

Business Plan Guide

Writing a business plan, especially for those who do not come from a business background, may seem daunting. But worry not. The business plan can be broken down into several clear, logical modules. Following a structure like the one below in writing a business plan is not an arbitrary exercise. It forces you to think ahead and plan. Setting a direction and having a benchmark to compare your progress against will lead to greater awareness and better performance.

1) Executive Summary

- Clear, succinct, and effective as a standalone overview of the plan

2) Company Overview

- Genesis of concept
- History and current status
- Overall strategy and objective of the venture

3) Products and Services

- Description of your product or services' key features, benefits to customers, and pricing
- Comments on development, next steps, and proprietary position

4) Marketing

- Description of your potential customers in terms of size and composition
- Sales and promotion strategy
- Assessment of competitors through barriers to entry and competitor analysis

5) Operations

- Production and delivery of product or service
- Product costs and margins
- Potential obstacles and risks, and corresponding alternate courses of action

6) Management

- Organizational structure and a summary of how the skills and backgrounds of management will enable venture to execute strategy

7) Summary Financials

- Projected cash flow statement, income statement, and balance sheet
- Amount of funding needed to move forward, if any, and the intended usage of capital

8) Offering

- Description of possible exit strategies
 - Continuity of business strategy and succession
 - Outline of proposals and terms of a deal to investors

Competition Specific Requirements

- Written submissions may be in either English or French
- The length of the business plan must be limited to 15 pages
 - This does not include the title page, table of contents, or appendices
 - The total length of the document must not exceed 30 pages
 - Pages must be numbered
- The title page must contain the company name and logo, a mailing address, and the names, phone numbers, and email addresses of all team members
- The document must be submitted in Microsoft Word (.doc only) or Adobe Acrobat PDF format using font size 12 and one inch all-around margins and double spacing.

Sample Plans and Other Resources

Competitors are not required to follow the business plan structure outlined above exactly. There is no *one* right approach to take in writing a plan, so use the points above as a starting point, and adapt it for *your* concept. View the above structure as a resource, and tap into other resources as well – the Internet, books, and professors – in writing your business plan.

Those looking for sample business plans should visit our partner Small Business BC, which has many sample business plans from a wide range of industries available for reference on its website at <http://www.smallbusinessbc.ca/bizstart-samplePlan.php>.