-quarter period will deposit monthly and employers whose liability is more than \$50,000 are required to deposit semi-weekly. The employer will follow the appropriate deposit schedule for the entire calendar year. The specific rules may be found in IRS Publication 15, Circular E, Employer's Tax Guide which may be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service.

FUTA tax deposits are made quarterly (by the end of the month following the end of the quarter), unless the amount of FUTA tax owed but not deposited is \$500 or less. If the tax is \$500 or less at the end of the quarter, no deposit is required. The tax is added to the tax for the next quarter.

Note that there are new rules requiring the payment of federal taxes by electronic funds transfer (EFTPS). Under the new EFTPS requirements, if the total deposits of all federal taxes exceed \$200,000 during a given calendar year, that taxpayer is required to use EFTPS for tax deposits for the next calendar year. EFTPS is not mandatory for small business employers who do not exceed the \$200,000 threshold. However, these taxpayers may voluntarily use EFTPS as a convenient alternative to making tax deposits with Federal Tax Deposit Coupons.

#### **14. Deposit withheld Minnesota income tax.**

Form: The employer can make Minnesota tax deposits in one of three ways: electronically, via the Department of Revenue's e-File Minnesota system at [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us), by touchtone telephone (800) 570-3329, or by mailing in form MW-5, Withholding Tax Deposit Form.

Available from: Either [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us) (to use e-File Minnesota), or by telephoning (800) 570-3329, (to use touchtone telephone), or from the Department. The Minnesota Department of Revenue will mail customized forms to employers registered for withholding tax upon request. The Minnesota Department of Revenue requests that employers use the customized forms only if the employer chooses to pay by check. Note: some employers are required to pay electronically.

Filed with: Minnesota Department of Revenue.

How often: The total amount of accumulated undeposited withholding tax will determine how often deposits must be made. Note that electronic payment may be required. For further information see the Minnesota Income Tax Withholding instruction booklet, available at [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us) or from the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

#### **15. File federal quarterly withholding return or**

Form: 941, Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return. (Different forms are required for employers of agricultural employees).

Available from: Internal Revenue Service.

Filed with: The IRS Service Center designated on the form.

How often: The employer must file a return quarterly (annually for employers of agricultural employees using Form 943).

File employment taxes annually.

Form: 944, Employer's Annual Federal Tax Return.

Available from: Internal Revenue Service. The IRS has changed their tax filing requirements from quarterly to annually for certain small businesses who have an Employment Tax Liability (Federal Income Tax Withholding, Social Security and Medicare Taxes and FUTA) of \$1,000 or less for the calendar year (average annual wages of \$4,000 or less). Eligible taxpayers will be notified by mail by mid-February or may contact the IRS by mid-April at 1-800-829-4933 in order to have their filing changed to Form 944. Contacts after April 1 will remain Form 941 filers for the tax year.

Filed with: The Internal Revenue Service. If you file a paper return, you may pay by check, money order, credit card, or the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFPTS). If you file your return electronically, you may also pay by authorizing an Electronic Funds Withdrawal (EFW) from your checking or savings account. To make more frequent deposits, you may use Federal Tax Deposit (FTD) coupons or EFPTS.

How often: This return is due once a year, on January 31, after the end of the tax year. Note: If while designated as a Form 944 filer, your business grows and your total annual employment tax liability increases to \$2,500 or more, you must make deposits. If you do not make the required deposits, you will be subject to penalties and/or interest.

#### **16. File Minnesota quarterly withholding return.**

Form: Quarterly Withholding Tax Return (for the first three quarters of the year); Year-End Withholding Return/Reconciliation (for the fourth quarter).

Available from: Returns must be filed electronically via the Internet or by touchtone telephone.

Filed with: Minnesota Department of Revenue either via the Internet, using e-File Minnesota (at [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us)) or by touchtone telephone, at (800) 570-3329.

How often: Quarterly. A return must be filed even if the employer paid no wages subject to withholding or had no employees during the quarter.

#### **17. File Minnesota unemployment insurance wage detail.**

Form: All wage detail reports must be filed electronically. Wage detail reports filed on paper will not be accepted.

Available from: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

Filed with: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

How often: Quarterly.

#### **18. File federal unemployment tax (FUTA) return.**

Form: 940, Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment (FUTA) Tax Return

Available from: Internal Revenue Service.

Filed with: The IRS Service Center designated on the form.  
How often: Annually, by January 31 of each year. See the section of this Guide on Unemployment Taxes for situations in which Form 940-EZ may be filed.

## **19. Provide Form W-2 to employee and others.**

Form: W-2, Wage and Tax Statement.  
Available from: Internal Revenue Service.  
Filed with: Employee (three copies); Social Security Administration (one copy); Minnesota Department of Revenue (one copy). One copy is retained by the employer.  
How often: The Form W-2 must be provided to the employee by January 31 each year. If the employee stops working for the employer and requests the W-2 before the January 31 deadline, it must be provided within 30 days following the request. The federal copy of the Form W-2, along with Form W-3, is filed with the Social Security Administration by February 28 each year. The State copy of form W-2 is mailed to the Minnesota Department of Revenue by February 28 each year using the W-2 mailing label found in the forms book.

## **20. File Minnesota Annual Withholding Return/Reconciliation.**

Note: File this ONLY if you are not a quarterly filer (see checklist item 16) and you have been notified by the Minnesota Department of Revenue that you are an annual filer of income taxes withheld.

Form: File the Minnesota Annual Return using the Internet e-File Minnesota ([www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us)) or touchtone telephone (800) 570-3329.  
Available from: Returns must be filed via the Internet or by touchtone telephone.  
Filed with: Minnesota Department of Revenue.  
How often: Annually, by February 28 each year.

## **21. Information returns, pensions and other payments.**

Employers who make payments to consultants, independent contractors, and others who are exempt from withholding may be required to provide a federal Form 1099-MISC to those individuals, and file the form with the Internal Revenue Service. Employers who pay pensions are required to issue Form 1099R to the recipients. The Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue have established special rules applicable to these situations.

## BUSINESS TAXES

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Common areas of small business tax liability include federal and state income taxes, state sales and use tax, FICA (Social Security and Medicare) tax, FUTA (federal unemployment) tax, state unemployment tax, and tax withholding. In addition, businesses may be liable for less commonly applicable taxes such as taxes on the sale of fuel, alcohol products and cigarettes, and the hazardous waste generator tax. These taxes are discussed in more detail in this section.

Note that businesses that operate in multiple jurisdictions, whether cities, states, or counties, need to be concerned about the taxes imposed by each of those jurisdictions, as well as the impact on the tax imposed by their home jurisdiction. This applies equally to businesses using the Internet to sell goods or services.\*

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Business owners who wish to learn more about federal and state taxation can attend workshops and seminars offered throughout the state. Telephone numbers for these workshops are listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

#### **Internal Revenue Service and Minnesota Departments of Revenue and Employment and Economic Development Business Education Workshops**

The Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Departments of Revenue and Employment and Economic Development sponsor free workshops on tax issues for small businesses. For more information on these workshops visit the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development UI Division website at [www.uimn.org](http://www.uimn.org) or call (651) 259-7220 or (651) 259-7567 for more information.

Basic Workshops. Daytime workshop series offer sessions suitable for new businesses, new employers, and others interested in an introduction to business tax responsibilities.

- Business Income Tax discusses various types of business organizations, such as sole proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations, and the tax requirements of each type of business. Basic record keeping, estimated tax payments, business use of one's home and certain business expenses are discussed.

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\*For more information on using the Internet in business operations, see *A Legal Guide to the Internet*, published by and available without charge from the Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office, 1st National Bank Building, 332 Minnesota Street, Suite E200, St. Paul, MN 55101-1351, telephone (651) 556-8425 or 1-800-310-8323. It is also available in an electronic form at [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com).



- Sales Tax provides a basic understanding of the types of goods and services subject to sales tax. Use tax requirements, record keeping, filing requirements, forms preparation and the use of purchases with exemption certificates will be discussed. More information on these workshops is available on the Department of Revenue's website, [www.taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/business taxpayers](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/business taxpayers).
- Employment Taxes and Employer Issues and Responsibilities provides participants with a basic overview of federal and state employment tax requirements including those that relate to: corporation and S-corporation officers and employees; withholding and deposits; unemployment tax; quarterly and annual filings; and independent contractor/employee issues. The workshop also includes labor standards issues and the rules for employers with respect to employee child support and other obligations (further discussed in the "Issues for Employers" section of this Guide). Topics presented in the "Employment Tax" workshop are included in a course guide available online as an Adobe PDF file, [www.uimn.org](http://www.uimn.org).

## Written Information

Both the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue have written information on certain business topics.

**Internal Revenue Service.** The IRS tax information website, [www.irs.gov/businesses](http://www.irs.gov/businesses), provides extensive tax information and online tools and resources especially for business. The IRS offers many education products that can be viewed or ordered online at any time.

The Small Business/Self-Employed Division has a free electronic mail service designed to provide tax information for small business owners. By signing-up for the mailing list, a business can receive information about upcoming tax dates, what's new on the IRS website, recently added tax forms and publications, IRS news releases and special IRS announcements. Subscribe to this and other free subscription services in the Newsroom of [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) under e-News Subscriptions.

**Minnesota Department of Revenue.** Information on Minnesota taxes administered by the Minnesota Department of Revenue is published in instruction booklets for each type of tax.

In addition, the Sales Tax Division of the Minnesota Department of Revenue publishes Fact Sheets which provide technical application of the sales tax law to certain industries and taxable items. Likewise, the Individual Income Tax Division and the Withholding Tax Division publishes Fact Sheets on individual various tax topics. The instruction booklets and Fact Sheets may be obtained by calling the Department of Revenue at the telephone numbers listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide or by accessing the Department's website ([www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us)).

## **TAX IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS**

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Many Minnesota businesses will need one or more tax identification numbers. These include the Federal Employer Identification Number, the Minnesota Taxpayer Identification Number, and the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Employer Account Number. New tax identification numbers must be obtained each time the ownership or form of business organization changes.

### **Federal Employer Identification Number**

Sole proprietors who do not have employees, who are not required to file information returns, who do not have a retirement plan for themselves, and who are not required to pay federal excise taxes in connection with their business generally may use their social security number as their federal employer identification number. Likewise, single-member limited liability companies that have elected to be taxed as a sole proprietorship may follow the rule set out in the previous sentence. All other business entities are required to obtain a federal employer identification number by filing Form SS-4 with the Internal Revenue Service. Note also that an independent contractor doing commercial or residential building construction or improvements in the public or private sector is considered to be, for workers' compensation purposes, an employee of any person or entity for whom or which that independent contractor performs services unless, among other things, that independent contractor has a federal employer identification number.

Form SS-4 may be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service by calling the IRS at the telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. The form and instructions can also be printed directly from the IRS website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) (click on More Forms and Publications under Most Requested Forms and Publications). One can apply for the federal employer identification number online, by telephone, by fax or by U.S. mail. To complete the application and receive the number for immediate use using the IRS website, go to [www.irs.gov/businesses](http://www.irs.gov/businesses) and click on "Employer ID Numbers" under topics. To apply by telephone, call the IRS at (800) 829-4933 between 7 AM and 10 PM Eastern Time. It helps to have the hard copy of SS-4 on hand. Minnesota businesses seeking to apply via fax can submit their application by dialing (859) 669-5760. Mail applications, which can take up to 4 to 5 weeks, should be submitted—for Minnesota businesses—to IRS, EIN Operations, Philadelphia, PA 19225.

### **Minnesota Taxpayer Identification Number**

A business needs to obtain a Minnesota tax identification number (a seven digit number assigned by the Department of Revenue) if it is required to file information returns for income tax purposes, has employees, makes taxable sales, or owes use tax on its purchases. Most businesses need a Minnesota tax identification number. However, a sole proprietorship or single member limited liability company which does not have any of these tax obligations does not need a Minnesota tax identification number.

To obtain a Minnesota tax identification number, go to the Minnesota Department of Revenue's website at [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us). In order to apply for a Minnesota tax ID number online, you will need your federal employer ID number (FEIN), if applicable; the legal name or sole-proprietor name and business address; the business name (D.B.A.) if applicable; NAICS code (North American Industry Classification Code) available from the U.S. Census Bureau's website; names

and social security numbers of the sole-proprietor, officers, partners or representatives; and e-mail address and name of a contact person. If you do not have internet access, call (651) 282-5225 and ask about receiving Form ABR. If you already have a Minnesota ID number, you may need to apply for a new one if the business changes its legal organization, or you are required to apply for a new federal ID number.

### **Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Employer Account Number**

All business entities, other than sole proprietorships or single member limited liability companies without employees, must register with the Department of Employment and Economic Development. This Department issues identification numbers that are different from those issued by the Department of Revenue and the Internal Revenue Service. Registration is accomplished online at [www.uimn.org](http://www.uimn.org), with the Minnesota Employment and Economic Development Department of Unemployment Insurance at (651) 296-6141. The Department requests that businesses not register for a UI Employer account number until wages have actually been paid.

### **Difference Between a Minnesota Tax ID, Minnesota Sales Tax Permit and a Minnesota Employer ID**

Minnesota does not have a separate sales tax permit or employer ID number.

If a business has a Minnesota Tax ID and is registered to collect sales tax (this registration is part of the application for a Minnesota Tax ID, Form ABR, Application for Business Registration), the Minnesota Department of Revenue will send a confirmation letter that will serve as a sales tax permit. It is not required that this letter be displayed, but suppliers may require a copy for their records. A copy of the registration confirmation may be printed by using e-File Minnesota (at [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us)) and selecting "Update your Business Information."

The Minnesota Tax ID number is called other things, such as "sales tax exempt number", "resale exemption number", or "seller's permit". This is merely a difference in terminology, often encountered in dealing with suppliers from other states. If a business has a Minnesota Tax ID, and is registered for the tax types that it needs to collect and submit, then it does not need to apply for any additional numbers from the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

If a business is registered to collect income tax withholding, the Minnesota Tax ID also serves as its Minnesota Employer ID for tax purposes; however, businesses may also be required to register with the Department of Employment and Economic Development for an Unemployment Insurance (UI) Employer Account Number for unemployment taxes. For more information, go to [www.uimn.org](http://www.uimn.org) or see the sections in this Guide on Unemployment Insurance.

## **TAXPAYER BILL OF RIGHTS**

Both the United States Congress and the Minnesota Legislature have enacted a Taxpayer Bill of Rights that governs many taxpayer relationships with the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue. These laws formalize and standardize many audit, appeal, and collection procedures and clarify rights and protections available to taxpayers.

Information on the federal Taxpayer Bill of Rights and the legislation amending it known as the Taxpayer Bill of Rights II is provided in Publication 1, Your Rights as a Taxpayer, which may be obtained by calling the Internal Revenue Service. Information on the Minnesota taxpayer rights law also may be obtained by calling the Minnesota Department of Revenue. Both are listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **ELECTRONIC FILING OF TAXES**

A business is required to file all its Minnesota taxes electronically if it annually collects or owes more than the following amounts of any one type of Minnesota tax:

Sales and use tax	\$10,000
Corporate estimated tax	\$10,000
MinnesotaCare tax	\$10,000
Cigarette or tobacco tax	\$120,000
Alcohol tax	\$120,000
Employee withholding	\$10,000
Distributor taxes	\$120,000
Insurance premium taxes	\$120,000
Fire insurance taxes	\$120,000

In other words, if a business collects more than \$120,000 in sales taxes annually, but its only other tax is \$10,000 in employee withholding taxes, both the sales tax and the withholding taxes must be paid electronically. For this purpose, the Department of Revenue measures the tax collected or owed for the period from July 1 to June 30 of the following year (i.e., not the calendar year). Any business exceeding one of the above thresholds is notified by the Department of Revenue, by letter, in the October following the end of the measuring period that as of the next January 1, all of that business's taxes must be filed electronically.

Information about using the e-File Minnesota electronic filing system is available on the Minnesota Department of Revenue's website at [www.taxes.mn.us](http://www.taxes.mn.us).

Note that for federal tax purposes, many businesses will be required to file tax payments electronically, by means of the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS). See the section of this Guide titled "Business Taxes – Income Tax Withholding – Withholding Tax Deposit and Filing Requirements".

Large corporations with assets of \$50 million or more were required to start e-filing with their 2005 Forms 1120 or 1120S. Now, certain mid-sized corporations, those with assets between \$10 million and \$50 million, are required to e-file their Forms 1120 or 1120S for tax years ending on or after December 31, 2006. Corporations required to e-file are those that meet the asset threshold and that file 250 or more federal returns a year, including excise tax, employment tax and information returns such as Forms W-2 and 1099.

The IRS is committed to enabling all taxpayers and practitioners to comply with their tax filing obligations, more information is located at [www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=118516,00.html](http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=118516,00.html).

- **Corporate taxpayers** (Forms 1120, 1120S, 1120-F) may email questions about e-file to: LargeCorporate@irs.gov. Note: This email service is for e-file related questions only, not account or tax law questions.
- **Partnerships** (Forms 1065, 1065-B) can find further e-file information for partnerships using the Modernized e-File (MeF) platform at Modernized e-File (MeF) for Partnerships ([www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=200526,00.html](http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=200526,00.html)).
- **Tax exempt organizations** can find further e-file information at e-file for Charities and Non-Profits (<http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=108211,00.html>) or email questions to [tege-eo-efile@irs.gov](mailto:tege-eo-efile@irs.gov).

## **BUSINESS INCOME TAX RETURNS**

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This section describes the federal and state income tax returns that must be filed by various business entities. The business also may be liable for estimated tax payments, sales and use tax, and other taxes which are discussed later in this chapter.

### **SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP**

For federal tax purposes, the sole proprietor reports income and expenses from the business on Schedule C or Schedule C-EZ (Form 1040) and any related forms and schedules. The net income or loss from the business is then transferred to the proprietor's individual Form 1040. The sole proprietor uses Schedule SE (Form 1040) to report net self employment income for purposes of computing the Social Security and Medicare self employment tax.

There is no separate form for reporting sole proprietorship income on the Minnesota tax return. To compute Minnesota income tax, the proprietor uses Form M1, the individual income tax return form. A copy of the federal Form 1040, including a copy of Schedule C or Schedule C-EZ and other supporting schedules, must be attached to the Minnesota return.

### **PARTNERSHIP**

For federal tax purposes, the partnership files Form 1065, which is an information return. No tax is paid by the partnership with this return. Other forms and schedules may be required, including Schedules K and K-1. Individual partners use Schedule E (Form 1040), which is prepared using information from their Schedule K-1 of Form 1065, to report their distributive share of partnership income, deductions, credits and losses on the individual Form 1040. Schedule SE (Form 1040) is used to compute Social Security and Medicare self employment tax.

A married couple who jointly operate an unincorporated business and who file a joint federal income tax return can elect not to be treated as a partnership for federal tax purposes provided that the husband and wife are the only members of the joint venture and that both husband and wife materially participate in the running of the business.

For state tax purposes, the partnership completes Form M3, Partnership Return and files it with the Department of Revenue along with a copy of federal Form 1065 and Schedules K and K-1. The partnership may also have to pay a minimum fee based on property, payroll, and sales attributable to Minnesota. If the partnership has items of income, credits or modifications that are different from its federal return, the partnership should also issue and file Schedule KPI and/or Schedule KPC. If the partnership has nonresident individual partners it may file a composite income tax on their behalf using Schedule KC. If it has nonresident individual partners who will not be included in such composite income tax, generally the partnership is required to withhold income tax on behalf of such partners and remit it with its Minnesota partnership return, by using Schedule MW-3NR. Individual partners who are not included on the composite income tax also complete Form M1, the individual income tax return.

## **C CORPORATION**

A C corporation is taxed under the provisions of Subchapter C of the Internal Revenue Code. For federal tax purposes, the C corporation reports its income, deductions and credits, and computes its tax on Form 1120 or Form 1120-A. Supporting forms and schedules may be required. If the corporation issues dividends, it must annually send its shareholders Form 1099-DIV, stating the amount of dividends paid. A copy of Form 1099-DIV also is filed with the Internal Revenue Service. Shareholders report dividends received from the corporation on their individual Form 1040.

The C corporation determines its state tax on Form M4, Corporation Franchise Tax return. The corporation also may have to pay a minimum fee based on property, payroll, and sales attributable to Minnesota.

## **S CORPORATION**

An S corporation is a corporation that elects to be treated for federal tax purposes under Subchapter S of the Internal Revenue Code. As stated elsewhere in this Guide, a form making this election must be timely filed with the Internal Revenue Service. The S corporation generally is not separately taxed. The S corporation files Form 1120S and supporting forms and schedules, including Schedules K and K-1 (Form 1120S). Individual shareholders report their share of the S corporation's income, deductions, and credits on their individual Form 1040, using information contained on the Schedule K-1.

S corporations file Minnesota Form M8 Corporation Return, with the state, along with copies of federal Form 1120S and supporting forms and schedules. In addition, the S corporation may have to pay a minimum fee based on property, payroll, and sales attributable to Minnesota. If the S corporation has items of income, credits or modifications that are different from the federal return it should also issue and file Schedule KS. If the S corporation has nonresident individual shareholders it may file a composite income tax on their behalf using Schedule KC. If it has nonresident individual shareholders who will not be included on such a Schedule, generally the S corporation is required to withhold income tax on behalf of such shareholders and remit it with the Minnesota S corporation return by using Schedule MW-3NR. Individual shareholders who are not included on the Schedule KC must also complete Form M1, the individual income tax return.

## LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

Under certain Treasury Regulations (26 C.F.R. § 301.7701-1 et seq. which became effective January 1, 1997), the organizers of a limited liability company can choose how the limited liability company will be taxed. Generally speaking an LLC with one member may be taxed either as a corporation or as a sole proprietorship. LLCs with two or more members may be taxed either as a partnership or as a corporation. Note that for one member LLCs, this decision will also impact whether the LLC needs a tax identification number. The Minnesota Department of Revenue has indicated that a Minnesota limited liability company will receive the tax treatment for state purposes that it receives for federal purposes. Persons considering forming a limited liability company are advised to consult with a tax professional regarding the state and federal tax treatment of such an entity. See also the sections of this Guide entitled “Choosing the Form of Business Organization – Tax and Non-Tax Considerations – Introduction” and “Choosing the Form of Business Organization – Tax and Non-Tax Considerations – Tax Considerations in Choosing the Form of Organization”.

## TAX CREDITS

Minnesota allows several credits which can reduce the tax otherwise payable by businesses. Some of these credits are available only to C corporations, while others may be taken by partnerships, partners, S corporations, S corporation shareholders, and owners of sole proprietorships. Certain credits may only be taken as a carryback or carryover of unused credits permitted in a prior year.

Credits presently available are:

- For C corporations, the alternative minimum tax (AMT) carryover credit (Minnesota Statutes § 290.0921, subd. 8);
- Alternative minimum credit for individuals (Minnesota Statutes § 290.091, subd. 6);
- Enterprise zone credit (Minnesota Statutes § 273.1314, subd. 9);
- Credit for research and development expenditures (Minnesota Statutes § 290.068);
- Credit for income tax withheld for nonresident partners or S corporation shareholders (Minnesota Statutes § 290.92, subd. 12(b)).
- Border city zone credit, to encourage businesses to locate in certain Minnesota cities (Breckenridge, Dilworth, East Grand Forks, Moorhead and Ortonville), rather than in other states. (Minnesota Statutes section 469.1732). Note that according to representatives of the Minnesota Department of Revenue, businesses claim this credit by filing a claim for refund (i.e., it's not claimed on the tax return); and
- Seed Capital Investment Credit. For investments in qualified businesses in the above border cities, a credit of 45% of the amount invested, up to \$112,500 per year, is allowed. The total amount of credit allowed is limited to allocations that the border city has available for tax reductions in its border city enterprise zone. To be qualified, a business must have its principal office or a significant operation in a border city, have Minnesota residents as a majority of its employees there, and rely on innovation, research, or the development of new products for its growth plans. A business will apply to the commissioner of the Department of Employment and Economic Development for certification.

- Credit in an amount equal to thirty percent of the cost of transit passes provided by an employer, to its employees, for use in Minnesota (Minnesota Statutes § 290.06, subd. 28, added by 2000 Statutes Chapter 490, Article 4, Section 16).

Other tax credits that may be of interest to businesses are:

- Work Opportunity Federal Tax Credit provides an incentive to hire individuals from targeted groups that have a particularly high unemployment rate or other special employment needs. In most cases, the credit can be as much as 40% of the “qualified first year wages” paid to individuals who begin work before September 30, 2011. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (WOTC Unit) certifies members of targeted groups.

Credit in an amount equal to thirty percent of the cost of transit passes provided by an employer, to its employees, for use in Minnesota (Minnesota Statutes § 290.06, subd. 28, added by 2000 Statutes Chapter 490, Article 4, Section 16).

- Job Opportunity Building Zones (JOBZ) are specific areas of the state encompassing 29,000 acres in 325 subzone communities where, for a maximum of 12 years, a number of tax incentives are available. These include: exemption from the corporate franchise tax; exemption from sales tax on goods and services used in the zone if purchased during the duration of the zone; exemption from income tax on business income generated by a business in the zone based on property and payroll in the zone; exemption from income tax from rent on tangible or personal property used in the zone; exemption from capital gains on the sale of real or tangible personal property in the zone; exemption from capital gains on the sale of an ownership interest in a business located in the zone. There is also a jobs credit for employers in the zone who increase employment and pay an average wage in excess of \$30,000. Additional information, including information on application and the terms of a Business Subsidy Agreement implementing the JOBZ incentives is available on the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development website at [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com). Specific community and JOBZ site information is available at [www.MNPRO.com](http://www.MNPRO.com).
- Biotechnology and Health Science Industry Zones are designated by the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development to facilitate the development of bioscience companies and research facilities near the Mayo Clinic in Rochester and the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses of the University of Minnesota. The zones provide tax incentives including exemptions from corporate income tax, alternative minimum tax, franchise tax, sales and use tax; and tax credits for job creation and research and development investments. For additional information contact the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development at (651) 259-7436.

The **AMT carryover credit** and **alternative minimum credit for individuals** allow a reduction of regular tax for alternative minimum tax previously paid.

The **enterprise zone** legislation provides for creation of a number of zones in the state, with special consideration given to areas bordering on other states, in which special tax credits may be allowed: (1) sales tax exemption for construction equipment and material; (2) income tax credit based on the number of employees; (3) income tax credit for debt financing costs incurred to construct new facilities; and (4) property tax credit for new business facilities or for expansion of facilities. It is available to partnerships and corporations and may be passed through to partners and S corporation shareholders.



The credit for **research and experimental expenditures** is available for “qualified research expenses” as defined in Section 41(b) and (e) of the federal Internal Revenue Code, except for those expenses incurred for basic research conducted outside the state of Minnesota. For more details on qualified research expenses, see Minnesota Statutes § 290.068. The credit is available only to C corporations. It is not available to S corporations or individuals.

The credit for income tax withheld for nonresident individual partners or S corporation shareholders is a credit on the individual’s personal income tax return and is claimed on the “Minnesota income tax withheld” line of Form M1.

More detailed information on these credits, carryovers, and carrybacks may be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

Businesses should contact their tax advisors and the federal IRS for further information on the operation of these credits and their possible use by an individual small business. In Minnesota the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development is responsible for certifying businesses for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the Welfare to Work Credit. Additional information on that process can be found at [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

## **NON-MINNESOTA BUSINESSES DOING BUSINESS IN MINNESOTA**

Non-Minnesota businesses which do business in Minnesota or own property in Minnesota may be subject to taxation by Minnesota if they have sufficient “nexus” or connection with Minnesota to justify imposition of Minnesota tax laws. Activities that create nexus include but are not limited to:

- Having a place of business in Minnesota;
- Having employees or independent contractors conducting business in Minnesota;
- Owning or leasing real property, or tangible personal property, in Minnesota, and
- Obtaining or regularly soliciting business from within Minnesota. Obtaining or soliciting business within Minnesota includes activities like selling products or services to customers in Minnesota who receive the product or service in Minnesota; engaging in transactions with customers in Minnesota that involve intangible property and result in income; leasing tangible personal property in Minnesota, and; selling or leasing real property located in Minnesota. Methods of regularly soliciting business in Minnesota include direct mail and phone solicitation, and various forms of advertising, including via print publications and radio and television.

This issue can be complicated to resolve. Further information on the nexus standards and exceptions, and other requirements for non-Minnesota businesses may be obtained from the Department of Revenue.

## **TAXATION OF FIRMS DOING BUSINESS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE MINNESOTA**

### **Phase in of Single Factor Apportionment Formula**

Between tax years 2007 and 2014, Minnesota will move from a three factor apportionment formula (sales, property, payroll) to a single sales factor for purposes of a business apportioning its income to Minnesota for income tax purposes. The new formula is:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Sales % Factor</b>	<b>Property % Factor</b>	<b>Payroll % Factor</b>
2007	78	11	11
2008	81	9.5	9.5
2009	84	8	8
2010	87	6.5	6.5
2011	90	5	5
2012	93	3.5	3.5
2013	96	2	2
2014	100	0	0
and later			

### **“Throwback Rule”**

Minnesota does not use the throwback rule. In determining what to count as an in-state sale for the apportionment formula, most states (including Minnesota) use the destination of the sale to determine where sales are assigned. For example, if the destination of a sale is in Minnesota, the sale is included in the sales factor as an in-state sale; if the destination of the sale is in another state, the sale is not an in-state sale. When a throwback rule is used, sales made to destinations in another state are counted as in-state sales because the selling corporation lacks taxable nexus in the destination state.

## **BUSINESS ACTIVITIES REPORT**

Every corporation that has property or personnel in Minnesota or receives income from Minnesota sources is required to file with the Department of Revenue, Form M-4R, Business Activities Report, unless the corporation files a timely corporate income tax return (either Form M4 or Form M8), has a certificate of authority to do business in Minnesota, or is otherwise exempt from this requirement. A corporation that is required to file a Business Activities Report and fails to do so does not have any cause of action upon which it may bring suit under Minnesota law and is prevented from using Minnesota courts for all contracts executed and all causes of action that arose before the accounting period for which the corporation failed to file the report. The Commissioner of Revenue may disclose to litigants whether a Business Activities Report has been filed by a party to a lawsuit.

Copies of Form M-4R may be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Revenue. Questions may be directed to the Department.

## **ESTIMATED TAX**

Individuals who are sole proprietors, partners, S corporation shareholders, and members of limited liability companies generally will be required to make federal and Minnesota estimated tax payments if their income tax and, for federal purposes, self employment tax will exceed taxes paid through withholding and credits by \$500 or more (\$1,000 for federal individual income tax purposes). The tax is determined on income from all sources, not just on income from the business. Individuals may use Federal Form 1040ES, Estimated Taxes for Individuals, or may voluntarily elect to use the Electronic Federal Tax Payments System (EFTPS) to make Federal estimated tax payments. Minnesota Form M14, Individual Estimated Tax Payment Vouchers must accompany Minnesota estimated tax payments. Note that Federal Form 1040-ES contains a worksheet to use to compute estimated tax payments.

A C corporation whose estimated tax is expected to be \$500 or more must make estimated tax payments. A C corporation is not required to pay estimated taxes for the first year it is subject to tax in Minnesota. Federal estimated tax payments are deposited with an authorized financial institution. Minnesota payments are filed with the Department of Revenue. Corporations use federal Form 1120-W and Minnesota Form M-18 to calculate and make estimated tax payments. Partnerships and S corporations must make Minnesota estimated tax payments if their minimum fee and S corporation taxes are expected to be \$500 or more, or if they have any nonresident individuals whose tax is expected to be \$500 or more and who are included on the entity's composite income tax. Withholding of tax for nonresident partners or shareholders is subject to estimated tax requirements. Payments are filed with the Minnesota Department of Revenue on Form M-71 for partnerships and Form M-72 for S corporations.

Forms, worksheets and instructions for completing the forms are available from the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue at the addresses and telephone numbers provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **INCOME TAX PENALTIES AND INTEREST**

Both the Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Revenue may assess monetary penalties and interest for failure to pay a required tax, for a substantial underpayment of tax, for failure to file a return, for both failure to file and failure to pay, and for filing a fraudulent, false or frivolous return. The Internal Revenue Service also may impose a monetary penalty for underpayment of tax due to negligence or disregard of the tax rules, or for a substantial understatement of income. In addition, both the federal government and the state may impose criminal penalties for deliberately failing to file a return or deliberately filing a false return.

The interest rate on unpaid taxes is adjusted periodically by both the Internal Revenue Service and the state to reflect current market rates.

# **SALES AND USE TAX**

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## **SALES AND USE TAX REGISTRATION**

Every person who makes taxable retail sales or provides taxable services in Minnesota must obtain a Minnesota tax identification number and register for authorization to collect and remit Minnesota sales and use tax. This must be done before making any taxable sales in Minnesota. This includes not only all sellers located in Minnesota, but also any seller located outside Minnesota who:

- Has an office, place of distribution, sales or sample room, warehouse, or other place of business in Minnesota, either directly or by a subsidiary, or;
- Has an agent, representative, member, sales person, canvasser, solicitor or employee (either temporary or permanent) in Minnesota for any purpose, including the repair, sale, delivery, installation, or solicitation of orders for taxable items, or the leasing of tangible personal property located in Minnesota.

As described in further detail below, a business that does not pay sales tax at the time it purchases taxable goods and services is required to pay use tax. A business that is required to pay use tax must also obtain a Minnesota tax identification number and register for the sales and use tax authorization.

To obtain a Minnesota tax identification number and register to collect and remit the sales and use tax, go to the Minnesota Department of Revenue's website at [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us). If you do not have Internet access call (651) 282-5225 and ask about other methods of registration.

## **THE MINNESOTA SALES TAX**

The sales tax is a tax on the gross receipts from selling, leasing or renting tangible personal property at retail, or providing taxable services, in Minnesota. The end user of the personal property or services is responsible for paying the tax. Generally, a sale is at retail unless the customer purchases the property for purposes of reselling it, or plans to incorporate the property purchased into a new product for sale at retail. Sales by a manufacturer or wholesaler that are sold to customers who are not in the business of reselling the items purchased are sales at retail. However, some sales are specifically exempted by law from the sales and use tax. These exemptions are discussed later in this section.

The Department of Revenue has issued fact sheets on certain sales tax issues. Several fact sheets are industry specific. Copies of fact sheets can be obtained by telephoning (651) 296-6181, from the Department's website, [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us).

The sales and use tax rate increased from 6.5 percent to 6.875 percent on July 1, 2009.

This rate applies to all sales subject to sales and use tax under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 297A. It does not apply to purchases or sales of motor vehicles subject to tax Minnesota Statutes Chapter 297B;

however, it applies to leases of motor vehicles since leases are taxed under Chapter 297A. In addition, the 6.875 percent rate does not apply to the in-lieu lottery tax or to manufactured homes.

The new law does not provide transitional language. This means that if an invoice or billing includes charges for taxable items or services for dates prior to July 1, 2009, and dates on or after July 1, 2009, the entire billing will be subject to the 6.875 percent tax rate, unless those charges are separately stated for sales before July and for sales beginning July 1, 2009. When the charges are separately stated, charges for taxable items or services sold prior to July 1, 2009 will be taxed at 6.5 percent and charges for taxable items or services sold on or after July 1, 2009 will be subject to the 6.875 percent rate.

Some sales are subject to alternative sales and use tax treatment. These include sales such as admission tickets, construction contracts, leases of tangible property, meals, and catering contracts and motor vehicles. Businesses are advised to check with the sales tax division of the Minnesota Department of Revenue for further information.

## THE MINNESOTA USE TAX

The use tax complements and is similar to the sales tax. It applies when you buy, lease or rent taxable items on services used in your business without paying sales tax to the seller. The use tax rate is the same as the sales tax rate. The rate is applied to the cost of the taxable purchases on which the sales tax is not paid. The buyer pays use tax directly to the state. **Both businesses and individuals are subject to use tax.** For more information, request the Department's Use Tax Fact Sheets (Fact Sheet 146, Use Tax for Businesses, or Fact Sheet 156, Use Tax for Individuals).

Use tax must be paid on:

- Items purchased outside Minnesota from retailers who do not collect Minnesota sales tax, if the items are for use, storage or consumption in Minnesota.
- Items originally purchased for resale, if the items are taken out of inventory for business or personal use. When items are taken out of inventory, use tax is calculated on the purchase prices of the items.
- Items originally purchased for use in agricultural or industrial production, if the items are put to a taxable use. The use tax must be paid when the item is put to taxable use.
- Items and taxable services purchased from a Minnesota seller who does not collect the sales tax, if the items are put to a taxable use.

Businesses that have registered for sales and use tax should report the cost of the use tax items when they electronically file their sales and use tax return. Individuals must file a Form UT-1, Consumer's Use Tax Return, which is due April 15 following the end of the calendar year. Local use tax is also due if the items are used in an area that imposes a local sales and use tax. Note that with the exception of Duluth local use taxes, all local use taxes are required to be reported on the taxpayer's state return.

## EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES

Generally, all sales of taxable merchandise are presumed to be subject to the sales tax. However, certain customers are not required to pay the tax at the time of purchase. To show they are authorized to buy goods without paying the tax, these customers must give the seller a properly completed Certificate of Exemption, Form ST-3.

**Unless the customer gives the seller a properly completed exemption certificate, the seller is required to collect the sales tax.** It is not sufficient for the customer to provide only its sales and use tax number. Certificate of Exemption, Form ST-3, is available from the Department of Revenue at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide or from its website, [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us).

An exemption certificate may be for either a single purchase or a blanket exemption. Customers who frequently make exempt purchases from one seller should give that seller a blanket exemption certificate to cover future purchases. That way, the seller will not need to collect a new certificate each time the customer makes a purchase.

A properly completed exemption certificate should be retained in the seller's files to substantiate the exemption. Certificates are subject to inspection by the Department of Revenue, but they should not be mailed to the Department.

## EXEMPTIONS AND EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS

Certain sales are exempt from sales and use tax. Exemptions commonly encountered by Minnesota businesses are listed below. Detailed information on the exemptions may be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Revenue at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide or from the Department's website, [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us).

### **Food, Clothing and Prescription Drugs**

Generally, the sale of clothing, prescription drugs and most food is exempt from the sales and use tax. However, the exemption for sales of food does not apply to food purchased from restaurants, bars, delicatessens or caterers, or from vending machines, and it does not include candy, soft drinks or dietary supplements.

### **Refund for Tax Paid On Capital Equipment Purchases**

Purchasers of "capital equipment" as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 297A.68, subd 5, may be eligible for a refund of the sales tax paid at the time of purchase. The sales or use tax must first be paid at the full rate. The purchaser may then file a claim for refund (Form ST-11) with the Department of Revenue for the sales or use tax paid.

In order to qualify for the refund, the capital (or replacement capital) equipment must be used by the purchaser or lessee primarily for manufacturing, fabricating, mining, or refining tangible personal property to be sold ultimately at retail, or for electronically transmitting results retrieved by a

customer of an on-line computerized data retrieval system. Capital equipment includes all machinery and equipment that is essential to the integrated production process; also included are repair and replacement parts, materials used for foundations that support machinery or equipment, and materials used to construct and install special purpose buildings used in the production process.

## **Resource Recovery**

An exemption from sales and use tax is allowed for purchases of equipment used for processing solid or hazardous waste at a resource recovery facility. Such an exemption requires prior approval by the Minnesota Department of Revenue. For more information, contact the Minnesota Department of Revenue, Corporate and Sales Tax Division.

## **Sales to Non-Profit Organizations**

Nonprofit organizations may, in certain instances, be exempt from paying sales tax. Nonprofit organizations that purchase otherwise taxable goods or services will not have to pay sales tax on such purchases if: the organization is organized exclusively for a charitable, religious, or educational purpose; and the organization receives prior authorization from the Department for the exemption. The exemption does not apply to the purchases of meals, lodging, or motor vehicles, and also does not apply to the additional 6.2% tax or 3% fee on short term rental of vehicles. Qualifying exempt organizations must provide a certificate of Exemption, Form ST-3.

## **Sales to Government Agencies; “Direct Pay” Permits**

All sales made directly to the federal government are exempt from sales tax. To claim that exemption, an agency of the federal government merely needs to provide a purchase order or payment voucher indicating that the purchase is made directly by the federal government; alternatively, the purchasing federal agency may provide a Certificate of Exemption form (Form ST-3). Sales to employees of the federal government are not exempt from sales tax.

