

Thank you for your interest in being part of the FIN Food Business Incubator at Spice Bridge!

Spice Bridge provides space and support for the businesses who are part of our Incubator program. Spice Bridge also provides a community hub — a space where people can gather to learn about and celebrate the community's rich food traditions.



Entrepreneurs start working with us 4-6 months before they are ready to use the commercial kitchen space. In our Incubator, entrepreneurs work on their menus, pricing, marketing, sales channels, recipes, accounting, and other business planning and operations. Once a business is permitted and insured to use the kitchen, we also work together to build a market and customer base.

Every applicant is screened to ensure they meet basic program qualifications, including being a resident of South King County. See later in this document for more information on program qualifications.

Who can use the Spice Bridge Kitchen?

We do not offer commercial kitchen space to businesses who are not part of our program. You must meet our eligibility requirements and apply to join the Incubator.

What is the Food Business Incubator?

Our Incubator program supports entrepreneurs in launching their food business by providing affordable commercial kitchen and retail kiosk space, as well as connections to market channels and building necessary skills and experience to grow a stable business. Incubator participants are part of a business network—they participate in trainings, meet regularly with other participants, have shared responsibilities in maintaining the shared kitchen space, and work regularly with a business coach.



What types of food businesses can apply?

Our kitchen and support services support businesses wanting: to have a restaurant someday, offer catering, farmers' market/festivals, personal chefs, packaged goods, and food kiosks at Spice Bridge. Our kitchen would not work well for a food truck. We are open to learning about new business ideas, and want to make sure our business support and kitchen are a good match for your business idea.

Who is eligible to apply?

- You must live in South King County: Auburn, Burien, Des Moines, Federal Way, Kent, Renton, Tukwila, SeaTac, Skyway, or White Center/Boulevard Park. South of the Seattle City limits, and South of I-90.
- You must meet our **business ready requirements** (see below) and have an interest in working in a food business incubator program and shared commercial kitchen space.

- Your business must be in the **startup phase**. (Start-up food businesses have not yet formalized their business by entering into a commercial kitchen agreement, holding a Public Health permit, and are not yet “breaking even,” or making a profit from their business.)
- Your business must be at a point where most of your 2-3 year goals can be met by working through our incubator program.

We give priority to:

- **low-income families** (Living on less than 200% of the Poverty Level, or making more than 200% of the Poverty Level, but having trouble meeting your basic needs expenses)
- **immigrants, refugees and individuals from displaced indigenous communities**
- **BIPOC entrepreneurs**
- **Women**

What are the ‘business ready’ requirements?

To help you launch a successful business, it is important you have done some business preparation and planning. This means:

- You have a **written menu with pricing**. The business training and coach will help you figure out your menu and pricing. This may be included in your business plan.
- You have a **Washington State [food worker’s card](#)**. This is to ensure you have basic food safety knowledge.
- Business is in the **startup phase**, and/or most of your 2-3 year goals are a match to what the incubator is able to offer.
- You have an interest and willingness to work in a **shared commercial kitchen**, and to follow **incubator program timelines and guidelines**.
- **You must have a draft business plan**. There are many structures and formats a business plan can take, we offer a couple of outlines at the end of this document but you can also visit the library, research online, or get a business plan template from your business coach. You can write this on your own, with the help of a free business coach from one of our partners, or through an 8-week basic business course from [Ventures](#) or [Business Impact NW](#) (details below).

If you’d like to work on your business plan on your own, we have a list of useful resources and outlines included at the end of this packet.

Business Impact NW and Ventures offer free business coaching and can help you write a business plan. They also offer an 8-week basic business course; completed homework from one of these classes counts as a business plan. They have a sliding scale fee and are some classes are online. We can help you enroll in one of these business courses or connect you to a business coach to work on your business plan one on one.

- **Business Impact NW Launch & Grow Course (virtual)**
(<https://businessimpactnw.org/launch-your-business/launch-grow/>)
Special rate for FIN businesses: \$249. Email wbc@businessimpactnw.org and identify yourself as a Food Innovation Network business to get this special rate. Partial rebates are available upon completion.
- **Ventures Nonprofit Business Basics Course**
(<https://www.venturesnonprofit.org/courses/business-basics/>) Orientation is free. Business Basics is offered on a Sliding Scale.

When do I apply?

You may start the process at any time and encourage you let us know you are interested. We accept new businesses as openings are available. September 22nd, 2023 is the deadline for enrolling in the Incubator in early 2024, with a target business opening date of April 1, 2024. Once accepted into the program, we work with you 4-6 months on required permits, licenses and insurance, marketing needs, and a basic business plan to then use the kitchen.

What are my next steps to apply?

Applying to the FIN Incubator Program



When can I start using the kitchen?

