



**Frequently asked questions for business advisors**

*Revised January 22, 2026*

**Contents**

- Elevate Hennepin overview ..... 2
- Laying a solid foundation for Minnesota’s future economy ..... 2
- Elevate Hennepin advisors – Critical to the success of this work ..... 2
- Elevate Hennepin: A critical bridge ..... 2
- Eligible activities ..... 3
- Service hours ..... 4
- Idea Stage ..... 7
- Location requirements ..... 8
- Types of businesses ..... 10
- Eligible expenses ..... 13
- Client care ..... 14
- Referrals and services offerings ..... 16
- Data usage ..... 18
- Invoicing ..... 19
- Communications ..... 23
- Resources ..... 24

*Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HCHRA) reserves the right to revise this document without notice. With regard to this document, terms of any applicable HCHRA contracts apply and shall control.*

## **Elevate Hennepin overview**

Elevate Hennepin brings together experts, tools, and programs thoughtfully designed to help new and established businesses gain their footing, plan for next steps, and expand upon their success.

Thanks to support from Hennepin County and partner cities, Elevate Hennepin offers access to a wealth of no-cost advisors, cohort learning, and a resource directory of events and resources for small businesses.

The questions and answers below cover one-on-one advisor services only.

## **Laying a solid foundation for Minnesota's future economy**

Elevate Hennepin aims to advance an inclusive and equitable economy in Hennepin County and beyond. This economy will be made by the hands of those starting from scratch, building something fresh, striking out and stretching the marketplace with new ideas, ingenuity, and determination. For our economy to work for everyone, it needs everyone – including you.

## **Elevate Hennepin advisors – Critical to the success of this work**

Elevate Hennepin advisors represent the diversity of the businesses they serve. They are professional, experienced leaders serving businesses across the full spectrum of business stages, sectors, and disciplines. They bring cultural understanding to their practice and provide services in many different languages. Businesses can get up to 25 hours of consulting service within a 2 year period from each advisor at no cost, bringing enterprise level support to Hennepin County business owners.

## **Elevate Hennepin - A critical bridge**

Elevate Hennepin is more than just a government program that funds organizations doing good work. We ask our advisors to not just provide service, but to be knowledgeable about, and connect entrepreneurs to the wide array of resources offered to Hennepin County businesses through the Elevate Hennepin network and through other agencies.

When organizations work in silos, we know that businesses miss out on services and opportunities. That's why we ask our advisors to get to know each other, to learn about

other resources available to businesses, and to make connections that will support business owners beyond the services they provide. Our advisors are key ambassadors for this vision and a critical bridge between government, other business technical assistance providers, institutional lenders, and other small business support organizations. We help build that knowledge by providing information in communications and the monthly advisor meetings.

## Eligible activities

The goal of Elevate Hennepin is to provide peer learning, advising, and consulting services that get clients to the next step that will stabilize or help them grow – or help them get unstuck from an issue that is holding them back. The focus of the services should be helping the business owner understand processes, develop skills and strategy, improve operations, and establish better systems that will stabilize and strengthen the business. Elevate Hennepin advisors may provide a one-time consulting service – like enhancing a website, developing a marketing strategy for a new product, defining a business strategy, or designing and planning a short social media campaign – that the business can continue to maintain or replicate on their own in the future. An invaluable by-product of this work is that it increases owners' confidence in their abilities and their business.

While it is our goal to support as many businesses as possible, **Elevate Hennepin cannot meet every client's needs**. Elevate Hennepin advisory services are not intended to replace staff or provide ongoing professional services that most businesses need to run their business on a daily basis.

## Business Registration

### Can a business receive support if they are not registered with the state?

We ask that all businesses that work with an advisor, not in the idea stage, be registered with the Secretary of State of Minnesota. Advisors are responsible for checking if the business or a DBA is registered with the State of Minnesota before determining their scope of work. You can use the following link to [Search Business Filings](#) to find the registration details. We understand that some businesses may choose not to register with the SOS for unique reasons. If you have a business request to work with you and

they are not registered with SOS, please contact Elevate Hennepin staff to discuss the situation.

A business signed up to work with idea stage advisors are not required to be registered with the state and can work with their advisor up to 15 hours at no-cost.

## Service hours

### **Can a business receive more than 25 hours of service from my organization?**

Generally, we ask the advisor to have a strong sense of what types of services and projects can be completed within 25 hours for registered businesses and 15 hours for businesses in the idea stage. Together the advisor and client should identify a project that can be accomplished within 25 hours or less. Advisors may spend up to 25 hours with a client within the span of a few weeks or a month or may meet with a client for a few hours every month for several months. Larger projects and services that would take 12 months or more to complete are considered beyond the scope of Elevate Hennepin. Businesses have access to up to 25 hours of support per advisor every two years.