Although sales made directly to the State of Minnesota are not exempt from sales tax, Minnesota State agencies use a direct pay permit, which means that those agencies do not pay the tax to the seller, but instead pay the tax directly to the Department of Revenue. Purchase orders used by Minnesota State agencies contain information about the direct pay permit, so it is not necessary for vendors to obtain a copy of it. There are exceptions to the use of direct pay permits. Sellers of prepared food or beverages, lodging and related services, admissions to amusement or athletic events, motor vehicles or certain services to the State of Minnesota must collect sales tax on those sales from the purchasing Minnesota State agency.

Most sales to local governments (such as cities, counties, townships) are not exempt from sales tax.

Most purchases by public schools, local government hospitals and nursing homes are exempt from sales tax. To claim the exemption, these purchasers must provide a Certificate of Exemption (Form ST-3) to their sellers. However, sales of meals, or lodging to those entities are not exempt.

## **Fund Raising Sales by Non-Profit Organizations**

Under certain conditions, non-profit organizations are not required to collect sales tax on sales of tangible personal property, admission charges, and sales of food, meals, or drinks at fund raising events sponsored by the organization. Fund raising sales by certain youth and senior citizen organizations also are exempt. The exemption is subject to strict requirements, and failure to meet the requirements can make taxable the entire gross receipts from fund raising for the year. For more information, contact the Department of Revenue at (651) 296-6181.

### **FILING THE SALES AND USE TAX RETURN**

A sales and use tax account is set up on either a monthly, quarterly or annual filing basis depending on how much tax is owed each month.

**Annual Filing.** Tax must average less than \$100 per month.

**Quarterly Filing.** Tax must average less than \$500 per month.

**Seasonal Filing.** If the business is not open year-round, request seasonal filing. With seasonal filing you only need to file returns for those periods when the business is open.

**One-time Filing.** If you will be making taxable sales in Minnesota at only one event or during one month, ask for one-time filing. Do not apply for one-time filing if you plan to make taxable sales in the future.

If the amount of tax you report is consistently higher or lower than the limits, you can change your filing cycles when you log into e-File Minnesota to file or pay taxes. If internet service is not available, contact the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

You will not receive a notice to remind you to file your return or pay the tax due. The following are the due-dates:

**Monthly Filers.** 20<sup>th</sup> day of the following month.

**Quarterly Filers.** April 20, July 20, October 20 and January 20.

**Annual Filers.** February 5 of the following year. Annual filers must file on a calendar-year basis, not a fiscal year basis.

**Unregisterd Individuals Filing Annual Return.** April 15 of the following year.

Payments must be electronically received or postmarked by the due date. If the due date falls on a legal holiday or weekend, the return is due the next business day.

**Mandatory electronic payment.** Taxpayers who have a sales and use tax liability of \$10,000 or more in the state's fiscal year (July 1 - June 30) must file all taxes electronically starting with the next calendar year.



## LOCAL SALES AND USE TAXES

The Minnesota Department of Revenue currently administers and collects local taxes for any local unit of government that imposes them. Local sales tax applies to retail sales made and taxable services provided within the local taxing area. The tax applies to the same items that are taxed by the Minnesota sales and use tax law.

All retailers who are registered to collect Minnesota sales tax and are doing business in an area with local tax must be registered with the Minnesota Department of Revenue to collect that local tax. This includes sellers from outside the locality:

- Have an office, distribution, sales, sample or warehouse location, or other place of business in the local area either directly or by a subsidiary;
- Have a representative, agent, sales person, canvasser, or solicitor in the local area, on either a permanent or temporary basis, which operates under the authority of the retailer or its subsidiary for any purpose;
- Ship or deliver tangible personal property to the local area; or
- Perform taxable services in the local area.

Local tax applies to sales made or services performed within city limits or county boundaries only. To figure the tax, combine the state tax rate and the local tax rate and apply the combined rate to the taxable sales price.

Local use tax applies when items or services are bought for business or personal use in the local area without paying local sales tax to the seller. Use tax is similar to the sales tax and the rates are identical. It is based on the cost of taxable purchases. Common examples of when use tax is due are when:

- Items are bought outside the local area and the seller doesn't charge local sales tax, and then the item is used for business or personal use in the local area;
- A taxable item is bought for your business from an out-of-state seller who does not charge or collect local sales tax.

Expanded information on local sales and use tax is available from the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

## FICA TAX

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The Social Security and Medicare benefit programs are financed by taxes paid by employers and employees under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA), and by self employed individuals through the self employment tax.

FICA taxes are levied on both the employer and the employee. The employer is responsible for the employer's share of FICA taxes, and also is required to collect and pay the employee's part of the tax, which is withheld from the employee's pay in much the same way as income tax is withheld. Self employed individuals compute their self employment tax on Internal Revenue Service Schedule SE of Form 1040.

The anticipated FICA tax rate for 2010 (combining the rates for Social Security and Medicare) is 7.65 percent of the first \$106,800 in wages paid the employee plus an additional 1.45 percent of wages paid over \$106,800 since there is no ceiling on taxable wages for the Medicare tax.

For 2010 the anticipated self employment tax rate (combining the rates for Social Security and Medicare) is 15.3 percent of earnings between \$400 and \$106,800 with an additional rate of 2.9 percent for earnings over \$97,500, without a taxable maximum. A self employed individual may deduct one half of the self employment tax in computing adjusted gross income for income tax purposes.

Special rules apply to tipped employees, and to persons who receive both wages and self employment income. Special rules also apply to payments in kind made by employers, such as the furnishing of meals, lodging, clothing or services to employees.

It should be noted that the FICA rates and wage base limitations stated above are current as of December, 2009 (for the 2009 tax year). However, these amounts are subject to change by congressional action. Typically wage base limitations change each year. It is therefore wise to consult the IRS for the correct rate at the time of withholding or payment.

The following IRS publications can provide additional information on FICA contributions, withholding and self employment taxes: Publication 15, ***Employer's Tax Guide (Circular E)***; Publication 15-A, ***Employer's Supplemental Tax Guide***; and Publication 533, ***Self Employment Tax***. To obtain these publications contact the Internal Revenue Service at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide or visit their website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

# INCOME TAX WITHHOLDING

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## INTRODUCTION

Employers must withhold federal and Minnesota income tax and the employee's share of the FICA tax from their employees and pay those taxes to the federal and state government. The amount of withholding is based on the wages or salary paid to the employee, and the number of withholding allowances claimed by the employee on Form W-4, Withholding Allowance Certificate, which the employee completes at the time of hiring. (Withholding Allowance Certificates are discussed later in this section.) Employers are required to withhold both federal and state income taxes and FICA tax from their employees' wages as soon as they are paid. Note that special rules may apply to the withholding of taxes on "supplemental" wages (e.g., on a bonus paid to an employee).

The Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue provide withholding tables to enable the employer to determine the appropriate withholding amount. These tables are available on the Internet from these agencies. These agencies also send periodic newsletters and/or notices to employers about changes in the law or procedures. Employers must comply with these changes.

## TAX IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

All business entities that have employees must obtain a federal employer identification number. If the employer employs anyone who works in Minnesota, or any Minnesota resident, that employer must also obtain a Minnesota tax identification number. Employers should apply for their tax identification numbers before they expect to hire their first employee, to allow for adequate processing time. A penalty may be assessed for failure to apply on time.

A federal identification number is obtained by filing Form SS-4 with the Internal Revenue Service. To register for a Minnesota tax ID number and withhold Minnesota income tax, go to the Minnesota Department of Revenue website at [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us) and click on "register for a Minnesota tax ID number" on the e-Services menu. If you do not have Internet access, call Registration Services office at (651) 282-5225. Further information on the procedure for obtaining these numbers is provided in the section of this Guide on Business Taxes or may be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service or Minnesota Department of Revenue at the address and telephone numbers provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

Following receipt and processing of the applications for tax identification numbers, the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue provides the employer with respective identification numbers. Employers must file Minnesota withholding tax returns electronically over the Internet, or by touchtone telephone. If the employer chooses to pay by check, contact the Minnesota Department of Revenue so they can mail customized payment vouchers (MW-5 forms). The employer will automatically be enrolled in the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System—EFTPS—so it can make all deposits online or by phone. Within a few days it will receive by mail EFTPS enrollment confirmation, as well as a Personal Identification Number (PIN) and complete instructions for using EFTPS. It will need to wait until it receives its EFTPS information in the mail before it can

make a payment electronically. Once it receive the EFTPS Confirmation Package, it can begin making EFTPS payments.

## **WITHHOLDING ALLOWANCE CERTIFICATES**

Federal Form W-4, Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate, is completed by the employee at the time of hiring, and is used by the employer to determine how much tax to withhold from the employee's paycheck for both federal and state withholding. Form W-4 may be obtained by contacting the Internal Revenue Service at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. Form W-4 can also be downloaded from the IRS website, [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

Employees can claim fewer exemptions for their Minnesota withholding than for their federal withholding. If an employee wishes to do so, the employee should complete two W-4 forms and mark one "state copy" and one "federal copy." An employee cannot claim more exemptions for Minnesota withholding than for federal withholding.

Previous to 2007, employers had to routinely send the IRS any Form W-4 claiming complete exemption from withholding if \$200 or more in weekly wages was expected or claiming more than 10 allowances. Employers no longer have to routinely submit these W-4 Forms to the IRS. However, Forms W-4 are still subject to review. Employers may be directed (in written notice or in future published guidance) to send certain W-4 Forms to the IRS.

A copy of the Form W-4 must be sent to the Minnesota Department of Revenue if the employee claims to be exempt and the employer reasonably expects the wages to exceed \$200 per week unless the employee has completed an MWR form Reciprocity Exemption/Affidavit of Residency, or the employee claims more than 10 withholding allowances or the employer believes an employee is not entitled to the number of exemptions claimed. Employers must complete boxes 8 and 10 on any copies of Form W-4 sent to either the IRS or the Department of Revenue.

The employer should honor the employee's W-4 unless notified by the Internal Revenue Service or the Minnesota Department of Revenue that the W-4 is not valid. As noted above, an employee can complete two W-4 forms showing different exemptions for federal and state withholding. Penalties apply to employees knowingly filing incorrect W-4s and employers who fail to provide federal or state tax authorities with W-4s when required.

## **FURNISHING WAGE AND TAX STATEMENT TO EMPLOYEES**

The employer must issue a wage and tax statement (federal Form W-2) to each employee on or before January 31 of the following year, or within 30 days of a written request from the employee if his or her employment was terminated.

Employers may furnish Form W-2 to employees electronically provided certain criteria are met. Employers must affirmatively consent to receive the Form W-2 in an electronic format and prior to, or at the time of the consent, the employer must provide a disclosure statement containing certain disclosures. Additionally, the electronic version of Form W-2 must contain all required information and comply with applicable revenue procedures relating to substitute statements to

recipients. If the statement is furnished on a website, the employer must notify the employee, via mail, electronic mail, or in person, that the statement is posted on a website and provide instructions on accessing and printing the statement.

The federal copy of Form W-2, together with Form W-3, Transmittal of Income and Tax Statements, must be filed annually with the Social Security Administration by February 28. No other forms should be sent with the W-2s. The state copy of Form W-2 must be filed with the Minnesota Department of Revenue by February 28. Information Returns (1099s) that show Minnesota tax withheld should be sent with the W-2 Forms.

Forms W-2 and W-3 may be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **DEFINITION OF EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE**

Generally, an employer is a person or organization for whom a worker performs a service as an employee. The employer usually provides the tools and place to work and has the right to hire and discharge an employee. A person may be an employer for purposes of one kind of tax but not for another.

Generally, employees can be defined either under common law or under special statutes for special purposes. Generally speaking, a common law employee is anyone who performs services that can be controlled by an employer (what will be done and how it will be done). This is true even when the employer gives the employee freedom of action. What matters is that the employer has the legal right to control the method and result of the services.

Further information on determining whether an individual is an employee is provided in the sections of this Guide titled "Issues for Employers" and "Checklist for Hiring an Employee" or refer to Federal Publication 15A, Employer's Supplemental Tax Guide.

## **ISSUES FOR NONRESIDENT EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES**

### **North Dakota and Michigan Residents Working in Minnesota**

Minnesota has tax reciprocity agreements with these states. Under these agreements, residents of North Dakota or Michigan who work in Minnesota are not required to have Minnesota income tax withheld from their Minnesota compensation if they complete Form MW-R, Reciprocity Exemption/Affidavit of Residency. Instead, they pay state tax to the state in which they live.

A North Dakota or Michigan resident who works in Minnesota and does not want Minnesota income tax withheld from his or her wages must complete and give to the employer Form MW-R, Reciprocity Exemption/Affidavit of Residency. The employer must retain one copy for his or her records and forward one copy to the Minnesota Department of Revenue. Form MW-R should be filled out by the employee each year by the end of February or within 30 days of beginning work. The employer must send a copy of Form MW-R to the Minnesota Department of Revenue no later than March 31, or within thirty days after a new employee, or an employee who changes his or her address, files the form with the employer.

## **Wisconsin Residents Working in Minnesota**

Minnesota will end individual income tax reciprocity with Wisconsin effective January 1, 2010. As a result, Minnesota and Wisconsin residents who work across the border must file returns in both states for 2010 and beyond if they meet minimum filing requirements. On January 1, 2010, Minnesota employers who employ Wisconsin residents must begin withholding Minnesota income taxes on personal service income of Wisconsin residents working in Minnesota. Use the Federal Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate, Form W-4, to determine the amount of Minnesota income tax to be withheld from the employee's paychecks. If the employer no longer has a withholding obligation for Wisconsin, the Wisconsin withholding tax account should be inactivated effective December 31, 2009.

## **Employees of Interstate Carrier Companies**

Interstate carrier companies that have employees such as truck drivers, bus drivers or railroad workers who travel across state borders in their work must withhold state income tax for the employee's state of residence.

Interstate air carrier companies must withhold tax in any state in which an employee has his or her residence and in any state in which the employee earns more than fifty percent of his or her compensation.

## **Tax on Nonresident Entertainment Entities**

Nonresident entertainers such as musicians, actors, dancers, athletes and public speakers may be subject to a two percent tax on the gross compensation they receive for entertainment performed in Minnesota. The tax is imposed on the entertainment entity. The person who has legal control of the payment of the compensation is responsible for withholding and depositing the tax.

Further information on the nonresident entertainer tax may be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

## **Minnesota Residents Employed Outside Minnesota**

**In Other States.** An employer of a Minnesota resident who does not work in Minnesota but works in another state and who withholds federal income tax from the wages of that employee may also be required to withhold Minnesota income tax. The employer may also be required to withhold taxes in the other state in which the work is being performed.

An employer who is required to withhold both Minnesota income tax and income tax for another state should first determine the amount of income tax to be withheld for each state. If the amount of Minnesota income tax is greater than the amount to be withheld from the state in which the employee is working, the employer should send the difference to the Minnesota Department of Revenue and the remainder to the state in which the employee is working.

**Outside the United States.** A Minnesota resident who is transferred to a location outside the United States remains a Minnesota resident unless:

(1) the employee is a "qualified individual" for the foreign earned income exclusion of Section 911(d)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code, and

(2) the employee does not have an interest in any homesteaded property in Minnesota. If the employee does not meet these criteria, the employer must continue to withhold Minnesota income tax from the employee's wages.

If you are required to withhold Minnesota State tax, follow the same rules as tax withheld from employees working in Minnesota. (See the section titled "Withholding Tax Deposit and Filing Requirements" below.)

If the employee changes his or her domicile and requests that you stop withholding Minnesota income tax, send the Department of Revenue a copy of the employee's W-4 and a letter explaining in detail why the employee thinks his or her domicile has changed.

## WITHHOLDING TAX DEPOSIT AND FILING REQUIREMENTS

### Overview

Both the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue require employers to deposit withheld tax on a periodic basis, and to file periodic returns. Deposit and filing requirements are discussed below. Employers should note that for purposes of determining the frequency of payment, federal and state withholdings are totaled separately.

### Deposit Requirements

**Annual Requirement (Federal only).** Agricultural employers who accumulate less than \$2,500 federal tax liability during the year may pay the tax and file the return annually.

**Annual Requirement (Minnesota only).** Minnesota employers with less than \$500 in Minnesota tax in a year may be notified by the Department of Revenue that they qualify for annual filing. If an employer is notified, and the Minnesota withholding tax exceeds \$500, the employer is required to make a deposit at the end of the month following the month in which withholding tax exceeded \$500. To make a deposit, the employer should use the Minnesota Department of Revenue's Internet e-FILE system ([www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us)) touchtone telephone (800) 570-3329, or an MW-5 Minnesota payment voucher.

**Quarterly Requirement.** Employers with federal deposit liability of less than \$2,500 in the current quarter or state withholdings of \$1500 or less in the prior quarter must pay the entire amount to the Internal Revenue Service or Minnesota Department of Revenue quarterly. The payment is due the last day of the month following the end of the quarter.

**General Rule for Making Deposits (Minnesota).** If an employer withholds more than \$1500 in Minnesota tax during the previous quarter, the employer is required to make Minnesota deposits in the next quarter as often as it is required to make federal deposits, either monthly or semiweekly.

**Monthly Requirement.** New employers and employers whose total federal tax liability for the four quarters in the lookback period is \$50,000 or less are required to deposit employment taxes each month by the fifteenth day of the following month. The lookback period is the four quarters

beginning July 1 of the second preceding year and ending June 30 of the prior year. Employers should consult IRS Publication 15, Circular E, and the Minnesota Department of Revenue for specific rules and exceptions.

**Semi-weekly Requirement.** Employers whose total tax liability for the lookback period is more than \$50,000 are required to deposit employment taxes on Wednesday and/or Friday, according to their payroll day. Employers should consult IRS Publication 15, Circular E, Employer's Tax Guide, for specific rules.

**One-Day Requirement (Federal only).** Employers who accumulate taxes of \$100,000 or more on any day during a deposit period are required to make the deposit by the close of the next banking day, whether they are a monthly or semi-weekly depositor.

**Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS).** The EFTPS is the system sponsored by the U.S. Department of Treasury that allows taxpayers to initiate Federal tax payments electronically instead of using paper coupons. Taxpayers with aggregate Federal tax deposits exceeding \$200,000 are subject to the requirement to deposit by electronic funds transfer beginning in the second succeeding calendar year of reaching that threshold. Once that threshold has been met, and payment by electronic funds transfer has begun, the taxpayer is required to continue using EFTPS even if deposits in future years drop below the \$200,000 threshold amount.

Note also that other taxpayers not required to use EFTPS can use EFTPS voluntarily. Other taxpayers may use EFTPS to make tax deposits in amounts under the \$200,000 annual threshold or to make other certain nondepository tax payments. IRS continues to expand the types of payments that can be made using the EFTPS.

For more information or to enroll in EFTPS visit [www.eftps.gov](http://www.eftps.gov) or call the EFTPS Customer Service Center toll-free at 1-800-555-4477 or 1-800-945-8400.

**Electronic State Deposits.** State tax deposits must be made electronically if state tax withholdings total more than \$10,000 in Minnesota income tax during the last two quarters of 2008 and first two quarters of 2009. Employers are also required to deposit electronically if they are required to pay any other Minnesota business tax to the Minnesota Department of Revenue electronically. For more information consult the Minnesota Income Tax Withholding Instructions and Tax Table Booklet.

## Filing Requirements

**Quarterly Withholding Tax Return.** Each quarter, all employers (except annual filers) must file federal Form 941, Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return with the Internal Revenue Service. In addition, all employers (except Minnesota annual filers) must file a Minnesota Quarterly Tax Withholding Return for the first three quarters, and a Year-End Withholding Return Reconciliation for the fourth quarter. These returns must be filed electronically via e-File Minnesota (at [www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us)) or by touch tone phone (800) 570-3329.

**W-2 filing.** Federal Form W-3, Transmittal of Income and Tax Statements, must be filed annually with the federal copies of each employee's Form W-2 to the Social Security Administration. The state copies of each employee's Form W-2 and 1099s that show Minnesota withholding should be



sent electronically using eFile Minnesota. You will find more detailed information on the Minnesota Department of Revenue website, Withholding Tax Fact Sheets #2 and #2a, revised 8/07. The federal Form W-3 and the state copies of the W-2 must be filed no later than February 28 in the year following the taxable year, or within 30 days of going out of business.

**Annual Filing.** If you have been notified by the Minnesota Department of Revenue that you are an annual filer, you should not file quarterly returns. You should file only an Annual Withholding Return/Reconciliation, by February 28 of the year following the end of the taxable year. The Annual Withholding Return must be filed via the Internet (e-File Minnesota) or touchtone phone.

## **Forms**

Deposits are made with federal Form 8109, Federal Tax Deposit Coupon or through EFTPS which requires no coupon. Deposits of Minnesota taxes are made via the Internet (e-File Minnesota) by touchtone phone, or by mail using form MW-5. Quarterly returns are filed using federal Form 941, Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return. State returns must be filed via the Internet (e-File Minnesota) or touchtone telephone. Note that both federal and state returns must be filed, even if all amounts due have already been paid via deposits.

## **Due Dates**

All federal quarterly 941 returns are due April 30, July 31, October 31 and January 31. The first three Minnesota quarterly returns are due April 30, July 31, and October 31. The Year-End withholding return reconciliation return, along with the return for annual filers are due February 28. Federal returns and deposits and state deposits and returns will be considered on time if received or postmarked on or before the due date. The postmark must be a United States postmark and must not be from a postage meter. If deposits are made electronically, refer to the specific instructions for the type of deposit.

## **WITHHOLDING TAX PENALTIES AND INTEREST**

Both the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue assess penalties and interest for the failure to make deposits on time, the failure to file required returns on time, and the failure to file W-2 and 1099 forms. The amount of penalty for late deposits or late filing is based on the length of time the payment or return is late. The Internal Revenue Service imposes a penalty on failure to provide correct information on W-2 forms, and failure to provide a correct Taxpayer Identification Number.

Any person responsible for paying withholding tax may be held personally liable for failure to do so. A penalty equal to 100 percent of the amount withheld from employee's paycheck, also may be imposed.

Interest is assessed on unpaid withholding tax (plus penalties). Interest accrues from the date the payment should have been made to the date the payment actually is made. The interest rate is adjusted to reflect market rates.

## CONTRACTOR AND SUBCONTRACTOR CLEARANCE

A prime contractor, contractor or subcontractor who performs work on a project for the State of Minnesota or any of Minnesota's political or governmental subdivisions (e.g., counties, cities, school districts) must file a Withholding Affidavit for Contractors, Form IC134, with the Department of Revenue certifying that the contractor has complied with Minnesota's withholding tax laws in order to receive final payment for the work.

A **contractor** is a person who is awarded a contract to perform work and who performed the work personally or through his or her employees. A **prime contractor** is a contractor who is awarded a contract to perform work but who subcontracts all or part of the work to other contractors. A **subcontractor** is hired by a prime contractor to perform all or part of the work on a contract. A **subcontractor** files Form IC134 when the subcontractor completes its part of the project. A **prime contractor** or **contractor** files Form IC134 when the entire project is completed.

Go to the Minnesota Department of Revenue's website and click submit contractor affidavit on the e-services menu to submit a withholding contractor affidavit for approval.

## MINNESOTA INCOME TAX WITHHOLDING ON PAYMENTS TO INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS IN THE CONSTRUCTION TRADES

A construction contractor (payer) who makes payments to an individual construction contractor (payee) carrying on a trade or business as a sole proprietorship must deduct and withhold 2 percent (.02) of the payment(s) to that individual construction contractor as Minnesota income tax withholding. Payments are subject to 2 percent withholding only if the work was performed in Minnesota and the total payments during the calendar year exceed \$600. All of the payments (including the first \$600) are subject to income tax withholding. A single member Limited Liability Company (LLC) is not a sole proprietor for the purpose of the law. A Minnesota tax ID number is required to withhold Minnesota tax.

Contact the Minnesota Department of Revenue for additional information and a withholding tax fact sheet.

## SUCCESSOR LIABILITY FOR CERTAIN TAXES WHEN A BUSINESS OR ITS ASSETS ARE TRANSFERRED

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Whenever a business or its assets are transferred outside the ordinary course of business, and a lien for unpaid sales or withholding taxes has been filed, in certain situations the new owner can be liable for the amount of the lien and any related interest and penalties, and any other unpaid sales or withholding taxes. In order to avoid liability for these taxes, the potential new owner must send a notice to the Commissioner of the Department of Revenue at least twenty days before taking possession of the assets or paying the purchase price. That notice must contain information regarding the transfer of the business or its assets, the terms and conditions of that transfer, and the tax identification number of the business being transferred.

The Commissioner then has twenty days to notify the potential new owner of any additional sales or withholding taxes (including interest and penalties); the Commissioner may also notify the potential new owner of the amount needed to satisfy the lien, or that there are no taxes due in addition to the amount shown on the lien, or that additional tax returns are due. If the Commissioner fails to give the required notice within the twenty-day period, the potential new owner is not liable for any taxes other than those shown on the lien.

These rules apply to transfers of businesses or business assets, whether by sales or gift. In the case of sales transfers, the amount of the tax liability cannot exceed the purchase price. In the case of gift transfers, the tax liability is presumed to be the value of the transferred assets or business. Also, for transfers by gift, the tax liability can be avoided by returning the gifted property. These rules also apply to changes in the type of business entity or changes to the name of the business, so long as one business is being discontinued and another one started.

## **REVOCATION OR PREVENTION OF LICENSE ISSUANCE OR RENEWAL**

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Existing licenses can be revoked if the Department of Revenue notifies the licensing authority that the license holder owes the state for back taxes, penalties or interest.

In addition, the Commissioner of Revenue is authorized to stop, by issuing a Notice of Requirement for Tax Clearance, the issuance or renewal of any business, trade, occupational or professional license issued by the state, a county or a municipality to businesses that have a state tax liability of more than \$500 (Minnesota Statutes § 270.72).

If a licensing agency receives a Notice of Requirement for Tax Clearance for a business, a license may not be issued, renewed or transferred until the agency receives a tax clearance certificate from the Commissioner of Revenue. A tax clearance certificate is issued only upon resolution of the tax delinquency.

The Commissioner of Revenue is responsible for all negotiations, disputes and appeals resulting from a license denial under this statute. Further information regarding the requirements or application of this law may be obtained from the Minnesota Department of Revenue's Collection Enforcement group, at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TAXES

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Unemployment insurance taxes, paid by the employers, are funds used to pay unemployment benefits. The amount of tax paid by Minnesota employers is based on their unemployment history. Unemployment benefits provide a temporary partial wage replacement to those Minnesota workers who become unemployed through no fault of their own. These payments are an economic stabilizer/stimulator in times of economic downturn, and help to maintain an available skilled workforce for Minnesota employers.

Federal unemployment tax (generally referred to as FUTA tax) is a separate tax used to fund the administration of the program at both the federal and state levels. FUTA taxes are collected by the Internal Revenue Service on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration. State unemployment insurance taxes and the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Law are administered by the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program, a division of the Department of Employment and Economic Development. Information on the federal and state programs may be obtained from the U.S. Department of Labor (federal program) and the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program (state program) at the addresses and telephone numbers provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. Both the federal and the state unemployment insurance taxes are employer-funded. Therefore, no deductions for it may be made from employees' wages.

### FEDERAL UNEMPLOYMENT TAXES

#### Filing Requirements

The FUTA tax return is prepared once per year and is generally due one month after the year ends.

A FUTA tax return must be filed by any employer who meets any one of the following tests:

- The employer pays \$1,500 or more in wages in any one calendar quarter for the reporting year, or;
- The employer had one or more employees for some part of a day in any of 20 different weeks during the reporting year. For this test, all regular, temporary, and part-time employees are counted. Note: Partners of a partnership, and sole proprietors and their spouses, parents, and minor children are not counted for this purpose. (This test is known as the "general" test), or;
- The employer paid cash wages of \$20,000 or more to farm workers during any calendar quarter for the reporting year, or;
- The employer had 10 or more farm workers for some part of a day in each of 20 different weeks in the reporting year. Aliens admitted to the United States on a temporary basis to perform farm labor are counted for this purpose. (This test is known as the "farm workers" test), or;
- The employer paid cash wages of \$1,000 in any calendar quarter in the reporting year for household work done in a private home, local college club, or local chapter of a fraternity or sorority. (This test is known as the "household employees" test).

## **Figuring the Tax**

The federal unemployment tax is figured on the first \$7,000 in wages paid (“wage base”) to each employee during the year. The federal unemployment tax rate is 6.2 percent of the wage base (Note: The wage base and tax rate are subject to change annually); however, the employer is given a credit of up to 5.4 percent if the state unemployment insurance tax payments were timely. Therefore, the tax rate can be as low as 0.8 percent (6.2 percent minus the 5.4 percentage point credit). An employer may not take FUTA credit for any state taxes the employer did not actually pay.

In computing the employee wage base for FUTA, an employer who takes over the business of another employer who was subject to the federal unemployment tax may count wages paid by the first employer to those employees who continue to work for the second employer.

Additionally, wages paid to an owner/officer who owns 25 percent or more of a corporation or limited liability company (LLC), and has not opted to be covered under the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program (i.e. wages on which no Minnesota unemployment insurance tax has been paid), are not eligible for the 5.4 percentage point FUTA credit. For more information on this topic, see the section entitled “Coverage” under STATE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TAXES below.

## **Reporting and Paying the Tax**

FUTA tax is reported on Form 940. The form covers one calendar year, and is due January 31st of the following year. An employer may, however, be required to make deposits of the tax before filing the return. If at the end of any calendar quarter the employer owes but has not yet deposited more than \$500 in FUTA tax for the year, the employer must make a deposit by the end of the following month. If the tax is \$500 or less at the end of a quarter, no deposit is required. Instead, it is added to the tax for the next quarter. If the total undeposited tax is more than \$500 in the next quarter, a deposit is required. Form 8109 is used to make federal tax deposits. These payments may also be made electronically via the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS). To enroll, visit [www.eftps.com](http://www.eftps.com) on the Internet.

## **Penalties**

An employer can avoid penalties and interest by making tax deposits when they are due, correct returns, and paying the proper amount of tax when due. Penalties may be imposed for filing late deposits and late filing, unless the employer can show reasonable cause for the delay. Information on penalties can be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **STATE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TAXES**

### **Coverage**

All firms or organizations having services performed for them in Minnesota are subject to the provisions of the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Law, and most of these firms or organizations are required to pay unemployment insurance taxes. In lieu of taxes, governmental entities and some non-profits reimburse unemployment benefits paid to their former employees on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Whether or not a business is required to report wages and pay unemployment insurance taxes depends on the amount and type of employment, the amount of wages paid and other factors present in special situations. As discussed in "FEDERAL UNEMPLOYMENT TAXES" above, the wages paid to an owner/officer who owns 25 percent or more of a corporation or limited liability company (LLC), and has not chosen to be covered under the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program, are not subject to Minnesota unemployment insurance tax, nor do they need to be reported on the Wage Detail Report (discussed below in "Wage Detail Reports").

### **Registering for a Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Employer Account**

All entities that pay wages to employees performing covered services in Minnesota are required to register with the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program. Registration is done either online or by automated phone system, and should be completed as soon as possible after wages are paid to employees performing covered services in Minnesota, but not later than the due date of the first Wage Detail Report (discussed below in "Wage Detail Reports"). Based on the information provided, the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program will determine if the entity is required to report the wages paid to its employees and pay Minnesota unemployment insurance taxes on those wages, or (if eligible) reimburse any unemployment benefits that are paid to the entity's former employees. If the entity meets the reporting requirements, it will be assigned an unemployment insurance employer account number. The following entities do not need to register for a Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Employer Account:

- sole-proprietorships whose only employees are the spouse, parents, and/or minor children of the sole proprietor, or;
- corporations and LLCs whose only employees are owner/officers who own 25 percent or more of the business and have not chosen to be covered under the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program, or;
- partnerships whose only workers are the partners of the partnership.

### **Determining Succession**

A firm that buys or otherwise acquires any part of an existing business that is subject to the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Law must, within thirty days of the acquisition, report the acquisition online, or by using the automated phone system. If the entire business was acquired, and the predecessor and successor share 25 percent or more common ownership, the successor inherits the unemployment experience record of the predecessor. Common ownership includes, ownership by a spouse, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, niece,

nephew, or first cousin, by birth or by marriage. Common ownership is assumed if both the predecessor and successor are publicly held corporations. If this is the case, the rate remains until the successor establishes its own experience record. If a distinct severable portion of the business of a commonly owned predecessor is acquired, the successor may apply for the portion of the predecessor's experience record that is applicable to the portion of the business acquired. An organization that plans to acquire any part of an existing business may obtain information on the predecessor's account by submitting a release from the predecessor to the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program. An organization that acquires assets in the normal course of the seller's business is not, solely by reason of the acquisition, subject to this provision of the law.

## **Tax Rates**

The law requires that each new employer pay tax at a new employer rate, unless the rate was acquired from a predecessor with an existing Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Employer Account, and the new employer is eligible to have an experience rate computed based on all or part of the predecessors experience record (as described above in "Determining Succession"). Minnesota's new employer unemployment insurance tax rate is a ratio of the total of all benefits paid to all Minnesota unemployment insurance benefit applicants to all taxable wages reported within the computation period. The new employer rate cannot be less than 1.00 percent plus the base tax rate, which can range from 0.10 percent to 0.50 percent dependent upon the balance in the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Fund. The base rate is 0.50 percent for 2010.

New employers in high experience rating industries are assigned a separate new employer rate. The tax rate for new employers in these industries is set by law at 8.00 percent, plus the base tax rate.

High experience rating industries include (but are not limited to):

- residential, commercial or industrial construction;
- sand, gravel, or limestone mining;
- manufacturing of concrete, concrete products or asphalt; and
- road building, repair or resurfacing, including residential and commercial driveways and parking lots.

New employers who are not in high experience rating industries are also assigned a new employer rate. The tax rate for these new employers is determined each year using a calculation set by law. For 2010 this rate is 1.91 percent, plus the base tax rate.

Experience rating assigns a tax rate to employers who have paid wages for a sufficient period to rate their experience with unemployment. The fewer layoffs an employer's workers experience, the lower the tax rate. By relating tax rates to unemployment history, experience rating results in employers paying tax at a rate that covers the cost of unemployment for which their business is responsible. Experience ratings are computed to the nearest one-hundredth of a percent, to a maximum of 8.90 percent. To receive an experience rating, an employer must have paid covered wages for a specific period of time. This is the experience rating period. The computation period is 48 months (sixteen quarters), ending on June 30 of the year prior to the year for which the rate is computed.

The experience ratings assigned to employers for 2010 are based on the time period beginning July 1, 2005, and ending June 30, 2009. Employers do not need to have employees during the entire 48-month period to receive an experience rating. Employers who have paid wages before July 1 of their first year of coverage will be eligible for an experience rating in the third year. For example, employers who first paid wages on or before June 30, 2008 will receive an experience rate in the year 2010. Note that any special assessments and the Workforce Development Fee must be added to the percentages discussed above to arrive at the total cost rate.

### **Additional and Special Assessments**

If the balance in the Minnesota UI Fund on March 31 falls below certain levels, an additional assessment takes effect for the following year. The additional assessment is currently 14 percent of the tax due. There is also a provision in the law for a special assessment to pay interest on federal loans which help to keep the Trust Fund solvent during periods of high unemployment. There is no special assessment in place for 2010.

### **Special Fee for Workforce Development**

A special Workforce Development Fee of 0.12 percent of taxable payroll is paid with the quarterly unemployment insurance tax. The fee collected is deposited in the Minnesota Workforce Development Fund, and is used to fund programs that help unemployed workers with retraining and re-employment, helping to keep them a valuable part of their local economy in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program's website, [www.uimn.org](http://www.uimn.org), provides detailed information on experience rating and the other assessments.

### **Wage Detail Reports**

Minnesota requires employers to file wage reports and pay unemployment insurance tax on a quarterly basis. When employers pay covered wages to employees for services provided, they are required to submit quarterly wage reports detailing the wages they paid to each employee, and pay tax on the wages reported. All covered wages paid to both full and part-time employees during the calendar quarter must be reported (this includes commissions, bonuses, tips as well as the cash value of any remuneration paid by a means other than cash), except those wages excluded by law. Examples of excluded employment are listed in the Employer Handbook, which is available on the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program's website, [www.uimn.org](http://www.uimn.org).

Not all covered wages are taxable. Unemployment insurance tax is only paid on wages up to an annual taxable maximum per employee. The taxable maximum wage is \$27,000 per employee for calendar year 2010.



The wage information that is required quarterly for each employee is:

- full name;
- Social Security number;
- total wages paid in the quarter;
- number of hours worked in the quarter, and;
- work location(s).

Employers are also required to report the total number of covered workers who worked or received pay during the payroll period which included the 12th of the month for each month in the reporting period. The wage detail report and the related taxes and other assessments are due within one month after the end of each calendar quarter. The due dates are April 30, July 31, October 31 and January 31. If any of these dates falls on a weekend or state government holiday, the due date is the next state government business day. Wage Detail Reports are required from all covered employers, even though they may have had no employees during the quarter, and therefore owe no tax. Even though no tax is due, a late fee will still apply if the Report is filed late. Reports must be electronically filed and accepted by the due date. The electronic receipt date of the accepted report will determine timeliness.

Wage Detail Reports are filed online or with an automated phone option using the Employer Self-Service System. Features of the System include:

- All tax and wage reporting is done on a secure Internet website or using automated telephone reporting (for employers with few employees and no access to the Internet).
- Wage and tax reports are combined - the System calculates taxable wages and the amount of tax and other assessments due.
- Several standard electronic file formats and submission types are accepted.
- Electronic Payments—Electronic payment options using either ACH debit or ACH credit are available for all employers, and required for employers reporting 50 or more employees and all third-party processors paying on behalf of their clients. The receipt date of the payment (not the postmark date for paper check payments) will determine its timeliness.
- Features allow the user to view and update account information, view payment history and wage detail information, make changes to account information, view benefits paid charges and receive and respond to Notices of Benefit Account—all online.

### **Interest Charged on Late Tax Payments**

If the taxes due are not received by the due date, the employer is assessed interest at the rate of 1.5 percent per month or any part thereof, from the due date until payment is received by the Unemployment Insurance Program. Interest assessments may be removed if a late payment is attributable to certain extenuating circumstances. All requests for interest removal must be in writing, and the reasons for late payment must be substantiated.

## **Late Fees for Failure to File Timely Reports**

An employer who knowingly fails to submit a Wage Detail Report by the due date is required to pay a late fee in addition to the interest. An employer who submits the Wage Detail Report, but knowingly fails to include any part of the required information or knowingly enters erroneous information is also subject to an administrative fee. Additional information on interest and administrative fees is available on the Unemployment Insurance Program's website at: [www.uimn.org](http://www.uimn.org).

## **Adjustments and Refunds**

An employer that overpays the tax due may apply for an adjustment within four years from the date the tax was paid. To obtain an adjustment the employer should complete an adjustment transaction using the Unemployment Insurance Employer Self-Service System. Upon approval of the submission, the employer will receive a credit that can be applied to future taxes. When specifically requested, a refund check will be issued for the full amount of the credit. An employer who fails to include all wages in a previous report should complete an adjustment transaction via the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Employer Self-Service System. Upon review and approval of the completed submission, the necessary adjustments will be made. Adjustments for a prior quarter should not be made on a subsequent quarter's Wage Detail Report. All adjustments should be made to the quarter and year to which they relate. Overpayments or underpayments may also result from an unemployment insurance audit of an employer's payroll records. In such cases, all adjustments will automatically be made, and the employer will be notified of any overpayment or underpayment.

## **Audits**

Unemployment Insurance Auditors perform regular examinations of employer payroll records. An audit to verify wage items and employment is generally confined to a single year, but may be expanded if errors or exclusions are found. All of the employer's records, including subsidiary records, must be made available to the auditor. Auditors may also inspect records for the purpose of establishing an employer's liability under the law, to obtain information regarding an application for unemployment benefits and in connection with unemployment insurance fraud investigations. The Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Law provides that the records of any employing unit must be open to inspection, audit and verification at any reasonable time, and as often as may be deemed necessary.

## **Records**

True and accurate employment records must be kept by all Minnesota employers, whether or not they are covered under the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Law.

