Free sample template: please read first

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General Business Plan Template

Business Plan for [company name]

Owner(s): [ ]

Address and contact: [ ]

Plan date: [ ]

Prepared for: [lender / investor / internal]

Template version 1.0, October 2026, by Let's Talk Business Plans.

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How to use this template

- Replace every [bracketed field]. Delete the grey guidance and every shaded box before you send the plan.
- Build the numbers first in our free Excel workbook, then copy the summary figures into section 8: letstalkbusinessplans.com/posts/excel-business-plan-templates-free-download.
- Write the executive summary (section 1) last.
- The SBA says you don't have to stick to the exact business plan outline: use the sections that make the most sense for your business and your needs (SBA: Plan your business).

Known limitations of this template

- General, not written for any one industry.
- The PDF has no fillable form fields. Edit the Word file, or print the PDF and write on it.
- No formulas in this file: the numbers come from the Excel workbook.
- The workbook has no historical financials, no capital expenditure budget and one loan only.
- Checked in LibreOffice only. It has not been opened in Microsoft Word or Google Docs.
- A free sample: not legal, tax, accounting or financial advice, and without support (see the first page).

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1. Executive summary

How to fill this in (delete before sending)
Write this section last, on one page, from the sections that follow.
The SBA says: “Briefly tell your reader what your company is and why it will be successful.” It also says to include financial information and high-level growth plans if you plan to ask for financing (SBA).
Questions to answer in this section:
- What is your company, and why will it be successful?
- What is your mission, what do you sell, and who leads the business?
- If you are asking for financing: how much, and what do the headline numbers show?

- What we sell and to whom: [products or services] for [customers] in [area].
- Why now and why us: [ ].
- Location and team: [where you operate]; [owners and key people].
- Funding request: [$] as [debt / equity], mainly for [uses] (section 7).
- Headline numbers: Year 1 sales [$]; Year 1 net income [$]; debt service coverage (DSCR) [x]; lowest month-end cash [$] in [month] (section 8).

2. Company description

How to fill this in (delete before sending)
The SBA says: “Go into detail about the problems your business solves. Be specific, and list out the consumers, organization, or businesses your company plans to serve.” (SBA)
Your legal structure affects taxes, paperwork and personal liability: check the SBA's business structure page and your state (SBA: Choose a business structure).
Questions to answer in this section:
- What problems does your business solve?
- Which consumers, organizations or businesses will you serve?
- What gives you an advantage?

Legal name and structure: [sole proprietor / LLC / corporation / partnership]. Check with your state.

Start date: [month, year]. Location: [address or area].

Problem we solve: [ ]. Customers we serve: [ ].

Competitive advantages: [ ].

Excel workbook: Assumptions, sections 1 and 2 (first month and revenue lines).

3. Market analysis

How to fill this in (delete before sending)
The SBA says: “You’ll need a good understanding of your industry outlook and target market.” (SBA)
Say where each number comes from: your own calls, quotes, counts or a source you can link.
Questions to answer in this section:

- What is your industry outlook?
- Who is your target market, how many are there, and where?
- Who are your competitors, and how are you different?

Industry outlook: [ ] (source: [ ]).

Target market: [who], [how many], [where] (source: [ ]).

Competitor	Strengths	Your difference	Where you found this
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Trends that affect your sales: [ ].

Excel workbook: Revenue tab (units, prices, ramp-up, seasonality). Explain where each input comes from.

4. Organization and management

How to fill this in (delete before sending)
The SBA says: “Tell your reader how your company will be structured and who will run it.” It asks you to describe the legal structure, and to consider including resumes and CVs of key members of your team (SBA).
Legal structure: see the SBA's business structure page and check with your state (SBA: Choose a business structure).
Questions to answer in this section:

- How will the company be structured?
- Who will run it, and what have they done before?

Legal structure: [ ].

Organization chart (Excel workbook: Payroll tab)

Role	Person	Experience	Start month
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Advisers: [accountant], [attorney], [banker], [mentor]. Resumes are in the Appendix (section 9).

5. Service or product line

How to fill this in (delete before sending)
The SBA says: “Describe what you sell or what service you offer. Explain how it benefits your customers and what the product lifecycle looks like.” (SBA)

Copy each line's price and direct cost from the workbook so the numbers match section 8.

Questions to answer in this section:

- What do you sell, and how does it benefit your customers?
- What does the product lifecycle look like?

Excel workbook: Revenue and Direct Costs tabs

Line	Price	Direct cost	Gross margin
[ ]	[$]	[$]	[%]
[ ]	[$]	[$]	[%]
[ ]	[$]	[$]	[%]

Product or service lifecycle: [ ].

Intellectual property (trademarks, patents, copyrights), if any: [ ].

Research and development, if any: [ ].

6. Marketing and sales

How to fill this in (delete before sending)
The SBA says: “Your goal in this section is to describe how you’ll attract and retain customers. You’ll also describe how a sale will actually happen.” (SBA)

Put the marketing budget in the Excel workbook (OpEx tab, marketing lines) and copy the total here.