We also recognize that there may be times when a project may go slightly beyond your projected hours. If you are approaching the 25-hour cap with a client, and you feel that additional hours are necessary, complete an "Additional Hours Request Form," available on the [advisor toolkit page](#) under key documents. Then schedule a meeting with Elevate Hennepin staff [lxchel.McKinnei@hennepin.us](mailto:lxchel.McKinnei@hennepin.us) to make the case for additional hours. Form submission and the meeting should take place prior to working with a client beyond the 25-hours. Additional hours for idea stage clients, not registered with the state, will not be approved.

These requests are decided on a case-by-case basis using criteria such as what additional work needs to be done. Additional hour requests will not be approved if you, as an advisor, have a waiting list that exceeds two weeks. Advisors are encouraged to refer businesses to other advisors in the network if they feel that the business needs a different type of expertise, or a different type of service than they can provide in 25 hours.

### **Is there a cap on the number of advisors a business can work with?**

There is no limit on the number of advisors a business can work with. The only limit is the 25 hours per advisor per business registered with the state of Minnesota, and 15 hours for businesses in the idea stage or not registered with the state of Minnesota. However, we do ask that a business owner not wait more than 2 weeks to receive support.

### **Can additional hours be requested?**

To be good steward of the budget, we ask advisors and business owners to identify a scope of work that can be accomplished within 25 hours. Under certain circumstances a few additional hours may be granted to finish a project. Advisors will need to meet with a Hennepin County staff member to make the case of additional hours. However, there is no guarantee that additional hours will be granted.

### **Can I work with a business owner for an additional 25 hours if I am contracted for more than one area of support?**

Hours are per advisor, not per area of support. If you are contracted for various areas of support and have reached your 25 hours, you can submit an additional hours request form available on the [advisor toolkit page](#) under key documents, and schedule a call with [lxchel.mckinnie@hennepin.us](mailto:lxchel.mckinnie@hennepin.us) to discuss the scope of work for up to an additional 25 hours. The request for additional hours is approved on a case-by-case basis, rarely will someone be permitted to work over 50 hours with one advisor. An additional intake form will not be required. Intakes are per advisor not per area of support.

### **How do I know if this project would be considered ongoing maintenance or if it helps the business get to the next step?**

As part of your responsibility to the client, business advisors should have a strong understanding of what types of services and projects can be completed within 25 hours, what will make a difference in the business, as well as the tasks or “homework” that a business owner should be prepared to undertake to achieve the desired outcome. We trust that advisors will have a sense of whether the scope and expertise require a more specialized team that should be a paid service beyond Elevate Hennepin. We encourage you to discuss the scope and outcomes of the work, along with the client responsibilities with them, so that expectations are clear to everyone involved. For some clients their

needs, and the quality and caliber of work may result in them hiring the advisor to continue to work with the business after they have used their Elevate Hennepin hours. The business must request this next step of service; the advisor cannot solicit or sell to the business owner while they are under the Elevate Hennepin contract.

**If a business owner has already received 25 hours of service from my organization, can they receive another 25 hours of service from *another* advisor?**

Yes! Businesses can receive 25 hours of no-cost service per advisor. Advisors are encouraged to network with other advisors in the Elevate Hennepin network and connect their clients to other advisors who offer expertise or services that would help their businesses thrive. Advisors can use the referral form to directly refer to another advisor. The referral form can be found on the Advisor Online Toolkit. If the referral form is completed the business owner receiving the service does not have to complete another intake, if there is one already on file.

**Can multiple business entities with the same owner receive 25 hours of service per Hennepin County entity?**

Yes. A business owner with multiple business entities may receive 25 hours of service per *legal* entity from the same advisor. Example: Business owner has an interior design consulting business that is a separate legal entity from a home décor retail shop that they also own. They may receive 25 hours from Advisor A for the consulting business, and 25 hours from Advisor A for the retail shop provided both entities are based in Hennepin County. They must complete an online intake for each entity.

**Can a single business entity with multiple business locations receive 25 hours of service per location?**

No. A single business entity with multiple locations is only eligible for 25 hours of service per advisor.

**What about returning clients and clients exceeding 25 hours over calendar year?**

Our goal is to provide vital advising and consulting to help businesses address specific needs, and tackle challenges as they grow. Elevate Hennepin does not provide ongoing, routine back-office support.

