



IDAHO TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT DBE NEWSLETTER

April 2026



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Cyber Security for Small Businesses

■ *By Project Solutions Inc. Team*

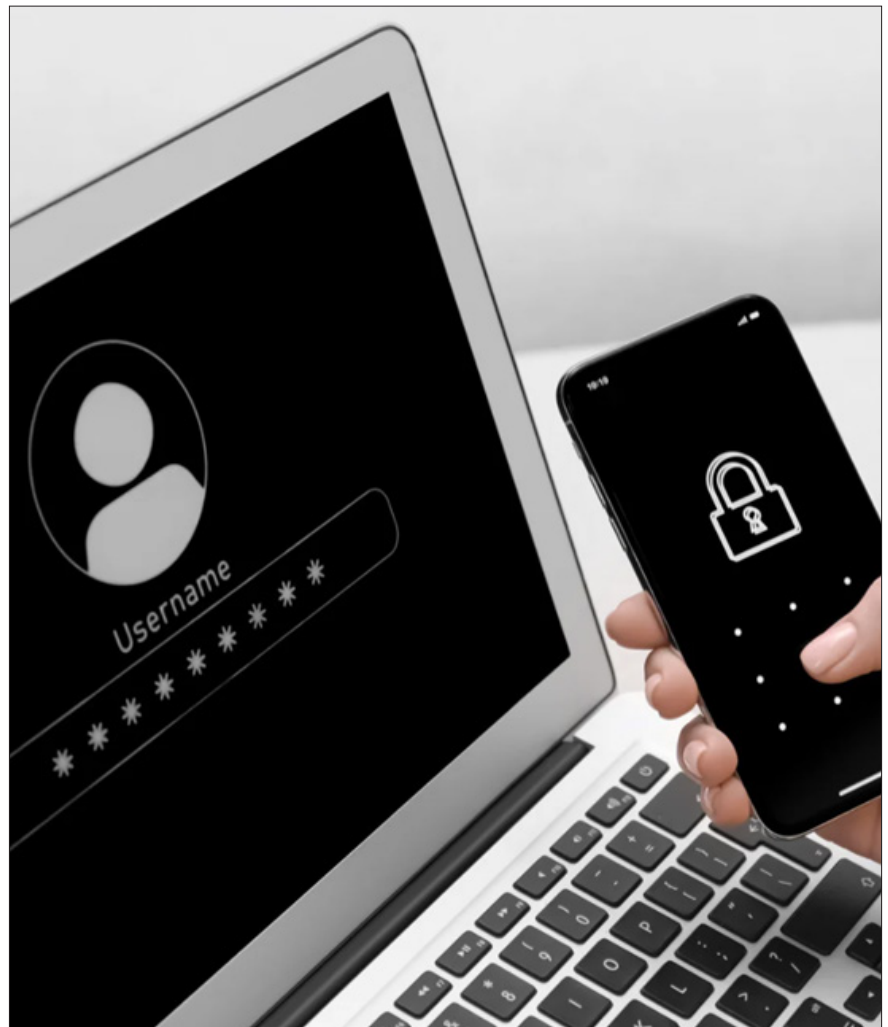
In the digital age, small businesses are becoming increasingly common targets for cybercriminals. Despite their size, these businesses often hold valuable data that can be exploited if not properly protected. While it may be tempting to think that a small business is too small to be noticed by hackers, such businesses often hold valuable data that can be exploited and lack the budgets necessary to maintain the complex security systems of larger companies, making them attractive targets for criminals. The theft of banking and financial information can cause significant losses, but these attacks can have other nasty effects, too. The disruption of workflow that results from employees' attention needing to be diverted to dealing with the attack or potential disruptions of access to information can cause further damage, and if customer or supplier information is compromised, the effects can spread to other businesses and damage your reputation, making it harder to continue doing business even after the initial attack has been thwarted. In fact, some studies have suggested that the majority of small businesses that become victims of cyber-attacks shut down within a year. That doesn't mean you should lose hope, however. With a bit of work, it is possible to maintain strong cyber security on a smaller budget. In this article we will look at a few steps you can take to improve your business's cyber security without breaking the bank.

