

WHAT IS A BUSINESS PLAN AND WHY MIGHT A VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION NEED ONE?

Factsheet 1

A Business Plan is a simple document which tells people about what type of organisation you are and what you are trying to achieve. It can be simple or complex, but having one is an imperative in a competitive world. Voluntary Organisations need such a plan, simply because they are a business and must raise income to survive and support their beneficiaries. The very fact that you have committed thoughts to paper and understand what you are and what you want to do moving forward makes you attractive to potential funders and that's important in a landscape of reduced and constrained income generating opportunities. Some people refer to a Business Plan as a Strategy. What's important is not what you call it, but what you include.

More detailed support can be provided through our Executive Membership or our Costed Service.



What should be included?

Business Plan Title and Subtitle

Every great business plan starts with a captivating title and subtitle. You will want to make it clear that the document is, in fact, a business plan, but the subtitle can help tell the story of your organisation in just a short sentence.

Executive Summary

Although this is the last part of the Business plan that you will write, it's the first section (and maybe the only section) that stakeholders will read. The executive summary of a business plan sets the stage for the rest of the document. It includes your organisations mission or vision statement, value proposition, and long-term goals.

Organisational Description

This brief part of your business plan will detail your business name, years in operation, key offerings, and positioning statement. You might even add core values or a short history of the organisation. The organisational description within a business plan is to introduce your organisation to the reader in a compelling and concise way.

The Opportunities you have

The business opportunity should convince investors or funders (or even members of the public who might wish to donate that your organisation meets the needs of the market in a way that no other organisation can. Community organisations operate in a market (The VCSE Sector) and therefore you need to identify how your organisation solves problems or adds value.

The Competitive Analysis

Just about every industry has more than one player in the market, and the VCSE Sector is no different. Understanding your competition is crucial to understanding how you can succeed, support more beneficiaries, and thrive. A SWOT analysis is an organised way to format this section.

The Target Market

You need to think about who you support and how. In Marketing Parlance this is your organisational TARGET MARKET. In this section you might need to think about geography, demographics, how customers access services or their behaviours.

Marketing

Marketing can be expensive, but you should have some basic and simple ideas about idea about how you want to communicate with your beneficiaries and what type of messages you wish to impart.

The Finances

We all know that money does not grow o trees (although we all wished it would). Money doesn't grow on trees and even the most digital, sustainable businesses h Voluntary Sector Organisations have expenses like most others, and outlining a financial summary of where your organisation is currently and where you would like to be in 12 months' time will substantiate this section. Consider including any monetary information that will give potential investors or funders a glimpse into the financial health of your business. These include items like Assets, Liabilities, Expenses, Debt, Investments and Revenue.

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The Team

Having outlined some great goals and objectives, together with a unique or compelling offer, not turn your attention to the Team and who will do what. Outline your Team, its strengths, and the skills that you have at your disposal. This is a crucial piece of information for funders and will inspire confidence in your organisation.

Your Funding Requirements

Remember that one of the goals of a business plan is to secure funding from investors, so you will need to include the funding requirements that you are seeking. The amount your business needs, for what reasons, and for how long will meet the requirements for this section.

Types of Business Plan

There is no ONE SIZE FITS ALL when it comes to Business Plans. Choose one which suits your organisational needs and remember to constantly update and develop the thought process which ignited the plan in the first instance. Never write the plan and leave it to gather dust. This is a recipe for chaos. Review the plan at least quarterly to ensure that you are on schedule to meet some of the plan's contents. This can be a collegiate exercise involving Trustees, Staff and Volunteers.

This is a Free Factsheet. This and others are available for reading and downloading by any organisation without charge. Further diagnostic tools are available from our Members Area only. There is a yearly charge to access this information. To join visit our website - <http://www.voluntaryimpact.org.uk/membership>

Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire also provides a range of bespoke services at a cost: For more information visit our website - http://www.voluntaryimpact.org.uk/community/consultancy_packages/

Voluntary impact Northamptonshire provides a service which will sense check and help develop your organisational plan. Due to the constrained nature of funding however, this is a costed service with prices available upon request. Simply contact info@voluntaryimpact.org.uk in the first instance.



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