The maximum 25 hours per advisor as a 2-year cap. Advisors always have the option to request additional hours by completing the additional hours request form on the [advisor toolkit page](#) under key documents. A meeting with Elevate Hennepin staff may be required to discuss the scope of work.\*

Here are a few general “Do’s and Don’ts” intended to help guide Elevate Hennepin Advisors

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support to tackle a specific need or challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist with day-to-day business operations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support business owners at key points of growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing back-office support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve new clients who need expert consulting and lack access or resources without Elevate Hennepin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve the same clients on a repeat or routine basis in excess of 25-hours total over 2 years</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve clients referred to you through Elevate Hennepin’s navigators and/or intake form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use your contract to cover the cost of existing clients who would otherwise pay for your time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure all clients you serve have completed an intake form through <a href="http://www.elevatehennepin.org">www.elevatehennepin.org</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with any client without an intake form on file</li> </ul>

*\* Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis, with no guarantee of approval.*

## Idea stage

Idea stage was a new area of support in 2025. Idea stage advisors have been selected to guide Hennepin County residents with a business idea through the process of deciding to launch and if appropriate register their business with the State of Minnesota.. These clients are eligible for 15 hours of support from idea stage advisors. Clients in the idea stage and not registered with the state should be working with an idea stage advisor. If

you are not an idea stage advisor, you should make a referral so they can work with someone contracted to provide these services. All idea stage advisors are listed [here](#).

### **Does a business have to be registered with the state for idea stage?**

Hennepin County does not require registration with the secretary of state for idea stage businesses. However, we do encourage advisors to share the pros and cons of registering with the business owner. If a business decides to register the idea stage advisor can help them or refer them to another advisor to assist with the decision to and the act of registering.

### **When is an idea stage business eligible to work with other advisors for 25 hours?**

Working with an idea stage advisor helps clients decide if the business idea is feasible and if they are prepared to be a business owner. Together the advisor and client work on the key elements of starting a business including understanding the product, customer, and pricing. After this the advisor can support the business owner to determine next steps, and if applicable refer them to an advisor in that area of support. Business owners must be registered with the State of Minnesota to work with other advisors.

## **Location requirements**

### **How is eligibility for Elevate Hennepin determined?**

Advisors are required to verify eligibility by looking up the business address on the Hennepin County Property Search database. If the business is physically located in Hennepin, it is eligible for Elevate Hennepin support. If the business hasn't been established, eligibility is determined by the client's residential address. See more information below.

### **How do I verify that the business's location is in Hennepin County?**

The Hennepin County Property Search database should be used to **verify addresses, found here:** <https://www.hennepin.us/residents/property/property-information-search>. It is not uncommon for locations in cities on the County's border to be mistaken as Hennepin County addresses, or for businesses to represent a location in Minneapolis when located someplace else. **Double-check the address for all businesses when you receive a request.**

### **When a business registers through the Elevate Hennepin website, are they automatically verified as a Hennepin County business?**

No. Advisors are required to verify that the information submitted by the business is accurate and that the business meets the criteria for services, as outlined in Attachment B of your organization's Elevate Hennepin contract. Advisors should verify every business location address. Business location can be verified through the [Hennepin County's Property Search database](#).

### **The business has multiple locations, within and outside of Hennepin County. Are they eligible for Elevate Hennepin?**

The business location receiving services must be a Hennepin County location. Elevate Hennepin services cannot be used primarily for an affiliated location outside of Hennepin County. Examples:

- A Hennepin County business with locations in Hennepin and Ramsey County wants to use Elevate Hennepin to develop a new website. **This is eligible.**
- A business with an office in Hennepin County wants to access Elevate Hennepin services to improve operations at a location in Washington County. **This is not eligible.**

### **An aspiring entrepreneur contacted me for services, but they have not identified a business location. How can I determine if they are eligible?**

Hennepin County residents are eligible to use Elevate Hennepin for businesses in the idea stage. Verify their home address using the [Hennepin County's Property Search database](#). If a Hennepin County resident is planning to open their business outside of Hennepin County, please refer them to the economic development office of the county where they plan to open their business for assistance.

### **A business from another county is interested in opening a business in Hennepin County. Are they eligible?**

Business owners with a location outside of Hennepin County or aspiring business owners outside of Hennepin County are eligible if they can document a potential business site within the county OR if they receive sponsorship from a city economic development professional in a Hennepin County city. Documentation can include a lease or purchase agreement for space in Hennepin County.

Clients that are sponsored by a city should list the City Hall address as the business location and the sponsoring city in the Business Name field. If the client states they are sponsored by a city, they should note it on the submission form.

If you are unsure, please contact Hennepin County staff. Invoices and reports should note the Hennepin County location in the explanation of services provided.

**My client’s business address is at a co-working space in Hennepin County, but they live in another county. Are they eligible?**

Yes. Renting a co-working space in Hennepin County counts. Please be aware we do not accept P.O. boxes.