Conduct Thorough Risk Assessments

The first step to protecting your business is understanding its points of vulnerability. Before you develop a plan of action, determine your potential risks. As a baseline, try to answer the following questions:

1. What data does your business store online?
2. Who has access to that data?
3. How is access managed?
4. How could that access be exploited?
5. Why would someone want access to your data, and what could they do with it?

These assessments can be conducted in house, but if your company lacks a dedicated IT team with enough experience, it's worthwhile to get outside help. Many cloud storage providers are willing to assist their clients' risk assessments, so asking yours may be a good place to start.



Train Your Employees

Employee leaks are the ultimate source of many successful cyber-attacks, and while some are malicious and intentional, most are entirely accidental. Whether it be leaving a laptop unattended at a café, using the same password for work and personal emails, or clicking on a phishing link, it's easy for one small mistake to lead to significant company losses. Cyber security is new, and many people are simply unaware of the threats they face when conducting business in an online world. The best way to prevent employee-based data breaches is to educate your staff and enable them to protect their data as easily as possible. Some steps you can take to help your employees you're your data safe are:

1. Provide training that teaches employees about the potential threats your businesses face, the consequences of attacks, and how they can help prevent them.
2. Encourage the use of complex and unique passwords for company accounts and provide access to password management software. Additionally, ensure that employees change their passwords regularly.
3. Require the implementation of multi-factor authentication for accounts that access sensitive information. There are a variety of free, secure apps that provide this service, making it an easy way to beef up security with no extra costs.
4. Draft policies about the handling of equipment such as laptops that have access to company data to ensure that they aren't being left unlocked or unattended in unsecured locations.
5. Make separate accounts for each employee so that the source of a data breach can be easily identified and isolated with minimal disruption to the rest of your staff.

These tactics are simple to teach, cheap to implement, and extremely effective. Requiring employees to complete assessment quizzes or simulating fake attacks to track employee reactions can be useful tools to see where this education is falling short, or where guidelines aren't being followed.



Secure Your Network

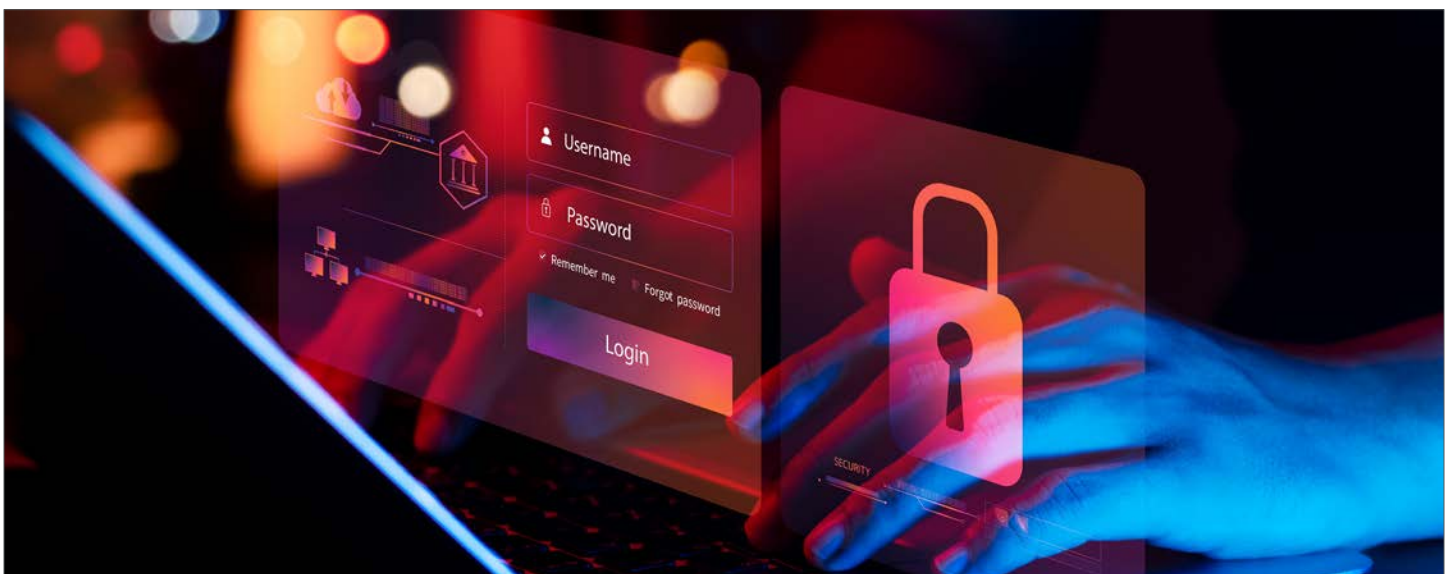
Humans aren't the only point of vulnerability in an online system, and some cyber criminals will attempt to access your network directly. When setting up a Wi-Fi network, ensure that it uses WPA2 or better security as a baseline. Once you have a secure base, add onto it with a firewall to prevent viruses or other malicious software from gaining access to your system and antivirus software to remove any that slip through. These programs do require some level of financial investment, but when weighed against the potential losses a virus can cause, they are well worth the expense. Additional layers of security can be added through encryption of especially sensitive data, making it even more difficult to access. Many email providers offer encryption and Do-Not-Forward services for users, which can further improve security by restricting distribution of company data, but these can be further improved by the implementation of SPF, DKIM, and DMARC records, which reject emails from addresses that are not included in pre-approved lists automatically.

