

# BUSINESS PLAN GUIDE

Business Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Telephone / Fax / Email

Owner's Name/Names

Date

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## *Notice of Confidentiality*

The information provided by \_\_\_\_\_ in this document is unique to its business and confidential. Anyone reading this is requested not to disclose any of the information without their express written permission.

It is also acknowledged by the reader that the information furnished in this business plan, other than information that is in public domain, may cause serious harm or damage to \_\_\_\_\_ and/or the proposed new owners and will be kept in strict confidence.

**A business plan should be written in the third person. Words such as “I”, “we”, “my”, and “our” should not be used. Instead consider using words and phrases such as “management”, “the owner”, “the company”, “Mr. Smith”, etc.**

**The REAP Basic Business Plan Introduction and Request for Funds is comparable to the Executive Summary used in many business plans.**

### **A. Introduction and Request for Funds**

The Introduction and Request for funds is a condensed version of the entire business plan and should include:

- The name and location of the business
- What type of business do you have or plan to have.
- Are you the current owner or the potential buyer?
- What is unique about your products/services?
- Is the business a start-up, initial operations, in expansion, rapid growth, or stable operations?
- What is or will be the legal form of the organization?
- Who will be the key management personnel?
- Who is requesting the funds?
- For what purpose are the funds being requested?
- How much equity are you investing in the business?
- What collateral will be used to secure the loan?

### **B. Pertinent Business Descriptions**

#### **1. What is the business name?**

#### **2. When was the business established and by whom?**

- If the business is established list previous owners and timeline of ownership.
- If the business is a start-up, explain what phase the plans are in.

#### **3. Where is the business located?**

- List the business location address (street, route, etc.) not a PO Box.

#### **4. Describe the building.**

- Describe the type of construction (post & pole, wood frame with metal covering, brick & mortar, metal frame with metal covering etc.).
- Describe the interior wall construction (sheetrock, paneling, painted block etc.)
- Are the walls and ceiling insulated?
- When was the building built (how old)?
- All information that will give the reader knowledge of the building.

- 5. Describe the ownership of the facilities. (Will they be purchased or leased?)**
  - Are the facilities financed or planned to be financed through conventional lenders?
  - Are the facilities financed or planned to be financed with a land sales contract?
  - Are the facilities leased? List the owner.
- 6. What is the layout of the facilities? Provide as an attachment.**
  - If available provide blueprints of the facilities.
  - If blueprints are unavailable draw a floor plan.
  - In the floor plan show walls, doors, windows and anything that provides detail of the facilities.
  - The floor plan does not have to be to scale but should be neat and representative of the facilities.
- 7. What equipment do you have (Specify if purchased or leased)? Provide as an attachment.**
  - Detailed listing of all major equipment owned.
  - Detailed listing of all equipment leased.
  - Detailed listing of equipment to be purchased.
  - OK to group tools such as carpenter hand tools, mechanic hand tools etc.
- 8. What is the legal structure of the business (Sole-proprietorship, partnership, corporation)?**
- 9. Who is your lawyer?**
  - If a lawyer is not selected, determine one that you would use for your business-provide name, law firm and address.
  - If you are unsure of a lawyer to use state that one would be selected when needed.
- 10. Who does your bookkeeping?**
  - Will your bookkeeping be completed in house?
  - If yes, by a full time employee or part time employee?
  - Will the business use a bookkeeping service?
  - Provide the name of the bookkeeper and relationship to the business.
- 11. Who is your accountant?**
  - Will this person or firm provide tax preparation for the business?
  - Provide the name and address of the accountant or firm.
- 12. What types of insurance do you carry?**
  - List all types of insurance policies now in effect or to be put in effect for the business.
  - List amounts of coverage for each type of insurance (liability, comprehensive, theft, fire, etc.).
  - If a start up or expanding business, it is advisable to meet with the insurance agent before finalizing the business plan.
  - The cost of insurance coverage will be needed for the financial projections.
- 13. Who is involved in management and what are their qualifications?**
  - List all management members (owners and employees) of the business and their relationship to the business.
- 14. Do family members help you? How many full-time? How many part-time?**
  - List all family members, duties and relationship to you.
- 15. Do you have other employees? How many full-time? How many part-time?**
  - List the number of all full and part time employees, now employed and those projected to be employed in the future.
  - Provide job descriptions for employees or groups of employees.

