AMERICA'S SBDC NEW YORK Mid-Hudson Region Small Business Development Center
SUNY Ulster Business Resource Center, One Development Court, Kingston, NY 12401 (845) 339-0025 sbdc@sunyulster.edu

BUSINESS PLAN PREPARATION GUIDE

In order to apply for a small business loan from a bank or from any other financial institution or agency, you will be required to provide a business plan**.** The process of developing your business plan will help you determine the feasibility of your project. A business plan consists of a written description of your business, financial statements and supporting documentation. Business plans can differ in format but most contain similar types of information. We have adopted this format, which is widely recognized and accepted by lending institutions.

The SBDC counselors can assist you in locating all pertinent information relevant to your business (i.e. demographic statistics, market information, etc.). The business plan framework requires that you look at a variety of factors that will have an important impact on your eventual success or failure.

Your SBDC counselor will be able to help you analyze the strengths and weaknesses of your plan. A sound business plan will be required to apply for financing to start or expand your business. Lenders will take your business plan, past credit history, collateral position and repayment ability into consideration when evaluating your application.

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I - STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This section briefly describes the name, legal structure and ownership of your business and the sources of funds and their intended uses for your project. State the amount of funds required, what the funds will be used for (i.e. purchase of existing business, construction, renovation, equipment, working capital, etc.).

Here are the essential elements to include in the Statement of Purpose:

1. What is the name of the business?
2. Who are the owners of the business (20% ownership +)?
3. What are your funding requirements?
4. How much equity (cash, equipment, land, buildings) are you investing?
5. To which institution(s) are you applying for funding?
6. What will the funds be used for?
7. How will the loan be re-paid? From cash flow? From sale of assets? By future investors?
8. Describe the collateral you will be putting up to secure your loan(s) (i.e. real estate, stocks, bonds, accounts receivable, savings account, cash value of life insurance, equipment, contracts…)

   NOTE: When real estate is used as collateral, make sure to include the type, location, age, description, improvements, and market value of the property. Also include the amount of equity you have in the property.

Example:

The purpose of this business plan is to secure a $20,000 business loan for the expansion of Wheel World, a retail bicycle store located in Anytown, NY. Wheel World, established in 2000, is owned and operated by Mr. John Doe. The loan will be used to renovate the second story of the existing building in order to expand the amount of selling space, to purchase additional equipment, inventory, and to provide working capital.

Sources and Uses of Funds

Sources	
Owner Equity	$10,000
Bank Loan	20,000
Revolving Loan Fund	10,000
TOTAL:	$40,000
Uses	
Equipment Purchases	$10,000
Leasehold Improvement	10,000
Inventory	15,000
Working Capital	5,000
TOTAL:	$40,000

II - DESCRIPTION OF THE BUSINESS

This section is an overview of the major aspects of your business, including its history, its legal structure, its ownership, products and/or services offered, and markets reached.

Following are the essential elements to include in *Description of Business*:

1. What form of legal entity have you chosen?
   ____ Sole Proprietorship
   ____ Partnership
   ____ LLC / LLP
   ____ Corporation
   ____ S Corporation
   ____ Non-Profit
2. What is your EIN (Federal Employer Identification #? ____________
3. What is your New York State Sales Tax ID#? ____________
4. Who are the owners and/or principals of the business?
5. What best describes the nature of your business?
   ____ Service
   ____ Retail
   ____ Wholesale
   ____ Other (Specify: ____________________)
   ____ Manufacturing
   ____ Agriculture
   ____ Construction
6. What are your principal products and/or services and what are they used for?
7. What markets are you trying to reach?
8. Who is your target customer?
9. How many jobs will you save or create over the next 3 years? __________
10. What will your average wage rate be? ___________

Example:

Wheel World is a retail bicycle shop, owned and operated as an S-Corporation by John Doe. It has been in continuous operation since January of 2000. Before opening Wheel World, John Doe operated a home-based bicycle repair shop for ten years. The demands for his services expanded to the point where it became economically feasible to open a retail location and to offer replacement parts, accessories and biking garments. At the time, there were no other independent bicycle shops in the area. Wheel World specializes in serving the needs of hard-core cyclists, both mountain and road riding.

III - DESCRIPTION OF LOCATION and/or SERVICE AREA

This section describes the physical location of your business and/or the geographic areas served. It should include what the advantages are of this location and how it will contribute to the success of your project.