Questions to answer in this section:

- How will you attract customers?
- How will you keep them?
- How will a sale actually happen?

- How customers find us: [ ].
- How a sale happens: [enquiry → quote or visit → order → delivery → follow-up].
- How we keep customers: [ ].
- Marketing budget: [$] a month fixed, plus [%] of sales (Excel workbook: OpEx tab).
- Ramp-up: [how fast sales build in the first months] (Excel workbook: Assumptions, section 3).

7. Funding request

How to fill this in (delete before sending)
The SBA says to "clearly explain how much funding you'll need over the next five years and what you'll use it for", whether you want debt or equity, the terms you'd like, and the length of time your request will cover (SBA).

Skip this section if you are not asking for money. Match the amount to section 8.1.

Questions to answer in this section:

- How much funding will you need over the next five years, and what for?
- Do you want debt or equity, on what terms, and for how long?
- What are your future financial plans, such as paying off debt?

- Amount requested: [$] as [a loan / a line of credit / equity].
- Terms wanted: [rate, term, repayment]. Time period the request covers: [ ].
- Owner equity: [$].
- Future financial plans: [for example, repay the loan by month [ ]].

Uses of funds (Excel workbook: Startup & Funding tab)

Use of funds	Amount
[ ]	[$]
[ ]	[$]
[ ]	[$]
[ ]	[$]
[ ]	[$]
Total uses	**[$]**

Match this to section 8: the request should equal the gap in your sources and uses (8.1).

8. Financial projections

How to fill this in (delete before sending)
The SBA asks for "a prospective financial outlook for the next five years", with forecasted income statements, balance sheets, cash flow statements and capital expenditure budgets, quarterly or even monthly projections for the first year, and projections that match your funding request (SBA).

Build the numbers in the free Excel workbook (60 months, rolled up to 5 years): letstalkbusinessplans.com/posts/excel-business-plan-templates-free-download. Copy the figures into the tables below. No formulas are in this file.

If your business is already established, the SBA asks for past income statements, balance sheets and cash flow statements, and a list of any collateral you could put against a loan (SBA).

Questions to answer in this section:

- Are your Year 1 projections monthly or quarterly?
- Do the projections match the funding request?
- What has to be true for these numbers to happen?

8.1 Sources and uses of funds

Excel workbook: Startup & Funding tab

Uses of funds	Amount	Sources of funds	Amount
Equipment, vehicles and fixtures	[$]	Loan	[$]
Inventory and deposits	[$]	Owner equity	[$]
Pre-opening costs	[$]	Investor equity	[$]
Working-capital reserve	[$]		
Total uses	**[$]**	**Total sources**	**[$]**

8.2 Profit and loss summary, Years 1 to 5

Excel workbook: P&L tab (annual columns)

Line	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Sales	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]
Gross profit	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]
Payroll	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]
Operating expenses	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]
EBITDA	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]
Net income	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]

8.3 Cash by year

Excel workbook: Cash Flow tab

Line	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Opening cash	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]
Lowest month-end cash	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]
Month it happens	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Ending cash	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]

8.4 Break-even

Excel workbook: Break-Even tab

Break-even sales per month	Profit basis	Cash basis
Your figure	[$]	[$]

8.5 Loan and debt service coverage

Excel workbook: Loan and Key Ratios tabs

Line	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Annual debt service	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]
Debt service coverage ratio (DSCR)	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]
DSCR after owner draws	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]

Loan: [$] at [%] for [months]; monthly payment [$].

Lenders set their own requirements. Ask your lender what it requires.

8.6 Balance sheet at each year-end

Excel workbook: Balance Sheet tab (year-end columns)

Line	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total assets	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]
Total liabilities	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]
Total equity	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]	[$]

8.7 Key assumptions

- Sales: [units, prices, ramp-up, seasonality, growth].
- Direct costs: [% of sales by line].
- Payroll: [roles, salaries, start months].
- Operating expenses: [rent, insurance, marketing].
- Loan: [amount, rate, term].

8.8 Monthly projections printout

Attach the monthly Year 1 P&L and cash flow printout from the Excel workbook (Appendix, section 9).

9. Appendix checklist

How to fill this in (delete before sending)
This appendix is our addition, not one of the SBA's sections. Attach what your reader asks for and tick it.

The SBA suggests resumes of key team members (Organization and management) and, for established businesses, past financial statements and a collateral list (Financial projections) (SBA).

Questions to answer in this section:

- Is every claim in the plan backed by a document?

☐ Resumes of the owners and key people

☐ Permits and licenses

☐ Leases

☐ Quotes and estimates

☐ Letters of intent

☐ Credit history

☐ Collateral list

☐ Monthly projections printout (P&L and cash flow, Year 1)

☐ Past financial statements (established businesses)

A. Optional: one-page lean plan

Our addition. The SBA says lean plans "focus on summarizing only the most important points of the key elements of your plan", and that "Some lenders and investors may ask for more information." It says you might prefer a lean format "if you want to explain or start your business quickly, your business is relatively simple, or you plan to regularly change and refine your business plan."