**16. If you have employees, explain the labor situation in your area (i.e. is it difficult to find employees?)**

- If you are unfamiliar with the labor situation in the area, the local Chamber of Commerce or economic development offices can provide helpful information.

**17. What is the purpose of your business and highlights of progress to date?**

- Is the purpose to provide all your income?
- Is the purpose to provide supplemental income?
- Is the purpose to provide other family members the opportunity to remain in the area?
- Is the purpose to provide you the opportunity to own and operate a viable business in your local community?
- The highlights can include anything that stands out as positive achievements in the start up phase or expansion of the business.

**C. Products or Services Descriptions**

**18. Describe your products or services: Is there a need for these services or products?**

- Group the products and services by category or brand if it is relevant to the business.
- Benefits of your products/services.
- Level of quality for each product or service.
- Seasonality of your products/service.
- Economic value of your products/services (necessity of discretionary).

**19. What is the view of the current status and prospects for the industry?**

- Is the product /service in a growth mode for your market region?
- Is the product/service something new for your market region?
- Are there local and regional activities/development affecting your products/services.

**20. How is your business affected by major economic, social, technological or regulatory trends?**

- Will adverse economic conditions affect your products/services and how?
- Will your business provide a socially acceptable product/service in your market region?
- Are your products/services of the type that technological advances will create adverse implications?
- Are there regulatory trends possible in the future that could adversely impact your products/services?

**21. Are government regulations affecting your product or service (list them)?**

- List all governmental regulations (licensing, permits, inspections, compliances, etc.) that will apply to your products/services.

**22. How do you distribute your product or service?**

- Are your products/services delivered or performed at the customer's location?
- Are your products/services picked up or performed at the business location?
- Is there a combination of the above offered by the business?

**23. What does it cost to make the product or deliver the service?**

- Take into account direct costs (cost of ingredients, raw materials, etc.) and indirect costs (rent, utilities, etc.)

**24. What is your pricing strategy?**

The pricing policy is one of the most important decisions you will have to make. The “price” must be right” to penetrate the market, maintain a market position, and produce profits.

**Price can be calculated with the following equation: Price + image + service + product + overhead + profit + risk. Some factors influencing the equation are:**

- Perceived value to the customer
- Price sensitivity
- Quality
- Competition
- Services accompanied with core product or service
- Location
- Cost of Goods or Services Sold

## **D. Competition and Customers**

### **25. Who are your major competitors and what is your competitive advantage?**

- List all major competitors by name and location in your market area/region.

### **26. Describe your customers.**

- If individuals define by sex, age, income, occupation, household size etc. Check the Census data for your market area/region.
- Is the primary target market stable, growing, or decreasing?

### **27. Describe customers you would like to attract in the future.**

- As your business grows, expands or new products/services are provided, who will be the new customers?

### **28. How large is the market geographically?**

- From what towns, counties, states and countries (Internet Marketing) do your customers come from?
- What is the size of the different market segments in terms of number of people and amounts of products/services sold to them?

### **29. How large is the market? (Number of potential customers?)**

- Identify by age, sex, income, occupation, household size, etc. (census data) the number of potential customers in your market area/region.

### **30. Why will customers choose your product or service? What benefits do you offer?**

- Will customers choose your products/services because of price, quality, service, personal contacts or some combination of these factors?
- Explain the benefits that set your products/services apart from competitors-product/service knowledge, location, ease of shopping, etc.

### **31. How is customer loyalty established in your business?**

- Friendly and knowledgeable sales/service personnel, correcting mistakes, making every customer feel they are important to your business, delivery of product/service as per agreement with the customer, etc.

### **32. What are your service and product warranty policies?**

## **E. Marketing, Promotion, Advertising and Public Relations Plan**

### **33. What is your market position?**

A market position is the process in which a marketer communicates with consumers to establish a distinct place for its product or brand in their minds.