Entrepreneurs start working with us 6-9 months (pre-incubation) before they are ready to use the commercial kitchen. During this time, we work with you on required permit/licenses, marketing, recipes, accounting, and other business planning and operations. A business must be permitted by Public Health and insured to use the kitchen.

Other things to know:

Some of the requirements to enter our program may take some time for you to complete, so please feel free to begin working on them now to prepare you for our next application phase.



Additional resources to help you get ready to start a food business or to join the incubator program:

- **If you have never worked in a commercial kitchen**, consider joining a program like Project Feast to gain these important skills. <http://projectfeast.org/training-programs.html>.
- **If you are not comfortable speaking and writing English**, please consider signing up for ESL classes at one of the local community colleges such as Highline College: <https://precollege.highline.edu/ESL.php>, or visit the King County Library's [Welcoming Center](#) at Kent Library for more resources. It's important that you can use English to communicate with peers and understand food safety and program expectations.
- **If you are not familiar with basic computer skills**, such as writing and responding to email, keeping an online calendar, using the internet to research, or filling out forms online, there are classes available through the King County Libraries or Seattle Public Libraries. There are also free classes available online at sites like <http://coursera.org>
- **If you want to write your business plan on your own rather than take a class, many good resources are available, including:**

SCORE [Business Plan for a Startup Business](#) (this is a complete business plan template that you can download and enter your own information into.)

King County Library Small Business Resources Center: <https://kcls.org/small-business-resources/>

Seattle Public Library Business Center: <https://www.spl.org/programs-and-services/business-and-nonprofit>

SBA Business Plan Writing Help: <http://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/starting-managing-business/starting-business>

Business Impact NW free business coaching: <http://www.businessimpactnw.org>

Ventures free business coaching: <http://venturesnonprofit.org>

StartZone and Small Business Development Center at Highline College: <https://sbdc.highline.edu/>

Other important skills to starting a business or being part of a business incubator are:

- Having good communication skills. Regularly checking email, text message, and voice mail and answering within 24 hours.
- Time management: Do you keep a calendar so you don't miss appointments and meetings? Do you know how long it will take for you to drive or take the bus to get to a meeting, so you are leaving your home with enough time?
- Collaboration: Are you interested in working with others in the incubator program: staff and other businesses?
- Organization: Do keep your papers in a place where you can find them? Are you able to find your equipment when you need it?
- Changes: Are you able to be flexible as changes happen?

Business Plans for FIN Incubator Applicants

A business plan is a document that tells others about your business idea, the work you have done to show that it makes sense as a business, and what you plan to do to make your business a success. Business plans are usually NOT a final document. You will keep working on it as you are running your business at the same time, and if you join our incubator program we will be helping you with your business plan. It does not need to be formal or perfect: the main goal of a business plan is to give you a way to explain why your business should exist, and why you are the best one to start this business.

If you don't know the answer to these questions, you can also write about what you need to know, and how you plan to learn more to find out the answers.

Option 1: Traditional Business Plan

A basic business plan should include:

1. A summary of your business idea:

- Business name, owner or owners, if you are already in business or when you plan to open.
- Your resume if you have one.
- The problem your business solves (hint: every business is solving someone's problem) and how you are solving this problem. Describe what your business sells, and where you will be selling. If it's a restaurant, describe the restaurant and the restaurant's location. If it's a packaged food business, list the kinds of stores, farmers markets, or other places you'll sell your foods.
- A mission statement if you have one.

2. Products offered:

- Menu with prices
- Description of each menu item
- Photos if you have them

3. Market research:

- What other businesses are there that are like yours?
- Who is your competition? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- Who is your target customer?
- How will you reach those customers? How will you market your business?
- If possible, include information about the location where you want to have your business.
- Why will customers choose your business over the competition?

4. The industry:

- What do you know about your industry? Is it growing? What trends do you think you can benefit from?

5. Financial projections:

- These should include the sales price of each of your items, and a list of all of the costs that go into that item.
- What are your startup expenses?
- What will your monthly expenses be?
- How much do you think you'll be able to sell each month over the next year (or more)?
- Will you be able to sell enough to cover those expenses?

Option 2: [Business Model Canvas and Financials](#)

You can download a template here: <https://www.strategyzer.com/library/the-business-model-canvas>

Option 3: You can also submit your completed workbook or worksheets from Business Impact NW's Launch and Grow class, or Venture's Business Basics class. If all of the homework has been completed, we can look at that as your draft business plan.

If you're not sure if your draft business plan will meet this requirement, feel free to reach out to us. We are happy to answer any questions, or look at your plan in advance.

For more information about the Food Business Incubator, please contact Njambi Gishuru at 206-291-7407 or njambi@foodinnovationnetwork.org.