



Thinking of starting a new business?

Frequently asked questions,
to help you get started.



South Oxfordshire
District Council

Listening Learning Leading

www.SO-Business.co.uk



Vale
of White Horse

District Council

www.Vale4Business.com



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This guide is designed to support new businesses in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. We hope that the following information will assist your business journey.

Where can I get business advice?

Business is GREAT – support, advice and inspiration for growing your business.

Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) – helps ensure business success in an increasingly competitive world. They are the voice for business across Government.

Federation of Small Business (FSB) – the largest campaigning pressure group promoting and protecting the interests of the self-employed and owners of small firms locally.

Oxford Business Enterprise (OBE) – a free advisory service that provide advice to all new businesses.

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) – supports businesses across Oxfordshire and is responsible for championing and developing the Oxfordshire economy.

Oxford Business Mentors – free business mentoring for small established businesses (more than one year in business).

UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) – offer both new and experienced exporters tailored, impartial and expert advice on winning business overseas.

Vale4Business – a collaborative partnership that brings together the key businesses in the Vale of White Horse to support long term economic growth. Vale4Business provide businesses in the Vale of White Horse with support, advice and up to date business information.

SO Business – a one-stop shop for business information and advice for all businesses, large and small, in South Oxfordshire.

What is the right structure for my business?

There are a variety of business models to choose from which are dependent on your individual business needs and requirements.

Speak with a qualified accountant to get a clear idea of what your business need is and the best business model to choose. The **Department for Business, Innovation and Skills** has developed a useful guide to help you make an informed decision.

Once you have picked a business model you will need to register with HM Revenue and Customs (**HMRC**) to ensure your business earnings are accounted for, and in line with UK tax regulations.

How do I register my new business?

All businesses must register with HMRC, once registered you can assess whether your business is subject to pay tax.

If you have chosen to be a limited company you must also register with **Companies House**, who incorporate and dissolve limited companies, register the information companies are legally required to supply, and makes that information available to the public.



What if I'm a home-based business?

You are not alone - there is an estimated 4.2 million businesses operating from their homes across the UK.

If you want to meet like-minded home-based business owners attend regular home-workers networking groups. Jennings at [Monument Park](#) offer monthly networking groups at The Picnic Hamper, The Work Station in Abingdon town centre offers co-working hot desks, and The Late Breakfast meet in Thame, Abingdon and Charlgrove – to name a few.

If you store goods or products at home you may need to increase your home insurance to manage this. Please speak with your home insurance provider to make sure you are fully covered in the event of theft, loss or damage.

Sign up to receive Vision, a monthly business e-newsletter, which will help your business keep up to date with local business news and events. To subscribe email economic.development@southandvale.gov.uk

Where do I go for business rates and licensing information?

Businesses and other occupiers of non-domestic properties pay non-domestic rates (business rates). Dependent on your type of business and premises you may not need to pay business rates, however it's always best to check. Contact the Valuations Office Agency or [South Oxfordshire District Council](#) or [Vale of White Horse District Council](#) for clarification.

Your local district council is also responsible for issuing and managing a range of licences and permits covering a variety of activities. These include licences for premises that supply alcohol and for taxi drivers, as well as for a range of other charitable and commercial activities. Please refer to the [South Oxfordshire District Council](#) or [Vale of White Horse District Council](#) website for further information.

I want to expand my skills and knowledge, where should I go?

[Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#) has created a useful guide to assist business expansion. They offer practical advice on developing a business plan, marketing your business and ways to increase your skills to assist business growth.

Local colleges may also run classes specifically aimed at businesses. Abingdon and Witney College offer a programme of short courses aimed at employees, these include business management, communications and also industry training such as food safety. Alternatively, [Oxfordshire Business Support](#) run regular sessions aimed at business development, and many are free!

The Trading Standards Institute recently launched the website [Business Companion](#) sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. This useful website guides you through trading standard contracts for on-premises selling, off-premises selling and distance selling.

Do I need business insurance?