**My client’s business address is not in Hennepin County, but they have clients and customers in Hennepin County. Are they eligible?**

No. Eligibility is determined by the location of the business when registered with the state. Businesses that do not have a brick-and-mortar location in Hennepin County are not eligible for services regardless of where their customers are located. Conducting business in Hennepin County or having clients in Hennepin County is not sufficient to establish eligibility. If they are a resident of Hennepin County and their business is done out of their home, the business address would be their home address.

**Types of businesses**

Industries such as finance, real estate, and insurance are highly regulated, and we strongly encourage business advisors to avoid providing services that are not specifically within their background or area of expertise. See more specific details below.

The Elevate Hennepin program does not include support for organizations who’s primary service is lobbying. As a government entity, unit we want to ensure we remain neutral and are not sponsoring political advocacy for private organizations, either directly or indirectly.

**May I support real estate transactions through Elevate Hennepin?**

Elevate Hennepin does not include real estate agents or brokers among our advisor network and Elevate Hennepin does not cover real estate transaction costs a business

may incur. Individuals or businesses seeking to buy or sell investment property are not eligible for Elevate Hennepin consulting services.

However, Elevate Hennepin advisors include legal and financial professionals who may provide consulting to help a business owner assess the legal and financial aspects of leasing or buying commercial space where the majority of the building will be used to conduct the day-to-day operations of the owner's business.

### **Can I provide guidance to landlords, real estate development companies, or homeowners associations outside of a real estate transaction?**

Elevate Hennepin advisors may provide limited support; however, industries of this nature require specialized industry knowledge that is not in the scope of Elevate Hennepin services. It is often in the best interest of the client to seek out professionals that specialize in their industry. We leave it to the advisor's discretion on whether they can or should provide this specific type of support.

Elevate Hennepin does not include real estate agents or brokers among our advisor network and Elevate Hennepin does not cover real estate transaction costs a business may incur. Individuals or businesses seeking to buy or sell investment property are not eligible for Elevate Hennepin consulting services. However, Elevate Hennepin advisors include legal and financial professionals who may provide consulting to help a business owner assess the legal and financial aspects of leasing or buying commercial space where the majority of the building will be used to conduct the day-to-day operations of the owner's business.

### **Do you support franchise businesses?**

Franchise owners and agents often receive significant levels of support from their corporate affiliations and may have limited ability to implement specialized recommendations from advisors and / or rules and regulations that they are required to adhere to. Please learn more about the franchise and manage expectations about what the business owner may implement if you decide to provide advisory services to a franchise business.

Elevate Hennepin’s Growth Series (CEO Next, HR Next, CEO Now, and CEO Start) only supports for-profit businesses. Nonprofits and franchises are not eligible to participate in these group-learning opportunities.

### **Will I have the opportunity to serve businesses through Elevate Hennepin that contribute to my organizational mission?**

Elevate Hennepin business navigators refer clients to advisors based primarily on the business client’s stated needs and the expertise provided by the advisors. In matching business needs with advisor expertise, navigators may consider a business clients stated need to be served by a specific cultural community and match that business client with an appropriate advisor specializing in doing business with that community. Navigators will also consider a client’s requested language and translation needs in making referrals.

Contractually, business advisors are not allowed to prohibit participation in or the benefits of any program, service or activity on the grounds of any protected status or class, including but not limited to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, gender expression, gender identity, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or public assistance status. No person who is protected by applicable law against discrimination shall be subjected to discrimination.

We encourage all advisors to promote their services, and Elevate Hennepin resources in general, broadly, and inclusively. Advisors are encouraged to engage in promotion and outreach among cultural communities that align with their missions. Advisor’s should not rely fully on referrals from Elevate Hennepin Business Navigators to spend their NTE, but by cooperatively promoting in collaboration with the Hennepin County Economic Development department.

### **Are home-based businesses eligible?**

Yes, home-based businesses are eligible if the business owner’s home is located in Hennepin County. Verify their home address using the [Hennepin County Property Search database](#). Residents of other counties whose businesses do not have a brick-and-mortar location in Hennepin County are not eligible for services. Please refer them to the economic development office of the county in which they are based for assistance.

## **Are nonprofits eligible for Elevate Hennepin one-on-one advisory services and cohort programs?**

Yes, nonprofits are eligible to receive Elevate Hennepin services. However, Elevate Hennepin has been developed to focus on for-profit businesses. To maximize support available for businesses, we ask that you restrict promotion of Elevate Hennepin to private sector businesses. Business and strategic planning advisors should refer clients to resources in the region, including [Propel Nonprofits](#) and [Minnesota Council of Nonprofits](#).

If your organization has a strong background in supporting non-profit entities—which have different legal, corporate, and revenue structures than small businesses—you may provide services. We do require that a non-profit seeking Elevate Hennepin support are physically located in Hennepin County, have 501c3 status, and been in existence for at least 1 year. In addition, they must also have at least one W2 employee that works for the non-profit.

