FREE WORKBOOK · NOVEMBER 2026 EDITION

2027 IT Budget Planner for Alberta Small Businesses

A step-by-step workbook for owners and office managers. You don't need to be technical. Each page tells you what to check, how to decide, and what to write down.

30 minutes
Do the quick check on page 3 and fix the red items first.

An afternoon
Work through the 7 steps, one page each, and fill in the worksheet.

With help
Book a free IT assessment and we'll fill it in with you.

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How this workbook works

Most small businesses don't have an IT budget. They have a pile of bills and a few expensive surprises a year. This workbook turns that into one page you can plan around.

The 7 steps

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Take stock	Microsoft 365	Sign-ins and security	Computers	Backups	Network and office	Support and people

Every step looks the same

- **Why it matters** in two sentences
- **Do this:** short numbered actions, with where to click
- **Decide:** a simple yes or no flow
- **Example:** a worked example for a 10-person office
- **Write this down:** which worksheet line to fill in
- **Done when:** a box to tick so you know you can move on

Colours tell you what can wait

Do now A deadline has passed or a single mistake could stop the business. Fix these first, even if you do nothing else.

This year Plan and budget it for 2027. Spread it over the quarters.

Can wait Worth doing, but only after the red and amber items.

You don't have to do it all. If you only have 30 minutes, do the quick check on the next page. If a step doesn't apply to you (no server, for example), tick it and move on.

What you'll need

- [ ] Your last few IT, software and internet invoices
- [ ] Access to your Microsoft 365 admin center, or the person who has it
- [ ] A walk around the office to count computers and equipment

Prices are list prices as of November 2026 and change often; check current pricing before you commit. Examples are illustrations, not quotes. AlphaIT provides IT services, not financial or legal advice.

30-MINUTE VERSION

The quick check

Answer these ten questions. Every “No” or “Not sure” points to the step that fixes it. Start with the red ones.

Question	Yes	No / not sure	Priority	Go to
Does every account, including the owner’s, use multi-factor sign-in (an app or passkey, not just a password)?			Do now	Step 3
Has anyone restored a file from your backup in the last 3 months, and did it work?			Do now	Step 5
Are all computers on Windows 11 (or covered by paid Windows 10 security updates)?			Do now	Step 4
When someone leaves, are their accounts and passwords shut off the same day?			Do now	Step 7
Is your firewall still supported by its maker (getting security updates)?			This year	Step 6
Do you know what you pay for Microsoft 365 per person, and that nobody unused is still licensed?			This year	Step 2
Do staff know how to spot a fake invoice or a fake “boss” request for money?			This year	Step 3
Do you have a written list of every computer, licence and subscription you pay for?			This year	Step 1
Does everyone know who to call, and what to do, if something gets hacked?			This year	Page 11
Do staff have written rules for using AI tools like ChatGPT or Copilot?			Can wait	Step 7

Scoring it: any red “No” is your first job this month. Three or more amber “No” answers means it’s worth doing the full workbook this quarter.

STEP 1

1 Take stock

About 20 minutes

This year

You can't budget for what you can't see. Most offices find at least one subscription nobody uses, or a computer nobody remembered.

Do this

1. **Count the people** who use a computer or email for work, including part-time staff and contractors.
2. **Walk the office** and count computers, printers and network boxes (firewall, switches, Wi-Fi). Write down any model names you can see.
3. **Check Microsoft 365:** in the admin center go to **Billing › Your products** to see how many licences you pay for, and **Users › Active users** to see who has them.
4. **Go through 3 months of invoices** and card statements for software, internet, phones, domains and website hosting.

Your inventory

What	How many	Notes (age, model, who has it)
People using computers or email		
Desktop and laptop computers		
Work phones and tablets		
Microsoft 365 licences (by plan)		
Other software subscriptions		
Printers and scanners		
Firewall, switches, Wi-Fi access points		
Servers or storage boxes (NAS)		
Website, hosting and domain names		
Internet and phone services		

EXAMPLE

A 10-person office finds 12 Microsoft 365 licences, 11 computers (one in a cupboard), a firewall bought in 2018 and two design-software subscriptions for a person who left last spring. That's three things to fix before spending anything new.

Write this down: keep this page. Every later step uses these numbers.

☐ Done when the table above is filled in, even roughly.

STEP 2

2 Microsoft 365

About 20 minutes

This year

For most offices this is the biggest per-person software cost. You can mix plans in one company, so each person only pays for what they use.

Decide: which plan does each person need?

Do they need desktop Word, Excel and Outlook installed?	**No:** Business Basic is usually enough (email, Teams, files, Office in the browser).	**Yes:** go to the next question.
Do they handle sensitive client data, or carry a laptop out of the office?	**No:** Business Standard.	**Yes:** Business Premium, for device management and stronger security.