Since an employer's reporting requirements cannot be properly determined without such records, the records must be open to inspection as requested by the Audits & Special Accounts Section of the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program. The law provides penalties and administrative fees to ensure compliance.

Records must contain the following information for each employee:

- full name;
- complete home address;
- Social Security number;
- the beginning and ending dates of the pay period and the date of payment;
- the days and number of hours in which the individual performed services;
- the location where the services were performed;
- the amount of gross wages paid and wages due but not paid for services performed;
- the rate and base unit of pay;
- any amounts paid as allowances or reimbursement for expenses; and
- the date of, and reason for, an employee's separation from employment.

Wages paid and wages due but not paid must be broken down to show the character of each payment. For example, meals, lodging, bonuses and gifts must be shown separately. Employment records must be kept for at least eight years after the calendar year in which the wages were paid or became due and payable.

### **Personal Liability for Payment of Unemployment Insurance Tax**

In the event that a corporation or limited liability company fails to pay its unemployment insurance tax, its individual officers, directors, employers, governors, members or owners who are responsible for filing Wage Detail Reports and paying taxes may be held personally liable for any unpaid taxes, interest and fees.

# FEDERAL TAX REQUIREMENTS

YOU MAY BE LIABLE FOR	IF YOU ARE TAXED AS*	USE FORM	DUE ON OR BEFORE
<b>Tax Identification Number</b>	Sole proprietor with employees; Partnership; Corporation  If you are a sole proprietor with no employees use your Social Security Number as your tax identification number	SS-4, Application for Identification Number	See Instructions on Form SS-4
<b>Individual – Income Tax Return</b>	Sole proprietor	Schedule C (Form 1040), Profit or loss from business	April 15th or the 15th day of the 4th month after the end of the tax year
	Partner or S corporation shareholder	Schedule E (Form 1040), Supplemental Income or Loss	Same as above
<b>Business – Income Tax Return</b>	Partnership	Form 1065, U.S. Partnership Return of Income	15th day of the 4th month following the close of the tax year
	S corporation	Form 1120-S, U.S. Income Tax Return for S corporation	15th day of the 3rd month after the end of the tax year
	Corporation	Form 1120, U.S. Corporation Income Tax Return	15th day of the 3rd month after the end of the tax year
<b>Estimated Taxes – Individual</b>	Sole Proprietor or individual who is a partner or S corporation shareholder	Form 1040ES, Estimated Tax For Individuals	15th day of the 4th, 6th, and 9th months of tax year, 15th day of 1st month after end of tax year
<b>Estimated Taxes – Corporation</b>	Corporation	Form 1120-W, Corporation Estimated Tax	15th day of the 4th, 6th, 9th and 12th months of tax year
<b>Withholding of Income Tax and FICA Deposits</b>	Business with Employees	Form 8109, Federal Tax Deposit Coupon	See withholding and deposit instructions issued by IRS
<b>Return for Reporting Withholding of Employee's Income Tax and FICA</b>	Business with Employees	Form 941, Employer's Quarterly Tax Return	End of month following end of quarter
<b>Reporting Information on Wage and Tax Statements (Form W-2)</b>	Business with Employees	W-3, Transmittal of Income and Tax Statements	February 28
<b>Unemployment Tax (FUTA)</b>	Business with Employees	Form 940, Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment (FUTA) Tax Return	January 31
<b>Unemployment Tax Deposits</b>	Business with Employees	Form 8109, Federal Tax Deposit Coupon	See FUTA Deposit Instructions issued by IRS
<b>Information Returns</b>	Business Required to File Form 1099, U.S. Information Returns	Form 1096, Annual Summary and Transmittal of U.S. Information Returns	February 28
<b>Other Federal Taxes call the IRS</b>			

\* Note that generally speaking, single-member LLCs may choose to be taxed as a sole proprietorship or a corporation. LLCs with at least two members may choose to be taxed either as a corporation or as a partnership.

# STATE OF MINNESOTA TAX REQUIREMENTS

YOU MAY BE LIABLE FOR	IF YOU ARE TAXED AS*	USE FORM	DUE ON OR BEFORE
<b>Tax Identification Number</b>	Making taxable sales or withholding taxes; Partnership, Corporation	Register online at <a href="http://www.taxes.state.mn.us">www.taxes.state.mn.us</a> or ABR, Application for Business Registration	See information at <a href="http://www.taxes.state.mn.us">www.taxes.state.mn.us</a> or call (651) 282-5225
<b>Income Tax</b>	Sole Proprietor	M1, Individual Income Tax Return	April 15, or the 15th day of 4th month after the end of the tax year
	Individual who is a partner or S corporation shareholder	M1	Same as above
	C Corporation	M4, Corporation Franchise Tax Return	15th day of 3rd month after end of the tax year; for cooperative associations, the 15th day of the 9th month after the end of the tax year
		M11 Insurance Premium Tax (insurance companies)	March 1
	S corporation	M8 Corporation Return	15th day of 3rd month after end of tax year
	Partnership	M3 Partnership Return	15th day of 4th month after end of tax year.
<b>Sales and Use Tax (sales tax returns must be filed using the e-FILE Minnesota electronic filing system or by phone system or by phone)</b>	Organization that makes retail sales or provides taxable services	ST1, Sales and Use Tax Return	Due date is based on filing cycle assigned by Department of Revenue – see instructions.
	Business that purchases taxable property for use in Minnesota without paying sales tax	ST1, Sales and Use Tax Return	Included on Sales and Use Tax Return
	Consumer who purchases taxable property without paying sales tax	UT-1, Consumer's Use Tax Return	April 15th of following year
<b>Estimated Tax</b>	Sole proprietor or individual who is a partner or S corporation shareholder	M14, Tax Payment Voucher-Individual	15th day of 4th, 6th, and 9th months of tax year; and 15th day of 1st month after end of tax year
	Corporation	M18, Corporation/Banks Declaration of Estimated Tax Payment Vouchers	15th day of 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th months of tax year

\* Note that generally speaking, single-member LLCs may choose to be taxed as a sole proprietorship or a corporation. LLCs with at least two members may choose to be taxed either as a corporation or as a partnership.

# STATE OF MINNESOTA TAX REQUIREMENTS

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YOU MAY BE LIABLE FOR	IF YOU ARE TAXED AS*	USE FORM	DUE ON OR BEFORE
<b>Withholding of Income Tax</b>	Sole proprietor, corporation, S corporation or partnership	Internet or touchtone phone or MW-5, Income Tax Withholding Deposit Form	See withholding instructions issued by the Department of Revenue
		Employer's Quarterly Income Tax Withholding Return, by Internet or touchtone phone	End of month following end of quarter, except for the Annual Reconciliation form which is due by February 28
<b>Nonresident Partner or Shareholder Withholding</b>	Partnership S corporation	M3 (Schedule MW-3NR) M8 (Schedule MW-3NR)	Due date of tax return
<b>Unemployment Tax</b>	Sole proprietor, corporation, S corporation, partnership, limited liability partnership or limited liability company	Minnesota Unemployment Insurance self-service system, registration and login links available at <a href="http://www.uimn.org">www.uimn.org</a>	Within 10 days after payment of wages to employees
		MDES-1, Unemployment Quarterly Tax Report	One month after end of each calendar quarter
<b>Minimum Fee</b>	Corporation	M4	Due date of tax return
	S Corporation	M8	
	Partnership	M3	
<b>Other Taxes</b>	Call Department of Revenue		

\* Note that generally speaking, single-member LLCs may choose to be taxed as a sole proprietorship or a corporation. LLCs with at least two members may choose to be taxed either as a corporation or as a partnership. For Minnesota unemployment insurance purposes, all LLCs are treated as corporations.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

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### STATE PROGRAMS

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#### MINNESOTA SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE OFFICE

The Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office, specifically created by Minnesota Statutes § 116J.66, provides accurate, timely and comprehensive information and assistance to businesses in all areas of start-up, operation and expansion. Functionally, the office has two bureaus for service delivery: the Bureau of Business Licenses and the Bureau of Small Business. The specific services of the Bureau of Business Licenses and the Bureau of Small Business are described below. For further information on these programs or to order any of the publications, call or write the Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

The Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office also administers the Small Business Development Center program. For further information on this program, call or write Minnesota Small Business Development Centers at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

#### **Bureau of Business Licenses**

The Bureau of Business Licenses provides a number of services at no charge. It publishes the *State of Minnesota Directory of Licenses and Permits* reproduced in this Guide. That Directory is also available electronically at [www.license.mn.gov](http://www.license.mn.gov). The Bureau provides comprehensive information on the number and kind of licenses required for a business venture, the agencies which issue them and the affirmative burdens imposed on applicants. The Bureau will also provide opinions from licensing agencies on their use of discretion in issuing licenses, and the potential issues and difficulties in obtaining licenses based on a review of a potential applicant's business concept. Master application procedures for obtaining related and similar licenses from different licensing agencies of the state are available, as well as consolidation of hearings involved in obtaining multiple licenses and information on related licensing requirements of federal and local governments.

#### **Bureau of Small Business**

The Bureau of Small Business serves as a focal point within state government for small business related information. It publishes *Checklist for Hiring an Employee* (reprinted in this Guide), an outline of the federal and state requirements governing the hiring of an employee; *A Guide to Intellectual Property Protection*, a primer for the inventor and the entrepreneur on the protection of new ideas and the products which result from them; *A Legal Guide to the Internet*, designed to

alert Minnesota companies, employers and residents to issues which commonly are in conjunction with operating on the Internet; *An Employer's Guide to Employment Law Issues in Minnesota*, designed to alert Minnesota employers to issues which commonly arise in the employment relationship; *Why and How to Conduct a Human Resources Audit in Minnesota* provides useful information to employers, with illustrative examples of human resources audit checklist; *Raising Capital: Securities Law and Business Considerations*, providing a general overview of the various federal and state securities law considerations involved in raising capital and including such areas as "taking a company public," "due diligence," the investment agreement and tax consequences of capital financing; *Loan Documentation: An Introduction for Small Businesses*, a discussion of the representations, warranties and covenants required by commercial lenders; *An Introduction to Franchising*, an overview of franchising as a business tool; *A Guide to Biotechnology Finance* and the *2009 Supplement*, a primer on the issues associated with the acquisition of both equity and debt capital in the particular context of biotechnology firms with long development periods, substantial regulation and product approvals, tax issues associated with commercialization, intellectual property rights and usage, and other factors; and *Small Business Notes*, an electronic format serial publication presenting a brief overview of recent trends, developments and issues affecting small businesses. *Small Business Notes* is available on the web at [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com). Many of these publications are also available on CD-ROM. The Bureau continually produces new publications throughout the year. Contact the Bureau for a current publications list. All publications are available free of charge. The Bureau also sponsors seminars and workshops on small business issues.

## SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

The Minnesota Small Business Development Centers (MnSBDC) offer confidential one-on-one business counseling and group training to those that are interested in expanding or starting a small business in Minnesota. Most MnSBDCs are located within an hour drive of a business client's residence. The MnSBDCs operate through a network of nine statewide regional centers, 21 satellite centers and outreach locations. The MnSBDC network is made up of committed professionals, each with distinctive credentials that qualify them to assist with both general and special business needs. Drawing on both formal education and years of practical business experience, each counselor understands well what it is like to operate a business.

The MnSBDC counseling service primarily focuses on assisting existing and growing businesses in the areas of business planning, marketing, E-commerce technology, financial analysis and loan packaging. Directly and through collaboration with other resource organizations, the MnSBDC program also offers assistance and referrals in areas like regulatory compliance assistance, information technology, exporting, government procurement, and federal research and development opportunities. Counseling is customized to meet the needs of the client, and may be provided by staff counselors or private consultants. The MnSBDCs also offer assistance to those who are considering starting a business by providing information and resources on pre-business planning and by working with resource partners to help the entrepreneur with exploring possibilities in determining whether to pursue the business venture. A request for counseling services can be accessed on the MnSBDC website at [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com).

Training seminars offered by the MnSBDC are designed to help small business owners and



managers strengthen their management skills. Training programs are specifically designed and delivered based on the needs of the local business community. Recent training seminar topics offered have included pre-business planning, access to capital, understanding and using financial statements, employment management issues, workplace communication, E-commerce technology, and market research and analysis. A listing of current training programs offered by the MnSBDC network can be found by visiting the website, [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com).

While the MnSBDC does not administer loan or grant programs, its network of counselors does help small business to access funding options, evaluate eligibility, and help prepare documentation that lenders require. The MnSBDC helps business owners to better understand the loan process and helps them to prepare a detailed and complete loan application.

Resource libraries at the MnSBDCs offer access to business development reference books, periodicals and computerized databases. Many MnSBDCs have computers and business software that may be used by clients to develop business plans. The MnSBDCs are accessible by Internet at [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com) and most regional centers offer online counseling.

The MnSBDC program is a partnership of the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and the host institutions of the regional and satellite centers. Businesses served by the MnSBDC must meet size standards and other requirements for assistance established by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Financial support of its funding partners allows the MnSBDC to offer counseling services at no cost to the business client. Training programs and special projects are provided either at no cost or for a nominal fee.

Addresses and telephone numbers for members of the MnSBDC network are listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide or can be found on its website, [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com).

## **MINNESOTA TRADE OFFICE**

The Minnesota Trade Office (MTO), an office within the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), is the state agency that provides export assistance to Minnesota companies. The MTO delivers programs and services particularly focused on helping small and medium sized companies enter and compete in the international market. Most services are offered free of charge or at a nominal cost. MTO services include:

### **Export Counseling and Technical Assistance**

The MTO is staffed with a team of international trade representatives with broad international business experience who can help guide companies through the challenges of conducting international business. Through confidential and personalized meetings, MTO trade representatives are available to evaluate your export readiness, advise on how to conduct market research and develop an export plan, assist with market entry strategies, identify market opportunities and provide market intelligence, provide shipping and tariff information, identify potential distributors, partners, agents, and buyers, and much more.

## **Export Promotion Services**

To help companies explore market opportunities firsthand and meet potential distributors, partners, agents, and buyers, the MTO arranges numerous export promotional events annually. The MTO organizes trade missions, including the governor's trade missions; provides exhibition opportunities at domestic and international trade shows; and arranges face-to-face meetings with potential foreign buyers. In addition to promotional events organized directly by the MTO, the trade office also can advise Minnesota companies of promotional events organized by other trade associations.

## **Export Education and Training Services**

The MTO provides training seminars and workshops designed to provide companies the knowledge and tools necessary to be successful exporters. A complete listing of educational programs is posted on the Minnesota Trade Office Web site: [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com) (click on Calendar of Events).

## **Market Intelligence and Research Resources**

To ensure Minnesota companies have the very latest market intelligence at their disposal, the MTO works with the DEED library to maintain an extensive collection of information on foreign markets. Open to the public Monday through Friday (9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.) and staffed with professional researchers, the DEED library is replete with economic data, export statistics, international trade periodicals, company directories, a wide variety of electronic and internet-based market research tools, as well as materials to help companies learn the mechanics of exporting and the art of conducting business in other cultures. Companies also can access valuable research resources on the MTO Web site.

To take advantage of the full range of MTO export assistance services, contact the MTO at the address and telephone number in the Resource Directory section of this Guide and visit the MTO website: [www.positivelyminnesota.com/Business/Exporting\\_Trade/](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/Business/Exporting_Trade/)

# **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE**

## **Small Business Assistance for People with Disabilities**

People with disabilities who wish to start or continue operating a small business may be eligible to receive financial assistance and support through Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Vocational Rehabilitation services funding is available for start-up costs when a qualifying individual with a disability wishes to start a new business. Funding is also available to cover business stabilization costs when an owner's disability forces changes to a product, service or method of operation, or when a disability causes suspensions or lengthy interruptions to business operations.

Eligible costs must be identified on a business plan that is developed and approved in collaboration with a vocational rehabilitation counselor. These costs could include such things as occupa-

tional licenses, tools, marketing materials, insurance, equipment, stocks and supplies.

For more information about assistance and services provided by Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and to find office locations, see: [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com).

## **EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS**

### **Minnesota WorkForce Centers**

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development has joined with other providers of employment and training services to create the Minnesota WorkForce Center System. Over 45 WorkForce Centers have services provided by Job Service/Unemployment Insurance, local job training programs, State Services for the Blind, Veteran's Services, and Rehabilitation Services.

In addition, other organizations may be partners at each WorkForce Center, including Community Action Programs, Department of Human Services programs, local community or economic development groups, schools and colleges, and local government offices. The WorkForce Centers are nationally recognized for their accessibility and wide range of services offered.

Services of interest to businesses include:

- Self-service job postings and resume searches on MinnesotaWorks.net
- Job screening and computerized skills matching
- CareerOneStop
- Fee-based job analysis of position duties and tasks
- Employer advisory committees
- Labor market information
- Special programs, such as Shared Work and bonding programs
- Federal tax credits
- Conferences and seminars
- Veterans placement and representatives
- Plant closings and mass layoffs
- Job and career fairs

More information about WorkForce Centers and services to business is available on the DEED website: [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

### **Shared Work Program**

The Shared Work Program is an option for employers faced with a layoff. It allows an employer to divide available hours of work among a group of employees as an alternative to full layoffs.

Affected employees may receive partial unemployment insurance benefits while working reduced hours. An employer can maintain morale, productivity and flexibility in the workplace by participating in the Shared Work Program. For more information about the program, contact the Shared Work Coordinator or go to: [www.uimn.org/sharedwork](http://www.uimn.org/sharedwork).

## **Apprenticeship Programs**

Apprenticeship programs are located in the Workplace Services Division of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. Apprenticeship provides technical assistance to employers developing apprenticeship programs. It also provides schools, guidance and veterans' counselors, and business and industry groups information regarding program requirements, selection criteria and general information about conducting quality apprenticeship programs.

Many of the highly skilled occupations learned through apprenticeships range from one to five years in length, in conjunction with 144 hours of related technical instruction each year. In Minnesota an occupation may become apprenticeable if the occupation requires at least 2,000 hours of hands-on training to learn essential skills. However, most programs are from 6,000 to 8,000 in length. Upon completion of training, the apprentice earns a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship from the State of Minnesota.

For more information about apprenticeship, contact the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry or go to: [www.dli.mn.gov/Appr.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/Appr.asp).

## **MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE**

The University of Minnesota Extension Service delivers educational programs and information to Minnesota citizens and communities. Extension's statewide network of researchers, educators, and volunteers focuses on community development and vitality; land, food, and environment; and youth development and family living.

For more information, see: [www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu).

## **MINNESOTA JOB SKILLS PARTNERSHIP**

The Minnesota Job Skills Partnership offers technical, financial and job training assistance to businesses, communities, educational institutions and workers. The Minnesota Job Skills Partnerships Board brings businesses with specific education needs together with educational institutions to design customized training programs. In each project, partnering businesses provide a private match, and educational institutions build expertise in their curriculum and support the needs of regional industry.

Additional loan and grant programs available through the Minnesota Job Skills Partnership include:

- Minnesota Pathways Program—Provides grants to educational institutions with businesses as partners to develop training programs for individuals making a transition from public assistance to work.

- Health Care and Human Services Worker Training and Retention Program—Provides grants to educational institutions to develop training programs to alleviate worker shortages in the health care and human services industries.
- Special Incumbent Worker Training Program—Provides grants to provide training to assist businesses and workers to gain new skills that are in demand in the Minnesota economy.
- Low Income Worker Training Program—Provides grants to help low income individuals receive training to acquire additional skills in order to move up the career ladder to higher paying jobs.

The Minnesota Job Skills Partnership is located within the Workforce Development Division of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. For more information and applications, see: [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com).

## **DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAM**

The Dislocated Worker Program, also located within the Workforce Development Division of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, provides employment and training services to workers laid off from their jobs due to no fault of their own and due to changes in technology, investment strategies, and consumption and competition. The program also serves veterans leaving active duty with the Armed Forces and certain individuals leaving active duty of the National Guard or Armed Forces Reserves.

DEED delivers dislocated worker services in two ways: For individual dislocated workers, resources are allocated to service providers in the WorkForce Centers, or in the event of a plant closing or mass layoff (usually 50 or more workers affected) DEED has developed a process which customizes services to the needs of the affected workers and businesses. The process begins in confidence with members of the Dislocated Worker Program Rapid Response Team. The most effective programs begin with at least 60 days notice, in compliance with the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN).

For more information about the Dislocated Worker Program and Rapid Response Team, see: [www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com).

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## **GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT ASSISTANCE**

Governmental agencies at the federal, state and local level are major consumers of a variety of goods and services. Many such agencies have special set-aside or preference programs for small businesses in general and/or businesses which are owned, controlled and operated by minorities, women, service disabled veterans or businesses located in distressed areas.

To qualify for some of these programs, businesses must complete an application and be certified by the third party that the business meets the program qualifications. Information on the various federal, state, local and private certification programs can be found at, [www.doi.gov/febtc/sadboc.htm](http://www.doi.gov/febtc/sadboc.htm).

In addition, many units of government are increasingly using the Internet in their procurement processes. Businesses will need to prepare to participate in Internet procurement and electronic payment systems if they intend to be able to compete for government business.

## **FEDERAL PROCUREMENT**

The Small Business Act authorizes federal agencies to conduct procurements that are exclusively reserved for small businesses called “small business set asides.” There are different programs under which these set-asides are authorized.

The Small Business Reserve is a statutory provision that requires all agency purchases valued between \$2,500 and \$100,000 to be reserved for small businesses. It applies when there are two or more responsible businesses that can satisfy the agency’s requirement at a fair market price. Contracts in this dollar range are made using simple procedures that make it easier for businesses to participate. Procurement opportunities valued above \$100,000 are subject to more complicated procedures, and may be set aside for small businesses if there is an expectation that offers will be obtained from two or more small business concerns.

Federal agencies have goals for spending certain percentages of their contracting dollars for various subcategories of small businesses. For some of these categories, a small business may self-certify its status on the Online Certification and Representation Application website (<http://orca.bpn.gov/>) and in the Central Contractor Registration ([www.ccr.gov](http://www.ccr.gov)). Small businesses, small disadvantaged small business, small women owned businesses, veteran owned small businesses, and service disabled veteran owned small businesses may self certify their status. However, veteran owned small businesses and service disabled veteran owned small businesses wishing to do business with the Veteran’s Administration must register at [www.vetbiz.gov](http://www.vetbiz.gov).

Small business concerns that are located in and hire from historically underutilized business zones or HUBZones may qualify for procurement preferences. Qualified small business concerns wishing to claim HUBZone status must first apply and be certified by SBA. HUBZone information can be found at [www.sba.gov/hubzone](http://www.sba.gov/hubzone).

Several other federal procurement programs exist for small businesses. These programs address the areas of contractor responsibility, innovation research, technology, and business development.

The Certification of Competency Program requires the government to purchase goods and services from responsible contractors, meaning that the contractor has the capacity, financial resources, business acumen and required eligibility to perform a federal prime contract.

Under the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program, federal agencies having research and development budgets in excess of \$100 million set aside a percent for awards to small high-technology firms. The SBIR program is discussed in the Sources of Information and Assistance section of this Guide.

Under the Small Business Technology Transfer Program (STTP) federal agencies having annual research and development budgets of more that \$1 billion will set aside a percentage for awards to small high-technology firms that collaborate with non-profit research institutions.

The 8(a) Business Development Program is designed to provide business assistance and training to help socially and economically disadvantaged citizens gain access to the economic mainstream. This nine year program, consisting of a four year developmental stage and a five year transition stage, provides specialized business training, counseling and the ability to obtain contracts through sole-source and restricted competition procedures. To learn more about the 8(a) BD program including eligibility requirements, application procedures and to access the online 8(a) BD application go to [www.sba.gov/8abd](http://www.sba.gov/8abd).

Micro-purchases (government purchases at or below \$3,000) are made using the simplest and most direct buying technique. Micro-purchases may be made by telephone, over the counter, by Internet transactions, or other means of electronic communication. These purchases are made by credit card. The credit card holders are generally outside of the purchasing department.

Simplified acquisition procedures apply to procurement with an estimated value of \$100,000 and below. As mentioned above, procurement valued between \$2,500 and \$100,000 are reserved exclusively for small businesses. Simplified acquisitions are made using oral or written solicitations along with commercial cards or electronic purchasing techniques.

The largest volume of dollars expended by the federal government is made through the use of formal procedures for acquisitions above the \$100,000 simplified acquisition threshold. Formal procedures include sealed bidding where an Invitation for Bids is used and negotiations where a Request for Proposals is used. Under sealed bidding procedures, contractors submit bids that are opened publicly at a time and place designated by the purchasing agency. Award is made to the lowest responsible bidder. In a negotiation, a statement of work outlining the goals to be achieved by the contractor describes the requirements. Negotiations have been proven to be an effective technique for obtaining a range of solutions.

There is also a growing trend among federal agencies to negotiate long-term Multiple-Award Task Order contracts. These contracts frequently combine a wide range and large volume of work that had previously been the subject of individual contracts.

## **Resources**

The Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) helps businesses sell to the government. Services include help with initial registrations (CCR, ORCA, etc.), Bid Match Services, one-on-one counseling, and training. The PTAC can be reached at the address and phone number in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

Many federal agencies publish their requirements on their own home pages. The Small Business Act requires that agencies annually publish a list of their requirements for upcoming fiscal years. These requirements can be accessed through individual agency websites or the SBA website.

FedBizOpps.gov is the single government point-of-entry for Federal Government Procurement opportunities over \$25,000. Government buyers are able to publicize their business opportunities by posting information directly to FedBizOpps via the Internet ([fbo.gov](http://fbo.gov)). Vendors seeking federal markets for their products and services can search, monitor and retrieve opportunities solicited by the entire federal contracting community. A help line is available for assistance.

SBA's Office of Government Contracting's web page ([www.sba.gov/gc](http://www.sba.gov/gc)) contains government contracting information including tutorials, contact name and phone numbers, and overviews of various programs to help small businesses.

## **STATE PROCUREMENT**

The state of Minnesota has a program for enabling small businesses and small businesses owned by targeted groups to participate in the state procurement process. Under this program, the state may set aside certain contracts for award to small businesses, may grant preferences for bids by small targeted group businesses, and may require state contractors to subcontract with small firms.

The small business procurement program and the targeted group procurement program are administered by the Department of Administration. Information and an application package may be obtained by contacting the Materials Management Division of that Department at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. Also, note that that Division's web site is a good source of information ([www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us](http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us)).

The commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Administration maintains a website with a searchable database providing the public with information on state contracts, including grant contracts. Contact the Minnesota Department of Administration for more information.

### **Purchases from Small Business in General**

Each fiscal year the Department of Administration must ensure that small businesses receive at least 25 percent of the total value of anticipated total state procurement of goods and services, including printing and construction. In addition, every state agency must for each fiscal year designate for awarding to small businesses at least 25 percent of the anticipated procurements of that agency for professional and technical services.

To be eligible for the small business procurement program, a business must have its principal place of business in Minnesota; be a manufacturer, manufacturer's representative, dealer, jobber, distributor, contractor, or business engaged in a joint venture; not be a broker, third party lessor, or franchise; and comply with revenue or sales limitations for the industry established by the Department of Administration.

### **Purchases from Small Targeted Group Businesses**

The purpose of the targeted group procurement program is to remedy the effects of past discrimination against members of targeted groups. Periodically, the Department of Administration studies whether effects of past discrimination continue to dampen the participation of members of targeted groups. To be considered under the program, a business must be so designated by the Commissioner of the Department of Administration; businesses can be designated under one of two possible avenues. First, for businesses majority owned and operated by women, persons with a substantial physical disability, or specific minorities, the designation is made on the basis of "purchasing categories". A business is eligible under the program if the Commissioner "determines



there is a statistical disparity between the percentage of purchasing from businesses owned by group members and the representation of businesses owned by group members among all businesses in the state in the purchasing category.” Second, the Commissioner may designate a business if the Commissioner “determines that inclusion is necessary to remedy discrimination against the owner based on race, gender, or disability in attempting to operate a business that would provide goods or services to public agencies.” (Note that the statute specifically provides that such designations of purchasing categories and businesses are not rules for purposes of Chapter 14 of Minnesota Statutes, and are not subject to the rulemaking provisions of that Chapter.)

To be eligible for the small targeted group procurement program, a business must be majority owned and operated by women, or by persons with a disability, or by specific minorities; and have its principal place of business in Minnesota. Also, to qualify a business must: not be a manufacturer, manufacturer’s representative, dealer, jobber, distributor, contractor, or business engaged in a joint venture; not be a broker, third party lessor, or franchise; comply with revenue or sales limitations for the industry established by the Department of Administration; and be certified as eligible according to procedures and criteria established by the Department of Administration.

To qualify for the targeted group and economically disadvantaged procurement programs, the business must file an application for certification and supporting documentation with the Materials Management Division of the Department of Administration. The application and supporting documentation are reviewed by the staff of the Materials Management Division for conformity with applicable laws. A business that is certified by the Department of Administration is eligible to participate in small business procurement programs of the Department of Administration, and could be eligible to participate in similar programs of the state Department of Transportation and some metropolitan agencies, without further certification. Certified businesses must submit an annual report to the Materials Management Division verifying information on file with the Division.

The incentive for targeted group vendors is the pricing preference received on state contracts. Specifically, the Commissioner of Administration may award up to a six percent preference in the amount bid for specified goods or services (i.e., a bid for \$106 is treated the same as a bid for \$100 by a non-targeted business), when the bidder is a small targeted group business. Likewise, a pricing preference of up to six percent (four percent for construction projects) may be awarded for bids submitted by a small business located in an “economically disadvantaged area”. For this purpose, a business can qualify by meeting one of three tests: the owner resides in or the business is located in a county in which the median income for married couples is less than 70% of the state median income for married couples; the owner resides in or the business is located in an area designated a “labor surplus” area by the U.S. Department of Labor; or, the business is a rehabilitation facility or work activity program. Also, the Department of Administration may designate a “targeted neighborhood” (so designated pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 469.202) or an “enterprise zone” (so designated pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 469.167) as “economically disadvantaged” for purposes of that 6% preference.

All laws and rules pertaining to solicitations, bid evaluations, contract awards, and other procurement matters apply equally to procurements from small businesses. Before making an award under the small targeted group business program, the Department of Administration is directed by statute to evaluate whether the small business scheduled to receive the award is

able to perform the contract. The determination includes consideration of production and financial capacity and technical competence.

Note, however, that Minnesota Statutes provides that the state may use a “reverse auction” procedure in which vendors compete in an open and interactive environment to deliver the lowest price for goods or services. When the commissioner of administration determines that a reverse auction is the appropriate process the provisions of Minnesota Statutes 16C.06 on solicitations do not apply.

Registration as a vendor can be made via the state’s online vendor registration system. You will need a Federal Tax Identification Number and Minnesota Tax Identification number (if applicable) when you register. Being registered is not a guarantee that you will be sent invitations to bid or requests for proposals – only that your name will appear on a list as a potential vendor of the products you sell or the services you provide.

## **LOCAL PROCUREMENT**

Businesses interested in selling their goods or services to local units of government should contact each locality. Outside the immediate Twin Cities area the local city clerk or county auditor is the best first step in determining the potential for sales to local governments. For the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, procurement contacts are listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

# ACCOUNTING AND TAX ASSISTANCE

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## PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

A Certified Public Accountant (CPA) is a person licensed and certified by the state for professional competence and experience in the field of accounting whose education and experience background includes: completion of a college accounting program; passing a rigorous exam in accounting, auditing, income taxes and business law; qualifying for certification by the State Board of Accountancy; practicing according to a strict code of ethics; meeting continuing education requirements; and passing a peer review of their policies and procedures every three years. A Licensed Public Accountant (LPA) is also licensed by the state without having passed an examination. An LPA provides many of the same functions as a CPA and is also required to meet ongoing continuing professional education and peer review.

CPAs are qualified to provide a variety of services, but their services are particularly beneficial to start-up situations in three general areas: financial statement services; tax-related services; and financial planning and consulting services.

### Financial Statement Services

Accounting is the language of business. It ties together the marketing and management operations of a business. CPAs use this language to communicate needed information to their clients. The financial statements are the medium through which pertinent information is transmitted to businesses. They usually include the accountant's report; balance sheet; income statement; cash flow statement; and notes to the financial statements.

Each statement gives a different aspect of the condition or result of operations for a period of time. The more one understands and respects the language, the more benefit one derives from the financial statements. The present and prospective activities of the business will often dictate that a CPA give independent, objective opinions on financial statements prepared by management. The reports rendered by the CPA on the financial statements are generally at one of three levels:

- **An Audit.** A positive assertion on financial statements that the financial statements do or do not present fairly the financial position, results of operations, and cash flows in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles or another comprehensive basis of accounting consistently applied.
- **A Review.** Limited assurance that nothing came to the accountant's attention to indicate the statements were not in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles or another comprehensive basis of accounting.
- **A Compilation.** An indication that the financial statements were compiled from information represented by management and that no assurance is given on them.

The level of reporting plays a significant role because it indicates the degree of assurance that the CPA is rendering on the financial statements. Where a business has borrowed from a financial institution, the size of the debt will usually dictate what level of assurance the bank would like to see.

## **Tax-Related Services**

The entrepreneur often doesn't realize that tax planning is a source of business capital. Careful planning and the use of a CPA can enhance this source of funds. Income taxes must be paid on business profits; hence, they are expenses of a business. These income taxes, if properly planned, can be kept to a minimum, thus leaving cash available for financing your business. In addition, if a business should fail, you will want the most advantageous treatment of these losses. The CPA must always be aware of current changes in the tax law and can provide the proper vehicle for making the most of this source of funds. For example, the CPA can: assist in structuring the initial organization of proprietorships, partnerships (whether general, limited or limited liability) or corporations; assist in structuring a possible tax-free incorporation; assist in structuring business purchase, sale or liquidation transactions; prepare various compliance tax reports, such as individual, partnership and corporate income tax, payroll, sales tax, property taxes; handle tax examinations and tax planning strategies; assist in estate planning and personal tax planning; and assist in the implementation of executive compensation, retirement plans and employee benefit programs.

## **Financial Planning and Consulting Services**

A CPA can assist a business in choosing the form of business organization; setting up an accounting system and procedures; defining and obtaining reporting, operational and cost control needs; developing and evaluating the business plan, forecasts and budgets; strategic planning; preparing special purpose reports including statements prepared on comprehensive bases of accounting other than generally accepted accounting principles; preparing reports with opinion on specific financial statement elements such as accounts receivable and inventory reports; discussing results of applying agreed-upon procedures to specific financial statement elements; implementing cash flow and management reports; structuring and implementing financing plans for the start-up, operation, and expansion stages; preparing reports to management on the strengths and weaknesses of internal accounting controls along with recommendations to correct the weaknesses; preparing bank loan applications for initial or expansion capital needs; computer selection, implementation and training; and providing advice on business valuations and mergers and acquisitions.

The Minnesota Society of Certified Public Accountants maintains a free referral service to put businesses in contact with qualified CPAs. Contact the MNCPA at the telephone number listed in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **ENROLLED AGENTS**

Enrolled Agents are trained and experienced tax professionals who have either passed a comprehensive examination given by the Department of the Treasury or have had five continuous years of experience with the Internal Revenue Service at the audit level. Enrolled Agents must maintain their credentials through continuing tax education which is reported directly to the Internal Revenue Service. Enrolled Agents are trained to handle complex tax returns for individuals, partnerships, corporations and other tax entities, and are authorized to represent taxpayers at all administrative levels before the Internal Revenue Service. Information and referrals may be obtained from the National Association of Enrolled Agents referral hotline telephone number provided in the Resource Directory Section of this Guide or from the Minnesota Society of Enrolled

Agents at the website provided in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **TAXPAYER EDUCATION WORKSHOPS**

The Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Departments of Revenue and Employment and Economic Development sponsor free workshops on tax issues for small businesses. For more information on these workshops visit the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance website at: [www.uimn.org](http://www.uimn.org) or call (651) 259-7220 for more information.

For information on Minnesota sales tax workshops, visit the Minnesota Department of Revenue website at: [http://www.taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/business\\_taxpayers/business\\_education/mbeworkshops.shtml](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/business_taxpayers/business_education/mbeworkshops.shtml).

## **ACCOUNTABILITY MINNESOTA**

AccountAbility Minnesota is a nonprofit organization that assists low-income individuals and small business owners with their accounting issues and tax filing requirements. Low-cost accounting set-up and consulting are provided by staff or volunteers.

**Eligibility.** Direct services are limited to lower revenue businesses. Please contact AccountAbility Minnesota for the current guidelines.

**Typical Services.** The goal is to train entrepreneurs to do their own bookkeeping and accounting. They provide consulting and training services to prepare each entrepreneur to become comfortable with these tasks. Typical services include: an assessment of the current recordkeeping and accounting systems the entrepreneur is using; designing an efficient recordkeeping system and how to maintain it; determining the best tool for accounting tasks (paper v. software); training on the accounting system chosen; preparation of financial statements and how to use the information.

To apply for help business owners must complete an application and prepay the first three hours of service. To obtain this information and an application please contact AccountAbility Minnesota at the address and telephone number provided in the Resource Directory section of this guide or visit our website [www.accountabilitymn.org](http://www.accountabilitymn.org).

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## **LIBRARIES**

### **LIBRARY SERVICES**

Libraries and librarians are an invaluable source of assistance to the business community, providing access to resources and information. While library resources can be directly used by patrons, entrepreneurs should not be shy about seeking the expertise of librarians who are familiar with search techniques and sources and can save patrons time, money and hassle. Today, public libraries serve the business community by featuring small business collections, offering workshops

on such topics as creating business plans and researching patents and trademarks, and providing networking opportunities.

Entrepreneurs and small business owners can use library resources to prepare business plans, research competitors, track trends and perform market analysis. Researchers can use library databases to access business news and research, company information, trade and professional associations, annual reports, demographics and more. The business community can use libraries to research a range of topics, including product protection, employee rights and responsibilities, accounting, taxation, marketing, quality management, business plan development, economic trends and emerging technologies.

Many library resources can be searched from work or home via the Internet. While most users appropriately think first of public libraries, local public libraries can connect to other larger and specialized library collections. Business people should also consider nearby college and university libraries, which frequently serve their broader communities. In addition, libraries in government agencies offer unique publications and resources that may be useful. Finally, special libraries that serve corporations, law firms, medical institutions and other organizations may also be helpful. The Electronic Library for Minnesota at <http://www.elm4you.org/> can help researchers locate public libraries and databases available to Minnesota residents.

Libraries subscribe to many online resources useful to business people. These resources are widely available at Minnesota libraries:

### **Databases for Business Information**

The following databases provide access to business news, research, trends and reports:

- **ABI Inform**-Features business information from trade journals, industry surveys and company reports
- **Business and Company Resource Center**-Offers business articles from academic and trade journals, company profiles, investment reports and industry overviews
- **Business Plans Handbook**-Offers model business plans on hundreds of businesses
- **Business Source Premier**-Features full-text articles from business journals, industry surveys, market research and country reports
- **NewsBank**-Provides full-text articles from business journals and domestic and international newspapers
- **Proquest Newsstand**-Provides full-text articles and abstracts from 350 newspapers
- **Regional Business News**-Features full-text coverage from regional business publications across the U.S.

## Tools to Research Companies

These online and print sources offer company profiles, contact information, product descriptions and sales and employment figures. The following company directories are available at many Minnesota libraries:

- **Business & Company Resource Center**-Includes 450,000 company profiles
- **Dun & Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory**-Lists 1.6 million U.S. companies (includes companies with sales of \$1 million or more or 20 or more employees)
- **EDGAR**-Provides U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission filings on public companies [www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml](http://www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml)
- **Hoovers**-Provides information on about 40,000 companies [www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com)
- **Kompass**-Features a directory of 2.3 million companies in 66 countries [www.kompass-usa.com/](http://www.kompass-usa.com/)
- **LifeScience Alley Member Directory**-Features a directory of Minnesota life sciences companies
- **Mergent Online**-Provides information on public companies around the world
- **Minnesota Biosciences Industry Directory**-Lists bioscience and medical device companies
- **Minnesota Manufacturers Register**-Provides information on Minnesota manufacturers
- **ReferenceUSA**-Offers information on 14 million U.S. businesses
- **ThomasNet**-Includes manufacturers, distributors and service providers [www.thomasnet.com/](http://www.thomasnet.com/)

## Minnesota Business Journals

These Minnesota resources cover business in Minnesota. The Index to Minnesota Business Periodicals at [www.jjhill.org/research\\_online/index\\_to\\_mn\\_business\\_periodicals.cfm](http://www.jjhill.org/research_online/index_to_mn_business_periodicals.cfm) indexes many of these journals.