Elevate Hennepin’s Growth Series (CEO Next, HR Next, CEO Now, and CEO Start) only supports for-profit businesses. Nonprofits and franchises are not eligible to participate in these group-learning opportunities.

## **Can advisors utilize Elevate Hennepin Services?**

Business advisors with a contract to perform services may seek services *from other advisors* in the network if they are a registered business in Hennepin County. However, we do ask advisors to respect the service and limit usage and connect with an Elevate Staff member to confirm approval. In addition, advisors may not provide services to their own organization and charge Hennepin County.

## **Eligible expenses**

### **May I bill Hennepin County for time spent networking with potential clients or prospecting clients?**

Networking and prospecting in general are not billable. However, there may be occasions when we ask an advisor to attend or present at an outreach event, and in some cases, this time may be billable. Be sure to confirm whether any of these events

are billable beforehand, and make sure there is shared understanding of the amount of time that is billable. We recommend a quick confirmation email to avoid misunderstandings.

### **May I bill Hennepin County for time spent doing the client intake?**

Time spent on the intake to determine “fit” and scope of work, up to 30 minutes, **can not** be invoiced. Once the client confirms they want to move forward with scope of work all hours can be invoiced.

### **May I bill Hennepin County for time spent preparing invoicing?**

Time spent on invoicing at the end of each billing period is not considered an eligible expense. However, your contract will specify if you are an organization that is allowed to bill \$375 for administrative work each quarter. If you are allowed, the administrative fee must be billed at the end of each quarter, not in the beginning of the quarter nor in total at the end of the year.

### **Why don't you pay for administrative time spent on invoicing and prospecting clients?**

Recognizing that companies may have overhead associated with delivering services, Hennepin County pays an hourly rate that is comparable or higher than other government entities. Advisors are allowed to bill for the allotted administrative amount each quarter, if noted in their contract. Any amount over the quarterly administrative amount allowed is considered overhead and is built into the hourly rate.

### **Can I bill Elevate Hennepin if a client doesn't show up for an intake or advisor session?**

No, you cannot bill Elevate Hennepin if clients don't show up for a session. It is strongly recommended that you establish a late, no-show policy that is communicated in your initial email to the client.

## **Client care**

### **I received a request to provide services through the website, what is the next step?**

The service expectation is that you contact the client within 2 business days of receiving a request for service from the website. This can be done via email and should include instructions on how the client can schedule time to meet with an advisor or intake person within your organization.

### May I provide an auto-response to fulfill the 2-day response time?

You may provide an automatically generated email that has a clear path for scheduling an initial assessment. Automatically generated emails should not defer a response to a later date.

### I am at capacity and will not be able to take on clients for a while. What should I do?

Advisors must submit an [intake change form](#) to deactivate and reactivate your intake form.

You are responsible for communicating with prospective clients and letting them know when you're at capacity, and what the expected wait time to meet with you will be. Please suggest that the client connect with the [Business Navigator](#) to be referred to another advisor if they would prefer not to wait. See an example of a notification below.

*Thank you for reaching out. I would be happy to schedule a time to meet with you to assess your business needs. I would like to schedule a 15-minute call to determine if our services are a good fit for your business. Please note that due to the Elevate Hennepin's popularity, I anticipate **an xx week wait prior to beginning an engagement.***

*If you do not wish to wait, please contact a [Hennepin County Business Navigator](#) to schedule a 15-minute consultation to be recommended to another advisor.*

### A client has requested expertise or services that I cannot provide. What can I do?

- Refer the client to email [elevate@hennepin.us](mailto:elevate@hennepin.us) or [schedule time](#) to be connected to a business navigator.
- Get to know other advisors in the Elevate Hennepin network so that you can make appropriate and skillful referrals using our referral form and system.
- Be sure you communicate the nuances of your service to Hennepin County staff, so we can ensure we are making appropriate referrals and can update your advisor card on the Elevate Hennepin web site.
- Refer the client for another no-cost resource available in the region that you believe best meets the client's needs.

### I am funded by multiple agencies, not just Hennepin County. Why should I talk about Elevate Hennepin with my client?

Recognition is important for all agencies that provide funding for small business consulting. For transparency, business owners should know where the funding for consulting services comes from.

We ask that you discuss Elevate Hennepin with your client because you are part of the Elevate Hennepin network that connects business owners to not just other Elevate advisors, but other resources available to business owners through DEED, the SBA, and our city partners. When you discuss Elevate with your client, suggest they explore [www.elevatehennepin.org](http://www.elevatehennepin.org), helping them connect to other advisors, events, and resources that are funded through multiple agencies. It is our goal to ensure that Hennepin businesses are connected to these resources and can access them.