Following are the essential elements to include in the Description of Location and/or Service Area:

1. General Information such as street address.
2. Is the location in a designated local, state (Empire) or federal development zone?
3. Describe the number and type of nearby businesses.
4. Availability of parking spaces.
5. Traffic patterns and traffic flow.
6. Accessibility to major transportation routes.
7. Floor plan, if applicable.
8. General terms of lease, if applicable.
9. Required leasehold improvements or renovations.
   Include official written estimate(s)
10. Documentation (i.e. letter, Certificate of Occupancy…) that indicates the location is approved by local zoning and planning boards for its intended use.

Example:

Wheel World is located at 123 Main Street in Anytown, NY. The building is a three-story structure with a total of 1,200 square feet of space on the first floor and second floors. In order to take advantage of an expanding bicycle market, Mr. Doe would like to renovate the second floor of the building, which is currently being used mainly for storage. The surrounding neighborhood consists of other small businesses, local government offices and single-family homes. A floor plan is provided in the appendix, which details the existing and proposed layout of the store. Although there are no large parking facilities near the store, most customers…

IV - MARKET ANALYSIS

In this section, give a description of the industry you are in and the factors that will contribute to the success and profitability of your business. Start with an industry-wide perspective and then discuss the specific details of your business.

Include factors such as: population changes, transportation patterns, technological developments, building activity, etc. If your business sells primarily to customers in a limited geographic area, emphasize the regional or local trends that affect your business.

Factors that should be mentioned include:

1. How large is the industry? Quote national or regional sales figures.
2. What are the current industry trends?
3. What markets are you trying to reach?
4. What are the details of your target demographic(s)
5. Who purchases the product(s) or service(s)?

___ Individuals ___ Business ___ Government ___ Other

6. What is the product/service used for?

Example:

Nationally, the sales of bicycles and related components have grown 20% per year in the past five years. Mass merchandisers such as K-mart, Sears and J.C Penney are responsible for approximately 75% of unit sales. The remaining 25% is made through bicycle shops, such as Wheel World, and accounts for 40% of the dollar value of industry shipment. The mass merchandisers usually sell the low to mid-priced bicycles for children or first time buyers. As people become more involved and knowledgeable about the sport, they purchased their bicycle from bicycle shops, because they are looking for better quality products and services. Although there has been an increase in the dollar volume of mail order sales, most mail order is utilized by experienced cyclists only.

There are two main target markets that Wheel World is trying to serve. The traditional target market for Wheel World has been males between the ages of 16 and 40. They are generally middle to upper class with enough disposable income to purchase bikes that cost from $260 to $600. There are an increasing number of women that are also purchasing bikes in this price range, but their numbers are still relatively small. The emerging target market, which Wheel World is attempting to capture with this expansion, is the BMX bike group. The BMX bike group is potentially highly profitable because the market is much younger than the traditional bike market and they require more service and parts.

The BMX bikes are being purchased for children in the 6 to 14 year old age group. These bikes are often used in dirt track racing competitions, which may require safety equipment such as helmets and uniforms. The BMX bikes range in price from $150 to 400 and are generally modified with special tires and pedals.

V - COMPETITION

In this section, provide information on your competitors. In most cases, there will be other businesses in the area that provide products and services that are similar to yours. Explain why customers will choose your business over theirs.

1. How many other businesses are providing the products or services that you offer?
2. Who are they and where are they located?
3. How long have they been in business and what is their track record?
4. Will you be attempting to take market share away from them or will you be creating a new market (niche)?

A very effective way to analyze your direct competition is to create a "competitive matrix" based on the criteria you would use to evaluate a business similar to yours. Each criteria can be evaluated on a scale of 1-10, for example, and then totaled for each competitor. A "high" score will indicate a business that you would want to imitate, a "low" score will indicate an opportunity to compete and gain market share. Remember, there is nothing wrong with copying success!

An example follows:

	Service	**Price**	**Location**	**Hours**	**Variety**	**Rentals**	**TOTAL**
T&R Bikes	5	3	10	5	5	0	**28**
Bike Brothers	10	8	8	8	10	10	**54**
Bikes'R Us	2	5	5	5	1	0	**18**
Wally Mart	0	10	10	10	3	0	**33**

Clearly from the example above, "Bike Brothers" is a store to imitate whereas the other competitors give you plenty of opportunity to gain market share. By analyzing the Strengths and Weaknesses of your competitors, it will become clear what **O**pportunities your competitors' **W**eaknesses provide, and what **T**hreats their **S**trengths present. This is commonly referred to as a "S.W.O.T." analysis. A thorough "S.W.O.T" will help you to develop your "unique selling proposition" which will be a critical part of your marketing strategy.

