Small Business Plan Template

A business plan for a freelancer or a small service business, in two sizes: a one-page lean plan that can take as little as an hour, and a short traditional plan for when a lender, a partner or you want the detail. The sections follow the two formats the U.S. Small Business Administration describes in its guide to writing a business plan. Fill in every [bracket] and delete the guidance in italics. Works in Word, Google Docs, Pages or on paper.

Workspace369 is not affiliated with the SBA. This template gives you a structure, not numbers: every figure in the example at the end is made up.

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1. Which plan do you need? (a quick check, for you)

The SBA describes two common formats. Pick one, or start lean and grow it.

- [ ] *You are starting or testing a simple service business, and the plan is mainly for you.* ***Use the one-page lean plan (section 2).***
- [ ] *You will ask a bank or lender for money, bring in a partner, or want every detail written down.* ***Use the traditional plan (section 3).***
- [ ] *You expect to change the plan often.* ***Start lean*** *and come back to it every few months.*

The SBA notes that traditional plans "can be dozens of pages long", while a lean plan is "typically only one page", and that some lenders and investors may ask for more than a lean plan gives them. Ask what your lender wants before you write.

2. The one-page lean plan

Nine boxes, one or two lines each. These are the nine lean plan sections the SBA lists; the prompts are written for service businesses.

Business name: [Your business] **Owner:** [Your name] **Date:** [date] **Review again on:** [date, e.g. in three months]

Box	What to write
Value proposition	[The one-sentence promise. e.g. "Monthly bookkeeping for local trades businesses, done by the 10th, so the owner always knows their numbers."]
Customer segments	[Exactly who you serve: type of business or person, size, place. Your business is not for everybody.]
Channels	[How you reach them: referrals, a website, local groups, a directory, social media. List the two that matter most.]
Customer relationships	[How working with you feels: personal or automated, in person or online, from first call to final invoice.]
Revenue streams	[How you get paid: project fee, monthly retainer, hourly, packages. List every stream.]
Key activities	[What you must do well to win: e.g. fast turnaround, a niche you know, a simple package.]
Key resources	[What you rely on: your skills, tools, a licence or certification, savings, a workspace.]
Key partnerships	[Who you work with: subcontractors, suppliers, a referral partner, an accountant.]
Cost structure	[Your biggest costs, and whether you compete on low cost or on value. Use the numbers in section 4.]

The next three things I will do: 1. [ ] 2. [ ] 3. [ ]

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3. The traditional plan

Nine sections, in this order. The SBA says you don't have to use all of them: use the ones that make sense for your business. A service business can often keep each one to half a page.

Executive summary

Write this last. Half a page: what the business does, who it serves and why it will work.

[Business name] provides [service] to [customers] in [place]. We are different because [reason]. The business is run by [name], who [relevant experience]. [If asking for money: "We are asking for $____ to ____, and expect to ____ by ____."]

Company description

The problem you solve, who has it and why you are the one to solve it.

- **The problem:** [What goes wrong for your customers today]
- **Who has it:** [Specific businesses or people]
- **Why us:** [Experience, a niche, location, speed, a skill others lack]

Market analysis

What you found out, not what you hope. Note where each fact came from and the date you checked it.

- **Who and how many:** [Your target customers and roughly how many are within reach. Source: ____]
- **Competitors:** [Three businesses customers choose instead of you, what they charge if it is public, and what they do well]
- **Your edge:** [What you will do better or differently]
- **Trends:** [Anything changing in your field or area. Source: ____]

Organization and management

- **Legal structure:** [Sole proprietor / LLC / partnership / corporation]. *Choose with an accountant or attorney: it affects taxes and liability.*
- **Who does what:** [Owner: ____. Subcontractor or staff: ____. Outside help (accountant, attorney): ____]
- **Licences, permits and insurance:** [What your city, state and trade require, and what you have]

Service line

What you sell, as a customer would see it.