Source: SBA: Plan your business.

Component (SBA)	Your notes
Key partnerships	[ ]
Key activities	[ ]
Key resources	[ ]
Value proposition	[ ]
Customer relationships	[ ]
Customer segments	[ ]
Channels	[ ]
Cost structure	[ ]
Revenue streams	[ ]

B. Before you send it

Our addition: a checklist for the PDF you send.

☐ Delete every shaded box, grey guidance line and [bracket].

☐ Every number matches the Excel workbook.

☐ Update the contents page so its page numbers are right.

☐ Export to PDF with your word processor's PDF export (in LibreOffice: Export as PDF).

☐ Open the PDF and check: the fonts look right, every page is there, the links work.

☐ Name the file [Company]-Business-Plan.pdf.

☐ Ask your lender or investor what file format it accepts.

☐ Keep the Word file as your master copy.

C. Example: filled financial tables

Example — replace with your numbers. A hypothetical business, from the Excel workbook's own example inputs, recalculated. Rounded to whole dollars

Every figure below is read from the Excel workbook's example. It is not a benchmark and not a real business. Replace all of it with your own numbers.

Example — replace with your numbers. Section 1, executive summary

Executive summary line	Example — replace with your numbers
Revenue lines	Service line A — projects; Service line B — monthly plans; Product line
Year 1 sales by line	Service line A — projects: $237,825; Service line B — monthly plans: $63,420; Product line: $110,985
Funding	$170,000 of uses, paid by: loan $110,000; owner equity $50,000; investor equity $10,000
Year 1	sales $412,230; net income $11,280
Year 5	sales $668,075; net income $84,125
Lowest month-end cash, Year 1	$25,060 (month 3)

Example — replace with your numbers. Section 8.1, sources and uses (Excel workbook: Startup & Funding tab)

Uses of funds	Amount	Sources of funds	Amount
Equipment	$30,000	Loan	$110,000
Furniture and fixtures	$8,000	Owner equity	$50,000
Leasehold improvements	$15,000	Investor equity	$10,000
Vehicles	$35,000		
Computers and software	$6,000		
Initial inventory	$10,000		
Deposits (rent, utilities)	$5,000		
Licenses and permits	$1,500		
Legal and professional fees	$3,500		
Pre-opening marketing	$5,000		
Pre-opening payroll and training	$6,000		
Other startup costs	$5,000		
Working-capital reserve	$40,000		
Total uses	**$170,000**	**Total sources**	**$170,000**

Example — replace with your numbers. Section 8.2, profit and loss summary (Excel workbook: P&L tab)

Line	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Sales	$412,230	$511,308	$558,800	$610,900	$668,075
Direct costs	$124,462	$153,406	$166,589	$180,950	$196,599
Gross profit	$287,768	$357,902	$392,211	$429,949	$471,476
Payroll	$170,006	$195,356	$250,294	$257,803	$265,537
Operating expenses	$81,134	$88,770	$93,363	$98,284	$103,563
EBITDA	$36,629	$73,776	$48,554	$73,863	$102,376
Net income	$11,280	$49,535	$25,526	$54,161	$84,125

Example — replace with your numbers. Section 8.3, cash by year (Excel workbook: Cash Flow tab)

Line	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Opening cash	$40,000	$55,391	$107,929	$135,246	$187,871
Lowest month-end cash	$25,060	$57,043	$106,504	$136,354	$191,038
Month it happens (of 60)	3	13	26	37	49
Ending cash	$55,391	$107,929	$135,246	$187,871	$269,010

Example — replace with your numbers. Section 8.4, break-even (Excel workbook: Break-Even tab)

Break-even sales per month	Profit basis	Cash basis
Example — replace with your numbers	$32,879	$32,342

Example — replace with your numbers. Section 8.5, loan (Excel workbook: Loan tab)

Loan	Example — replace with your numbers
Loan terms	$110,000 at 9% for 84 months; monthly payment $1,770

Example — replace with your numbers. Section 8.5, debt service (Excel workbook: Key Ratios tab). Read your own DSCR from the same tab.

Line	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Annual debt service	$21,238	$21,238	$21,238	$21,238	$21,238

Example — replace with your numbers. Section 8.6, balance sheet at each year-end (Excel workbook: Balance Sheet tab)

Line	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total assets	$148,463	$185,072	$196,460	$235,157	$302,367
Total liabilities	$98,183	$85,257	$71,119	$55,655	$38,739
Total equity	$50,280	$99,815	$125,341	$179,503	$263,628

Sources for the rules quoted in this template: the SBA's Plan your business and Launch your business pages, opened October 16, 2026. The links are in each section.