Plan	List price, CAD per user per month (annual)	What it adds
Business Basic	$9.50	Email, Teams, OneDrive and SharePoint; Office in the browser and on phones
Business Standard	$19.00	Everything in Basic, plus desktop Word, Excel, Outlook and PowerPoint
Business Premium	$29.80	Everything in Standard, plus Intune device management, Defender for Business, Defender for Office 365 Plan 1 and Conditional Access

Clean up first

- [ ] Remove licences from people who have left
- [ ] Move browser-only users down to Basic
- [ ] Check for duplicate subscriptions bought by different people

Copilot, before you buy

Microsoft has said new Copilot Business purchases through resellers will turn on pay-as-you-go usage billing by default from early 2027. Check who actually uses Copilot, and ask your reseller how spending limits are set.

EXAMPLE

10-person office, list prices:

4 people only use email and Teams: 4 × $9.50 = **$38.00**
6 people need desktop Office: 6 × $19.00 = **$114.00**
Total: **$152.00 a month**, about $1,824 a year.

If they hold sensitive client data and want every laptop managed, Premium for all 10 is 10 × $29.80 = **$298.00 a month**.

Write this down: worksheet line 1 (Microsoft 365) as a monthly cost.

- [ ] Done when every person has the plan they need, and nobody who left is still licensed.

STEP 3

3 Sign-ins and security

About 30 minutes

Do now

Most break-ins at small businesses start with a stolen password or a fake email, not a clever hack. The fixes below are cheap compared with the cost of one incident.

Deadline: February 1, 2027. Microsoft is retiring text-message (SMS) and voice sign-in codes for most Microsoft 365 work accounts. After that, anyone whose only sign-in method is a text or phone call gets a blocking prompt to register a passkey. Global admins and external users follow on July 1, 2027.

The essentials, in order

What	Priority	Usually costs
Multi-factor sign-in on every account, owner included	Do now	Included in Microsoft 365
Move staff off text-message codes to the app or passkeys	Do now	Included
Automatic updates on computers, servers and network gear	Do now	Mostly included; time to check
Security software on every computer	Do now	Included in Business Premium, or a separate subscription
Email filtering for phishing and bad attachments	This year	Included in Premium, or a separate subscription
A “call back” rule: any change to bank details or urgent payment is confirmed by phone on a known number	This year	Free
Short staff training on phishing and fake invoices, twice a year	This year	Free to low cost
Separate admin accounts used only for admin work	Can wait	Included

Do this

1. In the Microsoft 365 admin center, check that multi-factor sign-in is on for **every** user. “Most users” is not enough.
2. Ask each person how they sign in. Anyone using a text code registers a passkey (in the Authenticator app or on their device) before February, so they never see the blocking prompt.
3. Write the call-back rule on one page and send it to whoever pays invoices.

Write this down: worksheet line 4 (security software and email filtering) if you need a separate product.

☐ Done when every account has multi-factor sign-in and nobody relies on text codes.

STEP 4

4 Computers and Windows

About 30 minutes

Do now

A computer that no longer gets security updates is an open door. Two Windows deadlines have already passed, so check every machine.

Do this on each computer

1. Press **Windows key + R**, type **winver** and press Enter. Note the Windows version (10 or 11) and the version number, such as 24H2.
2. Write the result in the table below, with the computer's age if you know it.

Windows 10?	Support ended **Oct 14, 2025**. Upgrade, replace, or pay for Extended Security Updates while you plan.	**Windows 11:** next question.
Windows 11 Home or Pro on 24H2?	Security updates ended **Oct 13, 2026**. Update it to 25H2 or 26H2 now.	**25H2:** fine until Oct 12, 2027. **26H2:** fine until Oct 10, 2028.
Can a Windows 10 PC run Windows 11?	**No** (unsupported processor or no TPM 2.0): plan to replace it.	**Yes:** the upgrade from Pro to Pro is free.

Computer or user	Windows version	Age	Upgrade, update, replace or ESU	Quarter

Windows 10 Extended Security Updates (business)

Year	USD per PC
Year 1	$61
Year 2	$122
Year 3	$244

Cumulative: joining in Year 2 means paying for Year 1 too. ESU buys time; it isn't a plan.

EXAMPLE

3 of the office's 10 computers can't run Windows 11. Covering them for Year 2 costs ($61 + $122) × 3 = **US$549**, and next year it rises again. They budget to replace one per quarter instead, and buy ESU only for the two that wait longest.

Write this down: worksheet line 5 (computer replacements) as one-time costs by quarter, and line 6 (ESU) if you need the bridge.

☐ Done when every computer has a version, an age and a plan.

STEP 5

5 Backups

About 20 minutes, then 15 minutes a month

Do now

A backup nobody has tested is a guess. Ransomware, a dead drive or one wrong click can wipe out years of files, and Microsoft 365 is not a full backup on its own.