Protect Your Physical Location

Online attacks are not the only way to breach a company's network. Physical locations are also a point of vulnerability that allow cybercriminals to upload viruses or download data directly from your company's devices in person. Training employees to protect their devices, like laptops and mobile phones, can help prevent physical attacks, but it is also worth invested in protected spaces for key machines. Setting up a secure server room for the devices that run your Wi-Fi network that requires an extra key or password to enter will go a long way towards preventing bad actors from accessing your network, and security cameras can further deter attempts to physically access your data.

Keep Your Systems Up to Date

New vulnerabilities are regularly discovered and patched by the companies that provide the hardware and software that make online business possible. Not updating your systems can leave them vulnerable to known sources of attack, so ensure that your machines are regularly updated and run virus scans after each update as a baseline of security.



UPCOMING TRAINING & EVENTS

April 14

Federal Contracting Basics and Certifications for Small Businesses

SBA Webinar

Tues., April 14, 2026 | 10:00 A.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)

April 16

Managing Your Business Financials

North Idaho Small Business Development Center Webinar

Thurs., April 16, 2026 | 9:30 A.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)

April 29

Mastering Workplace Safety Audits: A Step-by-Step Guide

OH&S Webinar

Wed., April 29, 2026 | 12:00 P.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)

May 7

May ITD Monthly Contractor Meeting

Virtual

Thurs., May 7, 2026 | 8:00 A.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)



Contractors and Consultants 4 Part Training Series

April 21

#1 Ensuring Proper Flow Down for Subcontracts

ITD Webinar

Tues., April 21, 2026 | 10:00 - 11:00 A.M. MST

Cost: No Cost

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

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Passcode: C4HF3Fu9

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+1 208-473-7075,,133330671# United States, Boise

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 133 330 671#

Join on a video conferencing device

Tenant key: itdgov@m.webex.com

Video ID: 118 186 823 0

[More info](#)

April 22

#2 TERO and TSP Requirements for Federal Aid Construction Contracts

ITD Webinar

Wed., April 22, 2026 | 1:00 - 2:00 P.M. MST

Cost: No Cost

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 299 941 197 458 41

Passcode: un3ss2qW

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Video ID: 119 303 948 4

[More info](#)

April 29

#3 Conducting Labor Compliance Interviews & RE On-Site Inspections

ITD Webinar

Wed., April 29, 2026 | 10:00 - 11:00 A.M. MST

Cost: No Cost

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April 30

#4 Understanding General Wage Decisions and Certified Payrolls

ITD Webinar

Thur., April 30, 2026 | 1:00 - 2:00 P.M. MST

Cost: No Cost

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Video ID: 115 007 396 0

[More info](#)

DID YOU KNOW

Personal Narrative Assistance Available at No Cost

Project Solutions Inc (PSI) is the Supportive Services provider for ITD and is available for one-on-one assistance to DBEs who would like help drafting their personal narrative for the recertification process. To schedule time with a consultant, email dbes@projectsolutionsinc.com.



