



You wouldn't drive 2,000 miles without a map, so don't start a business without writing a business plan; it's your roadmap to success!

As explained in the course, business planning helps to ensure business success. And, as the blueprint for your business, a business plan is a critical element because it showcases your business's vision, product/service, marketing strategies, and financial projections.

Remember, a business plan outlines the complete operating framework of your business by detailing who you are, why you're in business, what you do, how you do it, where you operate, how you will generate profits, who your customers are, and why your business is important.

The checklist below covers information you learned in the course and organizes the checkpoints based on the sections of the business. Use the checklist to measure where you are in the process of collecting the necessary material.

Let's begin charting your path to writing your business plan!

Checkpoint	Yes	No
Preparing to Write a Business Plan		
I have decided the type of business plan to write.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a business plan started, in-progress, or complete.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the audience of my business plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the need my business provides to the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my potential customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know why my potential customers will buy my product or service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how to reach potential customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know where I will get the financial resources to start or grow my business.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing My Business Plan: Company Description Section		
I have a mission statement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my attainable business goals and objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is my product or service new and exciting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how my product is developed or service is provided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Checkpoint	Yes	No
I know who will buy my product or service.		
I know how my business will compare to competitors in my industry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how my business will manage foreseeable industry changes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how my company management is organized and who makes the decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do I anticipate my business manager structure changing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the values that drive my business.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how many employees I have, what they do, and how they are paid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the principal members of my business and their roles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can include a brief resume on each key manager within my business.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the legal structure of my business and know which licenses and/or permits my company operates with or needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing My Business Plan: Market Research Section		
I know my industry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my industry's current size and what share of that market I will have.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my competitors in my industry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my direct competitors in my industry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there regulations that apply to my industry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the trends in my industry (growth, consumer preferences, product development)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how and where my company fits in the industry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the advantages and/or disadvantages I have over my competitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the barriers to entering this industry. (examples: high initial capital costs, unique technology, customer need for brand recognition, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the demographics of my current or prospective customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know what customers buy and why.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My product is accessible to customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the price my customers will pay for my product or service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Checkpoint	Yes	No
Will my customers prefer my product over the alternatives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the market segments or groups that are more likely to buy my product.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing My Business Plan: Product/Service Line		
I know what product or service my business provides.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a pricing structure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know what factors give me a competitive advantage or disadvantage.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I keep an inventory.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my suppliers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the lifecycle stage of my product or service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am performing or planning research and development activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know what intellectual property rights I have for my product or service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing My Business Plan: Marketing & Sales Strategy		
I know my plan to grow my business.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how to communicate with my customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how I will sell my product or service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have identified my market segment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have tailored product offerings, prices, distribution, promotional efforts, and services toward identified market segments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have addressed unmet customer needs that offer adequate profitability for the business and focus on the target markets it can best serve.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have considered changes in customer needs and the business environment as well as emerging opportunities and threats.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have identified new markets that I can successfully target.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing My Business Plan: Funding Request Section		
I know my current and future (five years) funding requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how I will intend to use the funds I receive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my strategic financial situational plans for the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the price my customers will pay for my product or service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Checkpoint	Yes	No
Writing My Business Plan: Financial Projections Section		
I know what product or service my business provides.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a pricing structure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know what factors give me a competitive advantage or disadvantage.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing My Business Plan: Executive Summary Section		
I keep an inventory.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my suppliers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the lifecycle stage of my product or service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am performing or planning research and development activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know what intellectual property rights I have for my product or service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my plan to grow my business.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how to communicate with my customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have tailored product offerings, prices, distribution, promotional efforts, and services toward identified market segments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how I will sell my product or service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing My Business Plan: Assembling Business Plan		
I have addressed unmet customer needs that offer adequate profitability for the business and focus on the target markets it can best serve.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have identified my market segment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have identified new markets that I can successfully target.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have considered changes in customer needs and the business environment as well as emerging opportunities and threats.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how I will intend to use the funds I receive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my strategic financial situational plans for the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know the price my customers will pay for my product or service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Gather all the necessary information and conduct all the research you will need to write an accurate and complete business plan. Use free SBA tools to aid your research.
2. Prepare a draft business plan. Doing it is the only way you will learn. It doesn't have to be perfect, long or complete. Prepare the parts of the plan that you can.
3. Discuss your draft plan and any questions you have with a business mentor, coach, academic advisor, SBA representative or another seasoned business advisor.
4. Use the information you receive to prepare a more finished product. Remember, the business plan is a living document. It is a work in progress. Refine it, improve it and use it as the blueprint to your success.

NOTES

Use the space below to record any other preparation, getting started, or ideas you have for your business plan.

RESOURCES:

This worksheet is intended to help you document your ideas and possible solutions to common challenges small businesses face daily. You are not alone! If you would like talk to someone about your business, the SBA has a broad network of skilled counselors and business development specialists waiting to help your business start, grow, and succeed. Below is a short description of our resource partners:

Small Business Development Centers: Achieve your dream of business ownership and remain competitive in an ever-changing global economy with assistance from your local SBDC. Access free counseling and free or low-cost training on topics like regulatory compliance, technology development, and international trade. Find an SBDC adviser at sba.gov/sbdc.

SCORE: Join the ranks of other business owners who have experienced higher revenues and increased growth thanks to SCORE, the nation's largest network of volunteer business mentors. Experienced executives share real-world knowledge to fit your busy schedule. SCORE mentors are available for free as often as you need, in person, via email or over video chat. Find a mentor at sba.gov/score.

Women's Business Centers: Women entrepreneurs receive essential business counseling and training from this national network of community-based centers. Each center tailors its services to help you navigate the challenges women often face when starting or growing a business. To learn about SBA resources for women visit sba.gov/women.

Veterans Business Outreach Centers: Veteran and military entrepreneurs receive business training, counseling, and referrals to other SBA Resource Partners at a Veterans Business Outreach Center, sba.gov/vboc. Receive procurement guidance to better compete for government contracts. VBOCs also serve active duty service members, National Guard or Reserve members, veterans of any era, and military spouses.

The **SBA** has over 60 **District Offices** located throughout the country to help you start and grow your business.

Find all your local resources in one place using our convenient zip-code tool:
www.SBA.gov/local-assistance