## Referrals and services offerings

### How do I refer a client to another advisor?

The best practice is to contact the advisor to let them know about the referral, verify their availability, and complete a [referral form](#). You can access and provide your client with a direct link to the individual advisor's resource card on [www.elevatehennepin.org](http://www.elevatehennepin.org). Sending a personalized introduction to the advisor and the client is also recommended.

### Where can I find the advisor contact information?

The [Advisor Toolkit | Elevate Hennepin](#) includes a [referral guide](#) \* indicating which advisors specialize in specific areas.

*\*We are working on creating an update referral guide*

### My client needs services for which I am not contracted to provide through Elevate Hennepin, but that my organization offers through other funding sources. Can I provide that service?

Contracts allow for up to three hours of service outside of what you are contracted for through Elevate Hennepin. Beyond the three hours, you will only be reimbursed for services through Elevate Hennepin that are in your contract. If a client would benefit from services beyond what you are contracted to provide through Elevate Hennepin, you should refer them to another advisor in the network or refer them to other resources that are free to the client. **Note, advisors may not solicit for fee-based**

**business through Elevate Hennepin.** However, offering additional services to the client at no-cost under your contract with another funder is allowed.

**My client needs services for which I am not contracted to provide through Elevate Hennepin, but that my organization offers via a class or other paid opportunity. May I refer them to this other opportunity?**

No. While you may make them aware that you offer services on a fee basis in general, you must prioritize referring them to another resource within the Elevate Hennepin network or another no-cost resource available in the region that best meets the client's needs. **Referring clients to a paid opportunity is considered a conflict of interest.**

**If my client's business is in Hennepin County, but they did NOT find me through Elevate Hennepin can I bill my time for their services?**

Yes. As with all clients, they must complete the intake form. Each intake is unique to each advisor and is located on the resource card designated to the advisor – [click here for a list of all advisor resource cards](#). Advisors can share the link with Business Clients from the website or put it on their website for convenience. Each unique intake includes the same business questions as well as privacy details, data sharing practices and acknowledgements businesses need to know to use or qualify for services. The form should only take the business owner 3 to 5 minutes to complete.

**Where can I refer small business owners who are outside of Hennepin County for assistance?**

Businesses located in Minnesota are eligible for technical assistance through the State of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Small Business Partnerships Program (see link below). All of DEED's Small Business Partners that serve Hennepin County businesses are listed in the Elevate Hennepin website, so for Hennepin County businesses the Elevate Hennepin website is a "one stop shop" for consulting and technical assistance.

**[Small Business Partnerships Program / Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development \(mn.gov\)](#)**

Businesses can also check with their county to see what small business support programs are available.

- Anoka County Regional Economic Development:  
<https://www.anokacountysuccess.org/>
- Carver County Community Development Agency:  
<https://www.carvercda.org/community-economic-development/open-to-business/economic-development/open-to-business/>
- Dakota County Community Development Agency:  
<https://www.dakotacda.org/community-development/>
- Ramsey County Workforce and Business Development:  
<https://www.ramseycounty.us/businesses/workforce-business-development>
- Scott County Economic Development:  
[https://www.scottcountymn.gov/1073/Economic-DevelopmentDevelopment](https://www.scottcountymn.gov/1073/EconomicDevelopment)
- Washington County Community Development Agency:  
<https://www.washingtoncountycda.org/economic-development/>
- Wright County Economic Development Authority:  
<https://www.co.wright.mn.us/1012/Economic-Development-Authority>

## Data usage

### How does Hennepin County use the data about clients submitted through invoices and the web site?

Hennepin County recognizes that privacy and trust are of utmost importance to businesses seeking services through Elevate Hennepin. The certifications and acknowledgements form contains a data privacy statement known as a “Tennessee warning” that informs business clients of their rights and how their information is used. Please refer to your contracts for a full description of applicable laws.

In accordance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, some of the information shared through the Elevate Hennepin Initiative is considered private, confidential, and/or nonpublic data under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. The County is collecting this information to better understand who is using this technical assistance. The County will use the information to demonstrate outcomes and improve technical assistance offered to business owners. Clients are not legally required

to provide information and may refuse to complete this intake form, but technical assistance cannot be provided under the Elevate Hennepin initiative without it. If the client opts to not provide the requested information, the County may not fund participation in this opportunity.

The following persons or entities may access the information you provide: the County and County employees, participating Hennepin County cities, and any business advisor assigned to the client through the Elevate Hennepin initiative. All data will be handled in compliance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. Certain information, such as the names and addresses of businesses, may be deemed public information by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and may be provided to cities that invest in Elevate Hennepin. Client data is not used to determine a business owners' eligibility for *other* county services. We may share *aggregate* information and data that is deemed public information with other county departments and with cities that invest in Elevate Hennepin.