Yes, you most likely need both business insurance and public liability insurance if your business deals with customers or the public. Speak with your accountant for personal advice for your business.

I have a new design concept, how can I protect it?

You may wish to register a trademark to protect your business, product, design idea or brand. It's important to register with the [Intellectual Property Office \(IPO\)](#) to protect your ideas from individuals or other companies.



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Where can I get advice to grow my business?

There are many questions that arise as your business expands and grows and you are suddenly in the position to employ staff. HMRC has developed a [free e-course](#) that helps answer some of the questions you may have.

You may have outgrown your home office space and are now looking to move into a commercial premise. It's important to do a thorough investigation of the property market in order to find the right space for your business, and the associated business rates this will entail. Search the [SO Business](#) and [Vale4Business](#) live searchable commercial property databases for full listings in your area. Alternatively search [Estates Gazette](#) or [Nova Loca](#).

Can I get advice for trading overseas?

If your business trades overseas there may be associated tax implications, seek advice from your accountant.

[Oxfordshire International Business Club \(OIBC\)](#) run regular workshops and business advice sessions to support Oxfordshire businesses who wish to trade overseas. The OIBC is a forum and community where people can learn and share good practice - and build networks - in the domain of international business.

A [UKTI Export Advisor](#) can also provide support. The UKTI works with UK based businesses to ensure their success in international markets through exports.

I'm a young entrepreneur, where can I seek support?

There are several funding and support opportunities that you may be eligible to apply for.

[Startup Awards](#) – grant funding for young entrepreneurs.

[Shell Live Wire](#) – helps 16 to 30 year olds start and develop their own business. They provide information and support - plus a free Essential Business Kit to every caller.

[The Princes Trust](#) – helps young people aged 18 to 30 who are unemployed or underemployed to start up in business.

[Young Guns](#) – a programme celebrating some of the most successful and promising young players currently operating in the business world.

How do I get involved with my local business community?

The best way is to join a local business partnership or to attend business networking events. This will provide you with the opportunity to meet like-minded individuals, promote your business and work collaboratively with others.

Please refer to the [SO Business](#) or [Vale4Business](#) websites for local networking groups.

Local business partnerships:
[Abingdon Chamber of Commerce](#)
[Abingdon Business Alliance](#)
[Didcot Chamber of Commerce](#)
[Faringdon Chamber of Commerce](#)
[Goring Gap Business Network](#)
[Henley Business Partnership](#)
[Thame4me](#)
[Wallingford In Business](#)
[Watlington Business Association](#)
[Wantage Chamber of Commerce](#)



Is there any financial help available?

There are a number of grants and funds available.

Start-up Loans – a government funded scheme to provide advice, business loans and mentoring to start-up businesses.

Sustainable Routes – offering a grant of £1,000 to help businesses cut travel costs and Co2 emissions.

Oxfordshire LEADER Rural Grants – a grant scheme managed by South Oxfordshire District Council. LEADER supports business project ideas that boost the rural economy.

Crowd-funder and **Crowdcube** – innovative, alternative solutions for individuals, businesses, charities and schools, providing a platform for projects to be heard and to raise capital. More than 3000 projects are up and running with the support of funding from interested parties.

Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) – supporting voluntary and community sector groups and organisations based in Oxfordshire. They offer all kinds of advice, including sources of funding and getting fit to fund.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils – voluntary, non-profit partnership grants and funds are available.

For further funding opportunities, please visit the [Oxfordshire Business Support](#) website.

Other useful resources

Start-up Britain – a government campaign to support UK entrepreneurs.

The Tax Donut – a free financial resource site for small businesses.

IdeasTap – a charity that works with leading arts organisations to create industry opportunities for creative businesses.

Co-operative Futures – a dynamic co-operative policy and development agency supporting the development of social enterprises in Oxfordshire.

Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) – help for businesses involved in manufacturing to become more efficient and profitable.

Ethnic Minority Business Service – supports members of ethnic minority communities to start new businesses.

The economic development team are always happy to help, contact the team via economic.development@southandvale.gov.uk or alternatively call 01235 540390