If you were unable to attend one of the live Writing Your Personal Narrative workshops, ITD has posted the full Personal Narrative Workshop along with the accompanying workbook on the [ITD DBE website](#). Direct links to the recording, presentation slides, and workbook can be found [here](#).

Firms interested in scheduling a one-on-one session for personal narrative assistance with Project Solutions Inc. are strongly encouraged to view the recorded workshop prior to scheduling a session.

RESOURCES

Project Look-Ahead

The following links to the project look-aheads can be found on the [ITD Contractor Bidding](#) page.

- [90-day Contracts Bidding Look-Ahead](#)
- [18-month Contracts Bidding Look-Ahead](#)
- [LHTAC Leading Local Bridge Contractor Bidding Look-Ahead](#)

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

DBE/ACDBE IFR Reevaluation Continues

The [U.S. DOT's Interim Final Rule \(IFR\)](#), effective October 3, 2025, requires all DBE and ACDBE firms previously certified under race- or gender-based presumptions to undergo reevaluation using individualized criteria for social and economic disadvantage.

Reevaluation Process

The Idaho Transportation Department Office of Civil Rights (ITD OCR) is continuing to accept reevaluation submissions from Idaho-based firms certified before October 3, 2025. Firms are reviewed in the order submissions are received.

To complete the reevaluation, firms must submit:

- **A Personal Narrative (PN)** describing social and economic disadvantage experiences (for assistance on writing your PN see page seven for details)
- **An updated Personal Net Worth (PNW) Statement**

Materials must be submitted through www.itd.dbesystem.com as a "25 Re-Evaluation Application."

Firms that do not provide the required information will remain **ineligible** for the DBE/ACDBE program until their reevaluation is completed.

Target Submission Date

ITD is requesting that firms submit their reevaluation materials by **May 1, 2026** to support the rollout of the updated DBE Directory. Firms may submit after May 1 but will remain **ineligible** until recertified.

New & Interstate Applications

ITD will begin accepting new Idaho-based and interstate DBE/ACDBE applications only after all currently certified Idaho firms have completed the reevaluation process.

Interstate applicants must provide an acceptance letter from their home state dated after **October 3, 2025**.

A B2Gnow announcement will be issued once new applications can be submitted again.

Previously Pending Applications

Any Idaho-based or interstate applications that were in progress prior to the IFR must be resubmitted to meet the new requirements once the application portal reopens.

If You No Longer Wish to Participate

Firms choosing not to continue in the program should email civilrights@itd.idaho.gov to notify them of your decision.

Adapting to Economic Changes: Strategies for Resilience

■ *By Project Solutions Inc. Team*



In today's rapidly evolving economic landscape, small businesses face unique challenges in the wake of economic changes that make them uniquely vulnerable to market fluctuations. However, with the right strategies, your business can not only survive but thrive amidst these changes. In this article, we will look at a few key strategies that can help your business prepare for economic changes.

Stay Informed

The most impactful methodology for any business when it comes to adapting is to be aware of their industry. While it is not impossible, it is rare for significant changes to happen without warning. Paying attention to what is happening around your business can give you an indication of what's coming. Are new regulations being drafted by the government that will affect your company? Are customer attitudes shifting? Are competitors expanding? Keep track of current market trends and anticipated changes by listening to industry experts, tracking relevant news, attending conferences and webinars, and monitoring customer data. The more you know, the better you can prepare, and if you can anticipate industry shifts, you can act proactively instead of reactively when adapting to them.

Prioritize Flexibility and Diversity

Flexibility is key to weathering economic fluctuations. If your company relies entirely on one product, any change in the economy that affects that product will have massive effects on your company. Developing a broader range of products, services, and other revenue streams can help protect your business from economic turbulence. This can come in the form of more varied approaches to presenting the product your business is built around, like introducing budget-friendly versions of your product so that customers can still engage during economic downturns, or it can come through expanding the number of products you offer. These practices don't need to exclusively focus on economic downturns, however. Preparing for upswings allows your company to capitalize on opportunities for growth. You might consider introducing premium versions of your products or expanding your services when customers have more money to spend on them. The key is to think ahead, plan according to trends, and be ready to adjust to meet the changing needs of your business and its customers as market conditions shift.