## Invoicing

### How do I invoice for payment?

Please review the 2026 Elevate Hennepin [Advisor Invoice Process](#) stored on the Advisor Online Toolkit. To receive payment for services rendered, advisors must submit an invoice and complete the business client report provided (template is include on the [Advisor Online Toolkit](#) under the section titled invoice documents) by the Elevate Hennepin team. We will provide the spreadsheet and ask that you create and submit invoices that must include:

- Vendor letterhead or logo with vendor name
- Unique invoice number
- Invoice date
- Contract number
- Period of service dates
- Number of hours x rate
- Admin fee billing (only at the end of each quarter)

- Amount/rate/total

The business client report is required with your invoice. This form is an Excel spreadsheet that provides our team with the required outcomes needed for data reporting. All businesses listed in the Business Client Report will be checked to assure they have completed an intake and are in our system. If they have not completed the form, you will be notified and asked to have them complete before payment for their services will be submitted.

### **Does my client need to have a 2026 intake form on file, even if they already completed a form in 2025?**

No, clients who have completed an intake form in 2025 do not have to complete an intake for 2026. An intake is required for new clients or those who worked with an advisor before 2025.

### **Can I invoice for hours spent consulting with clients during a prior contract term?**

At the end of a contract period, Hennepin County staff will provide information about the deadline for submitting final invoices. Invoices must be submitted no later than 2 weeks after the contract end date. In certain cases, invoices must be provided BEFORE the contract end date. If that is the case, county staff will provide appropriate notice ahead of time. Outside of the established window of time for final invoices, payments cannot be issued for contracts that have expired without a purchase order.

### **Where can I find information about clients that connected with me through the Elevate Hennepin website?**

You should receive a notification each time an intake is completed. If you are not receiving those notification emails, please check your spam folder or/and connect with [Amran.Nur@hennepin.us](mailto:Amran.Nur@hennepin.us). In addition, client connections are summarized and emailed to you in a CVS report on a weekly basis. You may email Amran Nur at

[Amran.Nur@Hennepin.us](mailto:Amran.Nur@Hennepin.us) anytime to receive a summary of client connections to date.

**Do I need to submit individual sessions with a client?**

No. Please submit one line for each client served and summarize the services provided, in your Business Client Report. You can list all the businesses you worked with during a billing period in the Business Client Report.

**Do I need to provide session notes for individual sessions billed?**

No. Please **do not** provide individual session notes. The Business Client Report has drop down menu for all outcomes reported. They include high level outcomes connected to your area of support that we are choosing to track. No additional notes or overview are necessary. Please do *not* share sensitive information about the business with us.

**Do I need to fill out all the fields on the invoice Business Client Report spreadsheet?**

Yes. If you do not have the information from the client, please indicate that you do not have it in the field provided. If you have any questions regarding outcomes reporting, please email [lxchel.mckinnie@hennepin.us](mailto:lxchel.mckinnie@hennepin.us).

**I don't have an address for my client. Can I still submit their session for payment?**

No. Address verification is required, since Elevate Hennepin one-on-one advising is only offered to existing and prospective businesses located in Hennepin County. Please verify addresses here: <https://gis.hennepin.us/property/>. A best practice includes collecting the data needed for the invoicing (including the address) during the initial intake meeting.

**If my client completes the intake form on the website, do I still need to submit demographic and business information on the excel spreadsheet?**

No. You will only need to submit all information requested on the excel spreadsheet prior to submitting the invoice.

**Why are you asking me to provide lending information about my client, if I did not make a loan?**

If you are working with a client that is in the pipeline for lending, we want to capture accurate information about how your services contributed to their ability to access capital.

### **Are the acknowledgements and certifications forms required to be submitted prior to payment?**

Yes. Clients are required to complete the acknowledgements and certifications forms that are included in the online intake form. This can be done either through the website when they submit an inquiry through each advisors unique intake form linked to advisor resource cards. You are responsible for ensuring this intake form is completed and submitted. It is recommended they complete these forms before services are provided, but it is mandatory to have them completed before any hours are invoiced. If you need assistance verifying that the client has completed the Connect form, please contact [Amran.Nur@hennepin.us](mailto:Amran.Nur@hennepin.us).

### **Why are the acknowledgements and certifications forms required to be collected?**

The certifications and acknowledgements form contains a data privacy statement known as a "Tennessee warning" that informs business clients of their rights and how their information is used. Hennepin County and vendors working for the County are required by state law to provide this statement, any time we ask for private or confidential information. Because this is a legal obligation, we cannot waive Hennepin County's requirement to provide these disclosures to Elevate Hennepin participants. The County must also require a participant's signature on the form to prove the disclosures were provided to the client.