Positioning is a marketing strategy that creates a perception in the minds of consumers and competitors of the precise needs a certain product fulfills and where it “belongs” on the commercial market.

Examples:

- Marlboro cigarettes are for independent rugged, manly-men.
- Dove soap is for women who want soft skin.
- State Farm Insurance cares about people since it offers “The Good Neighbor” award to school teachers.
- Motel 6 is an inexpensive, homey place to stay.
- Cadillac is an expensive luxury car for wealthy people.

The marketing of minivans has successfully positioned the vehicles as family cars. They could have been positioned as roomy, more comfortable 4X4 vehicles, but they were not. Instead minivans are advertised in parent magazines and during family television viewing hours, and widely recognized as “mommy” cars.

Every new product must be positioned so the particular niche it fulfills is recognized by the individuals who want it. Advertising is the channel through which positioning is created. But marketers must first be keenly aware of the unique qualities of their product that sets it apart from the competition. You need to know your USP (Unique Selling Proposition), in order to know “what” you are trying to position in the market place.

### **34. What is your promotion plan?**

Promotions are the part of a company’s overall marketing plan that informs the public of a product, persuades them to buy it, and influences their perception of it. A highly successful promotion also creates customers whose belief in the product ensures long-lasting loyalty and repeat business.

Promotion of your business involves using all means available to get the message to your customers that your product or service is good and desirable.

You will have identified what is unique about your business and how that uniqueness will benefit the customer. The uniqueness and benefits of your products or services will carry through all of your promotion and will develop your image.

There are endless possibilities for conducting promotions. One or several can be used as part of the “promotional” mix”. Messages can be sent through:

- One-on-one presentations
- Direct mail, i.e. brochures
- Catalogs
- Coupons
- Sweepstakes
- Advertising
- Displays/Trade Shows
- Product demonstrations
- Public relations campaigns
- Publicity

- Direct mail
- Email
- Business and Community Involvement

### **35. What is your advertising plan?**

Advertising is any impersonal form of communication about ideas, goods, or services that is paid for by an identified sponsor. It is usually transmitted by mass media. Some examples are:

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Television
- Radio
- Direct mail
- Web sites
- Outdoor billboards
- Brochures
- Directory listings i.e. Yellow Pages
- Promotional items (matchbooks, calendars, pens etc.)
- Word-of-mouth

### **36. What is your public relations plan?**

Public Relations (PR) is a promotional activity that aims to communicate a favorable image of the product or its marketer and to promote goodwill. Several examples of PR are:

- Promotions
- Image enhancement activities
- Publicity
- Public awareness and education
- Community involvement
- Donations

It is important to have a solid and effective public relations plan for your business. People's attitudes drive them toward, or away from a business. If a business has a poor reputation and a poor relationship with the community, odds are that the business will suffer. Businesses that maintain a good image within the community are more likely to succeed.

## **F. Personal and Business Goals**

### **37. State your long term and short term business goals.**

### **38. State your long term and short term personal goals**

#### **G. Financial Statements –**

- Previous three years Balance Sheets and Profit and Loss Statements.
- Current Balance Sheets, Profit and Loss Statements, and Cash Flow.
- Projections for the next year (monthly) and the following two years (annual), including assumptions.
- Current Personal Balance Sheet.
- Break-even Statement.
- Startups are pro forma as opposed to historical.

## **H. Attachments**

- Any documents which help the reader understand why this is a good business opportunity.
- Note in the relevant narrative that an attachment is included. Example: (See Building Floor Plan, Attachment 3)
- Personal resume for each owner/manager
- Past 3 years tax returns for business (or owner if a start-up business)
- Floor plan sketch or blueprint
- Copies of leases, loan agreements, legal agreements, incorporation papers, etc.
- Letters of reference from other business owners & professionals
- Letters of intent from suppliers agreeing to sell to you & buyers agreeing to purchase
- Listing of insurance policies by type, company & policy number
- Job descriptions of key personnel
- Copies of policies and warranties
- Marketing pieces—brochures, price lists, menus, business cards, posters, etc.