

2008-2009: The Academic Business Plan Format

To facilitate the operation of a non academic unit as well as to determine its feasibility, benefit, cost, and ongoing viability, it is essential that a business plan be developed to support the goals of the University and Academic Agenda. While the general form of a business plan as used in the commercial world can serve as a guide for a plan in academia, there are some characteristics of the two sectors that are different. In general, an academic business plan should have the following components.

I. Executive Summary

II. Overview of Mission and Context Analysis

The Overview provides a brief description of the unit/program. Emphasis should be on the contribution of the unit to the University goals. The Context Analysis that examines the current goals/transitions of the academic units should suggest how the proposed operations goals will maximize the utilization of existing resources and structures. In general, it will be easier and more cost effective to build on existing strengths rather than undertake development in an entirely new direction. After reading this section the reader should have no question about what is being proposed.

III. Organizational Goals

This statement identifies specific goals related to the organization's mission and program functions. It is essential that a clear connection be drawn between any new development and the existing mission and goals of the unit. Program success and achievement of these goals should detail what the sponsoring unit and the University will gain from the achievement of the programs and goals. Program improvements progress toward achieving specific goals are assessed through metrics associated with the University System of Ohio Measures of Accountability as appropriate. Such metrics include:

- Access. Flexible, integrated higher education opportunities for all Ohioans
- Quality. High standards of teaching and learning
- Affordability and Efficiency. Maximize efficiencies as appropriate
- Economic Leadership. Demonstrate leadership and encourage creativity in contributing broadly to the economic outlook for Ohioans

IV. Benefits to External and Internal Communities

This section details what the sponsoring unit, the University and our external constituents will gain from the achievement of the programs and goals. Program improvements progress toward achieving specific goals are assessed through metrics associated with:

- **Organizational Values: External Focus**
 - * **Constituents:** Identify and respond to the needs of our external constituents (students, parents, partners, local community, and the state)
 - * **Service:** Develop people and talent to improve service levels
 - * **Process:** Ensure processes deliver value
 - * **Performance:** Increase accountability and performance to goal
 - * **Communication:** Improve understanding of the impact of services provided

- **Organizational Values: Internal Focus**
 - * **Community:** Foster strong partnerships within operations and support of professional community
 - * **Flexibility:** Maintain flexibility in our planning and service delivery such that we can adapt to new and emerging priorities
 - * **Continuity:** Ensure continuity of service in a time of reduced resources; maintain our physical, financial, service and technological infrastructure
 - * **Growth:** Provide opportunities for learning, thought, reflection, and exploration to renew and enhance our professional skills and contributions to our internal and external constituents
 - * **Communication:** Strive to provide communication that is constructive, timely, forthright and focused on achieving the goals and imperatives of the team

V. Operating Plan

The Operating Plan specifies not only what will be done but who will do it and when it may be expected to be done. The period of the plan will depend upon the program being developed but it would generally span over a five year period.

Program goals are to ensure inclusion of the following:

- **Data Management**
- **Facilities**
- **Information Technology**
- **Human Resources**
- **Continuous Improvement**

VI. Budget and Finance:

The Cost statement outlines the capital cost of operating the program. The Financial Plan is key to the Operating Plan.

- **Organizational Cost**
 - * **Funding Sources:** This should also provide as much detail as possible concerning the source of the capital or one-time funds that will be required
 - * **Intangible Costs:** When appropriate, there should also be an analysis of intangible costs such as lost opportunities and political liabilities created
 - * **Human Resources:** Also included should be an outline of human resource costs. What type and level of personnel are envisioned as being involved with the program?
- **Financial Plan**
 - * **Ongoing Cost Analysis:** Analyze ongoing cost of operation
 - * **Funding Sources:** Identify the sources of the funds that will be required for continued operation
 - * **Operating budget:** Show a surplus or break-even bottom line

It is clear that all of these elements are inter-related. Development of this plan will, of necessity, be an iterative process with preparation of one section being dependent upon preparation of another. In cases when data needed is not available, it is essential to make a best estimate rather than not complete the plan. Be sure to indicate when estimates are used, with some statement concerning the probable accuracy thereof.