These ideas can also be applied to your supply chain. Many small businesses are reliant on single source supply chains for production, but these are just as susceptible to economic fluctuations as the products those business produce. Goods manufactured in China might cost more during times of political tension, for example, or an increase in regional gas prices may cause shipping costs from effected suppliers to rise. Try to diversify your supply chain wherever possible to lower the impact of market changes on your company.

Embrace Innovation

Companies that are more willing to adapt to technological innovations are more likely to see long-term success, so it is vital to make sure that your company is structured to allow for adaptation as the methodology of business evolves. For example, businesses with online presences tend to be more resilient to market changes, especially as customer demand for online shopping options grows. By developing user-friendly e-commerce options for your business, you can help protect your revenue streams from the volatility inherent in physical location business. Introducing automation where possible in this process will also help reduce the work required to maintain operations, thus keeping it lean and agile. As with other trends, however, it's not enough to just stay current. Look ahead and be ready to adapt to new technology and evolving business practices as they arise.

Maintain a Cash Reserve

No matter how well prepared, every business will need to deal with periods of reduced income. It's important to have procedures in place to mitigate the impact of these periods, and one of the best ways to do that is to develop a cash reserve. By setting money aside in times of excess, you can prepare for times of need. The exact amount of money that you need in



reserve depends on your company, so decide what amount of cash will allow your business to operate with reduced income for an amount of time that makes you feel secure and form a plan to build that reserve. When times get tough, a cash reserve allows you to breathe a little easier knowing that you have the funds necessary to ride out the storm.

Invest in Staff

During periods of economic turbulence, it can be easy to see cutting staff as an efficient method of cutting costs, but this is not always the case. Reducing staff numbers reduces productivity, lowers morale, and places extra strain on the employees who remain, all of which can result in further lowering of profits and cascading losses. Additionally, should the company's position improve, cut positions will likely need to be filled again, which will incur further costs. Sometimes cutting staff is the only way to stay in business, but wherever possible, it's better to focus on preparing your staff for changes by helping them develop skills that make them more broadly useful to your business. When your staff is as agile as the rest of your business, you can adapt quickly with minimal disruptions to your workflow to changing economic conditions, which improves morale and better positions you to come out ahead when everyone else is struggling.

Build Strong Relationships

During times of financial hardship, having established relationships can provide stability. During times of financial growth, relationships provide expanded opportunities. Customer loyalty can be a crucial deciding factor in maintaining stable revenue in uncertain economic times, so implementing customer-centric business practices that make them feel acknowledged and supported where you can will make them more likely to return that support when money is tight. Forming strong relationships with suppliers will make it easier for you to secure more favorable deals that can save your company money and improve your efficiency, helping you expand your business. Collaborating with other businesses in your community can give you increased exposure to a wider market, as well as new opportunities to expand your offerings. Whenever you can, cultivate strong bonds at all stages of your business operations, from suppliers, to collaborators, to customers. By focusing on these relationships and engaging in collaboration, stakeholders at each stage of the process are benefiting, increasing profit and improving the experience of everyone involved.

Conclusion

Economic changes are stressful, challenging, and inevitable, but they don't have to spell doom for your business. By being aware of your situation, focusing on what you can do now to prepare for upcoming changes, and remaining flexible in the face of surprises, you can build a business that thrives even when times are hard, and takes advantage of unexpected opportunities no one else can see coming.

SPRING

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Featuring
PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Topics

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**HOW TO MANAGE
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Presented by:
Project Solutions Inc.

ITD & SBA PRESENT A VIRTUAL TRAINING ON



HOW TO DO WORK ON ITD PROJECTS

APRIL 22, 2026, 9:30-11:30 AM MST / 8:30-10:30 AM PST

Please join the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) & the Small Business Administration (SBA) to learn how your firm can do work on ITD projects. Prime contractors will join to share how to submit bids/quotes to them as subcontractors or suppliers for their contracts on ITD projects.

Join Teams Meeting

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Your Safety • Your Mobility
 Your Economic Opportunity



U.S. Small Business Administration