

Business Plan Outline/Business proposal

A business plan or business proposal is a useful tool for consolidating all the information about your business. Answering the questions below will demonstrate what information you already have and identify areas where your business idea can benefit from more detail. You may have been thinking about this business for a long time and have all of this information at hand, or this may be a fairly new business idea and you are still putting your thoughts together. Either way, this is a tool to pull it all together.

What is your business venture?

How would you describe your business to someone you met for the first time?

How is your business structured?

Most people when they are starting out have a sole proprietorship, but some have a partnership or have even incorporated their business

The Product(s) or Service(s)

Describe the products and/or services that you are selling (or plan to sell)

Market Demand

What do you know about who wants your products and services? Is this a growing market? Is this a niche market? Who do you think are your target customers? Is the market local? Regional? National?

Size of the Market

How big is the market for your goods and services? Is this something that a lot of people buy (like soap) or that a limited number of people would buy?

Competition

Who are your competitors? Who else is selling similar products and services in the market area where you plan to sell your products and/or services? You can learn a lot from looking at your competitors – what makes your products and services stand out or different from your competitors?

Marketing Plan

How do you plan to let people know about your products and services? How are you competitors doing this? What will you do with your marketing to get attention for your products and services? Are you familiar with print advertising, radio, social media, on-line promotions? What strategies are useful for your business?

Sales Plan and Forecast

What do you think that your sales will be over the first year/next year of your business? Think about this for each of your products and/or services. What research have you done that makes you think that these estimates might be reasonable?

What is the cost of running your business?

If you are just starting, what are your start up costs? What equipment and supplies will you need to purchase/rent/lease? What services (phone/data plan, insurance, rent, fees, business memberships etc.) What inventory will you need to purchase?

What are all of the expenses that you will incur to make/provide your products and services? Do you need to hire other people?

How much money do you need to make to cover your personal costs, pay your bills?

Budget:

Put together a budget for the next year that includes your forecast of sales and all of the expenses you will incur to run your business. Don't forget to pay yourself!

Cash Flow Projections

Cash flow projections spread your costs and expenses over the calendar year and will help identify what you need to keep operating regardless of the season. Often, when you are starting a business, there are many costs up front before you have any revenue. Other times you may need to make big purchases at a time of the year when there aren't a lot of sales.

Sources of Financing

What financing will you need to get your business started and operating until you can start generating revenue? Where will you get that financing? Personal savings? Family loan? Credit line from the bank? Loan from HCDC?