**BusinessNorth**

**Finance & Commerce**

**Minneapolis St. Paul Business Journal**

**MinnesotaBusiness**

**Minnesota Real Estate Journal**

**Minnesota Technology**

**Precision Manufacturing**

**ROI Central Minnesota**

**Twin Cities Business**

**Upsize Minnesota**

## **Minnesota Newspapers**

Local newspapers are also a great source for business and company news. Use the Minnesota Newspaper Directory at [www.mnnews.com/](http://www.mnnews.com/) to learn about the state's newspapers.

## **Business Reference Books**

Here is a sample of popular titles:

**Demographics USA County Edition**  
**Directory of Minnesota Business & Professional Associations**  
**Encyclopedia of American Industries**  
**Encyclopedia of Associations**  
**Encyclopedia of Business Information Sources**  
**Lifestyle Market Analyst**  
**Manufacturing & Distribution USA**  
**RMA Annual Statement Studies**  
**Small Business Sourcebook**

## **Business Websites**

Here are websites small business owners and entrepreneurs can use for free:

### **Business Plans**

- **Bplans**-Access tips for creating business plan [www.bplans.com/Sample\\_Business\\_Plans/index.cfm](http://www.bplans.com/Sample_Business_Plans/index.cfm)
- **Business Plans and Profile Index**-Lists types of small businesses and provides corresponding sample business plans, profiles and books [www.carnegielibrary.org/subject/business/bplansindex.html](http://www.carnegielibrary.org/subject/business/bplansindex.html)

### **Forms, Contracts**

- **Business Owner's Toolkit**-Offers model business documents, financial spreadsheet templates, checklists and official government forms [www.toolkit.com](http://www.toolkit.com)
- **Entrepreneur.com**-Provides how-to guides on starting a business, including FormNet at [www.entrepreneur.com/formnet/index.html](http://www.entrepreneur.com/formnet/index.html) for ready-made business forms
- **FindLaw for Corporate Counsel**-Find sample business contracts for many industries <http://contracts.corporate.findlaw.com/>



## Financing

- **BusinessFinance.com**-Offers a directory of business loan and venture capital sources (some information is fee-based) [www.businessfinance.com/](http://www.businessfinance.com/)
- **GovLoans.gov**-Access information on federal government loans [www.govloans.gov/](http://www.govloans.gov/)
- **SBA Financial Assistance**-Features a primer on financing options for your business [www.sba.gov/services/financialassistance/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/services/financialassistance/index.html)

## General

- **Biz Info Library**-Offers information on starting and growing a business [www.bizinfo library.org/](http://www.bizinfo library.org/)
- **Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation's eVenturing**-Links to articles of interest to entrepreneurs [www.eventuring.org/eShip/appmanager/eVenturing/eVenturingDesktop](http://www.eventuring.org/eShip/appmanager/eVenturing/eVenturingDesktop)
- **NYC Small Business Resource Center**-Highlights resources and services from the New York Public Library [www.nypl.org/research/sibl/smallbiz/sbrc/Pages/index.cfm](http://www.nypl.org/research/sibl/smallbiz/sbrc/Pages/index.cfm)
- **Ultimate Trade Show Directory**-Features a worldwide directory of trade shows, exhibitions and conferences [www.tsnn.com/](http://www.tsnn.com/)
- **WSJ's Small Business**-Offers articles, forums and a toolkit for small business owners <http://online.wsj.com/small-business>
- **Yahoo! Small Business**-Provides news geared to small business entrepreneurs <http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com/>

## Government Assistance

- **Business.gov**-Links businesses to forms, assistance, laws and regulations [www.business.gov/](http://www.business.gov/)
- **Bureau of Labor Statistics**-Provides economic data and analysis on employment [www.bls.gov/](http://www.bls.gov/)
- **IRS Small Business and Self-Employed One-Stop Resource**-[www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html)
- **Small Business Administration**-Features guides to starting, financing and expanding a business [www.sbaonline.sba.gov/](http://www.sbaonline.sba.gov/)
- **U.S. Census Bureau**-Provides social, demographic and economic information [www.census.gov/](http://www.census.gov/)

## Minnesota

- **James J. Hill Reference Library**-A private business library in St. Paul serving the small business community [www.jjhill.org/](http://www.jjhill.org/)

## **ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE**

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### **SPECIALIZED LEGAL RESEARCH AND ASSISTANCE**

LegalCORPS, part of the Minnesota Bar Association, provides referrals to Minnesota attorneys and provides pro bono services to small businesses and private non-profit organizations. For more information contact Legal Corps at (612) 752-6678 (Metro) or toll free (888) 454-5267, or e-mail [info@legalcorps.org](mailto:info@legalcorps.org).

Lawmoose.com is a Minnesota legal search engine that, while not offering legal advice, offers an online legal reference library for researching Minnesota law, an online search engine focused on law related sites in Minnesota, and a Minnesota legal periodical index. The site assists users in framing legal questions and issues to address to their own legal counsel.

The Hamline University School of Law offers a Small Business/Nonprofit clinic staffed by student attorneys under supervision of a practicing attorney. This Clinic offers free assistance during the academic year to low-income start-up and small businesses in areas of law such as choice of legal form, e.g., limited liability company, S Corporation, partnership; business taxation issues; lease and contract review and drafting; employment agreement review and drafting; licensing requirements; and trademark registration. For information contact the Clinic Office at (651) 523-2898. On the Internet at [www.hamline.edu/law/school\\_of\\_law.html](http://www.hamline.edu/law/school_of_law.html).

The University of Minnesota Law School Center for Business Law Multi-Profession Business Law Clinic has Practitioners in leading law firms and an independent account/consulting firm to provide supervisory expertise and mentoring in the representation of business entrepreneurs. For information contact Multi-Profession Business Law Clinic at (612) 624-5779. On the Internet at [www.centerforbusinesslaw.org](http://www.centerforbusinesslaw.org).

The William Mitchell College of Law has law students who work with practicing business and corporate lawyers to provide legal advice to eligible small business entrepreneurs. Contact the college at (651) 227-9171 or (888) WMCL-LAW. On the Internet at [www.wmitchell.edu/](http://www.wmitchell.edu/).

### **MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE FOR MINORITY BUSINESSES**

There are a number of organizations which offer business planning and business management assistance specifically targeted to businesses owned and operated by racial minorities, women, disabled individuals, and other socially or economically disadvantaged persons. A listing of these organizations can be found in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

### **INCUBATORS**

Sometimes called enterprise centers, innovation centers or business and technology centers, incubators offer new, small firms a way to minimize both fixed and variable costs by providing low cost office and production space, shared office services, management assistance and – in some cases – financial assistance.

## **INVENTORS RESOURCES**

The Minnesota Inventors Congress, a non-profit organization, provides information and assistance for inventors and directs inventors to reliable resources. It serves as a focal point for an invention support system in the state by providing year-round literature and guidance about the invention process to ensure that inventors are able to protect their intellectual property and bring a product successfully to the market.

The Inventors Congress hosts an annual Invention Expo where inventors test market their inventions (new products) and have the opportunity to connect with product scouts, investors and manufacturers. Inventors can attend “Inventing Success Seminars”™ that are designed to teach the invention development process.

For assistance or further information contact the MIC at the address and telephone number listed in the Resource Directory (under Inventors’ Resources) section of the Guide.

## **MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (MnSCU)**

All colleges and universities within the MnSCU system provide programs for small business owners. These programs range from the certificate level to the master’s degree. Some programs are focused on comprehensive business management such as the business marketing and management (A.A.S. degree) and the business administration master’s degree. Other programs contain a number of courses which small business owners or those intending to become small business owners would find useful.

In addition to the above programs which result in an academic credential, MnSCU’s community and technical colleges also offer a large variety of non-credit workshops and seminars worthwhile to small business owners. These educational opportunities are available either through open enrollment to the public or through customized contracts with individual business.

## **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS**

Regional development commissions are established by statute to coordinate and conduct regional planning activities for the counties, cities and towns which comprise the region.

The commissions are responsible for preparing and adopting a regional development plan which prescribes the policies, goals, standards, and programs for the orderly development of the region. By statute, the plan must address the physical, economic and social needs of the region, including land use, parks and open space, access to sunlight for solar energy systems, airports, highways, transit facilities, hospitals, libraries, schools, housing and public buildings.

The commissions review applications for federal and state loans and grants, conduct urban and rural research, coordinate civil defense, community shelter planning and flood plain management within the region and may contract to provide services and technical assistance to local units of government in the conduct of local planning and development activities.

A list of the regional development commissions, the counties they include, and the office addresses can be found in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

## **TRADE INFORMATION CENTER**

The Trade Information Center is a resource for information on federal export assistance programs. The Center is operated by the U.S. Department of Commerce for the 19 agencies comprising the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee (those agencies responsible for managing federal promotion programs and activities).

The Trade Information Center is an access point for information including export counseling, sources of international market research and trade leads, overseas and domestic trade events, sources of export financing and advice on export licenses and controls. Through the Center's trade specialists, businesses can learn how to access reports from the computerized National Trade Data Bank, which includes over 200,000 government documents related to export promotion and international markets. The staff can also direct businesses to state and local trade organizations that provide additional export assistance.

Information on reaching the Center is located in the Resource Directory section of this Guide. The Center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, Eastern Time. A fax retrieval system, available 24 hours a day, provides general and country-specific export information as well as documents on international trade agreements.

## **SCORE ASSOCIATION OFFICES**

SCORE is a nationwide organization of retired and active business men and business women who volunteer their services to help either new or existing businesses. In Minnesota there are 500 members in six SCORE chapters located in principal metropolitan areas of the state. These chapters operate branches in smaller communities. Approximately 8,500 people per year are helped in Minnesota through one of the following SCORE programs:

- Going into business workshops.
- Business seminars on specific subjects.
- Free, confidential one on one counseling in all areas of business management.

SCORE is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and receives direct support from Business Development Specialists from the U.S. Small Business Administration office in Minneapolis.

A list of SCORE offices and branches can be found in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.

SCORE sponsors seminars for small businesses. The "Going into Business" seminar is designed to help people minimize risks in the start-up and operation of a business. The "Business Loan" seminar offers an overview of SBA loan guarantee programs and funding options. The "Marketing"

workshop provides details on how to develop a low cost marketing program for a small business. The "Business Planning" workshop assists in developing business plans. SCORE seminars and workshops are listed on the Minnesota SCORE website: [www.score-mn.org](http://www.score-mn.org).

The Minneapolis, St. Paul, and South Metro chapters of SCORE hold workshops and seminars periodically throughout the year at a number of locations in the Twin Cities metro area. There is a nominal charge for these seminars. For details on dates and locations, call the Minneapolis office at (952) 938-4570, the St. Paul office at (651) 632-8937, or the South Metro office at (952) 890-7020.

## **BUSINESS PLANNING CENTER**

The Business Planning Center (BPC) in St. Paul offers a variety of programs to small business owners and those in the planning stage. In addition to their core program of assisting individuals developing their own business plan, the BPC programs include on-site counseling, volunteer bankers, lawyers and loan information officers.

Programs include:

- On-site counseling is available from members of SCORE and on specific days counseling is also available from LegalCORPS, bankers and accountants.
- There is a weekly business loan seminar explaining SBA's loan programs. Attendees receive sample loan applications, a business start-up kit, and information on how to apply for a loan.
- A Spanish-speaking collaborator is available daily to help with general information.

No appointment is necessary and there is no charge. The BPC is open from 9 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The hours are 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday. All services are confidential.

## **WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTERS**

Women's Business Centers offer business information and training, computer access and internet training and individual and group counseling. For more information or assistance, contact the Women's Business Center at the address and phone numbers in the Resource Directory section of this Guide.





# RESOURCE DIRECTORY





# RESOURCE DIRECTORY

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## CONTENTS

- Cooperatives
- Environmental
- Export / Import Assistance
- Financing, Federal Sources
  - U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
  - Certified Development Companies (CDCs)
  - Small Business Investment Companies (SBICs)
  - SBA Microloan Intermediaries
  - USDA Rural Development
- Financing, State Sources
  - Employment and Economic Development, MN Department of
  - Iron Range Resources
  - Pollution Control Agency, MN
  - Urban Initiative Program Certified Partners
- Financing, Local Sources
  - Regional / County / City Economic Development Programs
- Financing, Private Sources
  - Rural Initiative Organizations
  - Seed Capital
- Government, Federal
  - Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Department of
  - Census Bureau, U.S.
  - Commerce, U.S. Department of,
    - Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
  - Consumer Product and Safety Commission (CPSC), U.S.
  - Copyright Office, U.S.
  - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S.
  - Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), U.S.
  - Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
  - Federal Trade Commission (FTC)
  - General Services Administration (GSA), U.S.
  - Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of,
    - Food and Drug Administration (FDA), U.S.
  - Homeland Security, U.S. Department of
    - U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
  - Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
  - Justice, U.S. Department of
    - Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)
  - Labor (DOL), U.S. Department of
    - Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)
  - National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), U.S.
    - Federal Register
  - Patent and Trademark Office, U.S.
  - Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), U.S.
  - Small Business Administration (SBA), U.S.
  - Social Security Administration (SSA), U.S.
  - Treasury, U.S. Department of the
- Government, State
  - Accountancy, MN Board of
  - Administration, MN Department of
  - Agriculture, MN Department of
  - Animal Health, MN Board of
  - Archaeologist, MN Office of the State
  - Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and Interior Design (AELSLAGID), MN Board of
  - Assessors, MN State Board of
  - Attorney General Office, MN
  - Barber Examiners / Cosmetology Examiners, MN Boards of
  - Behavioral Health and Therapy (BBHT), MN Board of
  - Bookstore, Minnesota's
  - Bureau of Business Licenses
  - Campaign Finance and Disclosure Board, MN
  - Chiropractic Examiners, MN Board of
  - Commerce, MN Department of
  - Dentistry, MN Board of
  - Dietetics and Nutrition Practice, MN Board of
  - Education, MN Department of
    - Teaching, MN Board of
  - Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board (EMSRB), MN
  - Employment and Economic Development (DEED), MN Department of
  - Environmental Quality Board, MN
  - Gambling Control Board, MN
  - Health, MN Department of
  - Human Rights, MN Department of
  - Human Services, MN Department of
  - Labor and Industry (DLI), MN Department of
  - Lawyer Registration, Office of
  - Marriage and Family Therapy, MN Board of
  - Medical Practice, MN Board of
  - Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU)
  - Natural Resources (DNR), MN Department of
  - Nursing Home Administrators, MN Board of Examiners for

Nursing, MN Board of  
 Office of Higher Education, MN  
 Optometry, MN Board of  
 Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST),  
 MN Board of  
 Pharmacy, MN Board of  
 Physical Therapy, MN Board of  
 Podiatric Medicine, MN Board of  
 Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), MN  
 Private Detective and Protective Agent Services,  
 MN Board of  
 Psychology, MN Board of  
 Public Safety, MN Department of  
 Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA)  
 State Fire Marshall Division, MN  
 Public Utilities Commission (PUC), MN  
 Racing Commission, MN  
 Revenue, MN Department of  
 Secretary of State, Office of the Minnesota  
 Small Business Assistance Office, Minnesota  
 State Legislature, MN  
 Office of the Revisor of Statutes  
 Teaching, MN Board of  
 Transportation (Mn/DOT), MN Department of  
 Veterans Affairs, Minnesota Department of  
 Veterinary Medicine, MN Board of

Government, Regional  
 Regional Development Commissions

Insurance

Inventors

Job Service and Job Training  
 Job Service Programs  
 MN Job Skills Partnership  
 MN WorkForce Center  
 MinnesotaWorks.net  
 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth  
 Formula Grant Program

Legal Assistance  
 Minnesota State Bar Association  
 County Bar Associations  
 Law Schools

Libraries  
 Primary Metropolitan Area Libraries  
 Minnesota Library Systems  
 Law Libraries  
 Government Document Depository Libraries

Local Assistance for Small Businesses  
 Business Planning Center (BPC), U.S. SBA  
 Business Incubators

Management Assistance, General  
 SCORE (Counselors to America's Small  
 Business) Offices  
 Minnesota Small Business Development  
 Centers (MnSBDCs)  
 Minnesota State Colleges and Universities  
 University of Minnesota

Management Assistance for Minority Businesses

Procurement / Purchasing / Certification Assistance  
 Federal, State, and Local Contacts  
 Metropolitan Agencies  
 Minority Supplier Assistance

Tax and Accounting Assistance

Additional Resources  
 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Assistance  
 County / City Licensing Contacts  
 Other

## COOPERATIVES

Cooperative Network  
Blair Arcade West, Suite Y  
400 Selby Ave  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 228-0213  
[www.cooperativenetwork.coop](http://www.cooperativenetwork.coop)

USDA Rural Development  
State Office  
410 Farm Credit Service Building  
375 Jackson St.  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 602-7800  
[www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn/)

## ENVIRONMENTAL

See Government, State  
Minnesota Environmental Quality Board  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

## EXPORT / IMPORT ASSISTANCE

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Ronald Reagan Building  
Washington, DC 20230

Trade Information Center (TIC)/USA Trade Center  
(800) 872-8723  
[www.export.gov](http://www.export.gov)

Minneapolis U.S. Export Assistance Center  
Butler Square Bldg., Suite 210C  
100 North 6th St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
(612) 348-1638  
[www.exportassistance.com](http://www.exportassistance.com)

U.S. Customs & Border Protection  
Service Port—Minneapolis  
330 Second Ave. S., Suite 560  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 348-1690  
[www.customs.gov](http://www.customs.gov)

Minnesota Trade Office  
1st National Bank Building  
332 Minnesota St., Suite E200  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 259-7499

Export Minnesota  
[www.exportminnesota.com](http://www.exportminnesota.com)

Trade Assistance Helpline  
(651) 259-7498

## FINANCING, FEDERAL SOURCES

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)**  
[www.cfda.gov](http://www.cfda.gov)

[www.GovLoans.gov](http://www.GovLoans.gov)  
[www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)  
[www.business.gov](http://www.business.gov)

**U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)**  
Minnesota District Office  
210-C Butler Square Building  
100 North 6th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
(612) 370-2324  
[www.sba.gov/localresources/district/mn/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/localresources/district/mn/index.html)

**Basic 7(a) Loan Program**  
[www.sba.gov/financialassistance/borrowers/guaranteed/7alp/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/financialassistance/borrowers/guaranteed/7alp/index.html)

**CDC/504 Program**  
[www.sba.gov/financialassistance/borrowers/guaranteed/CDC504lp/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/financialassistance/borrowers/guaranteed/CDC504lp/index.html)

**Certified Development Companies (CDCs)**  
Central Minnesota Development Company  
1885 Station Parkway NW  
Andover, MN 55304  
(763) 784-3337  
[www.cmdcbusinessloans.com](http://www.cmdcbusinessloans.com)

Minnesota Business Finance Corporation  
(800) 593-0123  
[www.mbf.org](http://www.mbf.org)  
Bemidji Office:  
1710 Paul Bunyan Drive N.W., Suite 105  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
(218) 759-8481

Minneapolis Office:  
100 South Fifth Street, Suite 2400  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
(612) 746-6900

St. Cloud Office:  
616 Roosevelt Rd., Suite 200  
St. Cloud, MN 56301  
(320) 258-5000

Prairieland Economic Development Corp.  
1 Prairie Drive  
Slayton, MN 56172  
(507) 836-6656  
(800) 507-9003  
[www.prairielandedc.com](http://www.prairielandedc.com)

SPEDCO (St. Paul Metro East Development Corp.)  
3900 Northwoods Dr., Suite 225  
Arden Hills, MN 55112  
(651) 631-4900  
(866) 977-3326  
[www.spedco.com](http://www.spedco.com)

504 Corporation  
220 South Broadway, Suite 100  
Rochester, MN 55904  
(507) 288-6442  
(877) 504-5400  
www.504corporation.com

Mankato Branch Office:  
1961 Premier Drive, Suite 202  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 625-6056  
(800) 749-9015

Twin Cities Metro Certified Development  
Company  
3495 Vadnais Center Dr.  
Vadnais Heights, MN 55110  
(651) 481-8081  
(888) 481-4504  
www.504lending.com

**Small Business Investment Companies (SBIC)**  
www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/inv/esf/inv\_  
sbic\_financing.html

AAVIN Equity Partners I, L.P.  
2500 Rand Tower  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
(319) 247-1072

Affinity Ventures III, IV, L.P.  
901 Marquette Ave., Suite 2820  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
(612) 252-9897  
(612) 252-9900  
www.affinitycapital.net/

Agio Capital Partners I, L.P.  
5050 Lincoln Dr., Suite 420  
Edina, MN 55436  
(952) 938-1628  
www.agio-capital.com/

Bayview Capital Partners II LP  
301 Carlson Parkway, Suite 325  
Minnetonka, MN 55305  
(952) 345-2035  
(952) 345-2030  
www.bayviewcap.com

Convergent Capital Partners I, II LP  
505 N. Highway 169, Suite 245  
Minneapolis, MN 55441  
(763) 432-4081  
www.cvcap.com/index.html

GMB Mezzanine Capital, L.P.  
50 South Sixth Street, Suite 1460  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
(612) 243-4404  
www.gmbmezz.com/

Marquette Capital Fund I, L.P.  
60 South Sixth Street, Suite 3510  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
(612) 661-3990  
www.marquettcapitalpartners.com

Medallion Capital, Inc.  
3000 W. County Road 42, Suite 301  
Burnsville, MN 55337  
(952) 831-2025  
www.medallioncapital.com/

Milestone Growth Fund, Inc.  
527 Marquette Ave., Suite 1915  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
(612) 338-0090  
www.milestonegrowth.com/

**Micro-Loans**  
www.sba.gov/financialassistance/borrowers/  
guaranteed/mlp/index.html

**Microloan Intermediaries**  
Neighborhood Development Center (NDC)  
663 University Avenue, Suite 200  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 291-2480  
www.ndc-mn.org/

Northeast Entrepreneur Fund, Inc.  
www.entrepreneurfund.org/

Virginia Office  
Northeast Entrepreneur Fund, Inc.  
8355 Unity Drive, Suite 100  
Virginia, MN 55792  
(218) 749-4191  
(800) 422-0374

Duluth Office  
Northeast Entrepreneur Fund, Inc.  
Ordean Building  
424 West Superior Street, Suite 400  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 623-5747  
(800) 422-0374

Grand Rapids Office  
Northeast Entrepreneur Fund, Inc.  
Co-located with Itasca Development Corporation  
12 NW 3rd Street  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
(800) 422-0374

Northwest Minnesota Foundation  
4225 Technology Drive NW  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
(218) 759-2057  
(800) 659-7859  
www.nwmf.org  
Service area: Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Kittson,  
Lake of the Woods, Mahnomon, Marshall, Norman,  
Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau counties.

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation  
525 Florence Avenue  
Owatonna, MN 55060  
(507) 455-3215  
www.smifoundation.org  
Service area: Blue Earth, Brown, Dodge, Faribault, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, LeSueur, Martin, Mower, Nicollet, Olmsted, Rice, Sibley, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, Watonwan, and Winona counties

Southwest Initiative Foundation  
15 3rd Ave. NW  
Hutchinson, MN 55350  
(320) 587-4848  
(800) 594-9480  
www.swmnfoundation.org  
Service area: Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murry, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Swift, and Yellow Medicine counties.

WomenVenture  
2324 University Avenue, Suite 120  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
(651) 646-3808  
www.womenventure.org  
Service area: Ten-county Twin Cities metro area, which includes the counties of Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Washington and Wright.

#### **USDA Rural Development**

State Office  
410 Farm Credit Service Building  
375 Jackson Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 602-7800  
www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn/

#### **FINANCING, STATE SOURCES**

**MN Grants**  
[www.grants.state.mn.us](http://www.grants.state.mn.us)

#### **Employment and Economic Development, MN Department of**

1st National Bank Building  
332 Minnesota Street, Suite E200  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1351  
(651) 259-7114  
www.positivelyminnesota.com

Regional Marketing Representatives:  
Provide information about business development and site selection services, community profiles, E-commerce readiness, and other technical services of the department.

Northwest  
Counties: Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Hubbard, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomon, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, Roseau  
(218) 755-4478  
(800) 366-7809

Northeast  
Counties: Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Kochiching, Lake, St. Louis  
(218) 723-4610  
(888) 345-4528

West Central  
Counties: Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Todd, Traverse, Wadena, Wilkin  
(218) 631-7672  
(800) 417-7736

East Central  
Counties: Benton, Chisago, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, Wright  
(320) 684-9985  
(866) 684-9985

Southwest  
Counties: Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Swift, Yellow Medicine  
(507) 389-6779

Southeast  
Counties: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Winona  
(507) 453-2926  
(888) 438-5627

Twin Cities Metro  
Counties: Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Washington  
(651) 259-7436  
(800) 657-3858

Minnesota Indian Business Loan Program  
(651) 259-7424  
(800) 657-3858

Small Business Development Loan Program  
(651) 259-7428  
(800) 657-3858

Small Business Innovation Research(SBIR)/Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Programs  
(651) 259-7441  
(800) 657-3858  
www.positivelyminnesota.com

Urban Initiative Loan Program  
(651) 259-7424  
(800) 657-3858

**Iron Range Resources**

4261 Hwy 53 S.  
Eveleth, MN 55734-0441  
(218) 744-7400  
<http://ironrangeresources.org/>

**Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), MN**

520 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194  
[www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us)

Environmental Assistance Grants and Loans Program  
(651) 757-2208  
(800) 657-3864  
[www.pca.state.mn.us/grants/ealoans.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/grants/ealoans.html)

Small Business Environmental Improvement Loan Program  
(651) 757-2121  
(800) 985-4247  
[www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbomb\\_loan.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbomb_loan.html)

**Urban Initiative Program Certified Partners**

Central Minnesota Development Company  
1885 Station Parkway NW  
Andover, MN 55304  
(763) 784-3337  
[www.cmdcbusinessloans.com](http://www.cmdcbusinessloans.com)

African Development Center  
1808 Riverside Avenue, Suite 200  
Minneapolis, MN 55454  
(612) 333-4772  
(877) 232-4775  
[www.adcmnnesota.org](http://www.adcmnnesota.org)

Metropolitan Economic Development Association (MEDA)  
250 South Second Ave., Suite 106  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 332-6332  
[www.meda.net](http://www.meda.net)

Milestone Growth Fund  
527 Marquette Ave  
Rand Tower, Suite 1915  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
(612) 338-0090  
[www.milestonegrowth.com](http://www.milestonegrowth.com)

Minneapolis Consortium of Community Developers  
3137 Chicago Ave  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
(612) 789-7337  
[www.mccdmmn.org/](http://www.mccdmmn.org/)

American Indian Economic Development Fund  
831 Como Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55103  
(651) 917-0819  
[www.indianbizloans.org](http://www.indianbizloans.org)

Neighborhood Development Center (NDC)  
663 University Avenue, Suite 200  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 291-2480  
[www.ndc-mn.org/](http://www.ndc-mn.org/)

Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA)  
176 Cesar Chavez Street  
St. Paul, MN 55107  
(651) 222-6347  
[www.districtdelsol.com/docroot/](http://www.districtdelsol.com/docroot/)

SPARC  
Main Office:  
843 Rice Street  
St. Paul, MN 55117  
(651) 488-1039  
[www.sparcweb.org](http://www.sparcweb.org)

Para hablar con alguien  
en Español llámenos al  
(651) 488-1039 ext. 108

Yog koj xav nrog ib tub  
Hmoob tham ntaus  
(651) 488-1039 ext. 107

WomenVenture  
2324 University Avenue, Suite 120  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 646-3808  
[www.womenventure.org](http://www.womenventure.org)

**FINANCING, LOCAL SOURCES**

**Regional / County / City Economic Development Programs**

**Minnesota Community Capital Fund (MCCF)**

13911 Ridgedale Dr, Suite 260  
Minneapolis, MN 55305  
(952) 546-9049  
(800) 860-6223  
<http://mncommunitycapitalfund.org/>

**Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission (AAEDC)**

610 Fillmore St., Suite  
Alexandria, MN 56308  
(320) 763-4545  
[www.alexmn.org](http://www.alexmn.org)

**Benton County Economic Development**

P.O. Box 129  
Foley, MN 56329  
(320) 968-5071  
[www.co.benton.mn.us/EconDev/index.htm](http://www.co.benton.mn.us/EconDev/index.htm)

**Brainerd Lakes Area Development Corp. (BLADC)**

124 N. Sixth Street  
Brainerd, MN 56401  
(218) 828-0096  
(888) 322-5232  
<http://bladc.org>

**Cass County Economic Development Corporation**

303 Minnesota Ave. W. P.O. Box 3000  
Walker, MN 56484  
(218) 947-7522  
<http://www.co.cass.mn.us/ccedc/edc.html>

**Faribault County Economic Development Authority**

415 South Grove Street, Suite #4  
Blue Earth, MN 56013  
(507) 526-2130  
(800) 921-5629  
[www.faribaultcounty.org](http://www.faribaultcounty.org)

**Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.**

1961 Premier Drive, Suite 100  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 385-6640  
(800) 696-0652  
<http://www.greatermankato.com/business.php>

**Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission**

333 Litchfield Ave. SW, Suite 100 P.O. Box 1783  
Willmar, MN 56201  
(320) 235-7370  
[www.kandiyohi.com](http://www.kandiyohi.com)

**Koochiching County Economic Development Authority (KEDA)**

P.O. Box 138  
International Falls, MN 56649  
(218) 283-8585  
(800) 452-3569  
[www.businessupnorth.com/index.shtml](http://www.businessupnorth.com/index.shtml)

**Murray County Economic Development Authority**

P.O. Box 57  
Slayton, MN 56172  
(507) 836-6023  
<http://murray-countymn.com/php/>

**Redwood Area Development Corporation**

200 S. Mill St., P.O. Box 481  
Redwood Falls, MN 56283  
(507) 637-4004  
[www.radc.org](http://www.radc.org)

**St. Louis County Planning and Development**

100 Missabe Building  
227 West 1st Street  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 725-5000  
[www.co.st-louis.mn.us/slcportal/SiteMap/HomePage/Departments/Planning/Contact/tabid/334/Default.aspx](http://www.co.st-louis.mn.us/slcportal/SiteMap/HomePage/Departments/Planning/Contact/tabid/334/Default.aspx)

**Sherburne County Economic Development**

Sherburne County Government Center  
13880 US Highway 10  
Elk River, MN 55330  
(763) 241-2701  
[www.co.sherburne.mn.us/econdev/business/index.php](http://www.co.sherburne.mn.us/econdev/business/index.php)

**Swift County Rural Development Finance Authority (RDA)**

301 14th Street North  
P.O. Box 288  
Benson, MN 56215-0288  
(888) 843-4769  
[www.swiftcountyrda.com](http://www.swiftcountyrda.com)

**Wright County Economic Development Partnership**

P.O. Box 525  
6800 Electric Drive  
Rockford, MN 55373  
(763) 477-3086  
[www.wrightpartnership.org/index.html](http://www.wrightpartnership.org/index.html)

**Barnesville Economic Development AuthorityBB**

202 Front Street North P.O. Box 550  
Barnesville, MN 56514  
(218) 354-2145  
(800) 354-7570  
[www.barnesvillebusiness.com](http://www.barnesvillebusiness.com)

**Brooklyn Park Development Corporation**

5200 85th Ave. N.  
Brooklyn Park, MN 55443  
(763) 493-8058  
[www.brooklynpark.org/sitepages/pid303.php](http://www.brooklynpark.org/sitepages/pid303.php)

**Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce**

5 W. First Street, Suite 101  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 722-5501  
[www.duluthchamber.com](http://www.duluthchamber.com)

**Fergus Falls Economic Improvement Commission**

112 West Washington Avenue  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537  
(218) 332-5428  
[www.ffeic.org](http://www.ffeic.org)

**Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.**

Chamber of Commerce & Economic Developmnt  
1961 Premier Dr., Suite 100  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 385-6640  
(800) 697-0652  
<http://greatermankato.com>

**Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Department (CPED)**

Crown Roller Mill  
105 5th Avenue South #200  
Minneapolis, MN 55401(612) 673-5095  
[www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/business\\_assistance.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/business_assistance.asp)



CPED publication - *Starting a Business in Minneapolis A Practical Guide*  
[www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/docs/starting\\_a\\_business.pdf](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/docs/starting_a_business.pdf)  
Publication requests: (612) 673-5094

**Moorhead Community & Economic Development**

500 Center Ave.  
P.O. Box 779  
Moorhead, MN 56561  
(218) 299-5442  
(877) 833-6667

**Rochester Area Economic Development, Inc. (RAEDI)**

220 South Broadway, Suite 100  
Rochester, MN 55904  
(507) 288-0208  
[www.raedi.org/index.html](http://www.raedi.org/index.html)

**St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED)**

City Hall Annex  
25 W. Fourth St., Suite 1300  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 266-6565  
[www.stpaul.gov/index.asp?NID=354](http://www.stpaul.gov/index.asp?NID=354)

St. Paul Port Authority  
Suite 1900 Landmark Towers  
345 St. Peter St.  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 224-5686  
[www.sppa.com](http://www.sppa.com)

**FINANCING, PRIVATE SOURCES**

**Rural Initiative Organizations**

Initiative Foundation  
405 First Street S.E.  
Little Falls, MN 56345  
(877) 632-9255  
[www.ifound.org](http://www.ifound.org)  
Service area: Benton, Cass, Chisago, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd, Wadena, and Wright counties.

Northland Foundation  
202 West Superior Street, Suite 610  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 723-4040  
(800) 433-4045  
[www.northlandfdn.org](http://www.northlandfdn.org)  
Service area: Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis counties.

Northwest Minnesota Foundation  
4225 Technology Drive N.W.  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
(218) 759-2057  
(800) 659-7859  
[www.nwmf.org](http://www.nwmf.org)  
Service area: Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau counties.

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation  
525 Florence Avenue  
P.O. Box 695  
Owatonna, MN 55060  
(507) 455-3215  
[www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org)  
Service area: Blue Earth, Brown, Dodge, Faribault, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, LeSueur, Martin, Mower, Nicollet, Olmsted, Rice, Sibley, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, Watonwan, and Winona counties.

Southwest Initiative Foundation  
15 3rd Ave. NW  
Hutchinson, MN 55350  
(320) 587-4848  
(800) 594-9480  
[www.swifoundation.org](http://www.swifoundation.org)  
Service area: Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Swift, and Yellow Medicine counties.

West Central Initiative  
1000 Western Ave.  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537  
(218) 739-2239  
(800) 735-2239  
[www.wcif.org](http://www.wcif.org)  
Service area: Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin counties.

**Seed Capital**

Genesis Business Centers, Ltd.  
Elliot Park Lifesciences Institute  
700 Tenth Ave. South, Suite 323  
Minneapolis, MN 55415  
(612) 455-2215  
[www.genesiscenters.com](http://www.genesiscenters.com)

RAIN Source Capital  
1600 University Avenue West, Suite 401  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 632-2140  
[www.rainsourcecapital.com](http://www.rainsourcecapital.com)

StarTec Investments, LLC  
7900 International Drive #825  
Bloomington, MN 55425  
(952) 883-3222

Upper Lake Growth Capital  
10400 Viking Drive, Suite 530  
Eden Prairie, MN 55344  
(952) 995-7496

William C. Norris Institute  
Schultze Hall of Entrepreneurship 103  
1000 LaSalle Ave Mail  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
(651) 962-4346  
<http://www.stthomas.edu/business/centers/norris>

## GOVERNMENT, FEDERAL

### National Contact Center

Federal Citizen Information Center  
Official information and services from the U.S.  
government.  
(800) 333-4636  
**www.USA.gov**  
**www.usa.gov/gobiernousa**

**www.Business.gov**  
The official business link to the U.S. Government.

**www.DisabilityInfo.gov**  
Federal government's web site with  
disability-related information and resources.

**www.GovBenefits.gov**  
Partnership of Federal agencies providing access  
to government assistance programs.

**Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Department of**  
Rural Development  
State Office  
410 Farm Credit Service Building  
375 Jackson St.  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 602-7800  
[www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn/)

**Census Bureau, U.S.**  
Kansas Regional Office  
1211 North 8th Street  
Kansas City, KS 66101-2129  
(913) 551-6728  
(913) 551-5839 (TDD)  
(800) 728-4748  
[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

North American Industry Classification System  
(NAICS)  
[www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/](http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/)

**Commerce, U.S. Department of**  
Minneapolis Office of the U.S. Commercial Service  
Butler Square Bldg., Suite 210C  
100 North 6th St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
(612) 348-1638  
[www.export.gov](http://www.export.gov)

**Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)**  
Chicago Regional Office  
National Enterprise Center  
55 E. Monroe St., Suite 2810  
(321) 353-0182  
[www.mbda.gov/](http://www.mbda.gov/)

**Consumer Product and Safety Commission (CPSC), U.S.**  
4330 East West Highway  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
(301) 504-7923  
(800) 638-2772  
(800) 638-8270 (TTY)  
[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

Small Business Ombudsman/  
Small Business Information  
Washington, D.C. 20207  
(301) 504-7429  
(888) 531-9070  
[www.cpsc.gov/businfo/smbus.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/businfo/smbus.html)

### Copyright Office, U.S.

Library of Congress  
101 Independence Avenue SE  
Washington, D.C. 20559-6000  
(202) 707-3002  
[www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov)

### Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S.

Retail Industry Portal  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., Mail Code 2224A  
Washington, D.C. 20460  
(202) 564-7076  
<http://www.epa.gov/retailindustry/>

### Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), US

Minneapolis Area Office  
Towle Building  
330 2nd Avenue South, Suite 720  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(800) 669-4000  
(800) 669-6820 (TTY)  
[www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)

Workplace Poster Order Form  
(800) 669-3362 (voice)  
(800) 800-3302 (TTY)  
[www1.eeoc.gov/employers/poster.cfm](http://www1.eeoc.gov/employers/poster.cfm)

### Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

445 12th Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554  
(888) 225-5322  
[www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov)

Forms Distribution Center  
(800) 418-3676  
[www.fcc.gov/formpage.html](http://www.fcc.gov/formpage.html)

Media Bureau  
(202) 418-7200  
[www.fcc.gov/mb/](http://www.fcc.gov/mb/)

Audio Division  
(202) 418-2700  
[www.fcc.gov/mb/audio/](http://www.fcc.gov/mb/audio/)

Video Division  
(202) 418-1600  
[www.fcc.gov/mb/video/](http://www.fcc.gov/mb/video/)

**Federal Trade Commission (FTC)**

600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20580  
[www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)  
[www.ftc.gov/index\\_es.shtml](http://www.ftc.gov/index_es.shtml) (Espanol)

General Information Locator  
(202) 326-2000

Consumer Response Center  
(877) 382-4357

**General Services Administration (GSA), U.S.**

Office of Small Business Utilization  
Great Lakes Small Business Assistance  
(888) 353-5383  
[www.gsa.gov/r5smallbusiness](http://www.gsa.gov/r5smallbusiness)

**Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of  
Food and Drug Administration (FDA), U.S.**

Minneapolis District  
240 Hennepin Ave.  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 334-4100  
[www.fda.gov/](http://www.fda.gov/)

**Homeland Security, U.S. Department of  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)**

[www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

National Customer Service Center (NCSC)  
(800) 375-5283

St. Paul District Office  
2901 Metro Drive, Suite 100  
Bloomington, MN 55425  
(952) 853-2940

**E-Verify**

An Internet based system operated by the Dept.  
of Homeland Security (DHS) in partnership with  
the Social Security Administration (SSA) that  
allows participating employers to electronically  
verify the employment eligibility of their newly  
hired employees.

<https://e-verify.uscis.gov/enroll/StartPage.aspx?JS=YES>

**Internal Revenue Service (IRS)**

[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)  
[www.irs.gov/espanol](http://www.irs.gov/espanol) (Espanol)

Tax Help Line for Individuals  
(800) 829-1040

Business and Specialty Tax Line  
(800) 829-4933  
Small Business and Self-Employed  
[www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html)

Employer Identification Number (EIN):  
To apply for a EIN online:  
Go to [www.irs.gov/businesses](http://www.irs.gov/businesses), then click on *Employer ID Numbers*

To apply for a EIN by telephone:  
Call (800) 829-4933. *Have a completed Form SS-4 available before making this call.*

To apply for a EIN by fax:  
Complete and fax Form SS-4 using the designated  
Regional Service Center Fax-TIN number. For  
businesses with their principal place of business in  
Minnesota, use Fax-TIN (859) 669-5760.