Example: Wheel World is the only full-service bicycle shop within a 15-mile radius of Anytown, New York. Bikes are sold in two department stores in town, but they are generally sold to as different market segment. The closest competitor is the T & R Bike Shop located in Someplace, 20 miles away. The T& R Bike Shop has a good reputation and sells bikes for about the same price as Wheel World. The T & R Bike Shop is about half the size of Wheel World, and has not moved yet into the BMX market. A new bike shop opened last year in Benson, 25 miles away, and they are much more aggressive…

VI - MARKETING STRATEGY

In this section, provide information on the strategy you are going to use to attract your customers. Fundamentally, marketing is the art and science of getting and keeping customers. Describe in detail the people and/or businesses that will purchase your product or utilize your service. Decide what message you want to convey to the market. What will be your “unique selling proposition”? How are you going to differentiate your business from that of your competitors? Are you going to compete on the basis of price, service, quality, convenience, target market, or on some other basis? Think outside the box!

1. What are the primary factors that will account for your success?

___ Superior Quality	___ New Technology
___ Location	___ Price
___ Previous Experience	___ Other (Specify: __________________)

2. What will be the thrust of your promotional campaign or how are you going to communicate your unique selling proposition?

3. What media or methods will you utilize to convey your message?

___ Print	___ Television	___ Radio	___ Flyers
___ Direct mail	___ Business Cards	___ Sales Reps.	___ Seminar
___ Web Site	___ Other (Specify: ____)		

4. What will be the timing of your expenditures on advertising (i.e. monthly, quarterly, seasonally, etc…)?

5. What special promotional tools will you use (i.e. events, sales, community outreach, etc.)?

6. How much money will you budget for the various promotional and advertising activities you have selected? Take note that you will be spending more in the beginning of your venture until you become established.

7. How are you going to encourage repeat customer purchases? Also, don’t forget that word-of-mouth is a powerful marketing tool. How are you going to encourage your customers to refer to other potential customers?

8. What distribution channels will you employ?

___ Direct Sales	___ Direct Mail	___ Sales Reps	___ Internet	___ Retail
___ Wholesale	___ Distributors	___ E-Commerce	___ Other (Specify_____________)	

Example: See next page.

VII – PRICING STRATEGY

Your pricing structure is critical to the success of your business and is determined through market research and analysis of financial considerations. Basic marketing strategy is to price within the range between the price ceiling and the price floor. The market determines the price ceiling; it is the highest cost a consumer will pay for a product or service and is based on perceived value. The price floor is the lowest amount at which you can offer a product or service, meet all your costs and still make your desired profit. Consider all costs – see Financial Statements section.

The profitable business operates between the price ceiling and the price floor. The difference allows for discounts, bad debt and returns. Be specific about how you arrived at your pricing structure and leave room for some flexibility.

Positioning – predetermining the perceived value in the eyes of the consumer – can be accomplished through promotional activities. To be successful, you must decide what your product or service offers that your competitor's does not and promote it as the unique benefit. Very few items on the market have universal appeal. However, if you position your product or service properly, prospective purchasers or users will immediately recognize its benefits to them.

1. What is the rationale of your pricing strategy?
2. What is the competition charging?
3. What is the quality of the product or service you are offering?
4. What is the nature of the demand and what is the image you are projecting?

Example:

Wheel World's is positioning itself in the marketplace as the leader in BMX bike sales and customer support. By concentrating on post-purchase customer service, they are able to acquire and retain a loyal customer base. Wheel World depends on word-of-mouth referrals from satisfied customers and their convenient and highly visible location for their growth. They will also conduct seasonal and targeted advertising campaigns utilizing local radio and print media. Periodically, they will promote Wheel World by sponsoring BMX competitions. Their total advertising and promotional budget is $1,200 per month, which represents 10% of their income.

Wheel World's pricing strategy targets middle-income individuals and families willing to spend $150-$400 for a BMX bicycle. Their pricing is above what is expected in the mass market as they offer a higher quality product coupled with excellent post-purchase customer service and support. The prices are within the range that other specialty bicycle stores in the area charge.

Wheel World offers a variety of accessories and BMX clothing that generates incremental sales (cross selling). They continually study the marketplace for these products and strive to be responsive to their customers' needs and wants.

Wheel World trains and employs a knowledgeable sales and support staff of primarily young BMX enthusiasts from the community.

VIII - MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL

This part of the business plan is where you must convince a lender or investor that you are prepared by education, training and/or experience to manage the business.

