

Business Planning

A Business Plan helps you think through all aspects of your organisation and plan for the future. It helps you get an overview of your organisation, and is a useful tool for presenting yourself to funders and supporters.

A Business Plan may be for your whole organisation or for a particular project or part of your organisation (when it is sometimes called a Project Plan).

Below are the common points that are usually in a business plan - add sections that you think are appropriate. Always make sure it is clearly written, that you discuss it with appropriate people and that any costs are based on real costs.

1: A Summary of the Business Plan

One or two pages, summing up the main points of the plan and introducing the project in an appealing way. You may find it's easier to write this last.

2: The Background/History of Your Organisation

Put details of your legal and charitable status, aims and objectives, and how you are managed. Talk about your track record and highlight achievements.

3: The Needs for the Services Offered

You have to show how you are meeting a clear need, and that your activities are in demand. Include evidence - your own or any research or reports.

4: Aims and Objectives of the Project

This is the creative part, where you can think about what you would like to see happen in the next 3 years. This will depend on what you are set up to do, and the objects in your constitution, but goes into more detail.

Aims

These are statements detailing the purpose of your organisation or project. They can be seen as the changes you want to make, through your organisation or project. Don't have more than 6 aims. An example of an aim:

- To provide a variety of ways for people to understand the lives of disabled people through the mediums of art, drama, training and education.

Aims lead to outcomes - the benefits that will be achieved. For the above aim an outcome might be:

- Local people will gain a greater insight into the lives of disabled people, which will lead to less discrimination against them.

Objectives

These are the tasks needed to achieve the aims. Each aim will have several objectives.

An example of an objective for the above aim:

- Produce performances based on the lives of and experiences of disabled people.

Objectives will have targets (sometimes called outputs) - realistic numbers that you expect to achieve.

5: A Workplan

The workplan gives details about each of the above tasks: when they will be done, and who will do them. A plan can be used by the management committee and staff to monitor progress.

6: Resources Required

From the planning you have already done, you are now in a position to decide what resources you will need to carry out the work. Resources include:

Staff

How many staff hours will this work will need? What staff will you need to deliver this work? Full-time or part-time? What skills do they need? On what wage? What extra costs will each worker have - recruitment, training etc.?

Work space and equipment

Think about where you will carry out all your activities. Do you need to buy a building or rent space? What equipment do you need to run an office and your activities?
Is the space accessible to everyone?

Office costs

Bills like phone and mail costs, heating and lighting. Then costs of consumables like paper and envelopes.

A budget can be created when you have got costs and quotes for the above. A 3 year budget is usual, with all predicted outgoings and income. This should also be combined with a Cash Flow Forecast, which looks at the timing of money flows in and out of the organisation to make sure you always have enough cash when needed.

To make a cash flow forecast you need a **Fundraising Plan**. VAS can assist in identifying funders, and assist in submitting good applications.

7: Promotion and Publicity Plan

How will you advertise what you do to everyone who could use your services? How will you make sure no one is excluded? How will you target the kinds of people you most want to reach? How will you promote yourself to supporters, partners and potential funders?

8: Management

It is always a good idea to draw out your staffing structure. Make sure people are clear what their roles are. Who will have responsibility for what? Who will people report to, and get supervision from?

9: Monitoring and Evaluation

How will you measure the success of the organisation or project? How will you make sure you reach the targets you have set? How will you collect information about the work that you are doing? On paper or in a database? Who will do this and when? How will this information feed into improving the project? Who will analyze this information and act on it to make changes?

There are two types of information to collect: statistics about the quantity of work you do, and feedback to measure the effectiveness of your work.

The best Business Plans are a joint effort, carried out in consultation with staff, management and other interested parties. A plan will work best with the input and support of the people who will be expected to make it happen!