To apply for a EIN by mail:  
Forms are mailed to the designated Regional Service  
Center. For businesses with their principal place of  
business in Minnesota, mail to:  
Internal Revenue Service  
Attn: EIN Operation  
Cincinnati, OH 45999

Forms and Publications  
(800) 829-3676  
[www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html)

Online Ordering for Information Returns and  
Employer Returns  
[www.irs.gov/businesses/page/0,,id=23108,00.html](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/page/0,,id=23108,00.html)

Taxpayer Advocate Service  
(651) 312-7999  
(877) 777-4778  
(800) 829-4059 TTY/TTD  
[www.irs.gov/advocate/](http://www.irs.gov/advocate/)

**Taxpayer Assistance Offices**

Walk-in assistance and forms may be obtained at the  
field offices listed below. Call (800) 829-1040 for  
information on the days and hours the field offices  
are open.

Bloomington  
1550 American Blvd. E., Suite 700  
Bloomington, MN 55425  
(651) 312-8082

Duluth  
Federal Building  
515 1st Street West  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 626-1624

Mankato  
1921 Excel Dr.  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 625-4977

Minneapolis  
250 Marquette Ave.  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(651) 312-8082

Rochester  
21 S.W. 2nd Street  
Rochester, MN 55902  
(507) 281-3044

St. Cloud  
3800 8th Street North  
St. Cloud, MN 56303  
(320) 251-9261

St. Paul  
500 Wells Fargo Place, Suite 250  
30 E. 7th Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 312-8082

**Justice, U.S. Department of**

[www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)  
[www.ada.gov/publicat\\_spanish.htm](http://www.ada.gov/publicat_spanish.htm) (Español)  
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)  
Information and technical assistance.

ADA Information Line  
(800) 514-0301  
(800) 514-0383 (TTY)

ADA Guide for Small Businesses  
[www.ada.gov/smbusgd.pdf](http://www.ada.gov/smbusgd.pdf)

ADA Tax Incentives Packet  
[www.ada.gov/taxpack.pdf](http://www.ada.gov/taxpack.pdf)

**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)**

St. Paul Field Division  
30 East Seventh Street, Suite 1900  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101  
(651) 726-0200  
[www.atf.gov/](http://www.atf.gov/)

ATF Firearms Program  
[www.atf.gov/firearms/](http://www.atf.gov/firearms/)

Federal Firearms Licensing Center (FFLC)  
Licensing firearms and explosives manufacturers,  
importers, collectors, users, and dealers.  
Frequently Asked Questions  
[www.atf.gov/firearms/fflc/ffl/ffl\\_faqs.htm](http://www.atf.gov/firearms/fflc/ffl/ffl_faqs.htm)

**Labor (DOL), U.S. Department of**  
[www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)

National Contact Center  
(866) 487-2365

Employment Standards Administration (ESA) /  
Wage and Hour Division (WHD)  
Minneapolis District  
Tri-Tech Center, Suite 920  
331 Second Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55401-1321  
(612) 370-3371  
(866) 487-9243  
[www.dol.gov/esa/whd](http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd)

Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System  
(202) 691-6500  
[www.bls.gov/SOC/](http://www.bls.gov/SOC/)

elaws (Employment Laws Assistance for Workers  
and Small Businesses) Advisors  
Web-based, interactive tools that help  
individuals understand federal employment laws.  
[www.dol.gov/elaws/](http://www.dol.gov/elaws/)

elaws FirstStep Poster Advisor  
[www.dol.gov/elaws/posters.htm](http://www.dol.gov/elaws/posters.htm)

Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA)  
(866) 444-3272  
[www.dol.gov/ebsa/](http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/)

Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP)  
OSBP administers DOL's responsibility to  
ensure procurement opportunities for small  
businesses, small disadvantaged businesses,  
women-owned small businesses, HUBZone  
businesses, and businesses owned by service-  
disabled veterans  
(202) 693-6460  
[www.dol.gov/osbp/welcome.htm](http://www.dol.gov/osbp/welcome.htm)

Workplace Poster Requirements  
[www.dol.gov/osbp/sbrefa/poster/matrix.htm](http://www.dol.gov/osbp/sbrefa/poster/matrix.htm)

**Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)**

Regional Office  
230 South Dearborn Street, Room 3244  
Chicago, Illinois 60604  
(312) 353-2220  
[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

**National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), U.S.**

Federal Register, Office of the (OFR)  
8601 Adelphi Road  
College Park, MD 20740-6001  
(866) 272-6272  
[www.archives.gov/federal-register/](http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/)

**Patent and Trademark Office, U.S.**

Mailstop USPTO Contact Center  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450  
(571) 272-1000  
(800) 786-9199 (24 hour support)  
[www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov)

**Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), U.S.**

Small Business Ombudsman  
 100 F Street N.E.  
 Washington, D.C. 20549-0310  
 (202) 551-3460  
 (800) SEC-0330  
[www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov)

Chicago Regional Office  
 (312) 353-7390

Information for Small Businesses  
[www.sec.gov/info/smallbus.shtml](http://www.sec.gov/info/smallbus.shtml)

Publications Unit  
 For obtaining blank copies of SEC forms and other SEC publications  
 (202) 551-4040  
[www.sec.gov/about/forms/secforms.htm](http://www.sec.gov/about/forms/secforms.htm)

**Small Business Administration (SBA), U.S.**

Minnesota District Office  
 Butler Square Building  
 100 6th Street North, Suite 210-C  
 Minneapolis, MN 55403  
 (612) 370-2324  
[www.sba.gov/localresources/district/mn/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/localresources/district/mn/index.html)  
[www.sba.gov/espanol/](http://www.sba.gov/espanol/) (Espanol)

Business Planning Center (BPC)  
 Midtown Commons Building, Suite 112  
 2324 University Avenue W.  
 St. Paul, MN 55114-1843  
 (651) 209-1884  
[www.sba.gov/localresources/district/mn/mn\\_bpc.html](http://www.sba.gov/localresources/district/mn/mn_bpc.html)

National Ombudsman  
 (888) 734-3247  
[www.sba.gov/ombudsman/](http://www.sba.gov/ombudsman/)

Small Business Planner  
[www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/](http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/)

Small Business Size Standards  
[www.sba.gov/contractingopportunities/officials/size/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/contractingopportunities/officials/size/index.html)

**Social Security Administration (SSA), U.S.**

190 5th Street E., Suite 800  
 St. Paul, MN 555101  
 (800) 772-1213  
 (800) 325-0778  
[www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)

Information and resources for employer  
[www.socialsecurity.gov/employer1.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/employer1.htm)

**Treasury, U.S. Department of the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS)–Online**

[www.eftps.gov](http://www.eftps.gov)

EFTPS–OnLine Customer Support  
 (800) 555-8778

EFTPS Customer Support  
 (800) 555-4477 (English)  
 (800) 244-4829 (Espanol)

**GOVERNMENT, STATE**

**[www.state.mn.us](http://www.state.mn.us)**

Official web site for the State of Minnesota

**License Minnesota**

Web portal with access to licenses, permits and registrations administered by state agencies.  
[www.license.mn.gov](http://www.license.mn.gov)

**Accountancy, MN Board of**

85 E. 7th Pl., Suite 125  
 St. Paul, MN 55101  
 (651) 296-7937  
[www.boa.state.mn.us](http://www.boa.state.mn.us)

**Administration, MN Department of**

Materials Management Division  
 Customer and Vendor Services Helpline  
 112 Administration Building  
 50 Sherburne Avenue  
 St. Paul, MN 55155  
 (651) 296-2600  
 (800) 627-3529 Minnesota Relay Service  
[www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us](http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us)

**WebVen**

Minnesota's online vendor registration system.  
[www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/webven/](http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/webven/)

**Agriculture, MN Department of**

Orville L. Freeman Building  
 625 Robert Street N.  
 St. Paul, MN 55155  
 (651) 201-6000  
 (800) 967-2474  
 (800) 627-3529 (TTY)  
[www.mda.state.mn.us](http://www.mda.state.mn.us)

Dairy & Food Inspection Division  
 (651) 201-6062 (Food licensing)

MN Dept. of Agriculture publication: Starting a Food Business in Minnesota  
[www.mda.state.mn.us/news/publications/food/business&marketing/startingfoodbiz.pdf](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/news/publications/food/business&marketing/startingfoodbiz.pdf)  
 Publication requests: (651) 201-6027

**Animal Health, MN Board of**

625 N. Robert Street  
 St. Paul, MN 55155  
 (651) 296-2942  
[www.bah.state.mn.us](http://www.bah.state.mn.us)

**Archaeologists, MN Office of the State**

Fort Snelling History Center  
St. Paul, MN 55111-4061  
(612) 725-2411  
[www.osa.admin.state.mn.us/](http://www.osa.admin.state.mn.us/)

**Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and Interior Design (AELSLAGID), MN Board of**

85 E. 7th Place, Suite 160  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 296-2388  
[www.aelslagid.state.mn.us](http://www.aelslagid.state.mn.us)

**Assessors, MN State Board of Minnesota Department of Revenue**

Mail Station 3340  
St. Paul, MN 55146-3340  
(651) 556-6086  
[http://taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/property\\_tax\\_administrators/other\\_supporting\\_content/assess.shtml](http://taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/property_tax_administrators/other_supporting_content/assess.shtml)

**Attorney General Office, MN**

1400 Bremer Tower  
445 Minnesota Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 296-3353  
(800) 657-3787  
(651) 297-7206 (TTY)  
(800) 366-4812 (TTY)  
[www.ag.state.mn.us/](http://www.ag.state.mn.us/)

**Barber Examiners / Cosmetology Examiners, MN Boards of**

2829 University Ave. SE, Suite 710  
St. Paul, MN 55414  
(651) 201-2742  
(800) 627-3529 (Hearing/Speech Relay)  
[www.bceboard.state.mn.us](http://www.bceboard.state.mn.us)

**Behavioral Health and Therapy (BBHT) MN Board of**

2829 University Ave. SE, Suite 210  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(651) 201-2758  
[www.bbht.state.mn.us](http://www.bbht.state.mn.us)

**Bookstore, Minnesota's**

Minnesota's Bookstore operates as a centralized publishing house for state agency products sold to the public, publishes the State Register, the official State of Minnesota publication, and makes public licensing data available to the public.

660 Olive Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 297-3000  
(800) 657-3757  
(800) 366-4812 (TTY)  
(651) 282-5077 (TTY)  
[www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore/](http://www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore/)

State Register  
[www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore/state\\_register.asp](http://www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore/state_register.asp)

**Bureau of Business Licenses**

See Small Business Assistance Office, Minnesota

**Campaign Finance and Disclosure Board, MN**

190 Centennial Building  
658 Cedar St.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 296-1721  
(800) 657-3889  
[www.cfboard.state.mn.us](http://www.cfboard.state.mn.us)

**Chiropractic Examiners, MN Board of**

2829 University Ave. S.E., Suite 300  
Minneapolis, MN 55414-3220  
(651) 201-2850  
(800) 627-3529 (TTY)  
[www.mn-chiroboard.state.mn.us](http://www.mn-chiroboard.state.mn.us)

**Commerce, MN Department of**

85 7th Place East, Suite 500  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
[www.commerce.state.mn.us](http://www.commerce.state.mn.us)

## General Information

(651) 296-4026  
(651) 296-2860 (TTY)

## Consumer Concerns

Market Assurance  
(651) 296-2488  
(800) 657-3602 (MN only)

## Financial Exams—Banking &amp; other Financial Services

(651) 296-2135

## Financial Exams—Insurance

(651) 296-2488

## Insurance Information

(651) 296-2488  
(800) 657-3602 (MN only)

## Licensing Division

(651) 296-6319  
(800) 657-3978 (MN only)

## Securities/Registration

(651) 296-4973

## Telecommunications

(651) 296-4026

**Dentistry, MN Board of**

2829 University Ave. S.E., Suite 450  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(612) 617-2250  
[www.dentalboard.state.mn.us/](http://www.dentalboard.state.mn.us/)

**Dietetics and Nutrition Practice, MN Board of**

2829 University Avenue S.E., Suite 555  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(651) 201-2764  
[www.dieteticsnutritionboard.state.mn.us](http://www.dieteticsnutritionboard.state.mn.us)

**Education, MN Department of**

1500 MN Hwy. 36 West  
Roseville, MN 55113  
(651) 582-8200  
<http://education.state.mn.us>

License applications and information  
(651) 582-8691

Teaching, MN Board of  
1500 Highway 36 West  
Roseville, MN 55113-4266  
(651) 582-8833  
[http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Teacher\\_Support/Board\\_of\\_Teaching/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Teacher_Support/Board_of_Teaching/index.html)

**Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board (EMSRB), MN**

2829 University Ave. S.E., Suite 310  
Minneapolis, MN 55414-3222  
(651) 201-2800  
(800) 747-2011  
[www.emsrb.state.mn.us](http://www.emsrb.state.mn.us)

**Employment and Economic Development (DEED), MN Department of**

1st National Bank Building  
332 Minnesota St., Suite E200  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1351  
(651) 259-7114  
(800) 657-3858  
(888) GET-JOBS  
(651) 296-3900 (TTY)  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Border Cities Enterprise Zone Program  
Provides business tax credits to qualifying businesses in the Border Cities Enterprise Zone cities of Breckenridge, Dilworth, East Grand Forks, Moorhead, and Ortonville.  
(651) 259-7449  
(800) 657-3858

Business and Community Development Industry Specialists  
Minnesota Manufacturers/Computer Software and Electronics  
(320) 684-9985  
(866) 684-9985

Medical Devices and Healthcare/ Biosciences Industry  
(651) 259-7442  
(800) 657-3858

Business Services/Call Centers  
(651) 259-7432  
(800) 657-3858

Renewable Energy/Wood Products/Plastics and Composites/Industrial Machinery  
(651) 259-7432  
(800) 657-3858

**Business Enterprises Program**

Program provides appropriate training and support to assist Minnesotans who are blind become self employed.  
(651) 642-0789  
[www.mnssb.org/workingadults/bep.html](http://www.mnssb.org/workingadults/bep.html)

**Dislocated Worker Program**

Program assists to minimize the economic impact of layoffs and plant closings to employers and workers.  
(651) 259-7537  
(866) 213-1422  
(651) 296-3900 (TTY)  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com/dw](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/dw)

**Rapid Response Team**

(651) 259-7527 Dislocated Worker Programs  
(651) 259-7534 Dislocated Worker Programs  
(651) 259-7535 Employer/Business Liasion  
(651) 259-7541 Employee Liasion MN AFL-CIO  
(866) 213-1422

**Job Opportunity Building Zones (JOBZ)**

Program stimulates economic development activity through business tax exemptions, start-ups, or relocations from other states.  
(651) 259-7547 and (651) 259-7400 Northeast  
(218) 444-4732 Headwaters  
(218) 745-6733 Northwest Land of the Dancing Sky  
(507) 238-9461 Positively Southern Minnesota JOBZ Growth Corridor  
(320) 679-4065 Region 7E JOBZ  
(507) 389-8886 Souther Minnesota JOBZ Alliance  
(507) 836-8547, ext. 106 Southwest Regional Job Zone  
(320) 289-1981 Upper Minnesota Valley (Region 6W) JOBZ  
(218) 739-2239 West Central Minnesota JOBZ  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

**Job Service Program**

Program functions as a labor exchange, offering employment opportunities on a no-fee basis to Minnesotans and providing services to businesses.  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

**Labor Market Information**

Program collects, analyzes, and disseminates key labor market indicators, information, and analysis on the economy, workforce, industry base, and job market in Minnesota.  
(651) 259-7384  
(888) 234-1114  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com/Data\\_Publications/Data/](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/Data_Publications/Data/)

**Military Reservist Economic Injury Loan Program**

(651) 259-7523

Minnesota Federal Bonding Service  
Service provides individual Fidelity Bonds to employers for new or current employee who may be denied coverage by commercial carriers.  
(651) 259-7500  
(800) 345-2537  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Minnesota Indian Business Loan Program  
Program supports the development of Indian owned and -operated businesses for Native American people throughout Minnesota.  
(651) 259-7424  
(800) 657-3858  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Minnesota Investment Fund  
(651) 259-7430

Minnesota Job Skills Partnership (MJSP)  
Program helps business and schools competitively train the workforce.  
(651) 259-7514  
(800) 657-3858  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Minnesota Small Business Development Centers (Mn SBDCs)  
No cost business counseling and consulting.  
(651) 259-7423  
(877) 653-8333  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

See **MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE, GENERAL** for Mn SBDC locations throughout Minnesota.

Minnesota Trade Office  
Programs assist Minnesota exporters and international companies in responding to global market opportunities.  
(651) 259-7498  
(800) 657-3858  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com/Business/Exporting\\_Trade/](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/Business/Exporting_Trade/)

Trade Assistance Helpline  
(651) 259-7498

Minnesota WorkForce Centers  
(888) 438-5627  
[www.mnwfc.org](http://www.mnwfc.org)

See **JOB SERVICE AND JOB TRAINING DEPARTMENT of EMPLOYMENT and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** for MN WorkForce Center locations throughout Minnesota.

MinnesotaWorks  
An Internet-based self-service system where registered employers and job seekers can connect.  
[www.minnesotaworks.net](http://www.minnesotaworks.net)

MNPRO  
MNPRO is a site selection tool of available commercial buildings and land throughout Minnesota.  
(651) 259-7443  
(800) 657-3858  
[www.mnpro.com](http://www.mnpro.com)

Office of Science and Technology  
Serves as the liaison between 11 federal agencies and small businesses.  
(651) 259-7441  
(800) 657-3858  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Positively Minnesota Marketing Partnership  
Alliance of economic development professionals, utilities, real estate and construction companies promoting Minnesota's business climate under the Positively Minnesota banner.  
(651) 259-7298  
(800) 657-3858  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Regional Marketing Representatives:  
Provide information to business on financial programs, supply sources, business planning assistance, trade opportunities, strategic partners and venture partners.

Northwest  
Counties: Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Hubbard, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomon, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, Roseau  
(218) 755-4478  
(800) 366-7809

Northeast  
Counties: Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Kochiching, Lake, St. Louis  
(218) 723-4610  
(888) 345-4528

West Central  
Counties: Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Todd, Traverse, Wadena, Wilkin  
(218) 631-7672  
(800) 417-7736

East Central  
Counties: Benton, Chisago, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, Wright  
(320) 684-9985  
(866) 684-9985



Southwest  
Counties: Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Swift, Yellow Medicine  
(507) 389-6779  
(800) 657-3858

Southeast  
Counties: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Winona  
(507) 453-2926  
(888) 438-5627

Twin Cities Metro  
Counties: Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Washington  
(651) 259-7436  
(800) 657-3858

Small Business Assistance Office  
Office serves as a point of first and continuing contact for individuals and firms with questions about business start-up, business operation and business licensing.  
(651) 556-8425 (Voicemail Publication Order Line)  
(651) 259-7476 (Information and Assistance)  
(800) 310-8323  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com/sbao](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/sbao)

Small Business Development Loan Program  
(651) 259-7430  
(800) 657-3858  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Unemployment Insurance (UI) Program  
Program provides temporary benefits to qualified persons out of work.  
[www.uimn.org/](http://www.uimn.org/)

Employer contacts  
Employer Account information  
(651) 296-6141

Applicant contacts -general information  
(651) 296-3644 Twin Cities Metro Area  
(877) 898-9090 Greater MN  
(866) 814-1252 (TTY)

Trade Readjustment Act (TRA)  
(651) 259-7543  
(888) 234-1330  
(651) 296-3900 (TTY)  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Minnesota Business Tax Education Partnership Seminar/Workshop Schedule/  
(651) 259-7220  
(651) 259-7567  
[www.uimn.org/tax/tax\\_classes/current\\_workshop\\_schedule.htm](http://www.uimn.org/tax/tax_classes/current_workshop_schedule.htm)

Urban Initiative Loan Program  
Program assists minority-owned-and -operated businesses that will create jobs in low income areas of the Twin Cities.  
(651) 259-7424  
(800) 657-3858  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Veterans Programs  
Programs exist to ensure that specialized employment and training services are provided to veterans.  
(651) 259-7557  
(651) 296-3900 (TTY)  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/Veterans/index.aspx](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/Veterans/index.aspx)

Veterans Transition Assistance Program (TAP)  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
Program that assists persons with significant disabilities to seek, gain, and retain employment.  
(651) 259-7366  
(800) 328-9095  
(651) 296-3900 (TTY)  
(800) 657-3973 (TTY)  
(800) 627-3529 Minnesota Relay Service  
(877) 672-3848 Speech-to-Speech Telephone Re-Voice  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Workforce Investment Act (WIA)  
WIA provides the framework for a unique national workforce preparation and employment system designed to meet both the needs of the nation's businesses and the needs of job seekers and those who want to further their careers.  
(651) 259-7538  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Youth Formula Grant  
(651) 259-7555  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program and  
Programs provide a federal tax credit to employers as an incentive for hiring members of targeted groups.  
(651) 259-7508  
(888) 234-5521

**Environmental Quality Board, MN**  
658 Cedar St., Suite 300  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 201-2476  
[www.eqb.state.mn.us](http://www.eqb.state.mn.us)

Environmental Review Program  
(651) 201-2477

**Gambling Control Board, MN**

Suite 300 South  
1711 W. County Road B, Suite 300 South  
Roseville, MN 55113  
(651) 639-4000  
[www.gcb.state.mn.us](http://www.gcb.state.mn.us)

**Health, MN Department of**

625 N. Robert St.  
P.O. Box 64975 1  
St. Paul, MN 55114-0975  
(651) 201-5000  
(888) 345-0823  
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

Food, Beverage and Lodging (FBL) Program  
(651) 201-4500

**Human Rights, MN Department of**

190 East 5th Street, Suite 700  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 296-5663  
(651) 296-1283 (TTY)  
(800) 657-3704  
[www.humanrights.state.mn.us](http://www.humanrights.state.mn.us)

**Human Services, MN Department of**

444 Lafayette Road N.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 431-2000  
(800) 627-3529 (TTY/TDD)  
[www.dhs.state.mn.us](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us)

Licensing Division  
(651) 296-3971  
(800) 627-3529 (TTY/TDD)

Minnesota New Hire Reporting Center  
The Center is the office within the MN  
Dept. of Human Services to which  
employers are required to submit  
information on new and rehired Minnesota  
employees.  
P.O. Box 64212  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0212  
(800) 672-4473  
(800) 692-4473 (toll-free fax)  
[www.mn-newhire.com](http://www.mn-newhire.com)

**Labor and Industry (DLI), MN Department of**

443 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4307  
[www.dli.mn.gov](http://www.dli.mn.gov)

General Information  
(651) 284-5005  
(800) 342-5354  
(651) 297-4198 (TTY)

Apprenticeship  
(651) 284-5090  
(800) 342-5354  
[www.dli.mn.gov/Appr.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/Appr.asp)

Construction Codes and Licensing Division  
(CCLD)  
(651) 284-5012  
(800) 657-3944  
[www.dli.mn.gov/Ccld.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/Ccld.asp)

Code Administration Services  
(651) 284-5838  
[www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/Administration.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/Administration.asp)

Plumbing  
(651) 284-5067  
[www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/Plumbing.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/Plumbing.asp)

Electrical  
(651) 284-5064  
[www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/Electrical.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/Electrical.asp)

Residential Building Contractor  
(651) 284-5034  
[www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/RBC.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/RBC.asp)

Boilers  
(651) 284-5544  
[www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/Boiler.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/Boiler.asp)

High-pressure-piping  
(651) 284-5124  
[www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/HPP.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/HPP.asp)

Labor Standards  
(651) 284-5005  
(800) 342-5354  
[www.dli.mn.gov/LaborLaw.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/LaborLaw.asp)

Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health  
Administration (MNOSHA) Compliance  
(651) 284-5050  
(800) 470-6742  
[www.dli.mn.gov/MnOsha.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/MnOsha.asp)

MNOSHA Compliance St. Paul Area Office  
443 Lafayette Road N.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 284-5050  
(800) 470-6742

MNOSHA Compliance Duluth Area Office  
525 Lake Ave. S.  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 733-7830

MNOSHA Compliance Mankato Area Office  
12 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 1650  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 389-6507  
(877) 348-0508

MNOSHA Workplace Safety Consultation  
(651) 284-5060  
(800) 657-3776

Workers' Compensation Division  
[www.dli.mn.gov/WorkComp.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/WorkComp.asp)

Benefits  
(651) 284-5032

Claims questions  
(651) 284-5032

Workplace Posters Requests  
DMT Poster Requests  
Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry  
443 Lafayette Road N.  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4307  
(651) 284-5042  
(800) 342-5354  
[www.dli.mn.gov/LS/Posters.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/LS/Posters.asp)

Vocational Rehabilitation Unit (VRU)  
St. Paul Metro Office  
(651) 284-5038  
(800) 772-5500  
[www.dli.mn.gov/wc/Vru.asp](http://www.dli.mn.gov/wc/Vru.asp)

**Lawyer Registration, Office of**  
Minnesota Judicial Center Room 305  
25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 296-2254  
[www.mncourts.gov/mars/](http://www.mncourts.gov/mars/)

**Marriage and Family Therapy, MN Board of**  
2829 University Ave. S.E., Suite 330  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(612) 617-2220  
(800) 627-3529 (MN Relay Service)  
[www.bmft.state.mn.us/](http://www.bmft.state.mn.us/)

**Medical Practice, MN Board of**  
2829 University Ave. S.E., Suite 500  
Minneapolis, MN 55414-3246  
(612) 617-2130  
(800) 657-3709  
[www.bmp.state.mn.us/](http://www.bmp.state.mn.us/)

**Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU)**  
Wells Fargo Place  
30 7th Street E., Suite 350  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 296-8012  
(888) 667-2848  
(651) 282-2660 (TTY)  
[www.mnscu.edu](http://www.mnscu.edu)

**Natural Resources (DNR), MN Department of**  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)  
  
DNR Information Center  
(651) 296-6157  
(888) 646-6367

Watercraft, recreational motor vehicle and  
snowmobile registrations  
(651) 296-2316  
(800) 285-2000

**Nursing Home Administrators, MN Board of  
Examiners for**  
2829 University Ave. S.E., Suite 400  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(651) 201-2731  
(800) 627-3529 Hearing/Speech Relay/  
[www.benha.state.mn.us/](http://www.benha.state.mn.us/)

**Nursing, MN Board of**  
2829 University Ave. S.E., Suite 200  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(612) 617-2270  
(800) 627-3529 (Hearing/Speech Relay)  
[www.nursingboard.state.mn.us/](http://www.nursingboard.state.mn.us/)

**Office of Higher Education, MN**  
1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 350  
St. Paul, MN 55108  
(651) 642-0567  
(800) 657-3866  
[www.ohe.state.mn.us/](http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/)

**Optometry, MN Board of**  
2829 University Avenue S.E., Suite 550  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(651) 201-2762  
(800) 627-3529 (Hearing/Speech Relay)  
[www.optometryboard.state.mn.us](http://www.optometryboard.state.mn.us)

**Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST), MN  
Board of**  
1600 University Ave., Suite 200  
St. Paul, MN 55104-3825  
(651) 643-3060  
[www.post.state.mn.us](http://www.post.state.mn.us)

**Pharmacy, MN Board of**  
2829 University Avenue S.E., Suite 530  
Minneapolis, MN 55414-3251  
(651) 201-2825  
(800) 627-3529 (Hearing/Speech Relay)  
[www.phcybrd.state.mn.us/](http://www.phcybrd.state.mn.us/)

**Physical Therapy, MN Board of**  
2829 University Avenue S.E., Suite 420  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(612) 627-5406  
(800) 627-3529 (Hearing/Speech Relay)  
[www.physicaltherapy.state.mn.us](http://www.physicaltherapy.state.mn.us)

**Podiatric Medicine, MN Board of**  
2829 University Avenue S.E., Suite 430  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(612) 617-2200  
(800) 627-3529 (Hearing/Speech Relay)  
[www.podiatry.state.mn.us](http://www.podiatry.state.mn.us)

**Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), MN**

520 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194  
[www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us)

**MPCA General Information**

(651) 296-6300  
(800) 657-3864  
(651) 282-5332 (TTY)

**One-Stop Environmental Program**

(651) 757-2173  
[www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/onestop.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/onestop.html)

**Small Business Environmental Assistance Program**

(651) 282-6143  
(800) 657-3938  
[www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbap\\_p.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbap_p.html)

**Small Business Environmental Improvement Loan Program**

(651) 282-6143  
(800) 657-3938  
[www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbomb\\_loan.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbomb_loan.html)

**Small Business Ombudsman Program**

(651) 282-6143  
(800) 657-3938  
[www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbomb\\_p.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbomb_p.html)

**MPCA publication: *Environmental Guide for Small Businesses in Minnesota***

[www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/p-sbap1-00.pdf](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/p-sbap1-00.pdf)  
(651) 282-6143  
(800) 657-3938

**Private Detective and Protective Agent Services, MN Board of**

1430 Maryland Avenue East  
St. Paul, MN 55106  
(651) 793-2666  
(651) 282-6555 (TTY)  
[www.dps.state.mn.us/pdb/](http://www.dps.state.mn.us/pdb/)

**Psychology, MN Board of**

2829 University Avenue S.E., Suite 320  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(612) 617-2230  
(800) 627-3529 (Hearing/Speech Relay)  
[www.psychologyboard.state.mn.us/](http://www.psychologyboard.state.mn.us/)

**Public Safety, MN Department of**

Central Office, Town Square Building  
444 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 201-7000  
[www.dps.state.mn.us/](http://www.dps.state.mn.us/)

**Alcohol & Gambling Enforcement Division**

(651) 201-7500  
[www.dps.state.mn.us/alcgamb/alcenf/alcenf.html](http://www.dps.state.mn.us/alcgamb/alcenf/alcenf.html)

**Driver and Vehicle Services**

(651) 296-6911  
(651) 282-6555 (TTY)  
[MNDriveInfo.org](http://MNDriveInfo.org)

**Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA)**

Operations Center  
1430 Maryland Avenue East  
St. Paul, MN 55106  
(651) 793-7000 (24 hours)  
[www.bca.state.mn.us](http://www.bca.state.mn.us)

**State Fire Marshal Division, MN**

444 Cedar Street, Suite 145  
St. Paul, MN 55101-5145  
(651) 201-2700  
(651)-282-6555 (TTY)  
[www.dps.state.mn.us/fmarshal/fmarshal.html](http://www.dps.state.mn.us/fmarshal/fmarshal.html)

**Public Utilities Commission, MN**

121 Seventh Place East, Suite 350  
St. Paul, MN 55101-2147  
(651) 296-0406  
(800) 657-3782  
[www.puc.state.mn.us/](http://www.puc.state.mn.us/)

**Racing Commission, MN**

Canterbury Park Location  
P.O. Box 630  
Shakopee, MN 55379  
(952) 496-7950  
[www.mnrace.commission.state.mn.us](http://www.mnrace.commission.state.mn.us)

**Revenue, MN Department of**

600 N. Robert St.  
St. Paul, MN 55146  
[www.taxes.state.mn.us](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us)

Business Tax Registration  
MN Department of Revenue  
Mail Station 4410  
St. Paul, MN 55146-4410

(651) 282-5225  
(800) 657-3605  
<https://mndor.state.mn.us/er/ctrl/WelcomeController>

**Collections Division**

(651) 556-3003  
(800) 657-3909

**Corporations Franchise Tax**

(651) 556-3075

**Individual Income Tax Division**

(651) 296-3781  
(800) 652-9094 (Greater MN)

**Individual Income Tax Forms**

(651) 296-4444  
[www.taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/individ/forms.shtml](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/individ/forms.shtml)

Individual Income Tax Return information  
[www.mndor.state.mn.us/WheresMyRefund](http://www.mndor.state.mn.us/WheresMyRefund)

Minnesota Business Tax Education Program  
(Sales & Use Taxes)  
P.O. Box 7153  
St. Paul, MN 55107  
(651) 297-4213  
(651) 556-3102 (Fax)  
[www.taxes.state.mn.us/business\\_taxpayers/  
business\\_education/mbeworkshops.shtml](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us/business_taxpayers/business_education/mbeworkshops.shtml)

Minnesota Business Tax Education Partnership  
(Employment Taxes)  
c/o Gary Johnson  
UI Employer Assistance  
1st National Bank Building  
332 Minnesota St., Suite E200  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1351  
(651) 259-7220  
[www.uimn.org/tax/irs.htm](http://www.uimn.org/tax/irs.htm)

Employment tax workshops  
(651) 259-7220  
[www.uimn.org/tax/tax\\_classes/current\\_workshop\\_  
schedule.htm](http://www.uimn.org/tax/tax_classes/current_workshop_schedule.htm)

Sales and Use tax workshops  
(651) 297-4213  
[www.taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/business\\_taxpayers/  
business\\_education/mbereg.shtml](http://www.taxes.state.mn.us/taxes/business_taxpayers/business_education/mbereg.shtml)

Partnership Tax  
(651) 556-3075

Petroleum Tax Office  
(651) 556-6351

Sales and Use Tax Division  
MN Dept. of Revenue  
Mail Station 6330  
St. Paul, MN 55146-6330  
(651) 296-6181  
(800) 657-3777 (Greater MN)

Withholding Division  
(651) 282-9999  
(800) 657-3594 (Greater MN)

**Secretary of State, Office of the Minnesota**  
[www.sos.state.mn.us](http://www.sos.state.mn.us)

Business and miscellaneous filings address:  
Office of the Secretary of State  
Retirement Systems of Minnesota Building  
60 Empire Dr., Suite 100  
St. Paul, MN 55103  
(651) 296-2803  
(877) 551-6767 (MN only)

**Small Business Assistance Office, MN**  
1st National Bank Building  
332 Minnesota St., Suite E200  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1351  
(651) 556-8425 (Voicemail Publication Order Line)  
(651) 259-7476 (Information and Assistance)  
(800) 310-8323  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com/sbao](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/sbao)

**State Legislature, MN**  
**Office of the Revisor of Statutes**  
700 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 296-2868  
[www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/](http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/)

Statutes, Laws and Rules  
<https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/pubs/>

**Teaching, MN Board of**  
1500 Highway 36 West  
Roseville, MN 55113  
(651) 582-8833  
[http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Teacher\\_  
Support/Board\\_of\\_Teaching/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Teacher_Support/Board_of_Teaching/index.html)

**Transportation (Mn/DOT), MN Department of**  
395 John Ireland Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899  
(651) 296-3000  
(800) 657-3774  
(800) 627-3529 (TTY)  
[www.dot.state.mn.us](http://www.dot.state.mn.us)

Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle  
Operations (OFCVO)  
(651) 215-6300  
[www.dot.state.mn.us/cvo/index.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/cvo/index.html)

**Veterans Affairs, MN Department of**  
State Veterans Service Building  
20 West 12th St., Room 206  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 296-2562  
(888) 546-5838 LinkVet  
[www.mdva.state.mn.us](http://www.mdva.state.mn.us)

**Veterinary Medicine, MN Board of**  
2829 University Ave. S.E., Suite 540  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(651) 201-2844  
(800) 627-3529 (Hearing/Speech Relay)  
[www.vetmed.state.mn.us](http://www.vetmed.state.mn.us)

**GOVERNMENT, REGIONAL  
Regional Development Commissions**

Northwest Regional Development Commission  
115 South Main Avenue  
Warren, MN 56762  
(218) 745-6733  
www.nwrdc.org  
Region 1. Serves Kittson, Marshall, Norman,  
Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau counties.

Headwaters Regional Development Commission  
P.O. Box 906  
Bemidji, MN 56619  
(218) 444-4732  
www.hrdc.org  
Region 2. Serves Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard,  
Lake of the Woods, and Mahnommen counties.

Arrowhead Regional Development Commission  
221 West 1st Street  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 722-5545  
(800) 232-0707  
www.ardc.org  
Region 3. Serves Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca,  
Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis counties.

West Central Initiative  
1000 Western Ave.  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537  
(218) 739-2239  
(800) 735- 2239  
www.wcif.org  
Region 4. Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter  
Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin counties.

Region 5 Development Commission  
403 Prairie Ave. N.E., Suite 100  
Staples, MN 56479  
(218) 894-3233  
www.regionfive.org  
Region 5. Serves Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison,  
Todd, and Wadena counties.

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission  
333 6th Street SW, Suite 2  
Willmar, MN 56201  
(320) 235-8504  
(800) 450-8608  
www.mmrdc.org  
Region 6E. Serves Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker,  
and Renville counties.

Upper Minnesota Valley Regional  
Development Commission  
323 West Schlieman Avenue  
Appleton, MN 56208  
(320) 289-1981  
http://umvrdc.org  
Region 6W. Serves Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac  
Qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine counties.

East Central Regional Development Commission  
100 Park Street South  
Mora, MN 55051  
(320) 679-4065  
www.region7erdc.org  
Region 7E. Serves Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille  
Lacs, and Pine counties

Southwest Regional Development Commission  
2401 Broadway Avenue, Suite  
Slayton, MN 56172  
(507) 836-8547  
www.swrdc.org  
Region 8. Serves Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon,  
Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock  
counties.

Region Nine Development Commission  
Nichols Office Center  
410 E. Jackson Street, Suite 400, P.O. Box 3367  
Mankato, MN 56002-3367  
(507) 387-5643  
(800) 450-5643  
www.rndc.org  
Region 9. Serves Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault,  
LeSueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and  
Watonwan counties.

Metropolitan Council  
390 N. Robert St.  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 602-1000  
(651) 291-0904 (TTY)  
www.metrocouncil.org  
Region 11. Serves Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin,  
Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties.

Note: Regions 7W and 10 are dissolved.

