



Writing A Business Plan

Hints & Tips

Writing a Business Plan

While the language of business can seem at odds with the aims of voluntary organisations, you still need to plan for the future to get things done, and to account to your members, to funders and the public as you carry out your activities. Writing a business plan can seem daunting but some simple tips below may help you get started.

Why plan?

- to clarify and meet your aims and objectives
- to set out your goals
- to plan your approach and monitor your activities over time
- to measure your progress, keep on track, manage performance
- to raise money for the organisation or specific projects. It can be shown to other people who might provide or lend money, eg funders, public bodies, the bank.
- you can also use your plan to introduce new groups of people to your organisation, such as volunteers or new funders.
- to spot potential risks and problems
- to ensure you do not accumulate losses
- to ensure you comply with legislation and regulations

If you decide to apply to be a charity then the [Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator](#) may want to see a copy of a business or organisational plan as well as a draft constitution and also any other documents detailing your organisation's intended activities.

What should your business plan say?

A business plan is a clear and documented account of the activities you have decided to undertake over a given period, and the cost of making them happen. It should cover aims, objectives and strategies, and enable the organisation to deliver more effectively. Business plans are as individual as the groups that develop them, but some common elements include:



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- the history and background of your organisation including organisational structure
- current and future activities – what you are going to do and why?
- when and how you are going to do it?
- how does your project tie in to National and Local Outcomes
- what are the strengths and potential weaknesses of your organisation and what plans do you have in place to mitigate weaknesses
- how will you assess the potential risks to your project or organisation?
- where might the money come from? When and how it will be spent?
- how will you keep track of your progress and spending? How will you monitor and review?
- how will you know if the plan is working? How will you evaluate?

Remember who you are writing the plan for: your management committee, your staff, your members, your community, clients and potential grant funders. You should be honest and realistic when setting out your aims and objectives and how you intend to deliver them.

The information supplied in the 'public version' of a Business Plan may be slightly different to the version you will use for yourself. You should consider the information you supply to any third party carefully ensuring that any commercially sensitive information.

Who should be involved in the planning process?

Depending on the size of the organisation, it is useful to involve a number – or all – key players in the development of the plan to varying degrees. In voluntary organisations it is quite common to consult with clients, service users or members, as well as staff and/or the management committee. Once your business plan is finalised (including being dated and version controlled), it's good practice to get the finalised version ratified at a meeting of your Board or Committee so that everyone knows what your organisation is working towards.



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Useful resources

[Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action - Business Planning \(avashire.org.uk\)](http://avashire.org.uk)

[MyGov.scot – Writing a business plan](http://MyGov.scot)

[www.bgateway.com – www.bgateway.com](http://www.bgateway.com)) - Working on a Business Plan

www.gov.uk/write-business-plan - HMRC Business Planning Advice

Writing a business plan - SCVO

[The Business Model Canvas – a business modelling tool available free from many online sources](#)

Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action

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