

Business Planning for Sustainability and Impact Process Overview

Purpose, Goals, and Objectives

The purpose of a business planning process is to create a deliberate, informed plan for growth, impact, and sustainability based on systematic and objective analyses and decisions. The plan is the blueprint to guide organizational, or program, development and can serve as an important tool to attract interest and investment.

The goal of a business planning effort is to define the direction, programs, and market position based on needs, constituents, and competition. It creates the most appropriate business model based on fundraising or earned income potential or constraints and will often define feasibility or challenges associated with growth and expansion. The business plan also designs the organization to achieve strategic goals and to be sustainable.

The process informs marketing, resource development, programming, and capacity building efforts. The outcome is a business plan, with specific recommendations, implementation schedules and financial projections.



Process

A business planning process typically includes these components.

Analysis - Market, Feasibility, Organizational

The analysis defines the external opportunities in the “industry” or sub-sector, the potential markets, the competition and the organization’s capacity. The analysis is typically completed through phone or in-person interviews and a review of relevant materials, reports and documents. The analysis attempts to discern where market needs and interests overlap with organizational assets, competencies or products.

The analysis provides a profile of potential markets, an assessment of the “institutional landscape” and competition and the opportunities or obstacles for success. It becomes the context for decision making. It may address feasibility and costs / benefits of alternative directions, within the context of creating a sustainable an impact-ful organization.

Strategic Decisions

Based on the analysis and potential opportunities, leadership will want to make decisions about direction and focus and define the organization’s potential for growth and sustainability.

A decision making session typically focuses on key programs, products or services to attain strategic goals, serve markets, and define the most appropriate and feasible business model. It will also address realistic financial needs and the likelihood of attracting long term investment. It also defines organizational development implications of a selected option.

The outcome of the meeting is a strategic focus document representing fundamental business decisions. This informs the business plan.

The Business Plan

Based on the situation analysis and the decisions, the business model can be defined. This includes creating the most appropriate structure, staffing, or systems to achieve goals and to reach potential markets. Often times, the business model addresses necessary strategic partnerships and funding sources. It also includes a clear focus on strategic priorities and creates realistic timelines with financial projections.

The outcome is a business plan with specific recommendations and practical steps for implementation.

Sample Business Plan Outline

1. Business Description
 - a. Purpose and structure
 - i. Vision, mission
 - ii. Goals and results
 - b. Distinctive competence and unique niche
 - c. Strategic growth issues and strategic focus
2. Situation Analysis
 - a. External analysis
 - i. Data, trends and issues
 - b. Internal analysis and capacity
 - i. Strategy- structure- culture alignment
 - c. Market analysis
 - i. Market trends and needs
 - ii. Target market profile
 - d. Comparative analysis
3. Programs, Products and Services
 - a. Core programs
 - i. Purpose, audience
 - ii. Goals and objectives
 - b. Supporting programs
 - c. Distribution and access
4. Outreach Strategies
 - a. Position, brand, image
 - b. Outreach, marketing or communication strategies
5. Strategic Partnerships
 - a. Public –private partnership
 - b. Coalitions/ advisory
 - c. Strategic alliances
6. Organizational Development
 - a. Business model
 - b. Management and staffing
 - c. Governance
 - d. Systems and processes
 - e. Policies
7. Facilities
8. Finances
 - a. Policies
 - b. Source and uses of funds
 - c. Pro Forma financial statements
9. Implementation
 - a. Tasks and timeline