**INSURANCE**

Minnesota Joint Underwriting Association  
Pioneer P.O. Box 1760  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 222-0484  
(800) 552-0013  
www.mjua.org/generalinfo.htm

Minnesota Fair Plan  
(612) 338-7584  
(800) 524-1640  
www.mnfairplan.org/index.html

Minnesota Market Assistance Program  
Mike McClure  
(952) 472-3359  
(800) 257-1838

Minnesota Department of Commerce  
Insurance Information  
(651) 296-2488  
(800) 657-3602 (MN only)  
www.insurance.mn.gov

## INVENTORS

Minnesota Inventors Congress  
235 S. Mill St.  
P.O. Box 71  
Redwood Falls, MN 56283  
(507) 627-2344  
(800) 468-3681  
[www.minnesotainventorscongress.org](http://www.minnesotainventorscongress.org)

Inventors' Network  
P.O. Box 462  
Excelsior, MN 55331  
(651) 602-3175  
[www.inventorsnetwork.org](http://www.inventorsnetwork.org)

U.S. Patent and Trademark Depository Library  
Hennepin County Public Library -Central  
Business/Science/Government Documents  
Division  
300 Nicollet Ave.  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 630-6017  
[www.hclib.org](http://www.hclib.org)

## JOB SERVICE AND JOB TRAINING EMPLOYMENT and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF

### Job Service Programs

Program functions as a labor exchange,  
offering employment opportunities on a no-  
fee basis to Minnesotans and providing  
services to businesses.  
(651) 259-7544  
(651) 296-3900 (TTY)  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

### Minnesota Job Skills Partnership (MJSP)

Program helps business and education develop  
cooperative training projects.  
(651) 259-7514  
(800) 657-3858  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

### MN WorkForce Centers

Job skills analysis, assessment and  
customized training.  
(888) 438-5627  
[www.mnwfc.org](http://www.mnwfc.org)

MN WorkForce Center locations:

Skyline Mall  
1649 West Main Street  
Albert Lea, MN 56007-1868  
(507) 379-3409  
(507) 379-3409 (TTY)

303 22nd Ave. West, Suite 107  
Alexandria, MN 56308  
(320) 762-7800  
(320) 762-7805 (TTY)

Riverland Community College  
1600 8th Avenue Northwest  
Austin, MN 55912-1400  
(507) 433-0555  
(507) 433-0556 (TTY)

616 America Ave., Suite 210  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
(218) 333-8200  
(218) 755-4422 (TTY)

Anoka County Human Services Bldg.  
1201 89th Ave. N.E., Suite 235  
Blaine, MN 55434  
(763) 783-4800  
(763) 785-5987 (TTY)

4220 W. Old Shakopee Rd.  
Bloomington, MN 55437  
(952) 346-4000  
(952) 346-4043 (TTY)

204 Laurel St., Suite 21  
Brainerd, MN 56401  
(218) 828-2450  
(218) 855-5030 (TTY)

7115 Northland Terrace, Suite 100  
Brooklyn Park, MN 55428  
(763) 536-6000  
(763) 536-6005 (TTY)

Southcross Commerce Center IV  
2900 W. County Road 42, Suite 140  
Burnsville, MN 55337  
(952) 895-7600  
(952) 895-7661 (TTY)

Cambridge City Center  
140 Buchanan St., Suite 152  
Cambridge, MN 55008  
(763) 689-7140  
(763) 689-7569 (TTY)

715 Cloquet Avenue  
Cloquet, MN 55720-1629  
(218) 878-4414  
(218) 878-4414 (TTY)

1730 University Ave.  
Crookston, MN 56716-1112  
(218) 281-6020  
(218) 281-6020 (TTY)

Roosevelt Building  
801 Roosevelt Avenue  
Detroit Lakes, MN 56501-3703  
(218) 846-7379  
(218) 846-0772 (TTY)

Government Services Center  
320 West 2nd Street, Suite 205  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 723-4730  
(218) 723-4725 (TTY)

412 South State Street  
Fairmont, MN 56031  
(507) 235-5518  
(507) 235-5518 (TTY)

Faribo Town Square  
201 Lyndale Avenue S., Suite  
Faribault, MN 55021-5758  
(507) 333-2047  
(507) 333-2047 (TTY)

Lincoln Center  
125 West Lincoln Avenue, Suite  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537  
(218) 739-7560  
(218) 739-7287 (TTY)

Itasca Resource Center  
1215 Southeast 2nd Avenue  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3982  
(218) 327-4480  
(218) 327-4480 (TTY)

3920 13th Avenue East  
Hibbing, MN 55746-0068  
(218) 262-6777  
(218) 262-6777 (TTY)

Ridgewater College  
2 Century Avenue S.E.  
Hutchinson, MN 55350-0550  
(320) 587-4740  
(320) 587-4740 (TTY)

Rainy River Community College  
1501 Hwy. 71, SC 128  
International Falls, MN 56649  
(218) 283-9427  
(218) 283-9427 (TTY)

Meeker County Family Services Building  
114 Holcombe Avenue North, Suite 170  
Litchfield, MN 55355-2273  
(320) 693-2859  
(320) 693-2859 (TTY)

Coborns Complex  
315 12th St. NE  
Little Falls, MN 56345-2910  
(320) 616-2400  
(800) 627-3529 (TTY)

Mankato Place  
12 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 1600A  
Mankato, MN 56001-7796  
(507) 389-6723  
(507) 389-6512 (TTY)

Lyon County Courthouse  
607 W. Main Street  
Marshall, MN 56258  
(507) 537-6236  
(507) 537-6237 (TTY)

1200 Plymouth Ave. N.  
Minneapolis, MN 55411-4085  
(612) 520-3500  
(612) 302-7061 (TTY)

777 E. Lake Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55407-1546  
(612) 821-4000  
(612) 821-4013 (TTY)

202 North 1st Street  
Montevideo, MN 56265  
(320) 269-8819  
(320) 269-8819 (TTY)

406 E. 7th St., P.O. Box 720  
Monticello MN 55362-0720  
(763) 271-3700  
(763) 271-3745 (TTY)

Clay County Family Service Center  
715 11th Street N., Suite 302  
Moorhead, MN 56560-2086  
(218) 287-5060  
(218) 236-2001 (TTY)

903 Forest Ave E.  
Mora, MN 55051-1431  
(320) 679-6484  
(320) 679-6494 (TTY)

1618 South Broadway Street  
New Ulm, MN 56073-3756  
(507) 354-3138  
(507) 354-3138 (TTY)

McKnight 36 Plaza  
2098 11th Ave. E.  
North St. Paul, MN 55109-5100  
(651) 779-5666  
(651) 779-5223 (TTY)

631 Cedar Ave. N.  
Owatonna, MN 55060  
(507) 446-1470  
(507) 446-1470 (TTY)

1606 West 3rd Street  
Red Wing, MN 55066  
(651) 385-6480  
(651) 385-6404 (TTY)

300 11th Avenue Northwest, Suite 112  
Rochester, MN 55901  
(507) 285-7315  
(507) 280-3584 (TTY)



1542 Northway Drive, Door 2  
P.O. Box 67  
St. Cloud, MN 56303  
(320) 308-5320  
(320) 308-6434 (TTY)

540 Fairview Ave N.  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 642-0363  
(651) 642-0679 (TTY)

752 Canterbury Rd. S.  
Shakopee, MN 55379  
(952) 445-7087  
(952) 403-7999 (TTY)

1301 Highway 1 East  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701-2500 1  
(218) 681-0909  
(800) 627-3529 (TTY)

Olcott Plaza  
820 North 9th Ave., Suite 250  
Virginia, MN 55792-2345  
(218) 748-2200  
(218) 748-2222 (TTY)

124 1st St. S.E., Suite 2  
Wadena, MN 56482-1538  
(218) 631-7660  
(218) 631-7677 (TTY)

1 Mendota Road West, Suite 170  
West St. Paul, MN 55118  
(651) 554-5955  
(651) 554-5914 (TTY)

Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Bldg.  
2200 23rd St., N.E., Suite 2040  
Willmar, MN 56201-9423  
(320) 231-5174  
(320) 231-5174 (TTY)

Minnesota State College—Southeast Technical  
1250 Homer Road, Suite 200  
Winona, MN 55987-4897  
(507) 453-2920  
(507) 453-2930 (TTY)

2150 Radio Dr.  
Woodbury, MN 55125  
(651) 275-8650  
(651) 275-8653 (TTY)

318 9th Street  
Worthington, MN 56187-2342  
(507) 376-3116  
(507) 376-3116 (TTY)

#### **MinnesotaWorks**

An Internet-based self-service system where registered employers and job seekers can connect.  
[www.minnesotaworks.net](http://www.minnesotaworks.net)

#### **Workforce Investment Act (WIA)**

WIA provides the framework for a unique national workforce preparation and employment system designed to meet both the needs of the nation's businesses and the needs of job seekers and those who want to further their careers.  
(651) 259-7538  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

Youth Formula Grant  
(651) 259-7555  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

#### **LEGAL ASSISTANCE**

##### **Minnesota State Bar Association**

600 Nicollet Mall, Suite 380  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
(612) 333-1183  
(800) 882-6722  
[www.mnbar.org/](http://www.mnbar.org/)

Attorney Referral Service  
[www.mnfindalawyer.com](http://www.mnfindalawyer.com)

##### **LegalCORPS**

Free legal assistance for microenterprises and nonprofit corporations.  
600 Nicollet Mall, Suite 390A  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
(612) 752-6678  
(888) 454-5267  
[www.legalcorps.org](http://www.legalcorps.org)

#### **County Bar Associations**

##### **Anoka County Bar Association**

Attorney referral service  
(763) 783-5148  
[www.anokabar.org](http://www.anokabar.org)

##### **Dakota County Bar Association**

Attorney referral service  
(952) 431-3200

##### **Hennepin County Bar Association**

Attorney referral service  
(612) 752-6666  
<https://www.hcba.org/Legal-services/LawyerReferral.htm>

##### **Ramsey County Bar Association**

Attorney referral service  
(651) 224-1775  
[www.ramseybar.org/refer.html](http://www.ramseybar.org/refer.html)

## Law Schools

### Hamline University School of Law

Small Business/Non-profit Clinic  
Free legal assistance to small businesses and non-profit businesses. Staffed by student attorneys under supervision of a practicing attorney.  
1536 Hewitt Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 523-2898  
[www.hamline.edu/law/school\\_of\\_law.html](http://www.hamline.edu/law/school_of_law.html)

### University of Minnesota Law School

Center for Business Law  
Multi-Profession Business Law Clinic  
Practitioners in leading law firms and an independent account/consulting firm to provide supervisory expertise and mentoring in the representation of business entrepreneurs.  
229 19th Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 624-5779  
[www.centerforbusinesslaw.org](http://www.centerforbusinesslaw.org)

### William Mitchell College of Law

Law students work with practicing business and corporate lawyers to provide legal advice to eligible small business entrepreneurs.  
875 Summit Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55105-3076  
(651) 227-9171  
(888) 962-5529  
[www.wmitchell.edu/](http://www.wmitchell.edu/)

Business Law Clinic  
(651) 290-6476

Intellectual Property Property Institute  
Legal Clinic  
(651) 290-6425

## LIBRARIES

### Primary Metropolitan Area Libraries

Anoka County Library  
707 County Road 10 NE  
Blaine, MN 55434  
(763) 717-3267  
(763) 717-3271 (TDD/TTY)  
[www.anoka.lib.mn.us](http://www.anoka.lib.mn.us)

Bayport Public Library  
582 North 4th Street  
Bayport, MN 55003  
(651) 275-4416  
[www.bayportlibrary.org](http://www.bayportlibrary.org)

Carver County Library  
Chaska Library  
3 City Hall Plaza  
Chaska, MN 55318  
(952) 448-3886  
[www.carverlib.org/](http://www.carverlib.org/)

Columbia Heights Library  
820 40th Avenue Northeast  
Columbia Heights, MN 55421  
(763) 706-3690  
[www.anoka.lib.mn.us](http://www.anoka.lib.mn.us)

Dakota County Library  
1340 Wescott Road  
Eagan, MN 55123  
(651) 450-2900  
[www.co.dakota.mn.us/library](http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/library)

Hennepin County Library  
Central Library  
300 Nicollet Ave  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 630-6000  
[www.hclib.org/](http://www.hclib.org/)

James J. Hill Reference Library  
80 West 4th Street  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 265-5500  
(877) 700-4455  
[www.jjhill.org](http://www.jjhill.org)

Ramsey County Library  
2680 Arthur St.  
Roseville, MN 55113 1  
(651) 628-6803  
[www.ramsey.lib.mn.us](http://www.ramsey.lib.mn.us)

Scott County Library System  
Savage Library  
13090 Alabama Avenue South  
Savage, MN 55378  
(952) 707-1770  
[www.scott.lib.mn.us/](http://www.scott.lib.mn.us/)

St. Paul Public Library  
Central Library  
90 West 4th St.  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 266-7000  
[www.stpaul.lib.mn.us](http://www.stpaul.lib.mn.us)

South St. Paul Public Library  
106 3rd Avenue North  
South St. Paul, MN 55075  
(651) 554-3241  
[www.southstpaul.org/](http://www.southstpaul.org/)

Washington County Library  
(651) 731-1320  
[www.co.washington.mn.us/](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/)

Stillwater Branch Library  
224 Third Street N.  
Stillwater, MN 55082  
(651) 275-4342  
www.stillwaterlibrary.org

### Minnesota Library Systems

Capitol Area Library Consortium (CALCO)  
Provides access to state government  
library services and resources.  
www.state.mn.us/libraries/

Arrowhead Library System  
5528 Emerald Ave  
Mountain Iron, MN 55768  
(218) 741-3840  
www.arrowhead.lib.mn.us

Central Minnesota Libraries Exchange  
St. Cloud State University  
Miller Center 130-D  
St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498  
(320) 308-2950  
(800) 657-3796  
www.cmle.org

Duluth Public Library  
Main Library  
520 W. Superior St.  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 730-4200  
www.duluth.lib.mn.us

East Central Regional Library  
244 South Birch Street  
Cambridge, MN 55008  
(651) 689-7390  
(888) 234-1293  
http://ecrl.lib.mn.us

Great River Regional Library  
405 St. Germain W.  
St. Cloud, MN 56301  
(320) 650-2500  
www.griver.org

Kitchigami Regional Library System  
310 2nd St. N., P.O. Box 84  
Pine River, MN 56474  
(218) 587-2171  
www.krls.org

Lake Agassiz Regional Library  
Regional Office  
118 5th Street S., P.O. Box 900  
Moorhead, MN 56561-0900  
(218) 233-3757  
(800) 247-0449  
www.larl.org

Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA) /  
Metronet  
1619 Dayton Avenue, Suite 314  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 645-5731  
www.melsa.org/  
(651) 646-0475  
www.metrolibraries.net

Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)  
103 Graystone Plaza  
Detroit Lakes, MN 56501  
(218) 847-2825  
(800) 450-1032

Northwest Regional Library  
210 LaBree Ave. N., P.O. Box 593  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701  
(218) 681-1066  
www.nwrlib.org

Pioneerland Library System  
410 5th Street Southwest  
Willmar, MN 56201  
(320) 235-6106  
www.pioneerland.lib.mn.us/

Plum Creek Library System Headquarters  
P.O. Box 697  
Worthington, MN 56187  
(507) 376-5803  
www.plumcreeklibrary.org

Southeastern Libraries Cooperating/Southeast  
Library Systems (SELCO/SELS)  
2600 19th St. NW  
Rochester, MN 55901  
(507) 288-5513  
(800) 992-5061  
www.selco.lib.mn.us/

Southwest Area Multi-County Multi-Type  
Interlibrary Exchange (SAMMIE)  
109 South 5th Street, Suite 30  
Marshall, MN 56258  
(507) 532-9013  
www.sammie.org

Traverse des Sioux Library System  
1400 Madison Ave, Suite 622  
Mankato, MN 56001-5488  
(507) 625-6169  
www.tds.lib.mn.us

Viking Library System  
204 N. Cascade  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537  
(218) 739-5286  
www.viking.lib.mn.us

## Law Libraries

Anoka County Law Library  
325 E. Main St.  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 422-7487  
[www.co.anoka.mn.us/departments/law\\_library](http://www.co.anoka.mn.us/departments/law_library)

Carver County Law Library  
Carver County Government Center  
604 E. Fourth St.  
Chaska, MN 55318  
(952) 361-1564  
[www.carverlib.org/lawlibrary/](http://www.carverlib.org/lawlibrary/)

Clay County Law Library  
Clay County Courthouse, Basement  
807 11th St. N., P.O. Box 280  
Moorhead, MN 56561  
(218) 299-7522  
[www.co.clay.mn.us/Depts/LawLibr/LawLibr.htm](http://www.co.clay.mn.us/Depts/LawLibr/LawLibr.htm)

Dakota County Law Library - Hastings  
Hastings Government Center  
1560 W. Highway 55  
Hastings, MN 55033  
(651) 438-8080  
[www.co.dakota.mn.us/law\\_lib/](http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/law_lib/)

Hamline University School of Law Library  
1536 Hewitt Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55104-1284  
(651) 523-2937  
<http://lawlibrary.hamline.edu/>

Hennepin County Law Library  
C-2451 Government Center  
300 South 6th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55487  
(612) 348-3022  
<http://hclaw.co.hennepin.mn.us/>

Minnesota State Law Library  
Room G25, Minnesota Judicial Center  
25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 296-2775  
(800) 627-3529 (TTY)  
[www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us](http://www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us)

Olmsted County Law Library  
151 4th Street SE  
Rochester, MN 55904  
(507) 328-7600

Ramsey County Law Library  
1815 Courthouse  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 266-8391  
[www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ll/index.asp](http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ll/index.asp)

St. Louis County Law Library  
St. Louis County Government Center  
100 North 5th Ave. West, Room 515  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 726-2611  
(800) 450-9777  
[www.stlouiscounty.org/LawLibrary/LawLibrary.org](http://www.stlouiscounty.org/LawLibrary/LawLibrary.org)

Scott County Law Library  
Scott County Government Center  
200 4th Ave. W  
Shakopee, MN 55379  
(952) 496-8713  
[www.scott.lib.mn.us/Law\\_Library.html](http://www.scott.lib.mn.us/Law_Library.html)

Sherburne County Law Library  
Sherburne County Government Center  
13880 Highway 10  
Elk River, MN 55330-4608  
(763) 241-2565  
(800) 433-5232  
[www.co.sherburne.mn.us/attorney/lawlibrary.php](http://www.co.sherburne.mn.us/attorney/lawlibrary.php)

Stearns County Law Library  
725 Courthouse Square, Room 105  
St. Cloud, MN 56303  
(320) 656-3678  
[www.co.stearns.mn.us/908.htm](http://www.co.stearns.mn.us/908.htm)

U.S. Eighth Circuit Court Libraries  
[www.ca8.uscourts.gov/library/library.html](http://www.ca8.uscourts.gov/library/library.html)  
Minneapolis Branch  
1102 U.S. Courthouse  
300 South Fourth St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55415  
(612) 664-5830

St. Paul Branch  
316 N. Robert Street, Room 541  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 848-1320

University of St. Thomas  
Schoenecker Law Library  
1101 Harmon Place  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
(651) 962-4902  
[www.stthomas.edu/law/library/default.html](http://www.stthomas.edu/law/library/default.html)

Washington County Law Library  
Washington County Government Center  
14949 62nd St., N., Room 436  
P.O. Box 6  
Stillwater, MN 55082  
(651) 430-6330  
[www.co.washington.mn.us/info\\_for\\_residents/law\\_library/](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/info_for_residents/law_library/)

William Mitchell College of Law Library  
Warren E. Berger Library  
871 Summit Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105  
(651) 290-6324  
[www.wmitchell.edu/library](http://www.wmitchell.edu/library)

**Note:** There are county law libraries in each county, the management of which is usually assigned to courthouse employees. A complete list can be found at:  
County Law Library Program (CLLP)  
[www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us/cllp.html](http://www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us/cllp.html)

### Government Document Depository Libraries

Anoka County Library  
Northtown Library  
711 Highway 10 N.E.  
Blaine, MN 55434-2398  
(763) 717-3267  
[www.anoka.lib.mn.us](http://www.anoka.lib.mn.us)

Bemidji State University  
A.C. Clark Library  
1500 Birchmont Drive NE  
Bemidji, MN 56601-2699  
(218) 755-3342  
[www.bemidjistate.edu/library/](http://www.bemidjistate.edu/library/)

Carleton College  
Lawrence McKinley Gould Library  
One North College Street  
Northfield, MN 55057  
(507) 646-4260  
<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/library/>

Dakota County Library System  
Wescott Library  
1340 Wescott Road  
Eagan, MN 55123-1099  
(651) 688-1500  
[www.co.dakota.mn.us/library](http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/library)

Duluth Public Library  
520 West Superior Street  
Duluth, MN 55802-1578  
(218) 723-3802  
[www.duluth.lib.mn.us](http://www.duluth.lib.mn.us)

Gustavus Adolphus College  
Folke Bernadotte Memorial Library  
800 W. College Avenue  
St. Peter, MN 56082  
(507) 933-7567  
<http://gustavus.edu/academics/library/govdocs/index.html>

Hamline University  
School of Law Library  
1536 Hewitt Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 523-2937  
<http://law.hamline.edu/library/law-library.html>

Hennepin County Library System  
Central Library  
Business/Science/Government Documents Division  
300 Nicollet Ave.  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 630-6017  
[www.hclib.org](http://www.hclib.org)

Southdale Library  
7001 York Avenue South  
Edina, MN 55435-4287  
(952) 847-5933  
[www.hclib.org](http://www.hclib.org)

Minnesota State Law Library  
Room G25, Minnesota Judicial Center  
25 Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 296-2775  
[www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us/govdocl.html](http://www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us/govdocl.html)

Minnesota State University–Mankato  
Memorial Library  
ML 3097 P.O. Box 8419  
Mankato, MN 56001-8419  
(507) 389-5952  
<http://lib.mnsu.edu/govdoc/index.html>

Minnesota State University Moorhead  
Livingston Lord Library  
1104 7th Avenue S.  
Moorhead, MN 56563  
(218) 477-2349  
[www.mnstate.edu/govdocs](http://www.mnstate.edu/govdocs)

Ramsey County Library  
Roseville Library  
2180 North Hamline Avenue  
Roseville, MN 55113-4241  
(651) 628-6803  
[www.ramsey.lib.mn.us/](http://www.ramsey.lib.mn.us/)

St. Cloud State University  
Learning Resources and Technical Services  
James W. Miller Learning Resource Center, MC130-B  
720 4th Avenue South  
St. Cloud, MN 56301-4998  
(320) 308-2028  
<http://lrts.stcloudstate.edu/library/special/govt.asp>

St. John's University  
Alcuin Library  
31802 County Road 159  
P.O. Box 2500  
Collegeville, MN 56321-2500  
(320) 363-2601  
[www.csbsju.edu/library/services/docs/index.htm](http://www.csbsju.edu/library/services/docs/index.htm)

St. Olaf College  
Rolvaag Memorial Library  
1510 St. Olaf Avenue  
Northfield, MN 55057-1093  
(507) 646-3793  
[www.stolaf.edu/library/research/govdocs](http://www.stolaf.edu/library/research/govdocs)

St. Paul Public Library  
Central Library  
Government Publications  
90 West 4th Street  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 226-7000  
[www.sppl.org/weblinks/government.html](http://www.sppl.org/weblinks/government.html)

Southwest Minnesota State University Library  
Government Documents  
1501 State Street  
Marshall, MN 56258  
(507) 537-6176  
<http://lib.mnsu.edu/govdoc/index.html>

University of Minnesota  
Government Publications Library  
Wilson Library  
309 19th Ave S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 624-5073  
<http://govpubs.lib.umn.edu/>

University of Minnesota  
Magrath Library  
Government Documents  
1984 Buford Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55108  
(612) 624-3659  
<http://magrath.lib.umn.edu/gov>

University of Minnesota Duluth  
Library  
416 University Drive  
Duluth, MN 55812-2495  
(218) 726-7880  
[www.d.umn.edu/lib/homenav/gov/index.htm](http://www.d.umn.edu/lib/homenav/gov/index.htm)

University of Minnesota Law Library  
Walter F. Mondale Hall  
229 19th Ave S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 625-4300  
[www.law.umn.edu/library/home.html](http://www.law.umn.edu/library/home.html)

University of Minnesota, Morris  
Rodney A. Briggs Library  
600 E. 4th St.  
Morris, MN 56267  
(320) 589-6175  
[www.morris.umn.edu/library/govpubsa.php](http://www.morris.umn.edu/library/govpubsa.php)

William Mitchell College of Law  
Warren E. Berger Law Library  
875 Summit Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105  
(651) 290-6424  
[www.wmitchell.edu/library/](http://www.wmitchell.edu/library/)

Winona State University  
Main Library  
PO Box 5838  
Winona, MN 55987  
(507) 457-5148  
[www.winona.edu/library/gov/](http://www.winona.edu/library/gov/)

## LOCAL ASSISTANCE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

### U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

Business Planning Center (BPC)  
Programs include on-site counseling, volunteer  
bankers, lawyers and loan information seminars.  
Midtown Commons Building, Suite 112  
2324 University Avenue W.  
St. Paul, MN 55114-1843  
(651) 209-1884  
[www.sba.gov/localresources/district/mn/mn\\_bpc.html](http://www.sba.gov/localresources/district/mn/mn_bpc.html)

### Business Incubators

Breckenridge Business Center  
Breckenridge Port Authority  
420 Nebraska Ave.  
P.O. Box 410  
Breckenridge, MN 56520  
(218) 643-1431  
[www.breckenridgemn.net/port.html](http://www.breckenridgemn.net/port.html)

Cooperative Mercado Central  
Neighborhood Development Center (NDC)  
1515 East Lake St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
(612) 728-5485  
[www.mercadocentral.net](http://www.mercadocentral.net)

Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA) /  
University of MN Duluth (UMD) Center for  
Economic Development (CED)  
Duluth Technology Village  
11 E. Superior St., Suite 210  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 726-7298  
(888) 387-4954  
[www.umdcad.com/businessincubator/](http://www.umdcad.com/businessincubator/)

Economic Growth Centers  
2845 Harriet Ave. S.  
Mpls., MN 55408  
(612) 879-0109  
[www.egcmn.org/index.html](http://www.egcmn.org/index.html)

Fairmont Business Development Center  
416 Winnebago Ave  
Fairmont, MN 56031  
(507) 238-9461  
[www.fairmont.org](http://www.fairmont.org)

Frogtown Entrepreneur Center  
Neighborhood Development Center (NDC)  
501 North Dale St. and  
625 University Ave.  
St. Paul, MN  
(651) 379-8424  
www.ndc-mn.org

Genesis Business Centers, Ltd.  
Elliot Park Lifesciences Institute  
700 Tenth Ave South, Suite 323  
Minneapolis, MN 55415  
(612) 455-2215  
www.genesiscenters.com/

Itasca Technology Exchange  
201 NW 4th St.  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
(218) 326-5828  
www.itascatech.com/

Midtown Global Market  
Neighborhood Development Center (NDC)  
920 E. Lake St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
(612) 872-4041  
www.midtownglobalmarket.com

North Shore Business Enterprise Center  
1313 Fairground Rd. P.O. Box 248  
Two Harbors, MN 55616  
(218) 834-3384  
www.nsbec.com/

Swedish Bank Building  
Neighborhood Development Center (NDC)  
961-963 Payne Avenue  
St. Paul MN 55101  
www.ndc-mn.org

Owatonna Incubator, Inc.  
1065 SW 24th Ave., PO Box 505  
Owatonna, MN 55060  
(507) 451-0517  
www.owatonnaincubator.com/

Phillips Eco Center  
Green Institute  
2801 21st Ave S., Suite 110  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
(612) 278-7100  
www.greeninstitute.org

Plaza Verde  
Neighborhood Development Center (NDC)  
1516 East Lake Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
(612) 728-5485  
www.ndc-mn.org

University Enterprise Laboratories (UEL) - U of M  
1000 Westgate, Suite 101  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
(612) 641-2800  
http://uelmn.org/

University Technology Enterprise Center  
1313 5th St. SE  
Mpls., MN 55414  
(612) 379-3800  
http://utec-center.com/

Valley Technology Park  
510 County Road 71  
Crookston, MN 56716  
(218) 470-2000  
www.valleytech.org/

Venturi Group, LLC  
2800 Patton Rd.  
St. Paul, MN 55113  
(651) 634-3003

## MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE, GENERAL

### SCORE (Counselors to America's Small Business)

Small business mentoring and business advice.

#### Offices

Minnesota SCORE District Office  
210-C Butler Square Building  
100 North 6th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
(612) 370-2324  
www.score-mn.org

Small Business Administration (SBA)  
Business Planning Center  
Midtown Commons Building, Suite 112  
2324 University Avenue W.  
St. Paul, MN 55114-1843  
(651) 209-1884  
www.sba.gov/localresources/district/mn/mn\_bpc.html

Albert Lea SCORE Branch Chapter #406  
Albert Lea Business Development Center  
P.O. Box 370  
2610 Y H Hansen Ave.  
Albert Lea, MN 56007  
(507) 373-3930

Alexandria SCORE Branch Chapter #468  
Alexandria Vocational Technical College  
1601 Jefferson Street  
Alexandria, MN 56308  
(320) 762-4510

Austin SCORE Branch Chapter #406  
Austin Area Chamber of Commerce  
329 Main Street North, Suite 102  
Austin, MN 55912  
(507) 437-4561

Brainerd Lake Office Chapter #468  
Business & Industry Center  
Central Lakes College  
501 West College Drive  
Brainerd, MN 56401  
(218) 855-8151  
(800) 933-0346, ext. 8151

Cannon Falls Branch/Satellite Chapter #668  
Cannon Falls Area Chamber of Commerce  
PO Box 2  
Cannon Falls, MN 55009  
(507) 263-2289

Detroit Lakes SCORE Branch Chapter #468  
P.O. Box 832  
Detroit Lakes, MN 56502-0832  
(218) 846-3731

Lake Superior Region Branch Chapter #391  
11 E. Superior St., Suite 210  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 726-7298

Minneapolis SCORE Chapter #2  
Bremer Bank Building, Suite 103  
8800 Hwy 7  
Minneapolis, MN 55426  
(952) 938-4570  
[www.score-minneapolis.org/](http://www.score-minneapolis.org/)

New Ulm SCORE Chapter #2  
New Ulm Chamber of Commerce  
1 North Minnesota Street  
New Ulm, MN 56073  
(507) 233-4300

Park Rapids Area SCORE Chapter #468  
Hubbard County Courthouse, Room 101  
301 Court Avenue  
Park Rapids MN 56470  
(218) 732-2259

Red Wing SCORE Chapter #668  
439 Main Street  
Red Wing, MN 55066  
(651) 388-4719  
[www.score-redwing.org/](http://www.score-redwing.org/)

Rochester SCORE Chapter #406  
Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce  
220 South Broadway, Suite 100  
Rochester, MN 55904  
(507) 288-8103  
[www.score-rochester.org](http://www.score-rochester.org)

St. Cloud SCORE Chapter #468  
Anderson Entrepreneurial Center  
616 Roosevelt Rd. #118  
St. Cloud, MN 56301  
(320) 240-1332  
[www.stcloudscore.org/](http://www.stcloudscore.org/)

St. Paul SCORE Chapter #391  
176 N. Snelling Avenue, Suite 300  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 632-8937  
[www.score-stpaul.org/](http://www.score-stpaul.org/)

South Metro/Burnsville SCORE Chapter #628  
101 Burnsville Parkway, Suite 152  
Burnsville, MN 55337  
(952) 890-7020  
[www.score-southmetro.org](http://www.score-southmetro.org)

Willmar SCORE Branch Chapter #2  
333 Litchfield Avenue S.W., Suite 100  
Willmar, MN 56201  
(320) 894-6198

Worthington SCORE Branch Chapter #2  
Worthington Chamber of Commerce  
1121 3rd Avenue  
Worthington, MN 56187  
(507) 372-2827

#### **Minnesota Small Business Development Centers (MnSBDCs)**

No cost counseling and business consulting.  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

State Administrative Office  
1st National Bank Building  
332 Minnesota St., Suite E200  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1351  
(651) 259-7423  
(877) 653-8333  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

#### **Twin Cities Metro Area MnSBDC**

University of St. Thomas  
Schulze Hall 103  
46 South 11th St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
(651) 962-4500  
[www.stthomas.edu/business/centers/sbdc/default.html](http://www.stthomas.edu/business/centers/sbdc/default.html)

Regional Subcenters:  
Anoka Ramsey Community College–  
Coon Rapids Campus  
11200 Mississippi Boulevard NW  
Coon Rapids, MN 55433  
(763) 433-1200

Dakota County Technical College  
14200 Cedar Ave.  
Apple Valley, MN 55124  
(651) 423-8600

#### **Northwest MnSBDC**

Bemidji State University  
Center for Research and Innovation  
1500 Birchmont Drive N.E., #32  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
(218) 755-4255  
<http://nwsbdc.homestead.com/index.html>



Regional Subcenters:

Northland Community & Technical College  
1101 Highway 1 East  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701  
(218) 683-7053

**North Central MnSBDC**

Central Lakes College  
Business & Industry Center  
501 West College Drive  
Brainerd, MN 56401  
(218) 855-8142  
[www.clcmn.edu/smallbusiness](http://www.clcmn.edu/smallbusiness)

Regional Subcenter:

Anoka-Ramsey Community College–  
Cambridge Campus  
P.O. Box 343 300 Polk Street South  
Cambridge, MN 55008  
(763) 433-1964

**Northeast MnSBDC**

University of Minnesota Duluth  
Center for Economic Development  
11 East Superior St., Suite 210  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 726-7298  
(888) 387-4594  
[www.umdcad.com](http://www.umdcad.com)

Regional Subcenters:

Tech North Prep Center  
102 E. Sheridan St.  
Ely, MN 55731  
(218) 726-6338

Itasca Development Corporation  
12 Northwest Third Street  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
(218) 327-2241

Natural Resources Research Institute  
Small Business Development Center  
5013 Miller Trunk Highway  
Hermantown, MN 55811  
(218) 726-7298

Hibbing Community College  
1515 East 25th Street  
Hibbing, MN 55746  
(218) 262-6703

Koochiching Economic Development Authority  
405 3rd St., P.O. Box 138  
International Falls, MN 55649  
(218) 283-8585

Center for Economic Development  
North Shore Business Enterprise Center  
Two Harbors, MN 55616  
(218) 834-3494

Quad Cities SBDC

Mesabi Range Community & Technical College  
1001 Chestnut St. W.  
Virginia, MN 55792  
(218) 749-7752

**West Central MnSBDC**

Minnesota State University Moorhead  
1104 7th Avenue South, MSU Box 132  
Moorhead, MN 56563  
(218) 477-2289

**South Central MnSBDC**

Greater Mankato Business Development Center  
1961 Premier Dr., Suite 268  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 389-8881  
[www.rndc.org](http://www.rndc.org)

**Southeast MnSBDC**

Rochester Community and Technical College  
Heintz Center – HC 105  
1926 College View Road SE  
Rochester, MN 55904  
(507) 285-7536  
[www.rochestersbdc.com](http://www.rochestersbdc.com)

Regional Subcenters:

Albert Lea Business Development Center  
P.O. Box 370  
2610 Y.H. Hanson Avenue  
Albert Lea, MN 56007  
(507) 373-3930  
[www.albdc.com/sbdc.html](http://www.albdc.com/sbdc.html)

Southeastern MN Development Corporation  
1500 South U.S. Hwy 52  
Chatfield, MN 55923  
(507) 867-3164

Rice County Small Business Development Center  
Faribault Area Chamber of Commerce  
530 Wilson Avenue  
Faribault, MN 55021  
(507) 334-4381  
[www.faribaultmn.org/business/new\\_business.html](http://www.faribaultmn.org/business/new_business.html)

Owatonna Incubator, Inc.  
P.O. Box 505  
1065 SW 24th Avenue  
Owatonna, MN 55060  
(507) 451-0517  
[www.owatonnaincubator.com](http://www.owatonnaincubator.com)

Minnesota State College Southeast Technical  
1250 Homer Rd.  
Winona, MN 55987  
(507) 453-2740

**Central MnSBDC**  
St. Cloud State University  
720 Fourth Ave S.  
St. Cloud, MN 56301  
(320) 308-4842  
[www.stcloudstate.edu/sbdc/](http://www.stcloudstate.edu/sbdc/)

**Southwest MnSBDC**  
Southwest Minnesota State University  
1501 State Street – ST 201  
Marshall, MN 56258  
(507) 537-7386  
(800) 642-0684, ext. 7386  
[www.smsu.edu/sbdc/](http://www.smsu.edu/sbdc/)

**Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU)**  
Minnesota Small Business Management Education Program  
Program instructors target instruction to areas that will enable entrepreneurs meet their business and family goals.  
Office of the Chancellor  
Wells Fargo Place  
30 7th Street East, Suite 350  
Saint Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 297-1484  
[www.mgt.org/sbm/index.htm](http://www.mgt.org/sbm/index.htm)

**University of Minnesota**  
Office for Business & Community Economic Development  
Programs to promote business opportunities and job expansion for businesses owned by women, people of color, and people with disabilities.  
University of Minnesota  
2221 University Avenue SE, Suite 136  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414  
(612) 624-0530  
[www.ced.umn.edu/](http://www.ced.umn.edu/)

**Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP)**  
Program at the University of Minnesota that provides free technical assistance to Minnesota businesses to develop and implement industry tailored solutions that maximize resource efficiency, prevent pollution and reduce use and cost.  
McNamara Alumni Center  
University of Minnesota Gateway Center  
200 Oak St. SE, Suite 350  
Minneapolis, MN 55455-2008  
(612) 624-1300  
(800) 247-0015  
[www.mntap.umn.edu](http://www.mntap.umn.edu)

Minnesota Material Exchange  
[www.mnexchange.org/](http://www.mnexchange.org/)

University of Minnesota Extension Service  
Business Retention and Expansion Program  
Program is designed to help a community's existing businesses.  
460 Coffey Hall  
1420 Eckles Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55108-6068  
(612) 625-6246  
[www.bre.umn.edu](http://www.bre.umn.edu)

## **MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE FOR MINORITY BUSINESSES**

African Development Center (ADC) of Minnesota  
1931 South 5th St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55454  
(612) 333-4772  
(877) 232-4775  
[www.adcmnnesota.org](http://www.adcmnnesota.org)

ADC Mankato  
1961 Premier Drive, Suite 240  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 388-1363

American Indian Economic Development Fund  
831 Como Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55103  
(651) 917-0819  
[www.aiedfloans.org/](http://www.aiedfloans.org/)

American Indian Neighborhood Development Corporation (AINDC)  
1113 E. Franklin Ave.  
Mpls., MN 55404  
(612) 870-7555  
[www.aindc.com/](http://www.aindc.com/)

Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Minnesota  
1821 University Avenue West, Suite S-339  
St. Paul, MN 55401  
(651) 642-1331  
[www.AsianAmericanMN.com](http://www.AsianAmericanMN.com)

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Minnesota (HCCM)  
3000 North 2nd Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55411  
(612) 312-1692  
[www.hispanicmn.org](http://www.hispanicmn.org)

Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC)  
Plaza Verde  
1516 East Lake Street, Suite 201  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
(612) 724-5332  
[www.ledc-mn.org](http://www.ledc-mn.org)

Metropolitan Economic Development Association (MEDA)  
250 2nd Avenue S., Suite 106  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 332-6332  
[www.meda.net](http://www.meda.net)

Minnesota American Indian Chamber of Commerce  
1821 University Avenue West, Suite N180  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 789-6533  
[www.maicc.org](http://www.maicc.org)

Minnesota Hmong Chamber of Commerce  
1394 Jackson St., Suite 210  
St. Paul, MN 55117  
(651) 645-6777  
[www.hmongchamber.com](http://www.hmongchamber.com)

Minnesota Minority Supplier Development Council  
(MMSDC)  
111 3rd Avenue South, Suite 240  
Minneapolis MN 55401  
(612) 465-8881  
<http://msdc.adaptone.com/mmsdc/>

Minnesota Tribal Business Information Center (TBIC)  
Minnesota Native American Business Development  
Center  
P.O. Box 217  
Cass Lake, MN 56633  
(218) 335-8583  
[www.nabdc.org](http://www.nabdc.org)

Riverview Economic Development Association  
(REDA)  
176 Cesar Chavez Street  
St. Paul, MN 55107  
(651) 222-6347  
[www.districtdelsol.com](http://www.districtdelsol.com)

St. Paul  
Minority Business Development and Retention  
15 West Kellogg Blvd.  
280 City Hall/Court House  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 266-8966  
[www.stpaul.gov/index.asp?nid=372](http://www.stpaul.gov/index.asp?nid=372)

Office for Business & Community Economic  
Development  
Management Assistance Program (MAP)  
University of Minnesota  
2221 University Avenue SE, Suite 136  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
(612) 624-0530  
[www.ced.umn.edu/Applications.html](http://www.ced.umn.edu/Applications.html)

#### **Women's Business Centers (WBCs)**

WomenVenture  
2324 University Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
(651) 646-3808  
(866) 646-3808  
[www.womenventure.org](http://www.womenventure.org)

Northeast Entrepreneur Fund, Inc.  
424 W. Superior St., Suite 100  
Virginia, MN 55792  
(218) 623-5731  
[www.entrepreneurfund.org/WBN.htm](http://www.entrepreneurfund.org/WBN.htm)

#### **PROCUREMENT / PURCHASING / CERTIFICATION ASSISTANCE**

##### **Federal Contacts**

Fed Biz Opps (Federal Business Opportunities)  
[fbo.gov](http://fbo.gov)  
The single government point-of-entry  
(GPE) for Federal government procurement  
opportunities over \$25,000.  
Federal Service Desk  
(866) 606-8220

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Minority Business Development Agency  
(MBDA)  
The MBDA is a federal agency created  
specifically to foster the establishment and  
growth of minority-owned businesses in  
America.  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230  
(888) 324-1551  
[www.mbd.gov/](http://www.mbd.gov/)

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)  
Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP)  
OSBP administers DOL's responsibility to  
ensure procurement opportunities for small  
businesses, small disadvantaged businesses,  
women-owned small businesses, HUBZone  
businesses, and businesses owned by service-  
disabled veterans.  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Room C-2318  
Washington, DC 20210  
(202) 693-6460  
(866) 487-2365  
[www.dol.gov/osbp/welcome.htm](http://www.dol.gov/osbp/welcome.htm)

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)  
Government Contracting and Business  
Development (GCBD)  
GCBD helps small, disadvantaged, and  
women-owned businesses build their  
business potential and provide  
procurement assistance for small  
businesses.  
[www.sba.gov/gcbd/](http://www.sba.gov/gcbd/)

8(a) and Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB)  
Certification  
<https://sba8a.symlicity.com/applicants/guide>

HUBZone Program Certification  
<https://eweb1.sba.gov/hubzone/internet/>

## State Contacts

Minnesota Department of Administration,  
Materials Management Division  
112 Administration Building  
50 Sherburne Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
Customer and Vendor Services Help line  
(651) 296-2600  
(800) 627-3529 (Minnesota Relay Service)  
[www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us](http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us)

### WebVen

Minnesota's online vendor registration system.  
[www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/webven/](http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/webven/)

Minnesota Unified Certification Program (Mn/UCP)  
Mn/UCP is made up of the Minnesota  
Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT),  
Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) and  
Metropolitan Council. A one-stop shop for  
certification of Disadvantaged Business  
Enterprises (DBEs) on U.S. Department of  
Transportation contracts in Minnesota.