Decide: answer these two questions honestly

How much work could you afford to lose?
An hour? A day? A week? This decides how often backups need to run.

How long could you be without your files?
An hour? A day? This decides how fast you need to be able to restore.

The simple rule: 3-2-1

3 copies of your data, on **2** different kinds of storage, with **1** copy kept away from the office or offline, where ransomware can't reach it.

Do this

1. Find out what is backed up today: computers, the server or NAS, and Microsoft 365 mailboxes and files.
2. Restore one file into a new folder and open it. Write down how long it took.
3. Put the testing schedule below in your calendar.

How often	What to test	Done
Weekly	Read the backup report and check the last job succeeded	
Monthly	Restore one file and one Microsoft 365 item	
Quarterly	Restore a full folder and check the offsite or offline copy	
Twice a year	Restore a whole computer or server to spare hardware	
After big changes	New server, new software, office move or new backup tool	

EXAMPLE

The office backs up its file server nightly but has never restored anything, and nobody backs up Microsoft 365. Their first test restore fails because the backup job stopped four months ago. They budget for a Microsoft 365 backup and a monthly test.

Write this down: worksheet line 3 (backups) as a monthly cost.

☐ Done when a test restore has worked and the schedule is in someone's calendar.

STEP 6

6 Network, server and office

About 20 minutes

This year

The firewall is the front door of your network. When its maker stops sending security updates, attackers get a door that never gets fixed.

Firewall: do this

1. Find the brand and model on the label (Fortinet, SonicWall, Cisco Meraki, WatchGuard, Sophos, Ubiquiti and so on).
2. Look it up on the maker's end-of-life or product lifecycle page and write down the end-of-support date.

Is it past end of support, or within a year of it?

Yes: budget a replacement this year. **Do now** if already past.

No: make sure firmware updates are being installed.

Server: do you still need one?

Often no longer needed

If the server only holds shared files and email, many offices can move files to SharePoint and Teams, and email to Exchange Online, both part of Microsoft 365.

Usually still needed

Business software that every computer connects to (accounting, practice management, imaging), very large files, or Active Directory you rely on.

Wi-Fi and office

- ☐ Is guest Wi-Fi separate from the network your business computers use?
- ☐ Are there dead spots where people regularly lose connection?
- ☐ Moving or opening a new office in 2027? Plan internet, cabling and Wi-Fi before the lease starts.

EXAMPLE

The office's 2018 firewall reached end of support last year. They budget a replacement in Q1. Their server only holds files, so they plan a move to SharePoint for Q3, which removes a server replacement from future budgets.

Write this down: worksheet lines 7 (firewall, switches, Wi-Fi) and 8 (server or cloud storage) as one-time costs.

☐ Done when you know your firewall's support date and whether you need a server.

STEP 7

7 Support and people

About 20 minutes

This year

Technology problems are often people problems: nobody owns IT, a leaver still has access, or staff paste client data into an AI tool without thinking.

Decide: pay per job or a monthly plan?

	Pay per job	Monthly plan
Suits	A small office with few problems and simple systems	A team that relies on its systems all day
You pay	When something breaks	A set fee covering help, updates and monitoring
Watch out for	The same problem being fixed (and paid for) twice	What's included and what's extra, such as backups or projects

For reference, AlphaIT's managed IT starts at $350/month on an annual agreement or $400/month month-to-month (30 days' notice); the exact price depends on users, devices and servers.

When someone joins

- [ ] One account name pattern for everyone
- [ ] Licence assigned for the plan they need
- [ ] Multi-factor sign-in set up on day one
- [ ] No admin rights on their everyday account

When someone leaves (same day)

- [ ] Block sign-in and reset the password
- [ ] Change shared passwords they knew (Wi-Fi, suppliers, bank)
- [ ] Remove company data from personal phones
- [ ] Remove or reassign the licence

AI tools

Staff are probably already using ChatGPT, Copilot or Gemini. A one-page policy says which tools are approved, what never goes into them (client and personal information), and who checks the results.

Questions to ask any IT provider

- What exactly is included, and what costs extra?
- How fast do you respond, in writing?
- Are backups included and tested?
- If we leave, how do we get our passwords and data back?

Write this down: worksheet line 2 (IT support) and line 10 (training).

- [ ] Done when someone owns IT decisions and leavers are shut off the same day.

BE READY

If something goes wrong

You can't prevent every incident. You can decide in advance who does what, so the first hour isn't spent panicking.

Your one-page incident plan

Who to call	Name and number
IT support	
Bank (fraud line)	
Cyber insurance claims line	
Person who decides about shutting systems down	
Police non-emergency (fraud and cybercrime)	

First steps, in order

1. Disconnect the affected computer from the network. Don't turn it off.
2. Call IT support, then your bank if money is involved.
3. Don't pay anyone or reply to the attacker.
4. Write down what happened and when.