The acknowledgements in the form aim to generate transparency that Hennepin County is funding technical assistance and will be sharing future communications with clients. In addition, the form seeks to generate a shared understanding of the client's responsibility to complete follow-up surveys about Elevate Hennepin.

### **How do I check if my client has filled out a "Schedule a Consultation" form containing Hennepin County's acknowledgements and certifications?**

You will receive a notification from the website letting you know that a business has connected with you. If you want to keep these for your records, the email notification is your opportunity to retain these documents. You may email Amran Nur at [Amran.Nur@Hennepin.us](mailto:Amran.Nur@Hennepin.us) to receive a *summary* of client connections to date. In addition, you will receive an automated report every week listing all the businesses that

have requested your services in that week. If the report is empty when you receive it, that means you did not receive any requests that week.

### **Who do I follow up with if I have questions about the invoicing form or process?**

Please contact [Ixchel.Mckinnie@hennepin.us](mailto:Ixchel.Mckinnie@hennepin.us) for any questions regarding invoicing.

### **Who do I follow up with if I have a question about invoice payment or ACH direct deposit?**

Please email Simran Aryal at [Simran.Aryal@hennepin.us](mailto:Simran.Aryal@hennepin.us) and [Ixchel.Mckinnie@hennepin.us](mailto:Ixchel.Mckinnie@hennepin.us). Checks are mailed unless you sign up for ACH direct deposit. Please allow up to 2 weeks for payment after we let you know that it has been processed.

### **How do I sign up for ACH / direct deposit?**

Please fill out [this form](#) AND email Simran Aryal at [Simran.Aryal@hennepin.us](mailto:Simran.Aryal@hennepin.us) and Ixchel McKinnie [Ixchel.Mckinnie@hennepin.us](mailto:Ixchel.Mckinnie@hennepin.us). Checks are mailed unless you sign up for ACH direct deposit. Please allow up to 2 weeks for payment after we let you know that it has been processed.

## **Communications**

### **I would like to let my clients know that they can receive services through Hennepin County. Do you have materials to support this work?**

Yes. We provide images, graphics, sample content and more on our [Communications Toolkits \(hennepin.us\)](#) page on the Hennepin County web site.

We also can provide printed flyers, business cards and other graphics to support you. Please email [Amran.Nur@hennepin.us](mailto:Amran.Nur@hennepin.us) with any promotional materials requests.

### **Am I required to represent Elevate Hennepin in all client communications?**

Not unless specifically required by your contract. While we always appreciate recognition, we know that some organizations are funded through multiple agencies. We ask that if you are using Elevate funding to support the client that you let them know about Elevate Hennepin, which supports businesses through government funding provided by Hennepin County.

**The client I'm working with would be a GREAT success story. How do I let you know and connect them to the communications team at Hennepin County?**

Please email [Lily.Shaw@hennepin.us](mailto:Lily.Shaw@hennepin.us), or have your client express interest via the client satisfaction survey that is sent out through Hennepin County.

**I am attending, tabling or presenting at a business expo or event. Will Hennepin County promote this opportunity through Elevate Hennepin?**

We will promote events that are targeted to a business audience, are aligned with the Elevate Hennepin mission, and that are open to the public.

The easiest way to help us promote your event is to tag in posts from your organization about your events. Doing so is the best way for us to see and respond to social media so that we can like, share, repost, etc.

**Elevate Hennepin profiles:**

[Elevate Hennepin | Facebook](#)

[Elevate Hennepin | Instagram](#)

[Elevate Hennepin | LinkedIn](#)

You can also email [economic.development@hennepin.us](mailto:economic.development@hennepin.us) with the event details and links so we can determine if it is a fit to promote it in the Elevate Hennepin newsletter, social media, and events webpage. We are also willing to staff a table for certain events. Reach out to us to discuss opportunities.

**Resources**

**My client needs services that are not related to their business. Where can I direct them?**

If a client needs services that are not related to their business, there are a number of resources you can direct them to at Hennepin County.

**Office of Multi-Cultural Services**

For non-English speaking and immigrant clients, the best place to direct them is the

**Office of Multi-Cultural Services**, which connects residents to social services and support through the County and other agencies.

<https://www.hennepin.us/residents/human-services/multi-cultural-services>

### **Legal**

For legal issues that are not related to business, the State of Minnesota provides a listing of free and low-cost legal supports:

[Hennepin County Legal Referrals / Minnesota State Law Library \(mn.gov\)](#)

### **Human Services**

A complete listing of support offered through Hennepin County can be found through Hennepin County's Human Services division: [Human Services overview | Hennepin County](#)

This includes links to:

- Employment
- Energy Assistance
- Emergency Programs for shelter, housing costs, etc
- Health care assistance
- Food assistance