Include job descriptions, skills required, and compensation for any position you are creating. When needed, provide an organizational chart that represents the management structure of your business. If appropriate, include a résumé for each person in an appendix.

It is important to describe who will be responsible for various business functions including: purchasing, sales, bookkeeping, production, etc. You may also want to include any outside resources (i.e. accountant, attorney, business adviser, etc.) you will be retaining to assist you with any of these functions.

If you are a corporation or LLC, include the names and qualifications of your board members or management team.

You may want to describe any benefits your employees will be entitled to receive, including health insurance, vacation, sick and personal days, holidays, pension, bonuses, etc.

If you have already chosen the personnel to fill those positions, then a short narrative on their strengths, talents, and relevant experience is appropriate here.

John A. Doe
Any Street Address
Anytown, NY 12345
(845) 000-0000

SALES PROMOTION
Devised and supervised sales promotion projects for large business firms and manufacturers. Originated and coordinated newspaper and radio advertising and point of sales promotion with public relations and sales management. Analyzed market potentials and provided for improved service to increase sales effectiveness and reduce sales costs. Developed sales training manuals. As a sales executive and promotion consultant, handled a great variety of accounts. Sales potential in these firms varied from $100,000 to $5,000,000 per annum. Was successful in raising the volume of sales in many of these firms 25% within the first year.

SALES MANAGEMENT
Hired and supervised sales and staff on a local, area and national basis. Established branch offices throughout the United States and developed uniform systems of processing orders and sales records. Promoted new products as well as improved sales of old ones. Developed sales training program. Developed a catalog system involving inventory control to facilitate movement of scarcer stock between branches.

MARKET RESEARCH
Devised and supervised market research projects to determine sales potentials, as well as need for advertising. Wrote detailed reports and recommendations describing each step in distribution, areas for development and plans for improvement.

SALES
Retail and Wholesale. Direct sales to consumer, jobber and manufacturer. Hard goods, small metals and appliances.

FIRMS

1998 – 2000	B.B Bowen Sales Development Company, Sales Executive
1990 – 1998	James Bresher Sales Research Corporation, Senior Sales Promotions Manager
1988 – 1990	Dunnock Brothers Valve Company, Salesman, Sales Manager

MILITARY SERVICES
U.S Army, Master Sergeant, 1970-1988

EDUCATION
College of the City of New York
B.S., Major - Business Administration

IX - SHORT- AND LONG-TERM GOALS

In the short-term goal section, provide an outline of what you expect the business to accomplish during your first year of operation. Short-term goals (benchmarks) can be related to levels of sales, breakeven, profitability, etc. The short-term goals should be reflected in your financial projections.

In the long-term goal section, you want to elaborate on your plans for growth beyond the first year and will convey your vision of the company's future.

X -WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE APPENDICES

Personal Financial Statement (required for owners of 20% or more of the Company)

Copy of the business Tax returns for 3 most recent years

Copy of your personal Tax returns for one year

Pictures or diagrams of your products, labels, trademark etc…

Any and all supporting documents such as: Lease, contracts, surveys, list of equipment, leasehold improvements, inventory, résumés, patent information, etc.

XI – THE SIX C's OF CREDIT

Cash: Lender will want you to put liquid cash for up to 20-25% of the project cost.

Character of the borrower: This is a very important criterion. In evaluating character, lenders look at three qualities: integrity, management capability, and perseverance.

Capacity: This refers to the capacity to repay the loan. Lenders consider the following factors: business plan, research to support financial assumptions and projections, the projections, and the cash flow.

Collateral: Real estate, equipment, or any assets that can be used to secure the loan.

Credit: The personal credit report(s) of the borrower(s).

Conditions: These are usually beyond the control of the borrower and include such factors as restrictions on dividends, capital expenditures, salaries, etc.