Cyber insurance renewal

Insurers commonly ask about these. Answer literally: "all users" means all users.

- [ ] Multi-factor sign-in on email and remote access
- [ ] Offline or unchangeable backups that have been tested
- [ ] Endpoint detection and response (EDR) on computers
- [ ] Regular patching
- [ ] Email filtering
- [ ] Staff training

Alberta privacy law

Under Alberta's Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA), if personal information is lost or accessed without permission and there's a real risk of significant harm, the organization must notify the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC). Health information under the Health Information Act has its own rules.

Signs something is wrong

- [ ] Sign-in prompts nobody asked for
- [ ] Password reset emails you didn't request
- [ ] Sent emails nobody remembers writing
- [ ] New inbox rules that move or delete mail
- [ ] Files renamed, locked or with odd extensions
- [ ] A supplier "changing" their bank details by email

Write this down: worksheet line 11 (cyber insurance).

PLAN THE YEAR

Your 2027 IT calendar

Spread the work and the cost across the year. Dates in bold are fixed by Microsoft; the rest are suggestions.

Q1 · Jan to Mar

- **Feb 1:** text-message sign-in codes retired for most Microsoft 365 work accounts
- **Early 2027:** Copilot Business usage billing on by default for new reseller purchases
- Fix every red item from the quick check
- Replace an unsupported firewall

Q2 · Apr to Jun

- Replace the oldest computers that can't run Windows 11
- Staff training on phishing and fake invoices
- Check cyber insurance answers before renewal

Q3 · Jul to Sep

- **Jul 1:** text-message codes retired for Global Admins
- Move file shares to SharePoint, if you decided to
- Second round of computer replacements

Q4 · Oct to Dec

- **Oct 12:** Windows 11 25H2 Home and Pro support ends; move to 26H2
- Windows 10 ESU Year 2 ends in October
- Review this workbook for 2028

Every month, every quarter

Monthly (about 30 minutes)

- [ ] Test one backup restore
- [ ] Check computers installed their updates
- [ ] Remove access for anyone who left

Quarterly (about an hour)

- [ ] Review who has admin access, and why
- [ ] Review Microsoft 365 licences against staff
- [ ] Check the offsite or offline backup copy

Your renewal dates

Renewals are where surprise bills come from. Write the dates down once and put them in a shared calendar.

What renews	Renewal date	Cost	Who handles it
Microsoft 365 subscription			
Domain names			
Website hosting			
Firewall security licence			
Security or backup software			
Cyber insurance			
IT support agreement			

FILL THIS IN

Your 2027 IT budget worksheet

Copy your numbers from each step. Use the priority column to decide what goes first if the budget is tight.

#	Line	From	Priority	Monthly	One-time	Quarter
1	Microsoft 365 licences	Step 2				
2	IT support (plan or pay per job)	Step 7				
3	Backups (computers, server, Microsoft 365)	Step 5				
4	Security software and email filtering	Step 3				
5	Computer replacements	Step 4				
6	Windows 10 ESU (bridge only)	Step 4				
7	Firewall, switches, Wi-Fi	Step 6				
8	Server or cloud storage	Step 6				
9	Other software subscriptions	Step 1				
10	Staff security training	Step 7				
11	Cyber insurance	Page 11				
12	Internet and phones	Step 1				
13	Website, hosting and domains	Step 1				
14						
	Total					

Monthly total × 12 + one-time total = your 2027 IT budget.

Tight budget? Keep every red line, then the amber lines in order of the quick check. Green lines can move to 2028.

FINISH HERE

Your top 5 for 2027

If you only remember one page, make it this one. Write the five most important things from your worksheet, starting with the red ones.

#	What	Who	By when	Cost	Done
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Free tools that help with each step

Tool	Helps with	Where
Microsoft 365 Plan Picker	Step 2	alphait.ca/microsoft-365-plan-picker/
Password Leak Checker	Step 3	alphait.ca/password-checker-generator/
Email Security Checker	Step 3	alphait.ca/free-email-security-checker/
Windows 10 ESU Cost Calculator	Step 4	alphait.ca/windows-10-esu-cost-calculator/
Downtime Cost Calculator	Step 5	alphait.ca/downtime-cost-calculator/
AI Use Policy Generator	Step 7	alphait.ca/ai-policy-generator/

Want help filling it in?

AlphaIT offers a free IT assessment for businesses in the Edmonton area. We review your computers, network, accounts, backups and security, then help you put real numbers on the worksheet. No obligation.

alphait.ca/free-it-assessment/ · 780-318-0149 · open every day, 11 am to 7 pm

AlphaIT Ltd., Edmonton, Alberta. Managed IT, networks, security and Microsoft 365, plus websites and SEO, since 2019. This workbook is general guidance, not financial or legal advice. Prices and dates were checked in November 2026 and can change.