
100 Business Ideas to Kick-start Your Imagination

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Introduction

This leaflet will introduce you to a range of ideas for businesses you can run, or use as starting points to develop your own ideas.

Ideas

Ideas are grouped into general categories by the type of work or skills they need. For each category, you'll find information under these headings:

Pros & Cons

Gives some idea of factors which may be positive or negative for you. Some factors can be positive for one person and negative for someone else, such as indoor vs outdoor work!

Skills and Qualifications

Spells out what's likely to be needed for the category in general. Specific ideas will usually need their own set of skills, and may need particular qualifications.

Regulations

This section doesn't address regulations such as taxes or business licenses which apply to all businesses, but if a category tends to need more in the way of licenses, or is more heavily regulated than most, you'll read about it here.

Ideas

A sample list of ideas to start your mind working. You can find many more sample ideas in the books and web sites listed on the resource page of your handout, and we'll come up with lots of ideas during the workshop.

Category: Food

Pros & Cons

- Easy to start on a small scale
- Expensive to scale up to a larger business
- Online sales possible for some
- Online sales outside Canada may be difficult

Skills and Qualifications

- Cooking/baking skills for some ideas
- FoodSafe course recommended (may be required)

Regulations

- Commercial kitchen required for selling food items through others e.g. in stores
- Public Health inspections
- Labeling regulations for Organic foods

Ideas

- Caterer & Personal Chef
- Food delivery service (to boats, RV's...)
- Lunch delivery to businesses
- Specialty food item production
- Food drying and preserving service
- Home-made candy
- Wedding and party cakes
- Gift baskets
- Salad-and-juice bar lunch cafe
- Wild food collection and sales
- Specialty or Organic baking
- Fair Trade coffee and other drinks

Category: Personal and Household Services

Pros & Cons

- Often need very little startup cash
- Lots of people-contact
- Many are part time or seasonal businesses
- Limited by local demand
- Time-intensive
- Tied to local economy

Skills and Qualifications

- Varies widely by business
- Some may benefit from a certification even if not required (gives credibility)

Regulations

- May need to be bonded for some businesses where you enter people's homes
- May need a pesticide license for pest control, depending on what you're using

Ideas

- Fitness trainer/consultant
- Bodywork & Massage therapy
- House-cleaning service
- Errand or shopping service
- Childcare provider
- Professional Organizer
- Tax preparation
- Wedding co-ordinator
- Natural pest control
- Mobile hair and beauty care
- Seniors' or children's escort service
- Home inventory and engraving of valuables

Category: Animals and Plants

Pros & Cons

- Many are seasonal or part time
- Low hourly rate
- Outdoor work
- Work with living things

Skills and Qualifications

- Experience with specific plants or animals

Regulations

- Endangered Species regulations for exotic pets or fish
- Possible pesticide license required for some

Ideas

- Tropical Fish breeding/aquarium maint
- Pet-sitting and dog-walking
- House plant production
- Beneficial insect service for gardeners and greenhouses
- Drip irrigation systems
- Fruit tree pruning and management
- Seed production company
- Winter vegetable production
- Pet toy manufacture
- Natural pet food service
- Photos with exotic animals
- Vegetable garden setup and maintenance

Category: Business Services

Pros & Cons

- Consistent demand seasonally
- Up and down with the economy
- Some can be done online

Skills and Qualifications

- Some need business experience

Regulations

- May require bonding for services which enter offices after hours

Ideas

- Public Relations Specialist
- Poster, flyer and handbill distribution service
- Window displays
- Mailing list service
- Translation service
- Advertising coupon book
- Vehicle signs
- Parking lot cleaning & maintenance
- Inventory service
- After-hours office cleaning
- Information researcher
- Computer / software trainer

Category: Art and Craft

Pros & Cons

- Convert a hobby to a business
- Some crafts simple to learn
- Limited demand locally
- Can expand by selling online
- Time intensive

Skills and Qualifications

- Use the art/craft skills you already have

Regulations

- May be labeling or ingredient regulations for e.g. soap and other personal care items

Ideas

- On-the-spot portraits for tourists
- Rental artwork for offices and homes
- Hand-made greeting cards
- Hand-made jewelry
- Bird houses and feeders (decorative and functional)
- Garden furniture
- Craft kit design and production
- Sewing machine repair and service
- Custom soft furnishings
- Soap making
- Custom metalwork
- Ceramics and pottery

Category: Trades and Construction

Pros & Cons

- Many services needed whatever the economy is doing
- Low startup costs for many
- Some entail physical risks (e.g. roof & gutter work)

Skills and Qualifications

- Experience in the service you intend to provide
- Home Inspection benefits from CAHI or NAHI membership
- Many need physical fitness

Regulations

- Licenses needed for specific trades e.g. plumbing, electrical
- WCB coverage and insurance issues

Ideas

- Home Inspection
- Kitchen & Bathroom renovation
- Energy-conservation service
- Alternative Energy installer
- Hauling service
- Demolition service
- Construction cleanup
- Handyman service
- Appliance installation and removal
- Drain and gutter cleaning service
- Septic system pumpout and maintenance
- Greenhouse or shed kit manufacturer

Category: Computers

Pros & Cons

- Can work entirely from home over the Internet
- Many people already have the equipment
- Growing field, new niches
- Not tied to local economy
- Indoor, mostly desk-bound work
- Potential RSI problems
- Niches come and go quickly, very quick idea turnover

Skills and Qualifications

- Specific software and hardware expertise needed: credentials may be useful
- Many ideas need design skills
- Internet knowledge usually needed

Regulations

- Nothing computer-specific

Ideas

- Internet sales and mail-order
- Bookkeeping service
- Web site design, construction or maintenance
- Writing (resumes, manuals, reports, articles...)
- Online research training
- Ergonomics consulting
- Computer-Aided-Design (CAD) services
- Business Plan writing service
- Desktop Video / Multimedia production
- Classified Ad free paper
- Data and file conversion and rescue
- Self-publishing design and layout service

Category: Sports, Tourism and Entertainment

Pros & Cons

- Many are seasonal
- Growing demand for tourism-related services

Skills and Qualifications

- Varies widely

Regulations

- Hotel Keepers Act and PST requirements may apply to some

Ideas

- Bed & Breakfast
- Mobile DJ Service
- Special-interest camps (kids and adults)
- RV and boat storage service
- Used sports equipment sales
- Summer vending – sunglasses, sunscreen, beach toys...
- Adventure trip guide
- Romantic getaway planning
- Children's party equipment rental
- Event and concert planner
- Team uniform supply / cleaning service
- Traveling popcorn stand

Category: Health & medical

Pros & Cons

- Growing demand
- Some need low cash outlay for startup

Skills and Qualifications

- Specific education and training needed for many

Regulations

- Licensing needed for some services

Ideas

- First Aid and Earthquake kit supply
- Home convalescent care
- Herbalist (herbal medicine)
- Stop-smoking clinic/counseling
- Stress management clinic
- Disability consultant
- Senior daycare
- Medical equipment broker
- Check-up service for seniors, homebound
- In-home health care
- Nutrition and diet counseling
- Aromatherapy

Category: Miscellaneous

Pros & Cons

- Varies

Skills and Qualifications

- Varies

Regulations

- Varies

Ideas

- Mobile Auto detailing
- Garbage Can cleaning
- Locksmithing
- Wood pellet manufacturing
- Apartment cleaning (between renters)
- Packing, moving and storage service
- Mobile car dent removal and paint repair
- Firewood and kindling supply
- Tutoring & test coaching
- Local souvenir manufacturing
- Real Estate video and 360-degree photo service
- Fire & flood cleanup and restoration