

Business Briefs



WESTMINSTER BUSINESS INFO-LINE

Question? Complaint? Concern?
Call the Westminster Business Information Line:
303-658-2108
M-F 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., or leave a message after hours.
ecodevo@cityofwestminster.us

Business Assistance Resources in Westminster Help Companies to Start and GROW

OPENING A BUSINESS IN WESTMINSTER CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS 1, 2, 3.



From planning and training to financing and marketing, these local agencies cover the bases necessary for establishing a solid business presence in the community.

THE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER, THE METRO NORTH Chamber of Commerce and the City of Westminster are three organizations with staff and resources to support new and growing companies. From planning and training to financing and marketing, these local agencies cover the bases necessary for establishing a solid business presence in the community.

1

The North Metro Small Business Development Center, located at Front Range Community College's Westminster Campus, helps start-ups and emerging companies understand the realities of small business ownership, perform an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, and take advantage of many valuable resources.

The center offers free, confidential one-on-one counseling on various topics, including licensing, market research, financing, insurance, business plans and marketing strategies, as well as financial statement analysis, budgeting and projections. The center also schedules a wide range of seminars and workshops to offer training on topics related to starting or strengthening businesses.

The SBDC staff can provide and direct company owners to an extensive library of business information, much of it free and online. One storehouse for this information collection is the Colorado Business Resource Guide, a comprehensive business start-up guide, developed by federal and state business assistance agencies and the private sector. The guide can be found on the Colorado state government site (www.colorado.gov). Just search for Colorado Business Resource Guide.

2

When it comes time to file the paperwork to set up a business in the city, the City of Westminster is ready to assist. The city's Tax & License Toolbox is an online guide ([at www.cityofwestminster.us](http://www.cityofwestminster.us)) for licensing, sales and use tax, tax filing, forms, compliance and regulations. In addition the city offers the Capital Project Grant and the Small Business Training Scholarship programs to help defray some key business expenses.

The Capital Project Grant provides financial assistance to local businesses with 50 or fewer employees. The program reimburses 50 percent of one-time, project-related costs. One 2010 grant recipient was Plato BioPharma Incorporated, founded in 2009 by local entrepreneurs who developed facilities at the Church Ranch Business Center.

"Today with very tight financial markets, grant opportunities such as this are invaluable for startup companies," said Bob Leahy, Plato's business manager. "We raised money, but it's expensive. Here, we are basically getting free money, so we can go out and buy equipment that helps us pay off our debt. With the economic crash, people stopped loaning money and stopped giving venture capital. We were able to get that funding, due to the strength of our business model, but being able to get \$5,000 assistance from the city just helped.

"We love Westminster," Leahy added. "We are thrilled to be able to stay here and open a business. We like the relationship we have with the various departments of the city: economic development, fire, police. They are very business friendly. They do things in a logical fashion, while protecting the interests of the city and our neighbors."

Brad Harris, a franchise owner of Colorado Subway LLC, also received a \$5,000 grant in 2010. He put the funds toward remodeling and updating his Subway restaurant at 104th Avenue



GROWING BUSINESS: Nedra Cox (center), owner of La Bella Vita, is joined by Westminister Mayor Nancy McNally (left) at the ribbon cutting for the new business hosted by the Metro North Chamber of Commerce.

and Federal Boulevard, which was built about nine years ago.

"It just helped mentally with knowing that the city was taking a stake in our business, and it certainly feels good that they care about the businesses in the city," Harris said. "The grant process was very simple and straightforward. I filled out the application, and took before-and-after pictures. They came out and verified that the project was done, and got copies of invoices. It was as easy as that."

The city's Scholarship Program provides reimbursement of business training expenses to licensed Westminster entrepreneurs and small-business owners/employers with 50 or fewer employees. The program reimburses 50 percent of the cost of tuition, fees and required materials, up to \$500 per business, per calendar year, after successful completion of training in areas such as management, finance, marketing, computer skills and manufacturing trades.

Nedra Cox, the owner of La Bella Vita at 84th Avenue and Federal Boulevard, plans to apply for the scholarship this year to help with costs of training for her health and wellness business. Cox, who was new to the city before she opened her business in February 2010, said getting information from Westminster about the program has been quick and easy, and she has found all of the city's staff to be very helpful.

"The staff helped me with knowing what taxes had to be filed, and when they had to be filed. I called down there and he walked me through the entire process," Cox said.

3

As a new business owner, Cox has been taking full advantage of the services, groups and events of the Metro North Chamber of Commerce. She is a co-chair of one of the Chamber's many "leads" groups, which bring together a varied group of professionals weekly to network and build relationships.

"It's a good way to have business development partners and associates, who are more than willing to give information back and forth. It's not even about the number of leads that you get, but more about building relationships of trust with people, so we can confidently recommend someone we trust to our clients who trust our integrity," she said.

Cox is also part of the chamber's Leadership Program, which not only builds members' knowledge about the community and leadership, but connects them to business, nonprofit and government contacts. When her business opened, chamber members from the Ambassador Program helped with the ribbon-cutting celebration. Ambassadors also help with the chamber's after hours business mixers.

The organization's other networking and information events include development council breakfasts on key community topics, an annual fundraising and award gala, a 5K walk/run, and the Taste of the Chamber event. Member services include legislative advocacy, online information resources, a workers' compensation program and a membership directory and buyers guide.

"I would tell any new member that the Chamber of Commerce is an invaluable tool for your business. You learn a lot from the people you associate with, and build great relationships," Cox explained. "As far as the City of Westminster, you should really dig in and find out what's available out there. There are a lot of resources out there, and a whole staff of people there to help."

3 IMPORTANT WESTMINSTER BUSINESS RESOURCES

North Metro Small Business Development Center:

www.frontrange.edu/smallbusiness
Front Range Community College, Rm. C2006,
3645 W. 112th Ave., Westminster, CO 80031
303-460-1032

City of Westminster:

Existing Business Services:
<http://www.ci.westminster.co.us/974.htm>

Tax & License Toolbox:

<http://www.ci.westminster.co.us/1044.htm>
4800 West 92nd Avenue Westminster, CO 80031
Contact: Becky Nelson, Economic Development Specialist
303-658-2110; bnelson@cityofwestminster.us

Metro North Chamber of Commerce:

www.metronorthchamber.com
14583 Orchard Parkway, Suite 300,
Westminster, CO 80023
Contact: Joni States, Vice President of Member Services
303-288-1000 ext. 2;
joni@metronorthchamber.com