Service	What the customer gets	Price	How long it takes
[Service 1]	[Result, not tasks]	[$ ____]	[____]
[Service 2]		[$ ____]	[____]

Service	What the customer gets	Price	How long it takes
[Service 3]		[$ ____]	[____]

Marketing and sales

- **How customers find you:** [The two or three channels from your lean plan, with what you will do each week]
- **How a sale happens:** [e.g. enquiry, call, proposal, deposit, start date]
- **How you keep customers:** [e.g. a monthly check-in, a retainer, asking for referrals]

Funding request (only if you are asking for money)

The SBA's guidance: say how much you need, what for, whether it is a loan or an investment, the terms you want and how long the request covers.

- **Amount:** [$ ____] **Type:** [loan / investment] **Terms wanted:** [____]
- **What it pays for:** [equipment, materials, wages, or covering bills until revenue grows]
- **How it will be repaid or returned:** [____]

Financial projections

Use the numbers from section 4. If the business is already running, add your income statements, balance sheets and cash flow statements; the SBA suggests the last three to five years if you have them. For the first year, show monthly or quarterly figures, not just a yearly total.

[Monthly costs, owner pay, price per client and clients needed, from section 4. Then a 12-month table of expected clients, revenue and costs.]

Appendix

[Résumé, licences, sample contract, client testimonials, quotes for equipment, references. Only what supports the plan.]

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4. The numbers that matter (a worksheet)

A service business plan rests on four numbers. Fill these in before you write sections 2 or 3. Prices and costs are yours to set: this template doesn't suggest any.

Line	Per month
Business costs (software, insurance, phone, marketing, travel, other)	[$ ____]

Line	Per month
What you need to pay yourself	[$ ____]
A. Total you need to bring in (before tax)	**[$ ____]**
B. Average you earn per client per month	**[$ ____]**
Clients you need = A ÷ B, rounded up	**[____]**

Check: clients you need × B is at least A. Then ask yourself honestly whether you can win and serve that many clients with the time you have. If not, change the price, the service or the costs, not the arithmetic.

Put money aside for taxes too. How much depends on where you live and how the business is set up, so ask an accountant.

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5. Checklist before you use the plan

- [ ] The value proposition fits in one sentence.
- [ ] The customer segment names a specific group, not "everyone".
- [ ] Every price and cost in the plan is yours, and the arithmetic in section 4 adds up.
- [ ] Facts in the market analysis say where they came from and when you checked them.
- [ ] The legal structure, licences and insurance have been checked for where you work.
- [ ] If you are asking for money, the funding request matches the financial projections.
- [ ] You have set a date to review the plan.

Free, one-to-one help with a plan is available in the U.S. through SBA resource partners such as SCORE mentors and Small Business Development Centers. Find them on the SBA's website: https://www.sba.gov/counseling/local-assistance/

This template is general information, not legal, tax or financial advice.

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6. Filled-in example: a one-page lean plan

Harbor Lane Bookkeeping Owner: Dana Reyes **Date:** March 3 **Review again on:** June 2

Box	What Dana wrote
Value proposition	Monthly bookkeeping for local trades businesses, closed by the 10th of each month, so the owner knows their numbers before they quote the next job.

Box	What Dana wrote
Customer segments	Plumbers, electricians and builders with one to ten staff, within 30 miles of town.
Channels	Referrals from two accountants; talks at the local trades association.
Customer relationships	A 20-minute call each month, then email. Personal, mostly online.
Revenue streams	A monthly retainer at three levels; one-off clean-up projects for books that are behind.
Key activities	Closing the books on time, every month; knowing trades businesses' job costing.
Key resources	Ten years of bookkeeping experience; accounting software; a home office.
Key partnerships	Two local accountants who refer clients and do the tax returns.
Cost structure	Competes on value, not on price. Business costs are $480 a month.

Dana's numbers (section 4): business costs $480 + pay $4,000 = **$4,480 a month**. Average retainer **$400 a month**. $4,480 ÷ $400 = 11.2, so Dana needs **12 clients**. Check: 12 × $400 = $4,800, which is more than $4,480.

Next three things: 1. Ask both accountants for three introductions each. 2. Book the trades association talk. 3. Write the three retainer levels on one page.

Fictional example. The business, the owner and the numbers are made up to illustrate the template, and are not a guide to what to charge or what a business costs to run.

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