

The template below was provided by the Small Business Administration and provides an excellent outline for developing your business plan. A consultant can help you develop the organization's message, formulate business processes, prepare product and service descriptions, gather and analyze market data, and develop an overall, well-crafted narrative. Ultimately, the business owner is "the expert" and the plan must reflect his/her vision. Can you imagine talking about your business plan with a banker and not knowing how each page was crafted because you weren't a part of the process? This is why experts state that a business plan must be prepared by the business owner – consultants are there to help you shepherd the process.

Executive Summary

This section should:

- Be written last.
- Provide an enthusiastic snapshot of your company, explaining who you are, what you do and why.
- Be less than 2 pages in length.

After reviewing this section the reader should:

- Want to learn more about your business.
- Have a basic understanding about your company.

Business Description and Vision

This section should include:

- Mission statement (business purpose).
- Company vision (statement about company growth).
- Business goals and objectives.
- Brief history of the business.
- List of key company principals.

After reviewing this section the reader should know:

- Who the business is and what it stands for.
- Your perception of the company's growth & potential.
- Specific goals and objectives of the business.
- Background information about the company.

Definition of the Market

This section should:

- Describe your business industry and outlook.
- Define the critical needs of your perceived or existing market.
- Identify your target market.
- Provide a general profile of your targeted clients.
- Describe what share of the market you currently have and/or anticipate.

After reviewing this section the reader should know:

- Basic information about the industry you operate in and the customer needs you are fulfilling.
- The scope and share of your business market, as well as who your target customers are.

Description of Products and Services

This section should:

- Specifically describe all of your products and services.
- Explain how your products and services are competitive.
- If applicable, reference a picture or brochure of your products, which would be included in the plan's appendix.

After reviewing this section the reader should know:

- Why you are in business.

- What your products and services are and how much they sell for.
- How and why your products & services are competitive.

Organization and Management

This section should:

- Provide a description of how your company is organized as well as an organization chart, if available.
- Describe the legal structure of your business (proprietorship, partnership, corporation, etc.).
- Identify necessary or special licenses and/or permits your business operates with.
- Provide a brief bio description of key managers within the company.

After reviewing this section the reader should know:

- The legal form of ownership for your business.
- Who the leaders are in your business as well as their roles.
- The general flow of operations within the firm.

Marketing and Sales Strategy

This section should:

- Identify and describe your market – who your customers are and what the demand is for your products & services.
- Describe your channels of distribution.
- Explain your sales strategy, specific to pricing, promotion, products and place (4Ps).

After reviewing this section the reader should know:

- Who your market is and how you will reach it.
- How your company will apply pricing, promotion, product diversification and channel distribution to sell your products and services competitively.

Financial Management

- **This section should include:**
 - For a New Business
 - Estimate of start-up costs.
 - Projected balance sheet (1 year forward).
 - Projected income statement (1 year forward).
 - Projected cash flow statement (12 months forward).
- **For an Existing Business**
 - Balance sheets (last 3 years).
 - Income statements (last 3 years).
 - Cash flow statement (12 months).
- **If Applying for a Loan (in addition to the above)**
 - Current personal financial statement on each principal.
 - Federal tax return for prior year.

After reviewing this section the reader should:

- Have a good understanding regarding the financial capacity and/or projections for your company.

Visit the Small Business Administration online to input your business plan directly into a web based application, which follows the same input outline as offered above. <http://web.sba.gov/busplantemplate/BizPlanStart.cfm>