Office of Civil Rights  
MN Department of Transportation, M.S. 170  
395 John Ireland Boulevard  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899  
(651) 366-3073  
(800) 657-3774  
(800) 627-3529 (TTY, Voice, ASCII)

## Local Contacts

Central Certification Program (CERT)  
Hennepin County, City of Minneapolis, Ramsey  
County, and City of Saint Paul, are collaboratively  
sponsoring a one-stop shop for businesses for  
certification and participation in the public  
contracting process.  
c/o Contract and Analysis Services  
280 City Hall/Courthouse  
15 W. Kellogg Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 266-8900  
[www.govcontracts.org](http://www.govcontracts.org)

Hennepin County  
Purchasing & Contract Services Division  
A-2205 Government Center  
Minneapolis, MN 55487-0225  
(612) 348-3181  
[www.co.hennepin.mn.us](http://www.co.hennepin.mn.us)

Minneapolis  
Purchasing/Procurement Division  
Towle Building  
330 2nd Ave S., Suite 552  
Mpls., MN 55401  
(612) 673-2500  
[www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/procurement](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/procurement)

St. Paul / Ramsey County  
Contract and Analysis Services  
280 City Hall/Courthouse  
15 W. Kellogg Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 266-8900  
[www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/index.asp?nid=220](http://www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/index.asp?nid=220)

Anoka County Purchasing  
Government Center, Room 300  
2100 3rd Avenue  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 323-5300  
[www.anokacounty.us/v1\\_departments/div-finance-cent-serv/dept-fmcs/purchasing/index.asp](http://www.anokacounty.us/v1_departments/div-finance-cent-serv/dept-fmcs/purchasing/index.asp)

Bloomington  
Finance Department  
Purchasing Section  
1800 W. Old Shakopee Road  
Bloomington, MN 55431-3027  
(952) 563-8790  
[www.ci.bloomington.mn.us/cityhall/dept/finance/purchase/purchase.htm](http://www.ci.bloomington.mn.us/cityhall/dept/finance/purchase/purchase.htm)

Duluth  
Purchasing Department  
Room 100, 411 W. 1st Street  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 730-5340  
[www.ci.duluth.mn.gov/purchasing/index.cfm](http://www.ci.duluth.mn.gov/purchasing/index.cfm)

Olmsted County Purchasing  
2122 Campus Dr. SE, Suite 200  
Rochester, MN 55904  
(507) 328-7085  
[www.co.olmsted.mn.us/departments/purchasing/index.asp](http://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/departments/purchasing/index.asp)

St. Louis County Purchasing  
Government Services Center  
320 W. 2nd Street, Room 709  
Duluth, MN 55802-1404  
(218) 726-2666  
[www.co.st-louis.mn.us/Purchasing/Purchasing.html](http://www.co.st-louis.mn.us/Purchasing/Purchasing.html)

Stearns County  
Purchasing Department  
705 Courthouse Square, Room 47  
St. Cloud, MN 56303-4701  
(320) 656-3607  
[www.co.stearns.mn.us/801.htm](http://www.co.stearns.mn.us/801.htm)

Note: This is only a partial listing of city and county offices. Further information can be obtained by contacting individual city and county offices.

## Metropolitan Agencies

Center for Women Entrepreneurs and  
Entrepreneurship Education / Women's Business  
Enterprise National Council (WBENC)  
Metropolitan State University  
College of Management  
1501 Hennepin Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55403-1897  
(612) 659-7287  
[www.metrostate.edu/com/cwe](http://www.metrostate.edu/com/cwe)

WBENC Women's Business Enterprise (WBE)  
Certification  
(612) 781-0455  
[www.wbenc.org](http://www.wbenc.org)

Metropolitan Council  
Office of Diversity  
390 Robert St. N.  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 602-1769  
[www.metrocouncil.org/doing\\_business/  
overview.htm](http://www.metrocouncil.org/doing_business/overview.htm)

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)  
Program  
[www.metrocouncil.org/doing\\_business/dbeinfo.  
htm](http://www.metrocouncil.org/doing_business/dbeinfo.htm)

Women and Minority Business Enterprise  
(WMBE) & Small Business in Rural Areas  
(SBRA) Program  
[www.metrocouncil.org/doing\\_business/WMBE\\_  
SBRA.htm](http://www.metrocouncil.org/doing_business/WMBE_SBRA.htm)

Metropolitan Economic Development Association  
(MEDA)  
MEDA's Business Certification Assistance Service  
advises and assists clients in the identification of  
market opportunities as well as the preparation  
and proper submission of applications,  
certifications, and registrations necessary to do  
business with government entities.  
250 2nd Ave. So., Suite 106  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 259-6581  
[www.meda.net](http://www.meda.net)

Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)  
(612) 259-6565  
[www.ptac-meda.net](http://www.ptac-meda.net)

Minnesota Unified Certification Program (Mn/UCP)  
Mn/UCP is made up of the Minnesota  
Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT),  
Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) and  
Metropolitan Council. A one-stop shop for  
certification of Disadvantaged Business  
Enterprises (DBEs) on U.S. Department of  
Transportation contracts in Minnesota.  
MN Department of Transportation  
Office of Civil Rights  
395 John Ireland Boulevard M.S. 170  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899  
(651) 366-3073  
(800) 657-3774  
(800) 627-3529 (TTY, Voice, ASCII)  
[www.dot.state.mn.us/eeocm/  
dbecertificationprocess.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/eeocm/dbecertificationprocess.html)

## Minority Supplier Assistance

Metropolitan Economic Development Association  
(MEDA)  
MEDA's Business Certification Assistance Service  
advises and assists clients in the identification of  
market opportunities as well as the preparation  
and proper submission of applications,  
certifications, and registrations necessary to do  
business with government entities.  
250 2nd Ave. So., Suite 106  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 259-6581  
[www.meda.net](http://www.meda.net)

Minnesota Minority Supplier Development Council  
(MMSDC)  
111 3rd Avenue South, Suite 240  
Minneapolis MN 55401  
(612) 465-8881  
<http://msdc.adaptone.com/mmsdc/>

## TAX AND ACCOUNTING ASSISTANCE

Minnesota Association of Public Accountants  
1000 Westgate Dr., Suite 252  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
(651) 290-6289  
(800) 501-4521  
[www.mapa-mn.com](http://www.mapa-mn.com)

Minnesota Society of Certified Public Accountants  
1650 W. 82nd St., Suite 600  
Bloomington, MN 55431  
(952) 831-2707  
(800) 331-4288  
[www.mncpa.org](http://www.mncpa.org)

Minnesota Society of Enrolled Agents  
(763) 670-4529  
[www.mnsea.org](http://www.mnsea.org)

AccountAbility Minnesota  
2610 University Avenue W., Suite 450  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
(651) 287-0187  
[www.accountabilitymn.org](http://www.accountabilitymn.org)

Olmsted County  
License Bureau  
151 4 St SE  
Rochester MN 55904  
(507) 328-7660  
[www.co.olmsted.mn.us/departments/licensing/index.asp](http://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/departments/licensing/index.asp)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Assistance [www.DisabilityInfo.gov](http://www.DisabilityInfo.gov)

Provides easy access to comprehensive disability-related information and resources.

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) - Great Lakes ADA Center  
Provides information, materials, technical assistance and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
MC 728 Room 405  
1640 W. Roosevelt Road  
Chicago, IL 60608  
(800) 949-4232  
[www.adagreatlakes.org](http://www.adagreatlakes.org)

ADA Minnesota  
Resource providing Minnesota citizens with disabilities, businesses, communities, government, universities and colleges assistance in implementing the ADA.  
1600 University Ave. W., Suite 16  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 603-2015 (Voice)  
(651) 603-2001 (TTY)  
(888) 630-9793  
[www.adaminnesota.org/](http://www.adaminnesota.org/)

### County Licensing Contacts

Anoka County  
Government Center  
Vital Statistics  
325 E. Main St., Suite 120  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 323-5201

Clay County  
Auditor  
Clay County Courthouse 2nd Floor  
807 11th Street North  
Moorhead, MN 56560  
(218) 299.5006

Hennepin County  
Government Center  
300 South Sixth Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55497  
(612) 348-8240  
[www.co.hennepin.mn.us/](http://www.co.hennepin.mn.us/)

Ramsey County  
8 Fourth Street E.  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 266-8500  
[www.co.ramsey.mn.us/sitemap/License\\_Permits.htm](http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/sitemap/License_Permits.htm)

Sherburne County  
Government Center  
13880 Highway 10  
13880 Business Center Drive  
Elk River, MN 55330  
(763) 241-2861  
(800) 438-0576  
[www.co.sherburne.mn.us/auditor/licenses/](http://www.co.sherburne.mn.us/auditor/licenses/)

Stearns County  
705 Courthouse Square, Room 148  
St. Cloud, MN 56303  
(320) 656-3900  
[www.co.stearns.mn.us/615.htm](http://www.co.stearns.mn.us/615.htm)

St. Louis County  
Auditor/Treasurer's Office  
Miller Hill Mall  
1600 Miller Trunk Highway  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 279-2520  
[www.stlouiscounty.org/slcportal/](http://www.stlouiscounty.org/slcportal/)

Washington County  
Property Records and Taxpayer Services Dept.  
14949 62nd Street North  
Stillwater, MN 55082  
(651) 430-6180  
[www.co.washington.mn.us/info\\_for\\_residents/prts/service\\_license\\_centers/](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/info_for_residents/prts/service_license_centers/)

### City Licensing Contacts

Bloomington  
City Clerk's Office  
1800 W. Old Shakopee Road  
Bloomington, MN 55431-3027  
(952) 563-8728  
[www.ci.bloomington.mn.us/cityhall/dept/techserv/clerk/license/license.htm](http://www.ci.bloomington.mn.us/cityhall/dept/techserv/clerk/license/license.htm)

Brooklyn Park  
5200 85th Ave. N.  
Brooklyn Park, MN 55443  
(763) 493-8182  
[https://c2g.brooklynpark.org/Click2GovOL/Index.jsp](http://https://c2g.brooklynpark.org/Click2GovOL/Index.jsp)

Coon Rapids  
City Clerk  
11155 Robinson Drive  
Coon Rapids, MN 55433  
(763) 767-6432  
[www.ci.coon-rapids.mn.us/Clerk/clerkhome.htm](http://www.ci.coon-rapids.mn.us/Clerk/clerkhome.htm)

Duluth  
City Clerk's Office  
330 City Hall, 411 West First Street  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 730-5500  
[www.ci.duluth.mn.us/city/permits](http://www.ci.duluth.mn.us/city/permits)

Eagan  
3830 Pilot Knob Road  
Eagan, MN 55122  
(651) 675-5013  
[www.cityofeagan.com/live/licensing.asp?menu=2124](http://www.cityofeagan.com/live/licensing.asp?menu=2124)

Eden Prairie  
8080 Mitchell Road  
Eden Prairie, MN 55344  
(952) 949-8300  
[www.edenprairie.org/vCurrent/live/article.asp?r=1445](http://www.edenprairie.org/vCurrent/live/article.asp?r=1445)

Minneapolis  
City Hall, Room 1C  
350 South Fifth Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1391  
(612) 673-2080  
[www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/business-licensing/](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/business-licensing/)

Plymouth  
3400 Plymouth Blvd.  
Plymouth, MN 55447-1482  
(763) 509-5000  
(763) 509-5065 (TDD)  
[www2.ci.plymouth.mn.us](http://www2.ci.plymouth.mn.us)

Rochester  
City Clerk's Office  
201 4th Street S.E.  
Rochester, MN 55904  
(507) 328-2900  
[www.ci.rochester.mn.us/departments/cityclerk/licenses/index.asp](http://www.ci.rochester.mn.us/departments/cityclerk/licenses/index.asp)

St. Cloud  
City Hall  
400 2nd St. S.  
St. Cloud, MN 56301  
(320) 255-7200  
[www.ci.stcloud.mn.us](http://www.ci.stcloud.mn.us)

St. Paul  
Department of Safety & Inspections  
375 Jackson Street, Suite 220  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(651) 266-9090  
[www.stpaul.gov/index.asp?NID=774](http://www.stpaul.gov/index.asp?NID=774)

\*This is only a partial listing of the larger cities business licensing offices.

#### Other

##### **Lawmoose.com**

Online legal reference library, online search engine focused on law related sites in Minnesota, and a Minnesota legal periodical index.

##### **Metro Independent Business Alliance (IBA)**

Membership organization works to promote locally owned, independent businesses in the Metropolitan area.  
3100 Hennepin Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
(651) 387-0738  
[www.metroiba.org](http://www.metroiba.org)

##### **Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (MCN)**

MCN through its web site, resource publications, workshops and events, cost-saving programs and advocacy, works to inform, individual nonprofits and the nonprofit sector. promote, connect and strengthen nonprofits.  
2314 University Ave. #20  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
(651) 642-1904  
(800) 289-1904  
[www.mncn.org](http://www.mncn.org)







# **DIRECTORY OF LICENSES AND PERMITS**



# DIRECTORY OF LICENSES AND PERMITS

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*Expanded licenses and permits listings are available on the License Minnesota website at [www.license.mn.gov](http://www.license.mn.gov)*

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Aboveground Storage Tank Installations</b> Aboveground Storage Tanks (see TANKS)		
<b>Abstracter</b>		
Abstracter	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319 (800) 657-3978
<b>Accountants</b>		
Certified Public Accountant (CPA) Registered Accounting Practitioner (RAP)	Accountancy, Minnesota State Board of	(651) 296-7938
<b>Acupuncture</b>		
Acupuncture Registration Acupuncture Practitioner	Chiropractic Examiners, Minnesota Board of Medical Practice, Minnesota State Board of	(651) 201-2850 (612) 617-2130
<b>Adjuster</b> (see INSURANCE)		
<b>Adoption</b>		
Private Child Caring or Placing Agency License (Rule 4)	Human Services, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3971
<b>Advertising Devices, Signs</b>		
Advertising Device Permit	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-4671
<b>Agent</b> (see ATHLETE AGENT)		
<b>Air Emissions/Quality</b>		
Hot Mix Asphalt Permit Individual Part 70 Operating Permit or State Operating Permit Non-Metallic Mineral Processing General Permit Registration Permits (Options A, B, C, or D) Capped Permits for Air Emission Facilities (Option 1 or 2) Feedlot Construction Short-Form Permit Feedlot Interim Permit Feedlot NPDES/SDS Permit (General and Individual) Open Lot Agreement (OLA) State Disposal System Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota     Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 296-6143 (800) 657-3938     (651) 282-6143 (651) 282-6300 (800) 657-3938
<b>Aircraft</b>		
Aircraft Registration Aircraft Dealer's License	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 234-7201 (651) 234-7232
<b>Airports</b>		
Airport License: Personal-Use Airport Airport License: Private Airport Airport License: Public Airport Commercial Aviation Operators License	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 234-7232
<b>Alarm and Communication Contractors</b>		
Power Limited Technician Technology Systems Contractor	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5064
<b>Alcohol</b> (see LIQUOR)		
Permit to Purchase or Possess Ethyl Alcohol	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7507

<b><u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u></b>	<b><u>DEPARTMENT</u></b>	<b><u>CONTACT</u></b>
<b>Alcohol and Drug Treatment Providers</b> Chemical Dependency Detoxification Programs (Rule 32) Chemical Dependency Treatment (Non-Detox) Programs (Rule 31)	Human Services, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3971
<b>Alcoholism</b> Alcohol and Drug Counselor License	Behavioral Health and Therapy, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2758
<b>All Terrain Vehicles</b> (see UTILITY VEHICLES)		
<b>Alternative Health Care</b> Unlicensed Complementary and Alternative Health Care Practitioners Minnesota Doula Registry Acupuncture Practitioner Naturopathic Doctor Registry	Health, Minnesota Dept. of  Medical Practice, Minnesota State Board of	(651) 201-3728  (612) 617-2130
<b>Ambulance Service</b> (see EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES)		
<b>Ammonia</b> Anhydrous Ammonia Storage System Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6275
<b>Animals</b> Livestock Dealer License Livestock Dealer's Agent License Livestock Market Agency License Livestock Meat Packing Company Agent License Livestock Meat Packing Company License Import Poultry Permit Poultry Dealer and Poultry Hatchery Permits Testing Agent Authorization Captive Cervidae (White-tailed Deer, Elk, Moose, etc.) Registration Feed Foodwaste to Animals License Kennel License (Dogs and Cats) License for Animal Dealer to Sell Impounded Cats or Dogs to Research Institutions Animal Exhibition Permit Bin Composting Permit Ecodrum or Dutch Composting Permit License to Procure Impounded Animals for Investigation or Instruction Livestock Auction Markets and Consignment Sales Permit Pet Food Processing Permit Rendering Plant Permit Endangered Species Permit Permit to Exhibit Captive Wildlife	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of  Animal Health, Minnesota Board of  Animal Health, Minnesota Board of  Animal Health, Minnesota Board of  Animal Health, Minnesota Board of  Animal Health, Minnesota Board of  Animal Health, Minnesota Board of  Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6509  (320) 231-5170  (651) 201-6804  (651) 201-6808  (651) 201-6809 (651) 296-2942  (651) 259-5090 (651) 772-7906
<b>Apiaries</b> Apiary Certificate of Inspection	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(320) 239-4725
<b>Appraiser</b> Real Estate Appraiser	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319 (800) 657-3978
<b>Apprenticeship</b> Apprenticeship Registration	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5090 (800) 342-5354

<b><u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u></b>	<b><u>DEPARTMENT</u></b>	<b><u>CONTACT</u></b>
<b>Aquaculture</b> Aquaculture License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
<b>Archaeology</b> Archaeological Site Permit	Office of the State Archaeologist, Minnesota	(612) 725-2411
<b>Architecture</b> Architect	Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and Interior Design, Minnesota Board of	(651) 296-2388
<b>Asbestos</b> Asbestos Contractor License Asbestos Inspector Certificate Asbestos Management Planner Certificate Asbestos Project Designer Certificate Asbestos Site Supervisor Certificate Asbestos Training Course Permit Asbestos Worker Certificate Notification of Asbestos-Related Work and Amendments	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4620
<b>Asphalt</b> (see AIR QUALITY, WATER QUALITY)		
<b>Assessors</b> Assessor Certification: Various Classes	Assessors, Minnesota State Board	(651) 296-3010
<b>Athlete Agent</b> Athlete Agent Registration	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319 (800) 657-3978
<b>Athletic Trainer</b> Athletic Trainer (registration)	Medical Practice, Minnesota State Board of	(612) 617-2130
<b>Attorney</b> Attorney Registration	Attorney Registration, Office of (Minnesota Supreme Court)	(651) 296-2254
<b>Auctioneer</b> Auctioneer	Contact local County Auditor office.	
<b>Audiology</b> Audiologist License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-3726
<b>Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs)</b> Electronic Financial Terminal Authorization (Nonfinancial Institutions) Electronic Financial Terminal Notification (State-Chartered Financial Institutions)	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2715
<b>Aviation</b> Aircraft Registration Aircraft Dealer's License Airport License: Personal-Use Airport Airport License: Private Airport Airport License: Public Airport Commercial Aviation Operators License	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 234-7201 (651) 234-7232
<b>Bailbondsmen</b> Insurance Agent (Line item for Bailbondsmen)	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319 (800) 657-3978

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Bait</b>		
Exporting Minnow Dealer	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
Minnow Dealer's License		
Minnow Retailer		
Nonresident License to Purchase, Possess and Transport Frogs		
Nonresident Minnow Hauler License		
Resident Frog Dealer (Take, Possess, Transport, Sell)		
Resident License to Purchase, Possess and Transport Frogs		
<b>Banking</b> (see also ATMs, COMMERCIAL MORTGAGE BROKERING, CREDIT UNIONS, CURRENCY EXCHANGE, DEBT PRORATING AGENCY, INSURANCE, LOANS (NON-BANK LENDERS), MORTGAGE ORIGINATOR OR SERVICER, SAFE DEPOSIT COMPANY)		
Electronic Funds Transmission (EFT) Facility	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2135
Electronic Financial Terminal Authorization (Nonfinancial Institutions)	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2715
Capital Stock Savings Bank	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4867
Detached Banking Facility		
Interstate Bank Mergers and Branching		
Interstate Trust-Trust Office or Representative Trust Office		
Minnesota Bank or Trust Company Mergers		
Purchase and Assumption Application		
State Bank Charter or Trust Company Charter or Industrial Loan & Thrift Company With Deposit-Taking Powers		
State Bank Trust Authority		
Trust Service Office Authority		
<b>Barbering</b>		
Barbers and Barbershops: Various Classes	Barber Examiners, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2820
Hair Braiding Registration	Cosmetology Examiners, MN Board of	(651) 201-2742
<b>Bed and Breakfast</b>		
Bed and Breakfast Registration (to serve liquor)	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7510
Food, Beverage and Lodging License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4505 (651) 201-4500
<b>Bingo</b> (see GAMBLING)		
<b>Boat Dealer</b>		
Boat Dealer License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2316 (800) 285-2000
<b>Boats for Hire</b>		
Annual Boat Operating Permit	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5544 (800) 342-5354
Tour Boat Liquor License	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7506
<b>Boilers/Boiler Operating Engineer</b>		
Boiler Engineer: Ten Classes	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5059 (800) 342-5354
Boilers and Pressure Vessel Registration	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5137 (800) 342-5354
<b>Boxing</b>		
Boxing: Various licenses	Combative Sports Commission, Minnesota	(763) 792-7354
<b>Brokers</b> (see also MOTOR VEHICLE DEALER)		
Food Broker License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6627
Securities Agent, Securities Broker-Dealer, Investment Advisor	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2283
Residential Mortgage Originator or Servicer License	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2297

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Brokers (continued)</b> (see also MOTOR VEHICLE DEALER)		
Real Estate Limited Broker	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319
Real Estate Salesperson; Real Estate Broker		(800) 657-3978
Viatical Settlement Broker	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-7057
Brokers License (liquor)	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7506
Motor Vehicle Dealers License	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2977
<b>NOTE:</b> For the purposes of the motor vehicle dealers license, a "Dealer" includes licensed new motor vehicle dealers, used motor vehicle dealers, motor vehicle brokers, wholesalers, auctioneers, lessors of new or used motor vehicles, scrap metal processors, used vehicle parts dealers, and salvage pools.		
<b>Building Mover</b>		
Building Mover License	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3680
<b>Building Official</b>		
Accessibility Specialist	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Department of	(651) 284-5865
Certified Building Official		
Certified Building Official Limited		
<b>Burning</b>		
Open Burning Permit	Contact the local city government, fire department, local forestry office or fire warden.	
<b>Bus Shelters</b>		
Bus Shelter Permit	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 582-1443
<b>Camps</b>		
Youth Camp Permit	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4500
Recreational Camping Area License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4510
<b>Camps and Campgrounds</b>		
Membership Campground Agent Licensing	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319
		(800) 657-3978
Membership Campground Registration	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6332
<b>Carriers</b> (see also COURIER and MOTOR CARRIER)		
Common Carrier License	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7506
Common Carrier License - Intoxicating or 3.2%		
Common Carrier License (and Sunday)		
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-5029
Limousine Service Permit	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3643
Passenger Carrier Registration (Intrastate)	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3680
Special Transportaion Certificate (STS)	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3717
Unified Carrier Registration Agreement		
<b>Catering</b>		
Caterer's Permit (to serve liquor)	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7506
Food, Beverage and Lodging License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4505
		(651) 201-4500
<b>Charitable Organizations</b>		
Charitable Organizations Registration	Attorney General, Minnesota Office of	(651) 296-6172
Charitable Trusts	Attorney General, Minnesota Office of	(651) 296-8019
Professional Fundraiser Registration		
<b>Check-Cashing Company</b>		
Currency Exchange License	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2297
<b>Cheese</b>		
Cultured Dairy Food / Farmstead Cheese Permit 1	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6062



<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Chemical Dependency</b>		
Alcohol and Drug Counselor License	Behavioral Health and Therapy,	(651) 617-2244
Chemical Dependency Detoxification Programs (Rule 32)	Minnesota Board of	
Chemical Dependency for Treatment Programs (Rule 31)	Human Services, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3971
<b>Chemigation</b>		
Chemigation Permit & Chemigation Substantial Alteration Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6276
<b>Child Care</b>		
Child Care Center License (Rule 3)	Human Services, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3971
Family Child Care and Group Family Child Care License (Rule 2)	Contact County Social Services or	
In-home Child Care	Human Services Dept.	
<b>Child Placement</b>		
Private Child Caring or Placing Agency License (Rule 4)	Human Services, Minnesota	(651) 296-3971
<b>Chiropractic</b>		
Accupuncture Registration	Chiropractic Examiners, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2850
Animal Chiropractic Registration		
Doctor of Chiropractic		
Graduate Preceptor Registration (GPP)		
Independent Examiner Registration		
Professional Firm Registration		
<b>Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)</b>		
CFC Recyclers and CFC Recovery Equipment and Technician Certification	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	(800) 296-1996
<b>Cigarette</b>		
Unfair Cigarette Sales Act Fee	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2488
Cigarette & Tobacco Distributor & Subjobber Licenses	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-1882
<b>Clubs (Health, Social Referral, Buying Clubs)</b>		
Health, Social Referral, Buying Clubs Registration	Attorney General, Minnesota Office of	(651) 296-7575
<b>Collection Agency</b>		
Collection Agency and Debt Collector	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319
Collection Agency Certificate of Exemption		(800) 657-3978
<b>Combative Sports</b>		
Boxing: Various licenses	Combative Sports Commission,	(763) 792-7354
Mixed Martial Arts (MMA): Various licenses	Minnesota	
<b>Commercial Drivers</b>		
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-5029
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)		
Hazardous Materials Endorsement		
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)		
School Bus Driver Endorsement		
<b>Commercial Driver Training</b>		
Commercial Driver Training School License	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3966
<b>Commercial Mortgage Brokering</b>		
Real Estate Limited Broker	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319
		(800) 657-3978
<b>Communication Contractors</b>		
Power Limited Technician	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5064
Technology Systems Contractor		
<b>Complementary Health Care</b>		
Unlicensed Complementary and Alternative Health Care Practitioners	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-3728

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Composting</b>		
Bin Composting Permit	Animal Health, Minnesota Board of	(651) 296-2942
Ecodrum or Dutch Composting Permit		
Compost Facility Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 296-6300 (800) 657-3864
<b>Contractors</b>		
Residential Building Contractor / Remodeler	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5065
Independent Contractor Exemption Certificate	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5074
<b>Corporate Take-Overs</b>		
Corporate Take-Over Offers Registration	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-4051
<b>Cosmetologist</b>		
Cosmetologist Individual Licenses, Salons and Schools	Cosmetology Examiner, MN Board of	(651) 201-2742
Cosmetology School Surety Bond		
<b>Counselors</b>		
Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor License (LADC)	Behavioral Health and Therapy, Minnesota Board of	(612) 201-2758
Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC)	Behavioral Health and Therapy, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2760
Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)	Marriage and Family Therapy, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2220
Marriage and Family Therapist		
<b>Courier</b> (see also CARRIERS and MOTOR CARRIERS)		
Limousine Service Permit	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3643
Property Carrier Registration (Intrastate)	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3680
Unified Carrier Registration Agreement	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3717
<b>Crane</b>		
Crane Operator Certification	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5050
<b>Credit Services Organization</b>		
Credit Services Organization Registration	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 282-9855
<b>Credit Unions</b>		
Credit Union Certificate of Organization	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2297
<b>Currency Exchange</b>		
Currency Exchange License	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2297
<b>Dairy</b>		
Cultured Dairy Food/Farmstead Cheese Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6062
Dairy Plant License		
Dairy Transfer Station		
Grade A Milk Production Permit		
Milk and Cream Buyer and Tester License		
<b>Day Care / Day Services</b>		
Adult Day Services Centers License (Rule 223)	Human Services, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3971
Child Care Center License (Rule 3)		
Adult Foster Care License (Rule 203)	Contact County Social Services or County Human Services Department	
Family Adult Day Services		
Family Child Care and Group Family Child Care License (Rule 2)		
In-home Child Care		
<b>Debt Collection</b>		
Collection Agency and Debt Collector	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319
Collection Agency Certificate of Exemption		(800) 657-3978

<b><u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u></b>	<b><u>DEPARTMENT</u></b>	<b><u>CONTACT</u></b>
<b>Debt Prorating Agency</b> Debt Management Services Provider Registration	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319
<b>Dentistry</b> Dentist; Dental Hygienist; Dental Assistant	Dentistry, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2250 (888) 240-4762
<b>Deputy Registrar</b> Deputy Registrar Appointment	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 282-6060
<b>Detectives</b> (see PRIVATE DETECTIVES)		
<b>Dietitians</b> Dietitian License	Dietetics & Nutrition Practice, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2764
<b>Doctors</b> Physician (Medical Doctor and Doctor of Osteopathy)	Medical Practice, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2130
<b>Drainage</b> Drainage Permit	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-4638
<b>Drive-Away In Transit</b> Minnesota Drive-Away In Transit (Motor Carriers)	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2977
<b>Driver Education</b> Driver Education Program	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7625
<b>Driver Training</b> Commercial Driver Training School License	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3966
<b>Driveways</b> Access Driveway Permit	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-4668
<b>Drugs</b> (Human and Veterinary) Controlled Substance Researcher Drug Manufacturing License Drug Wholesaler License Medical Gas Distributor Pharmacist License Pharmacy License Pharmacy Technician License	Pharmacy, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2825
<b>Electric High Voltage Transmission Lines</b> Route Permit	Public Utilities Commission, Minnesota	(651) 201-2255
<b>Electricians</b> Electrical Contractor Class A Electrical Contractor Class B Electrical Installer Class A Electrical Installer Class B Journeyman Electrician Class A Lineman Maintenance Electrician Master Electrician Class A Power Limited Technician Technology Systems Contractor Unlicensed Unlicensed Individual (Electrical Worker, Elevator Constructor, Power Limited Technician) Registration	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5064            (651) 284-5084

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Elevators</b>		
Elevator Constructor	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5064
Elevator Contractor		
Master Elevator Constructor		
<b>Emergency Medical Services</b>		
Medical Response Unit	Emergency Medical Services	(651) 201-2804
Minnesota Ambulance Service License	Regulatory Board, Minnesota	
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Registration	Emergency Medical Services	(651) 201-2808
First Responder Registration	Regulatory Board, Minnesota	
<b>Employment Agency</b>		
Employee Leasing Company Registration	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-2669
Employee Leasing Company Registration Exemption		
Employment Agency License for Operation	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5005
<b>EMTs (see EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES)</b>		
<b>Energy Facilities</b>		
Certificate of Need	Public Utilities Commission, Minnesota	(651) 201-2236
Site Permit for Large Electric Generating Power Plant	Public Utilities Commission, Minnesota	(651) 201-2255
Site Permit for Large Wind Energy Conversion Systems		
<b>Engineering</b>		
Engineer-In-Training	Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying,	(651) 296-2388
Professional Engineer	Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and Interior Design, Minnesota Board of	
<b>Environmental Health Specialist/Sanitarian Registration</b>		
Environmental Health Specialist/Sanitarian Registration License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4502
<b>Explosives</b>		
Explosives License	State Fire Marshal	(651) 201-7204
Ownership or Possession of an Explosive Device or Incendiary Device Application	(MN Dept. of Public Safety)	
Explosives Permit	Contact the local Sheriff's Office or local Police Department	
<b>Family Therapy (see MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY)</b>		
<b>Feed, Commercial</b>		
Commercial Feed License (Includes Pet and Specialty Pet Foods)	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6176
<b>Feedlots</b>		
Feedlot Construction Short-Form Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 296-6300
Feedlot Interim Permit		(800) 657-3938
Feedlot NPDES/SDS Permit (General and Individual)		
Open Lot Agreement (OLA) Registration (Feedlot Program)		
State Disposal System Permit		
<b>Fertilizer</b>		
Bulk Pesticide/Fertilizer Storage Facility or Substantial Alteration Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6274
Agricultural Liming Material License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6275
Anhydrous Ammonia Storage System Permit		
Fertilizer License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6379
Soil and Plant Amendment Registration		
Specialty Fertilizer Registration		

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Financial Counselors/Planners</b>		
Financial Counselor or Planner Disclosure Document	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2283
<b>Fire Protection</b> (see FIREWORKS DISPLAY, SPRINKLER SYSTEMS, TANKS)		
<b>Firearms</b> (see also EXPLOSIVES)		
Firearms Training Certification	Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (MN Dept. of Public Safety)	(651) 793-1076
Federally Licensed Gun Dealers	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, U.S. National Licensing Center	(404) 417-2750 (866) 662-2750
<b>Fireworks Display</b>		
Fireworks Display Operator	State Fire Marshall	(651) 201-7204
Fireworks Display Permit -Indoor Displays	(MN Dept. of Public Safety)	
Fireworks Display Permit -Outdoors Displays		
<b>Fish</b>		
Fish Processing Operation Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6062
Fish Smoking Operation Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6630
Endangered Species Permit	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5090
Fishing Tournament Permit	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5200
Live Fish Transportation Importation and Stocking Permit		
Rough Fish Removal Permit		
Aquaculture License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
Commercial Netting of Fish		
Fish Packer License		
Fish Vendor		
International Fish Buyer - Retail		
International Fish Buyer - Wholesale		
Lake Superior Fish Buyer - Retail		
Lake Superior Fish Buyer - Wholesale		
Lake Superior Fishing Guide License		
<b>Fishing</b>		
Fishing Tournament Permit	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5200
<b>Food</b>		
Cultured Dairy Food / Farmstead Cheese Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6062
Dairy Plant License		
Dairy Transfer Station		
Fish Processing Operation Permit		
Food Broker License		
Meat Custom Processor Permit		
Milk and Cream Buyer and Tester License		
Non-Resident Frozen Food		
Retail Food Handler License		
Wholesale Food Handler License		
Wholesale Food Processor or Manufacturer License		
Livestock Meat Packing Company Agent License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6290
Livestock Meat Packing Company License		
Minnesota Grown Logo Labeling License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6510
Minnesota Wholesale Produce Dealer's License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6620
Meat Custom Processor Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6627
Fish Smoking Operation Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6630
Food Manager Certification	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4500
Food, Beverage and Lodging License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4505
Wild Rice Dealer License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
<b>Forest Products</b>		
Permit to Cut Timber	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5280
Special Product and Fuelwood Permits		

<b><u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u></b>	<b><u>DEPARTMENT</u></b>	<b><u>CONTACT</u></b>
<b>Foster Care</b>		
Adult Foster Care License (Rule 203)	Contact County Social Services or County Human Services Department	
Child Foster Care License		
Emergency Relative Foster Care License		
<b>Franchises</b>		
Franchise Offer or Sale Registration	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6328
<b>Frogs</b>		
Nonresident License to Purchase, Possess and Transport Frogs	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
Resident Frog Dealer (Take, Possess, Transport, Sell)		
Resident License to Purchase, Possess and Transport Frogs		
<b>Fuels</b>		
Refuse Derived Fuel Processing Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6300 (651) 296-0889 (800) 657-3938
Fuels Distributors License		
Special Fuel License		
<b>Fundraising</b>		
Charitable Organizations Registration	Attorney General, Minnesota Office of Attorney General, Minnesota Office of	(651) 296-6172 (651) 296-8019
Professional Fundraiser Registration		
<b>Funeral Directors</b>		
Mortuary Science (Mortician) License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-3829
<b>Funeral Establishments</b>		
Crematory License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-3829
Funeral Establishment License		
<b>Fur</b>		
Fur Farm Registration	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6062
Fur Tanning and Dressing License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
Game and Fur Farm License		
Nonresident Individual Fur Buyer		
Raw Fur Buyer		
Supplemental Raw Fur Dealer		
<b>Gambling / Gambling Equipment</b>		
Distributor's License	Gambling Control Board, Minnesota	(651) 639-4000
Excluded Bingo		
Excluded Raffle		
Exempt Permit		
Gambling Manager's License		
Manufacturer's License	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7529
Organization License		
Manufacture and/or Distributor of Gambling Devices		
Temporary Possession of a Gambling Device		
Gambling Tax Permit	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-1772 (800) 657-3605
<b>Game Farm</b>		
Game and Fur Farm License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
<b>Gas Storage Underground</b>		
Permit to Store Gas or Liquid Underground Using Natural Geologic Formations as a Storage Reservoir	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-0434
<b>Gasoline</b>		
Fuels Distributors License	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-0889

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Genetically Engineered Organisms</b>		
Agricultural Based Genetically Engineered Organism Release Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6277
Non-Agricultural Based Genetically Engineered Organism Release Permit	Environmental Quality Board (MN Dept. of Administration)	(651) 296-8253
<b>Geology</b>		
Geologist	Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and Interior Design, Minnesota Board of	(651) 296-2388
Geologist-In-Training		
<b>Ginseng, Buying and Selling</b>		
License to Buy or Sell Wild Ginseng	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
<b>Grain</b>		
Grain Bank License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6314
Grain Buying and Storing License		
<b>Grocery Stores</b> (see FOODS)		
<b>Group Homes</b>		
Boarding Care Home	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4101
Supervised Living Facility		
Board and Lodging License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-5000
<b>Guides</b>		
Bear Outfitters License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 355-0147
Master Bear Outfitters License		
<b>Hazardous Materials</b>		
Hazardous Material, Shipper's: Uniform Program Credential (UPR)	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3680
Hazardous Material, Transporters of: Uniform Program Credential (UPM, UPMM)		
Hazardous Material, Waste Transporter: Uniform Program Credential (UPW)		
<b>Hazardous Waste</b>		
Hazardous Waste Generator License	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 296-6300
Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage or Disposal Permit		(800) 657-3864
Hazardous Material, Waste Transporter: Uniform Program Credential (UPW)	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3680
<b>Health Care Facilities</b>		
Boarding Care Home	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4101
Freestanding Outpatient Surgical Centers		
Hospitals		
Board and Lodging License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-5000
Housing with Services Establishment Registration		
Mental Health Center and Clinic Certification (Rule 29)		
Mobile Health Evaluation and Screening Provider		
Nursing Homes		
Supervised Living Facility		
<b>Health Clubs</b> (see CLUBS)		
<b>Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO)</b>		
Accountable Provider Network License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-5164
Community Integrated Service Network License		(800) 657-3916
Health Maintenance Organization Certificate of Authority		

**REGULATED ACTIVITY****DEPARTMENT****CONTACT****Hearing Aids**Hearing Instrument Dispenser Certification  
Hearing Instrument Dispenser Trainee

Health, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 201-3724

**Herbs**

License to Buy or Sell Wild Ginseng

Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 297-4935

**Home Health Care**Home Care and Hospice  
Home Management Registration

Health, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 201-4101

**Hospice** (see HOME HEALTH CARE)**Hospitals**

Hospitals

Health, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 201-4101

**Hotels, Motels and Restaurants**Food Manager Certification  
Food, Beverage and Lodging License  
Bed and Breakfast Registration (to serve liquor)

Health, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 201-4500

Health, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 201-4505

Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 201-7510

**Hunting Guide** (see GUIDES)**Insurance**Insurance Premium Finance Company  
Catastrophe Adjuster  
Crop Hail Adjuster  
Insurance Adjuster  
Insurance Agency  
Insurance Agent  
Insurance Agent (Line item for Bailbondsmen)  
Third Party Administrator License  
Insurance Certificate of Authority  
Utilization Review Organization License  
Viatical Settlement Broker  
Viatical Settlement Investment Agent  
Viatical Settlement Provider License

Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 296-2297

Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 296-6319

(800) 657-3978

Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 296-8592

Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 296-9429

Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 297-3976

Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 297-7057

**Interior Designer**

Certified Interior Designer

Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying,  
Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and

(651) 296-2388

**Interpreter**

Spoken Language Health Care Interpreter Roster

Health, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 201-3731

**Invention Development Services**

Invention Development Service Disclosure

Attorney General, Minnesota Office of

(651) 296-3353

**Investment Advisor**Securities Agent, Securities Broker-Dealer,  
Investment Advisor

Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of

(651) 296-2283

**Jewelry** (see PRECIOUS METALS)**Junk Dealers, Pawnbrokers, and Second Hand Dealers**May be regulated by both city and county where  
business is located.

