

## **Business Planning**

A **business plan** is a formal document that is prepared when a new organization, program, product, or service begins or when an existing program, product, or service is expanded. It is used internally as a guideline for accomplishing goals, assigning tasks, and monitoring spending. It is employed externally when seeking financing to justify the financial, administrative, and programmatic capacity and integrity of the organization.

A business plan's length can vary according to the complexity of the organization or project; a typical plan averages between 15 and 20 pages in length plus appendices. It should be neatly presented with a cover page that includes complete contact information and a table of contents. Each page should be numbered and section headings should be included in order to make the plan easy to navigate. The language used should not be superfluous, but concise and to the point.

A business plan should be presented in the following format:

1. **Executive Summary** – This is a brief introduction that summarizes the content of the plan and states the amount of financing being sought (if applicable). It should capture the reader's attention and entice them to read on.
2. **Situational Analysis** – This section contains an analysis of the internal and external environments and describes the presenting situation that substantiates this new or expanded project.
3. **Organization Description** – This section states the organization's vision and mission statements. It describes the organization's ethical and cultural values. It states and explains organizational goals and objectives.
4. **Products and Services** – This section lists and describes each of the organization's products, programs, and/or services, including the qualities and benefits of each.
5. **Marketing Plan** – The marketing section describes your organization and the project's uniqueness, or distinctive competencies. It identifies target markets and estimates levels of service to each. A comparative analysis of similar organizations or programs should include your organization's areas of differentiation. This section also describes the communications and promotional campaigns that will be used to inform your target market(s) about your project and incite their interest in participation.
6. **Human Resources** – This section should describe the education, experience, and skills of your board of directors and executive staff. It should include a description of the staff that needs to be hired in order to achieve your service goals. Human resources policies should also be included.
7. **Operations** – This section describes management of facilities, quality control measures, and manufacturing and distribution processes (if applicable).
8. **Finance** – Three years of projected financial statements should be included in the appendix. This section should explain the anticipated income and expenses and describe the organization's fiscal management policies.
9. **Legal** – This section explains the legal or regulatory restrictions and requirements that are required.
10. **Conclusion** – This is a brief summary of the entire plan.
11. **Appendices** – These might include financial statements, resumes of key staff, job descriptions, promotional pieces, or results of marketing research.