Business Plans

Creating a functional business plan will help keep track of logistical and financial details. This plan will serve as a road map and vision for your business, working out these details ahead of time is both necessary and beneficial for ensuring the success of your farming operation. This sheet provides helpful resources and publications to guide the construction of your plan.

What is a Business Plan?

A business plan is a document that helps you to organize and succinctly summarize the vision you have for your business. The plan contains the operational and financial objectives of a business, the detailed plans and budgets showing how the objectives are to be realized.

A good business plan will contain the following:

- Your mission statement which includes the following:
    - **Your business overview:** business vision, key values, and goals, core skills of business owners and leaders, business structure
    - **Marketing Plan:** description of the industry, description of customer base, marketing environment (including the Product, Price, Place, and Promotion)
    - **Operations Plan:** production plans, soil description, seeding and planting plan, growing practices and management details, pest and disease control plan
    - **Risk Management Plan:** a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats the business may experience are described), planning for anything else that may go wrong (bad weather, pests & diseases, equipment failure)
    - **Financials:** estimated start-up costs, cash flow budget, enterprise budget, and expense forecast

While there is a lot of important information to include in a sound business plan, the plan should ideally not exceed 10 pages.

Helpful Publications for Writing a Business Plan

In addition to the farm business courses offered by the Cornell Small Farms Program [https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/online-courses/] and by the Cornell Dyson School [https://dyson.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/04/Cornell_StartingAgBizPrePlanning2021_e-VD-2.pdf] , there are a number of resources available to assist in developing a business plan and understanding the administrative side of running a farm or farm business. Below, you can find some of these resources.

General Business Resource Publications:

- Starting an Ag-Business? A Pre-Planning Guide [http://publications.dyson.cornell.edu/outreach/extensionpdf/2004/Cornell_AEM_eb0408.pdf]
- Business Transfer Guide: Junior Generation [http://publications.dyson.cornell.edu/outreach/extensionpdf/2016/Cornell-Dyson-eb1605.pdf]
- Producing a Business Plan for Value-Added Agriculture [http://publications.dyson.cornell.edu/outreach/extensionpdf/2007/Cornell_AEM_eb0708.pdf]

- Business Planning for the Agriculture Sector: A Guide to Business Plan Development for Start-up to Mid-size Operations [http://publications.dyson.cornell.edu/outreach/extensionpdf/2010/Cornell_AEM_eb1002.pdf]
- Building a Sustainable Business [https://www.sare.org/resources/building-a-sustainable-business/] (Sustainable Agricultural Research Education (SARE)Publications) 280 pages of education and practical exercises to guide you through the financial, management, and interpersonal skills needed to start a successful farm business. Order hard copy for $17 or download PDF online for free.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Publications for Specific Commodities:

- Landscape Business Planning Guide [http://publications.dyson.cornell.edu/outreach/extensionpdf/2003/Cornell_AEM_eb0313.pdf]
- Writing a Business Plan: A Guide for Small Premium Wineries [http://publications.dyson.cornell.edu/outreach/extensionpdf/2002/Cornell_AEM_eb0206.pdf]
- Writing a Business Plan: An Example for a Small Premium Winery [https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/122203/2/Cornell_AEM_eb0207.pdf]

Getting Help Writing a Business Plan

Cornell Cooperative Extension	The type of programming offered in each county is unique so contact your county extension office to see if they have a farm management or small business development educator. Often these educators offer business plan workshops and are willing to advise, review, or assist in writing your plan. Additional economic data and marketing tools can be found at the following website: https://dyson.cornell.edu/outreach/extension-bulletins [https://dyson.cornell.edu/outreach/extension-bulletins]	http://bit.ly/39Iewr9 [http://www.cce.cornell.edu/editor/show/In_Your_Community]
Cornell Small Farms Program Online Course BF 202: Business Planning	The Cornell Small Farms Program offers 20+ online courses every year on many topics related to the production and business sides of farming. Most are taught by Cornell Cooperative Extension educators. BF 202 is a 6-week course that will guide you through the process of writing your business plan, with weekly live webinars and feedback on your plan from an experienced farmer.	http://bit.ly/3riGekj [https://cornell-small-farms-program.teachable.com/p/bf-202-writing-a-business-plan/]
New York State Small Business Development Center	A network of 23 regional centers delivering business counseling and training free of charge to New Yorkers who want to start a business or improve the performance of an existing business.	www.nyssbdc.org [http://www.nyssbdc.org]
NY FarmNet	New York FarmNet has business plan writing publications (listed earlier in this fact sheet) in addition to farm counselors throughout the state who offer free and confidential help on any topic of concern, including: finances, farm changes, farm transfer, natural disaster, personal	www.nyfarmnet.org [http://www.nyfarmnet.org]

	stress, family communication, and marital conflict.	
Empire State Development's Entrepreneurial Assistance Program	ProgramPart of New York State's economic development agency, they have 9 centers across the state to provide specialized help to women, minority group members and persons with disabilities who are starting or operating an early stage business.	1-800-STATE NY https://bit.ly/3tpXciI [http://www.empire.state.ny.us/BusinessPrograms/EAP.html]
SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business"	SCORE is a nonprofit organization offering free business advice and training by experienced volunteers. Check the website for chapters in your area.	www.score.org [http://www.score.org]
Federal Small Business Administration	Federal agency with offices throughout the state providing counseling services and loan guarantees. They have a special emphasis area to work with women, minorities, veterans, and businesses involved in international trade.	www.sba.gov/ny [http://www.sba.gov/ny]
AgPlan	AgPlan is powerful website developed by the Center for Farm Financial Management at the University of Minnesota to help rural businesses develop a business plan.	https://agplan.umn.edu/ [https://agplan.umn.edu/]
USDA New Farmers Website	USDA's New Farmers Website provides a portal to various sites providing technical assistance for planning a business.	http://bit.ly/3jqlzIB [https://newfarmers.usda.gov/technical-assistance-planning-your-business]