XII – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Accounts Payable (A/P):** Money owed to creditors and suppliers.
- **Accounts Receivable (A/R):** Money owed to your business, usually due from customers for goods or services provided.
- **Asset:** Tangible item of value.
- **Balance Sheet:** Financial statement showing assets on the left side and liabilities on the right that provides an overview of a company's financial position at a single point in time.
- **Breakeven Point:** Volume of sales at which total costs equal total revenues. Sales above this volume generate profits.
- **Capital:** Property of a business, such as money, used to conduct its business.
- **Cash Flow:** Continuous flow of funds into and out of the business.
- **Collateral:** Property offered as security for a loan or other credit, subject to seizure upon default.
- **Cost of Goods Sold:** Cost to make a product, including materials, labor, and related overhead. Also called Variable Costs.
- **Current Assets:** Any asset that is or can become liquid (cash) within one year.
- **Current Liabilities:** Debts and amounts owed payable within one year.
- **Depreciation:** Except for land, assets wear out. They are devalued or depreciated every year.
- **Equity:** Funds invested in a business in exchange for ownership.
- **Factoring:** Financing of accounts receivable by a third party.
- **Financial Projections:** Estimates of the future revenues and expenses of a company.
- **Fixed Assets:** Property such as buildings, land, or equipment.
- **Gross Profit:** Sales minus cost of goods sold before deducting operating expenses. Also called gross margin.
- **Income Statement:** Financial statement that provides a historical perspective about a company's revenues, costs and profitability for a specific time period. Also called profit and loss statement.
- **Inventory:** Goods held for resale. May be in the form of raw materials, work in progress, or finished goods.
- **Liability:** Any obligation to pay another party now or in the future.
- **Line of Credit:** A short-term loan that can be used and repaid as needed.
- **Liquid Assets:** Assets that can be turned into cash quickly within one year.
- **Liquidity:** Measure of a firm's ability to quickly convert assets into cash.
- **Net Income or Loss:** Surplus or deficit remaining after all expenses have been deducted for a given period.
- **Net Worth:** Assets less liabilities.
- **Operating Expenses or Overhead:** Costs associated with the day-to-day activities of the business.
- **Prime Rate:** The interest rate set by the Federal Reserve, that banks charge their best commercial customers.
- **Principal:** The currently unpaid balance of a loan, not including interest.
- **Pro Forma Financial Statements:** Projecting or forecasting future income, expenses, and cash flow.
- **Retained Earnings:** Net profits that accumulate in a business.

XIII - FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

It is important to distinguish between start-up expenses, fixed costs (on-going operating expenses) and variable costs or Cost Of Goods Sold (C.O.G.S.), if applicable. Itemize all the initial expenses you will incur in opening your business. This will help you determine how much you will need to invest and/or borrow to get started. Ultimately, this total will include the working capital requirements for the period of time until your breakeven point. Breakeven occurs when your business is generating enough income to cover all of your expenses and you can pay yourself.

> NOTE: If your business will be the only source of family income, include your household expenses in your breakeven analysis.

Financial projections will clarify what your working capital needs will be. Following is a list of typical items to be included in your project:

START-UP COSTS:

Equipment Purchases

Initial Inventory

Leasehold Improvements/Renovations

And any other one-time expense to get you started. It is very important that you separate the start-up cost from the on-going, day-to-day operating expenses.

The pro forma financial statements will include:

Income Statement: Monthly for the first year, and quarterly for year 2 & 3.

Cash Flow Adjustments

Balance Sheets

WORKSHEET

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3
GROSS INCOME			
[1] Sales			
[2]			
[3]			
[4]			
[5]			
TOTAL INCOME			
COST OF GOODS SOLD [%]			
[1] Material			
[2] Labor			
[3] Credit Card Fee			
[4]			
[5]			
TOTAL C.O.G.S.			
GROSS PROFIT (= TI - TCOGS)			
OPERATING EXPENSES			
Owners' Compensation			
Accounting Fees			
Advertising/Marketing			
Bank Charge			
Bookkeeping			
Credit Card Monthly Fee			
Health Insurance			
Insurance - Equipment			
Insurance - Liability			
Lease Equipment			
Meals & Entertainment			
Membership Fees			
Office Supplies			
On-line Fees			
Payroll			
Payroll Taxes			
Postage			
Professional Fees			

OPERATING EXP. - CONT.	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3
Rent/Property Taxes			
Repairs/Maintenance			
Snowplowing/Landscaping			
Subscriptions			
Supplies			
Telephone			
Training			
Trade Shows			
Travel			
Utilities			
Water/Sewer/Garbage			
Website Hosting			
Depreciation			
Bank Loan Interest			
Other Loan Interest			
Contingency (3%)			
Other			
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES			
NET PROFIT (LOSS)			
BEFORE TAXES (= GP - TOE)			
(-) Taxes [%]			
NET PROFIT (LOSS)			
AFTER TAXES			
CASH FLOW ADJUSTMENTS			
(+) Bank Term Loan			
(+) Other Loan			
(+) Owner Equity			
(-) Purchase Building			
(-) Purchase Equipment			
(-) Leasehold Improvements			
(-) Inventory Purchases			
(+) Inventory Change			
(-) Bank Loan Principal			
(-) Other Loan Principal			
(+) Depreciation			
MONTHLY CASH FLOW			
CUMULATIVE CASH FLOW			