Contact local city or county government offices.

**Kennels** (see ANIMALS)



<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Laboratories</b>		
Environmental Laboratory Certification	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-5323
<b>Land Surveyor</b>		
Land Surveyor	Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying,	(651) 757-1520
Land Surveyor-In-Training	Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and Interior Design, Minnesota Board of	
<b>Lands (Public)</b>		
Permit for Removal of Stockpiled Iron-Bearing Material	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 231-8484
Registration of Exploratory Borer		
Permit to Cut Timber	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5280
Special Product and Fuelwood Permits		
Easement Across State-Owned Land Managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5404
Lease of State-Owned Land Managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources		
State Industrial Minerals Lease		
State Iron Ore/Taconite Lease		
State Metallic Minerals Lease		
State Peat Lease		
License to Cross Public Lands and Waters	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5959
Permit to Mine-Iron Ore and Taconite		
Permit to Mine-Nonferrous and Metallic Minerals		
Permit to Mine Peat		
Resource Management Access Permit	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6157
Special Events Permit		
<b>Landscape</b>		
Mn/DOT Landscape Specialist Certificate	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 336-3632
<b>Landscape Architect</b>		
Landscape Architect	Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and Interior Design, Minnesota Board of	(651) 296-2388
<b>Lawn Service Companies</b> (see FERTILIZER and PESTICIDES)		
<b>Lawyer</b>		
Attorney Registration	Lawyers Professional Responsibility, Office of (Minnesota Supreme Court)	(651) 296-2254
<b>Lead</b>		
Independent Examination Permit	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4620
Lead Firm Certificate		
Lead Inspector License		
Lead Interim Control Worker		
Lead Project Designer License		
Lead Risk Assessor License		
Lead Sampling Technician		
Lead Supervisor License		
Lead Training Course Permit		
Lead Worker License		
Notification of Lead Hazard Reduction Work and Amendments		
<b>Liming Material</b>		
Agricultural Liming Material License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6725
<b>Limousine Service</b> (see MOTOR CARRIER)		

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Liquor</b>		
Certification of an On Sale Sunday Liquor License	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of.	(651) 201-7504
Renewal of Liquor, Wine or Club License or 3.2 Licenses		
Retailers Identification Card		
Temporary On Sale Liquor License Permit		
Temporary One Day Consumption and Display Permit		
Brand Label Registraion	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7506
Brew Pub License		
Broker's License		
Common Carrier/Planes/Boats/Trains License (and Sunday)		
Common Carrier/Planes/Boats/Trains License		
Common Carrier/Planes/Boats/Trains License -Intoxicating or 3.2%		
Farm Winery License		
Malt Beverage Importer's License		
Manufacturer of Wine License		
Manufacturer's Warehouse Permit		
Manufacturer / Wholesaler Intoxicating Liquor Branch License		
Manufacturer / Wholesaler Intoxicating Liquor License		
Manufacturer's Warehouse Permit		
Micro Brewery License		
Minnesota Brewer's License		
Representative or Salesman Identification Card		
Tour Boat Liquor License		
Wholesaler of 3.2% Malt Liquor		
Wine and Distilled Spirits Importers License		
Certification On or Off Sale 3.2% Liquor License	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7507
Consumption and Display (Set up) Permit		
Optional 2 AM Permit		
Permit to Purchase or Possess Ethyl Alcohol		
Bed and Breakfast Registration	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-7510
Beer Keg Registration		
Caterer's Permit with Alcohol		
Club On Sale Liquor License		
County On Sale Intoxicating Liquor License		
Off Sale Liquor License		
On Sale Wine License		
<b>Livestock</b>		
Livestock Dealer License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6509
Livestock Dealer's Agent License		
Livestock Market Agency License		
Livestock Meat Packing Company Agent License		
Livestock Meat Packing Company License		
Livestock Auction Markets and Consignment Sales Permit	Animal Health, Minnesota Board of	(651) 296-2942
<b>Loans (Non-Bank Lenders)</b>		
Accelerated Mortgage Payment Provider	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2297
Consumer Small Loan Lender		
Industrial Loan and Thrift Company		
Motor Vehicle Sales Finance Company		
Regulated Lender		
<b>Lobbyists</b>		
Lobbyist Registration	Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, Minnesota	(651) 296-5615 (800) 657-3889
<b>Mail Order</b>		
Mail or Telephone Order Merchandise Rule	Federal Trade Commission (FTC), U.S.	(877) 382-4357

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Managed Care</b> Workers' Compensation Managed Care Organizations Certification	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5173
<b>Manufactured Homes</b> Manufactured Home Installer	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319 (800) 657-3978
Manufactured Home Park License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4510
Manufactured Home Dealer -Limited License	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5065
Manufactured Home Dealer -Subagency License		
Manufactured Home Dealer License		
Manufactured Home Manufacturer License		
<b>Manufacturing Facility</b> Part 70 Manufacturing General Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 282-6143 (800) 657-3938
<b>Manure</b> Commercial Animal Waste Technician (CAWT)	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6615
<b>Massage</b> Massage Therapists	Contact local city government offices.	
<b>Marriage</b> Marriage and Family Therapist	Marriage and Family Therapy, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2220
Marriage License	Local Registrar of County	
<b>Meat Packing</b> Livestock Meat Packing Company Agent License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6290
Livestock Meat Packing Company License		
Meat Custom Processor Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6062
<b>Medical Gas Distribution</b> Medical Gas Distributor	Pharmacy, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2825
<b>Medical Waivers</b> Driver Medical Waivers	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3674
<b>Medicine, Practice of</b> Physician (Medical Doctor and Doctor of Osteopathy)	Medical Practice, Minnesota State Board of	(612) 617-2130
Physician Assistant Registration		
Respiratory Care Practitioner Registration		
Telemedicine Registration		
Podiatrist	Podiatric Medicine, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2200
<b>Mental Health Services</b> Mental Health Center and Clinic Certification (Rule 29)	Human Services, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3971
Residential Treatment for Emotionally Disturbed Children License (Rule 5)		
Residential Treatment for Mentally Ill Adults License		
<b>Midwifery</b> Traditional Midwife License	Medical Practice, Minnesota State Board of	(612) 617-2130
<b>Mining and Minerals</b> Permit for Removal of Stockpiled Iron-Bearing Materials	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(218) 231-8484
Registration of Exploratory Borer		
State Industrial Minerals Lease	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5404
State Iron Ore/Taconite Lease		
State Metallic Minerals Lease		
State Peat Lease		

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Mining and Minerals (continued)</b>		
Permit to Mine - Iron Ore and Taconite	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5959
Permit to Mine - Nonferrous Metallic Minerals		
Permit to Mine - Peat		
<b>Ministers</b>		
Ministers, of any religious denomination, must file with the court administrator of the Minnesota District court of the county in which the ceremony is to be performed a copy of their credentials of license or ordination in order to solemnize a marriage. See Minnesota Statutes 517.		
<b>Minnnows</b> (see BAIT)		
<b>Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)</b>		
Mixed Martial Arts (MMA): Various licenses	Combative Sports Commission, Minnesota	(763) 792-7354
<b>Mobile Homes</b> (see MANUFACTURED HOMES)		
<b>Money Transmitting</b>		
Money Transmitter	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 282-9855
<b>Mortgage Originator or Servicer</b>		
Residential Mortgage Originator or Servicer License	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 282-9855
<b>Morticians</b>		
Mortuary Science (Mortician) License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-3829
<b>Motels</b> (see HOTELS, MOTELS AND RESTAURANTS)		
<b>Motor Carrier</b>		
Motor Carrier Direct Pay Certificate	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 556-6853
Moving Buildings Over Highways Permit	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6000
When Over Legal Size(s) or Over Legal Weight		
Oversized, Overweight Vehicles: Single Trip Permit, Job Permit, and Annual Permit		
Limousine Service Permit	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3643
Driver Medical Waivers	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3674
Building Mover License	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3680
Hazardous Material, Shipper's: Uniform Program Credentials (UPR)		
Hazardous Material, Transporters of: Uniform Program Credential (UPM, UPMM)		
Hazardous Material, Waste Transporter: Uniform Program Credential (UPW)		
Household Goods Mover Permit		
Passenger Carrier Registration (Intrastate)		
Property Carrier Registration (Intrastate)		
Special Transportation Service (STS)	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3717
Unified Carrier Registration Agreement		
<b>Motor Vehicle Dealers</b>		
Motor Vehicle Dealers License et al.	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2977
NOTE: A "Dealer" includes licensed new motor vehicle dealers, used motor vehicle dealers, motor vehicle brokers, wholesalers, auctioneers, lessors of new or used motor vehicles, scrap metal processors, used vehicle parts dealers, and salvage pools.		
<b>Motorized Vehicles</b>		
ATV Dealer License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2316
ATV Manufacturer License		(800) 285-2000
OHM Dealer License		
OHM Manufacturer License		

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Motorized Vehicles (continued)</b>		
ORV Dealer License		
ORV Manufacturer License		
Snowmobile Dealer License		
Snowmobile Manufacturer License		
<b>Nonresidential Services Programs</b>		
Day Training and Habilitation (DT & H) Services for the Developmentally Disabled	Human Services, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3971
Independent Living Assistance for Youth License (245A.22)		
Supported Employment Services (SES) for Persons with Developmental Disabilities		
<b>Notary Public</b>		
Notary Public Commission	Secretary of State Office, Minnesota	(651) 296-2803 (877) 551-6767
<b>Nurseries</b>		
Nursery Stock Dealer Certificate	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6507
Nursery Stock Grower Certificate		
Minnesota Grown Logo Labeling License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6510
<b>Nursing</b>		
Supplemental Nursing Services Agency Registration	Health, Minnesota Department of	(651) 201-4101
Nursing Assistant Registry	Health, Minnesota Department of	(651) 215-8705
Approval of Practical Nursing Programs	Nursing, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2270
Approval of Professional (Registered) Nursing Programs		
APRN (Advanced Practice Registered Nurse) Registry		
Border State Registry		
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)		
Professional Nursing Firms Registration		
Public Health Nurse Registration Certificate		
Registered Nurse (RN)		
<b>Nursing Home Administrators</b>		
Nursing Home Administrator	Nursing Home Administrators, Minnesota Board of Examiners for	(612) 617-2117
<b>Nursing Homes</b>		
Nursing Homes	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4101
<b>Nutritionist</b>		
Nutritionist License	Dietetics & Nutrition Practice, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2764
<b>Occupational Therapy</b>		
Occupational Therapy Practitioner License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-3725
<b>Optometry</b>		
Optometrist	Optometry, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2173
<b>Osteopaths (see DOCTORS)</b>		
<b>Pawnbrokers</b>		
Pawnbrokers Code of Conduct	Contact local city or county government offices.	
<b>Payroll Services</b>		
Payroll Services Registration (Third Party Bulk Filer)	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 282-5225 (800) 657-3605

<b><u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u></b>	<b><u>DEPARTMENT</u></b>	<b><u>CONTACT</u></b>
<b>Pesticide</b>		
Bulk Pesticide/Fertilizer Storage Facility or Substantial Alteration Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6274
Pesticides Registration	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6292
Commercial Pesticide Applicator License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6615
Noncommercial Pesticide Applicator License		
Pesticide Dealer License		
Private Pesticide Applicator Certificate		
Structural Pest Control Applicator/Company License		
Permit to Control Aquatic Plants	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(615) 259-5200
<b>Pet Food</b>		
Commercial Feed License (Includes Pet and Specialty Pet Foods)	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. o	(651) 201-6176
Pet Food Processing Permit	Animal Health, Minnesota Board of	(651) 296-2942, Ext. 31
<b>Petroleum</b> (see FUELS AND STORAGE)		
<b>Pharmacy</b>		
Pharmacist License	Pharmacy, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2825
Pharmacist Preceptor Registration		
Pharmacy Intern Registration		
Pharmacy License		
Pharmacy Technician License		
<b>Physical Therapy</b>		
Physical Therapist Assistant License	Physical Therapy, Minnesota State Board of	(612) 627-5406
Physical Therapist License		
<b>Physician Assistants</b>		
Physician Assistant (registration)	Medical Practice, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2130
<b>Pipefitter</b>		
High Pressure Pipefitter Journeyman Contractor	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5124
<b>Pipelines</b>		
Pipeline Routing Permit	Public Utilities Commission, Minnesota	(651) 201-2255
<b>Placement Services</b>		
Employee Leasing Company Registration	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-4523
Employment Agency (Temporary) Exemption Certificate		
Employment Agency License for Operation	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5005
<b>Plants</b>		
Brand Name for Seed Variety Registration	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6531
Minnesota Seed Permit		
Screenings Purchase Permit		
Nursery Stock Dealer Certificate	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6507
Nursery Stock Grower Certificate		
Permit to Control Aquatic Plants	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(615) 259-5092
Permit to Transport and/or Collect Aquatic Vegetation		
Endangered Species Permit	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(615) 259-5100
Application for a Permit to Control: Aquatic Plants, Algae, Swimmer's Itch & Leeches	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(615) 259-5200
<b>Plumbers</b>		
Master Plumber Contractor Bond	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5067
Plumber, Journeyman License		
Plumber, Master License		
Plumber's Apprentice Registration		
Unlicensed Plumber Contractor Bond		

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Podiatric Medicine, Practice of</b> Podiatrist	Podiatric Medicine, Practice of	(612) 617-2200
<b>Police</b> Part-time Peace Officer License Peace Officer License	Peace Officer Standards and Training, Minnesota Board of	(651) 643-3060
<b>Pools (Public)</b> Certified Pool Operator Swimming Pool and Spa Pool Plan Review	Health, Minnesota Dept. of Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4500 (651) 201-4503
<b>Poultry</b> Import Poultry Permit Poultry Hatchery Permits Pullorum-Typhoid Testing Authorization	Animal Health, Minnesota Board of	(320) 231-5170
<b>Power Plant Siting</b> Site Designation and Certificate of Site Compatibility	Public Utilities Commission, Minnesota	(651) 201-2255
<b>Precious Metal</b> Precious Metal Dealer License	Regulated by County Auditor	
NOTE: A Precious Metal Dealer is any person(s) engaged in the business of buying secondhand items containing precious (silver, gold and platinum) metal. Minnesota Statutes 325F.73		
<b>Private Detectives</b> Private Detectives License	Private Detective and Protective Agent Services, Minnesota Board of	(651) 793-2666
<b>Protective Agents</b> Protective Agent Escort Services License Protective Agent Services License	Private Detective and Protective Agent Services, Minnesota Board of	(651) 793-2666
<b>Psychology, Practice of</b> Licensed Psychologist; Licensed Psychological Practitioner	Psychology, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2230
<b>Racing (Horse)</b> Racing Class A License (Ownership and Operation) Racing Class B License (Racing & Card Club Operation) Racing Class C License (Occupational) Racing Class D License (County Agricultural Associations) Veterinarian	Racing Commission, Minnesota    Veterinary Medicine, Minnesota Board of	(952) 496-7950    (651) 201-2844
<b>Radiation</b> Ionizing Radiation Producing Equipment Registration Radioactive Materials Licensing	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4545
<b>Radiologic Technicians</b> (note: contact American Registry of Radiologic Technologists at (651) 687-0048, Minnesota is not a licensing state).		
<b>Radio</b> Radio Station	Federal Communications Commission	(202) 418-2700
<b>Radio Monitoring</b> Mobile Monitor Permit - Individual Mobile Monitor Permit - Media Mobile Monitor Permit - Non-Law Monitoring	Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, Minnesota	(651) 793-1054
<b>Raffles</b> (see CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS and GAMBLING)		

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Real Estate</b>		
Real Estate Appraiser	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6319
Real Estate Closer		(800) 657-3978
Real Estate Salesperson; Real Estate Broker	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6332
Subdivided Land Agent Designation		
Subdivided Land Registration		
<b>Recreational Camping Area</b> (see CAMPS)		
<b>Recyclers</b> (see CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (CFCs) and MOTOR VEHICLE DEALER)		
<b>Refuse-Derived Fuel Processing</b>		
Refuse Derived Fuel Processing Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 296-6300 (800) 657-3864
<b>Registrars, Deputy</b> (see DEPUTY REGISTRARS)		
<b>Rehabilitation Consultants, Firms and Vendors</b>		
Qualified Rehabilitation Consultants, QRC Firms, and Registered Rehabilitation Vendors	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5036
<b>Rendering Plant</b> (see ANIMALS)		
<b>Research, Drug</b>		
Controlled Substance Researcher	Pharmacy, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2825
<b>Residential Services Programs</b>		
Housing with Services Establishment Registration	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 215-8701
Children's Residential Facilities	Human Services, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-0156
Crisis Respite Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities	Human Services, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3971
Residential-Based Habilitation Waiver Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities		
Residential Treatment for Mentally Ill Adults (Rule 36)		
Semi-Independent Living Services (SILS) for Persons with Developmental Disabilities		
State-Operated Residential Treatment Programs for Persons with Psychopathic Personalities and Sexually Dangerous People		
<b>Respiratory Therapist</b>		
Respiratory Care Practitioner Registration	Medical Practice, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2130
<b>Restaurants</b>		
Food, Beverage and Lodging License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4505 (651) 201-4500
Environmental Health Food Manager Certification	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4515
Bed and Breakfast Registration (to serve liquor)	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6159 (651) 296-9519
<b>Roads and Highways</b>		
Moving Buildings Over Highways Permit When Over Legal Size(s) or Over Legal Weight	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6000
Oversized Vehicles: Single Trip Permit, Job Permit, and Annual Permit		
Access Driveway Permit		(651) 366-4668
Construction of Tunnels Under Highways Permit		
Drainage Permit		
Utilities Installation or Miscellaneous Work On Trunk Highway Right of Way		
Utility Permit on Trunk Highway Right of Way		
Advertising Device Permit	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-4671



<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Roofers</b>		
Residential Roofer	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5065
<b>Safe Deposit Company</b>		
Safe Deposit Company	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2297
<b>Sales and Use Tax</b>		
Sales and Use Tax Permit (Business Tax ID Number)	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 282-5225 (800) 657-3605
Certificate of Exemption	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6181 (800) 657-3777
Sales and Use Tax Exempt Status Certificate	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 556-6837
<b>Salons</b>		
Cosmetologist Individual Licenses, Salons and Schools	Cosmetology Examiners, MN Board of	(651) 201-2742
<b>Salvage, Motor Vehicle</b> (see MOTOR VEHICLE DEALER)		
<b>Sand and Gravel</b>		
Non-Metallic Mineral Processing General Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 282-6143 (800) 657-3938
<b>Sanitarians</b>		
Environmental Health Specialist / Sanitarian Registration License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4502
<b>Satellite Television Systems</b> (see COMMUNICATION CONTRACTORS)		
<b>Scanners</b>		
Mobile Monitor Permit - Individual Mobile Monitor Permit - Media Mobile Monitor Permit - Non-Law Monitoring	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 793-7026
<b>School Administrator</b>		
School Administrator (Directors, Superintendents of Schools, Principals, or Related Services Personnel)	Education, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 582-8691
<b>Schools</b>		
Cosmetologist Individual Licenses, Salons and Schools	Barber and Cosmetology Examiners, Minnesota Board of	(651) 201-2742
Cosmetology School Surety Bond	Nursing, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2294
Approval of Practical Nursing Programs		
Approval of Professional (Registered) Nursing Programs		
Private and Non-Minnesota Public Post-Secondary Degree Granting Institutions	Office of Higher Education, Minnesota	(651) 642-0533 (800) 657-3866
Private Non-Degree Granting Post-Secondary Educational Institutions		
Commercial Driver Training School License	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-3966
<b>Screenings</b>		
Screenings Purchase Permit	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6123
<b>Second Hand Dealers</b>		
May be regulated by both city and county where business is located.		
<b>Securities Sales</b>		
Securities Agent, Securities Broker-Dealer, Investment Advisor	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2283
Securities for Sale Registration	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-4520

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Security Guards</b>		
Protective Agent Escort Services License	Private Detective and Protective Agent Services, Minnesota Board of	(651) 793-2666
Protective Agent Services License		
<b>Security Systems</b> (see ALARM and COMMUNICATION CONTRACTORS)		
<b>Seeds</b>		
Brand Name for Seed Variety Registration	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6531
Minnesota Seed Permit		
Screenings Purchase Permit		
<b>Shelters</b> (see BUS SHELTERS and HEALTH CARE FACILITIES)		
<b>Shooting Preserves</b>		
Commercial Shooting Preserve License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
Private Shooting Preserve License		
<b>Signs</b> (see ADVERTISING DEVICES)		
<b>Social Work</b>		
Social Work Professional Firm Registration	Social Work, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2100
Social Worker License (Various Classes)		
<b>Soil Science</b>		
Professional Soil Scientist	Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, Geoscience and Interior Design, Minnesota Board of	(651) 296-2388
Soil Scientist-In-Training		
<b>Solid Waste</b>		
Industrial Solid Waste Land Disposal Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 296-6300 (800) 657-3864
Mixed Municipal Solid Waste Land Disposal Permit		
Municipal Solid Waste Combustor Ash Land Disposal Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 297-5754
Solid Waste Recycling Facility Permit-By-Rule (PBR)		
Solid Waste Storage Permit		
Solid Waste Transfer Facility Permit		
Type II Landfill Operator or Inspector Certificate		
Type III Landfill Operator or Inspector Certificate		
Type IV Waste Disposal Operator or Inspector Certificate		
Type V Waste Disposal Operator or Inspector Certificate		
<b>Special Events on DNR lands</b>		
Special Events Permit	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6157
<b>Special Transportation Services</b>		
Special Transportation Certificate (STS)	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-3717
<b>Speech Pathology</b>		
Speech-Language Pathologist License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-3725
<b>Sprinkler Systems</b>		
Fire Protection Sprinkler System Contractor License	State Fire Marshall (MN Dept. of Public Safety)	(651) 201-7200
Fire Protection Sprinkler System Design Contractor License		
Fire Sprinkler Systems Plan Review / Permit		
Multipurpose Potable Water Piping System Contractor License		
Multipurpose Potable Water Piping System Installer Certificate		
Managing Employee Certificate		

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Sprinkler Systems (continued)</b>		
Sprinkler Fitter (Conditional Journeyman) Certificate		
Sprinkler Fitter (Journeyman) Certificate		
Sprinkler Fitter (Limited Journeyman) Certificate		
<b>Storage</b> (see also WAREHOUSES)		
Underground Storage of Gas or Liquids Using Natural Geologic Formations Permit	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5700
<b>Student Exchange Organizations</b>		
International Student Exchange Organizations	Secretary of State Office, Minnesota	(651) 296-2803
<b>Subdivided Lands</b>		
Subdivided Land Registration	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6332
<b>Surety Bond</b>		
Cosmetology School Surety Bond	Cosmetology Examiners, MN Board	(651) 201-2742
Master Plumber Contractor Bond	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5067
Unlicensed Plumber Contractor Bond		
Water Conditioning Contractor Bond		
Mechanical Bond	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5068
<b>Tanks</b>		
Aboveground Storage Tank (AST) Permits (>1M Gallon)	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 296-6300
Aboveground Storage Tank (AST) Registration		(800) 657-3864
Underground Storage Tank (UST) Contractor / Supervisor Certificate		
Underground Storage Tank (UST) Registration	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 757-2429
<b>Tanning Facilities</b>		
Safety and equipment standards established by Minn. Stat. 325H.01 et. Seq. For licensing information contact the municipality where the facility is located.		
<b>Taxes</b>		
Unfair Cigarette Sales Act Fee	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2488
Tax Identification Number (Sales Tax and Use Permit)	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 282-5225
Fuels Distributors License	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-0889
Special Fuel License		
Gambling Tax Permit	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-1772 (800) 657-3605
Cigarette & Tobacco Distributor & Subjobber Licenses	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-1882
Motor Carrier Direct Pay (MCDP) Certificate	Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 556-6853
Sales and Use Tax Exempt Status Certificate		
<b>Taxidermy</b>		
Taxidermist License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
<b>Teaching</b>		
Teaching License	Education, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 582-8691
School Administrator (Directors, Superintendents of Schools, Principals, or Related Services Personnel)	School Administrators, Minnesota Board of	(651) 999-7387

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Teachers (continued)</b> Teaching Licenses: Appeal/Special Permission/ Waiver	Teaching, Minnesota Board of	(651) 582-8833
<b>Telecommunications / Telephone Services</b> Telephone Service Certificate of Authority -Local, Long Distance, Alternate Operator Service (AOS)	Public Utilities Commission, Minnesota	(651) 296-6913
<b>Telemarketing</b> Telemarketing Sales Rule	Federal Trade Commission (FTC), U.S.	(877) 382-4357
<b>Television</b> Television Station	Federal Communications Commission (FCC), U.S.	(202) 418-1600 (888) 225-5322
<b>Timber</b> (see also FOREST PRODUCTS)		
<b>Tobacco</b> Unfair Cigarette Sales Act Fee Cigarette & Tobacco Distributor & Subjobber Licenses	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-2488 (651) 297-1882
<b>Tow Truck Operators</b> Vehicle Tower	Contact local city or county government offices.	
<b>Trailer Parks</b> Manufactured Home Park License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4510
<b>Trees</b> Tree Care Company Registry Certified Tree Inspector	Agriculture, MN Dept. of Natural Resources, MN Dept. of	(651) 201-6095 (651) 259-5830
<b>Tunnels</b> Construction of Tunnels Under Highways Permit	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-4668
<b>Turtle and Tortoise</b> Turtle and Tortoise License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
<b>Underground Storage Tanks</b> (see TANKS)		
<b>Utilities</b> Utilities Installation or Miscellaneous Work On Trunk Highway Right of Way Utility Permit on Trunk Highway Right of Way	Transportation, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 366-4668
<b>Utility Crossings of Public Lands and Waters</b> License to Cross Public Lands and Waters	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-0237
<b>Utility Vehicles</b> ATV Dealer License ATV Manufacturer License Boat Dealer License OHM Dealer License OHM Manufacturer License ORV Dealer License ORV Manufacturer License Snowmobile Dealer License Snowmobile Manufacturer License	Natural Resources, MN Dept. of	(651) 296-2316 (800) 285-2000
<b>Vending Machines</b> Retail Food Handler License Unfair Cigarette Sales Act Fee Cigarette & Tobacco Distributor & Subjobber Licenses	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of Revenue, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6627 (651) 296-2488 (651) 297-1882

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Veterinary Medicine</b>		
Veterinarian	Veterinary Medicine, Minnesota Board of	(612) 617-2170
<b>Viatical Settlements</b>		
Viatical Settlement Broker	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-7057
Viatical Settlement Investment Agent		
Viatical Settlement Provider License		
<b>Warehouses</b>		
Grain Bank License	Agriculture, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-6314
Grain Buying and Storing License		
Independent Grain Buyer's License		
Storage of General Merchandise License		
Manufacturer's Warehouse Permit	Public Safety, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-6159 (651) 296-6939
<b>Waste</b>		
Municipal & Industrial NPDES/SDS Wastewater Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 282-6143
State Disposal System Permit		(800) 657-3938
Compost Facility Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 296-6300
Demolition Debris Disposal Facility Permit-By-Rule		(800) 657-3864
Demolition Debris Land Disposal Facility Permit		
Feedlot Construction Short-Form Permit		
Feedlot Interim Permit		
Feedlot NPDES/SDS Permit (General and Individual)		
Hazardous Waste Generator License		
Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage or Disposal Permit		
Industrial Solid Waste Land Disposal Permit		
Mixed Municipal Solid Waste Land Disposal Permit		
Municipal Solid Waste Combustor Ash Land Disposal Permit		
Registration (Feedlot Program)		
Solid Waste Recycling Facility Permit-By-Rule		
Solid Waste Storage Permit		
Solid Waste Transfer Facility Permit		
State Disposal System Permit		
Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems License (Designers, Installers, Inspectors, Maintainers) Certificate		
Open Lot Agreement (OLA)		
Type II Landfill Operator or Inspector Certificate	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 757-2072
Type III Landfill Operator or Inspector Certificate		(800) 657-3864
Type IV Waste Disposal Operator or Inspector Certificate	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 757-2599
Type V Waste Disposal Operator or Inspector Certificate		(800) 657-3864
Wastewater Operator Certification		
<b>Water Appropriation</b>		
Water Appropriation General Permit -Animal & Livestock Operations	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5700
Water Appropriation General Permit - Temporary Projects		
Water Appropriation Irrigation Permit		
Water Appropriation Non-Irrigation Permit		
<b>Water Conditioning</b>		
Water Conditioning Contractor	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5067
Water Conditioning Contractor Bond		
Water Conditioning Installer		

<u>REGULATED ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
<b>Water Quality</b>		
Municipal & Industrial NPDES/SDS Wastewater Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 282-6143
Sanitary Sewer Extension Permit		(800) 657-3938
SDS Pretreatment General Permit (MNP)		
Feedlot Construction Short-Form Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 296-6300
Feedlot Interim Permit		(800) 657-3938
Feedlot NPDES/SDS Permit (General and Individual)		
Open Lot Agreement (OLA)		
Registration (Feedlot Program)		
State Disposal System Permit		
NPDES General Permit	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 757-2119
NPDES/SDS Industrial Stormwater General Permit		(800) 657-3804
Underground Storage Tank (UST) Registration	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 757-2429
		(800) 657-3938
Wastewater Operator Certification	Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota	(651) 757-2599
		(800) 657-3864
<b>Water Supply</b>		
Water Supply System Operator Certificate	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4696
<b>Water Wells and Borings</b>		
Wells and Borings: Dewatering Well Contractor License	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4586
Wells and Borings: Drive Point / Dug Well Contractor License		
Wells and Borings: Elevator Boring Contractor License		
Wells and Borings: Explorer License (Exploratory Borings)		
Wells and Borings: Monitoring Well Contractor Registration		
Wells and Borings: Pump Installer License		
Wells and Borings: Screen & Pitless Contractor License		
Wells and Borings: Vertical Heat Exchange Contractor		
Wells and Borings: Well Contractor License		
Wells and Borings: Well Sealing Contractor License		
<b>Waters (Public)</b>		
Lake Aeration Systems Permit	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5200
Public Waters Work Permit	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5700
Dam Safety Permit	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 259-5715
License to Cross Public Lands and Waters	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 296-0237
<b>Weighing and Measuring Equipment</b>		
Placing in Service Permit	Commerce, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 215-5821
<b>Wild Rice Dealer</b>		
Wild Rice Dealer License	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 297-4935
<b>Wildlife Exhibit</b>		
Permit to Exhibit Captive Wildlife	Natural Resources, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 772-7906
<b>Workers' Compensation</b>		
Letter of Recognition of a Collective Bargaining Agreement Related to Workers' Compensation	Labor and Industry, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 284-5588
<b>X-Ray Machines (see RADIATION)</b>		
X-Ray Equipment Operator Test	Health, Minnesota Dept. of	(651) 201-4545



# INDEX





## INDEX

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Accounting.....	130 – 135
Assistance .....	284 – 286
Income forecasting .....	131 – 135
Principles .....	130
American with Disabilities Act (ADA) .....	201 – 203
Anti – discrimination laws. <i>See</i> Human rights	
Articles of Incorporation. <i>See</i> Corporations	
Assumed names. <i>See under</i> Naming the Business Entity	
Bonding .....	76
Business Opportunities .....	72 – 74
Business organization. <i>See</i> Organization, Form of	
Business plan .....	126 – 129
Capital gains and losses .....	26 – 27
Child labor standards .....	192 – 194
COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act).....	219 – 220
Cooperatives .....	56 – 58
Copyright protection .....	117 – 119
Corporate names. <i>See</i> Naming the Business Entity	
Corporations	
Closely held, defined .....	3
Defined.....	3
Forming .....	41 – 47
Nonprofit.....	56
S corporations .....	53 – 54

Disabilities. *See* Americans with Disabilities Act

Discrimination. *See* Human rights

Employee benefits

Fringe .....	25 – 26
Generally .....	24 – 26, 218– 221
Health insurance .....	218 – 220
Record keeping.....	219
Retirement plans. ....	24 – 25, 218

Employee training programs. *See* Training programs

Employees

Agreements .....	165 – 166
Background checks .....	191
Breaks.....	183
Defined.....	160 – 165
Employer references .....	181– 182
Hiring checklist.....	224 – 232
Immigration laws .....	204 – 205
Leave.....	183 – 188
Minors.....	192 – 194
Occupational safety and health.....	205 – 212
Personnel records .....	181 – 182
Plant closings .....	221– 222
Testing.....	188 – 191
Types .....	161 – 165
Whistleblower protection.....	195 – 196
<i>See also</i> Employee benefits	

Employment taxes. *See under* Taxes

Environmental protection programs

Air pollution.....	86 – 87
Compliance assistance.....	90 – 96
Feedlot permits.....	84
Hazardous waste.....	78 – 81
Reviews.....	77
Solid waste.....	87 – 90
Storage tanks.....	81 – 83
Water quality.....	83 – 86

Fair use.....	117
Feedlots. <i>See</i> Environmental protection programs	
Financing.....	10 – 12
Business plan .....	126 – 129
Grants, generally .....	136
Grants, rural development.....	148 – 149
Loans, federal.....	139 – 149
Loans, generally.....	137 – 139
Loans, local government .....	155
Loans, state.....	150 – 154
Private funding.....	155 – 156
Foreign limited liability companies. <i>See under</i> Limited liability companies	
Foreign limited liability partnerships. <i>See under</i> Limited liability partnerships	
Foreign limited partnerships. <i>See under</i> Limited partnerships	
Franchises	
Generally .....	58
Registration .....	70 – 74
Government procurement .....	278 – 283
Grants. <i>See under</i> Financing	
Hazardous waste. <i>See under</i> Environmental protection programs	
Health, employee. <i>See</i> Occupational safety and health; Workers' compensation	
Health insurance. <i>See under</i> Employee benefits	
HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) .....	220– 221
Human rights.....	196 – 203
Immigration laws.....	204 – 205
Injuries. <i>See</i> Occupational safety and health; Workers' compensation insurance	
Insurance .....	157 – 159
<i>See also</i> Employee benefits	

Intellectual property	
Commonly asked questions.....	120 – 123
Copyright protection .....	117 – 119
Patent protection .....	99 – 125
Resources.....	123 – 125
Trade secret protection .....	119
Trademark protection .....	112 – 116
Inventions	
Patent protection .....	99 – 112
Marketing .....	111 – 112
Resources.....	292
Labor standards.....	166 – 194
Coverage.....	167 – 168
Employer references .....	181 – 182
Exemptions.....	168 – 173
Immigration laws .....	204 – 205
Minimum wage .....	173 – 174
Minors.....	192 – 194
Overtime pay .....	174 – 175
Personnel records .....	181
Prevailing wage laws .....	175 – 176
Record keeping.....	176 – 177
Wage payment/reporting .....	178 – 179
Whistleblower protection .....	195 – 196
Legal assistance .....	291
Liability of business owners .....	7 – 8
Library services .....	286 – 290
Licenses and permits .....	74 – 76, 341
Limited Liability Companies	
Defined.....	4
Foreign.....	53
Forming .....	47 – 52
Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs)	
Defined.....	1 – 2
Foreign .....	38
Forming .....	38 – 39

Limited partnerships (LPs)	
Defined.....	2 – 3
Foreign.....	40
LLPs. <i>See</i> Limited Liability Partnerships	
Loans. <i>See under</i> Financing	
Losses. <i>See</i> Profits and losses	
LPs. <i>See</i> Limited Partnerships	
Marketing	
Of inventions.....	110 – 111
Strategies.....	128
Minimum wage. <i>See under</i> Wages	
Minnesota Employee Right-to-Know Act .....	209
Minority business assistance .....	291
Naming the Business Entity	
Assumed names .....	29 – 31
Availability of Corporate or Limited Liability Company Name.....	33
Business entity .....	29 – 36
Distinguishing characteristics .....	34 – 36
Options for Dealing with Non-distinguishable Names.....	35 – 36
Reserving a Corporate or Limited Liability Company Name .....	34
Statutory requirements.....	32 – 33
Net operating loss (NOL).....	27 – 28
Nonprofit corporations .....	56
<i>See also</i> Corporations	
Occupational safety and health.....	205 – 212
Employee rights/responsibilities.....	208
Employer rights/responsibilities .....	206 – 208
Recordkeeping.....	207
Violence protection .....	211 – 212
Workplace posters.....	222 – 223
Workplace safety .....	208 – 212

Organization, Form of	
Business plan .....	126 – 129
Changes in .....	4 – 5
Continuity .....	13
Filings with Secretary of State .....	58 – 63
Government regulation .....	15 – 16
Management control.....	8 – 10
Naming the Business Entity .....	29 – 36
Non-tax considerations .....	5 – 16
Ownership interest, dispositions .....	28 – 29
Ownership transfers .....	12
Tax considerations .....	16 – 29
Termination .....	13 – 15
Types, defined.....	1 – 5
 Overtime pay. <i>See under</i> Wages	
 Partnerships	
Defined.....	1
Forming .....	36 – 40
Revised Uniform Partnership Act (RUPA).....	9 – 10
<i>See also</i> Limited Liability Partnerships; Limited Partnerships	
 Patent protection .....	99 – 112
Application components .....	102 – 103
Application examination.....	103 – 104
Assigned to employer.....	166
Costs .....	108 – 109
Inventions, identical.....	106
Inventors assistance .....	292
Marketing .....	111 – 112
Rejections, options following .....	105
Requirements .....	99 – 103
Rights enforcement .....	109 – 110
Time for obtaining.....	111
 Permits. <i>See</i> Licenses and permits	
 Plant closings .....	221 – 222
 Private funding. <i>See under</i> Financing	
 Professional firms.....	54 – 55
 Profits and losses	
Distribution .....	8
Net operating loss (NOL).....	27 – 28

Regulatory process.....	96 – 98
Resources.....	299
Retirement benefits. <i>See under</i> Employee benefits	
Rulemaking	
By Agencies.....	96 – 98
Exemptions.....	98
S corporations.....	53 – 54
Safety, employee. <i>See</i> Occupational safety and health	
Secretary of State filings.....	58 – 63
Securities registration.....	65 – 69
Small businesses	
Assistance and resources.....	272 - 278
Social Security tax (FICA). <i>See under</i> Taxes	
Sole proprietorship	
Defined.....	1
Forming.....	36
Solid waste. <i>See under</i> Environmental protection programs	
Storage tanks. <i>See under</i> Environmental protection programs	
Taxes.....	233 – 271
Assistance.....	284 – 286
Choosing form of organization.....	16 – 31
Electronic filing.....	237 – 238
Employment.....	23 – 24
Estimated payments.....	28
Federal requirements.....	269
FICA (Federal Insurance Contributions Act) tax.....	251
Licenses, revocation, issuance, renewal.....	260
Ownership transfers.....	259 – 260
Resources.....	233 – 234
Sales and use taxes.....	245 – 250
Tax identification numbers.....	235 – 236
Taxpayer Bill of Rights.....	236 – 237
Unemployment taxes.....	24, 263 – 268
Withholding tax.....	252 – 259
Workers' compensation.....	23 – 24



Trade assistance .....	293
Trade secret protection .....	119
Trademark protection .....	112 – 116
Defined.....	112 – 113
Federal registration .....	115
Infringement .....	115 – 116
Reserving.....	113
Selecting.....	113 – 114
Unemployment compensation.....	24, 263 – 268
Wages	
Minimum wage .....	173 – 174
Overtime pay .....	174
Payment/reporting .....	178 – 180
Prevailing wage laws .....	175 – 176
Record keeping .....	176 – 177
Water pollution. <i>See under</i> Environmental protection programs	
Whistleblower protection .....	195 – 196
Women’s business assistance.....	299, 332
Workers’ compensation.....	23 – 24, 212 – 218
Workplace posters.....	222 – 223
Workplace safety. <i>See</i> Occupational safety and health	
Zoning.....	75 – 76

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