**BUSINESS TRAINING AND COUNSELING,**

**FOR FREE OR AT LOW COST!**

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I’m privileged to work for the [U.S. Small Business Administration](https://www.sba.gov/) (SBA). Our mission is to help small businesses start, grow, expand and recover. This article focuses on the small business training and counseling services that the SBA and its Resource Partners (more on them in a minute!) provide right here in Rhode Island.

Are you a self-learner? If so, there are numerous ***free*** on-line resources available to you 24/7/365! Let’s begin with the SBA itself:

* The [SBA website](https://www.sba.gov/) is full of information and tools for the entrepreneur and small business owner.
* The [SBA Learning Center](https://www.sba.gov/learning-center) has 30-minute courses on a variety of topics related to planning, launching, managing, and growing your business – such as how to write a business plan, social media marketing, cybersecurity for small businesses, and strategic planning.
* The RI District Office [Resource Guide](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/resourceguide_3144.pdf) is available on-line, along with the national [Resource Guide in Spanish](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/resourceguide_national_spanish.pdf).
* Check out the [SBA’s YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/user/sba) and the [RI SBA’s Twitter page](https://twitter.com/SBA_RhodeIsland) for additional information and resources.

Would you prefer to take an in-person class with an expert presenter and other small business owners, or to have one-on-one counseling? The SBA and its Resource Partners -- independent local organizations that the SBA funds -- provide high-quality training (free or at low cost) and one-on-one mentoring (free) tailored to the specific needs of small business owners. Trainings cover a wide variety of topics – basics such as the steps to starting a business, business plan basics, and record-keeping and accounting, as well as specialized subjects like marketing and brand building, regulatory compliance, technology development, social media, and financing preparation and strategies. Who are the SBA Resource Partners?

* The [Center for Women & Enterprise](http://www.cweonline.org/About-CWE/CWE-Rhode-Island) (CWE) (401-277-0800) is the women’s business center here in Rhode Island. It provides counseling and training to new and existing women business owners on a full range of business topics. CWE offers training, mentoring, and one-on-one counseling to help women build their business skills and create a lifetime network of key resources and contacts.
* The [Rhode Island Small Business Development Center](https://web.uri.edu/risbdc/) (SBDC) (401-874-7232) at the University of Rhode Island provides a variety of counseling, workshops, and information services for growing companies and start-ups. Look at the SBDC as a one-stop resource center for assistance in business plan development, market analysis, sources of capital, technology transfer, inventory assistance, and other managerial and technical support services. The SBDC also offers [short videos and readings](https://web.uri.edu/risbdc/resources-page/) as well as a [blog](https://web.uri.edu/risbdc/blog/).
* The [Rhode Island SCORE](https://ri.score.org/) Chapter (401-266-0077) is a volunteer, non-profit organization. With more than 40 years of experience helping small businesses succeed, SCORE matches volunteer counselors with clients needing expert advice. SCORE has counselors in nearly every area of business management. Whether you are considering starting a business, have a business that is experiencing challenges, or are ready to expand, SCORE can help. Rhode Island SCORE also has a [library](https://ri.score.org/browse-library-31) of diverse materials in formats ranging from eGuides to blogs to podcasts to templates and checklists.
* The [Veterans Business Outreach Center](http://www.cweonline.org/About-CWE/Veterans-Business-Outreach-Center) (VBOC) Program (844-404-2171) is designed to provide entrepreneurial development services such as business training, counseling and mentoring, and referrals for eligible veterans owning or considering starting a small business. The VBOC of New England is located in Providence.

As Benjamin Franklin observed, “if you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” Let the SBA help your small business plan for success! Assistance is available in languages other than English, including Spanish, and all SBA programs and services are extended to the public on a non-discriminatory basis. To learn more about the SBA’s programs and services, please contact Lana Glovach, SBA Economic Development Specialist, at lana.glovach@sba.gov or 401-528-4575.