



# James J. Hill Center Guide To Guide to Business Planning Resources

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Understanding the importance of a business plan is your first step toward starting a successful business. By creating a business plan, you will have a detailed management tool that will help your business get started, grow, and remain successful for years to come.

The James J. Hill Center's Library has the practical resources you need to create a successful business plan. This *Guide* will point you to general business plan information and guides, as well as to specific sources that will help you with writing various sections of your plan. For further information and other sources, call our reference line at 651-265-5500, or email us at [info@jjhill.org](mailto:info@jjhill.org).

The Hill Library is open to the public. Please check out our [web site](#) for current hours, where you can also find additional Hill Business Research Guides:

[http://www.jjhill.org/research\\_online/publications\\_and\\_research\\_guides.cfm](http://www.jjhill.org/research_online/publications_and_research_guides.cfm).

## Business Plans: Guides and Samples

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Starting a business often means creating a business plan, and the Hill Library has resources that will provide you with step-by-step instructions for writing your business plan as well as sample plans for your review.

### **Bplans.com – Sample Business Plans**

<http://www.bplans.com/samples/sba.cfm>

Created by the maker of Business Plan Pro and other business planning software products, this web site offers free online access to over 100 sample business in the format accepted by SBA lenders.

### **Business Plan Pro**

*Resource available at the Hill Library*

This stand-alone software application contains over 500 sample business plans and a template that will assist the user in writing their own business plan by prompting the user for necessary information. The software includes graphing and charting capabilities as well as hundreds of sample business plans.

### **The Business Plans Handbook**

*Subscription database available at the Hill Library.*

This series is a compilation of actual plans developed by small businesses throughout North America, plus a directory that includes listings for venture capital and finance companies, small business development centers, consultants, SCORE offices and more. The *Handbook* also includes a generic business plan template.

### **Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Business Plans and Profiles Index**

[www.clpgh.org/research/business/bplansindex.html](http://www.clpgh.org/research/business/bplansindex.html)

This index lists types of businesses and a corresponding sample business plan, profile or book about the business. Entries that refer to actual sample plans are in bold print. If the plan or profile is online, a link is provided. While the list covers print sources in the Business Department of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, the sources may be available to you through your local public or academic library.

### **Starting & Managing a Business**

[www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/index.html)

This SBA publication assists you in the preparation of a comprehensive business plan by helping you identify key questions and potential problems. Checklists and a sample income projection statement are included.

### **How to Write a Business Plan**

*Book at the Hill Library; Small Business Resources HD30.28.M35 2007*

Included in this easy to use guide are sample business plans, forms, financial advice, information about obtaining small business loans, and many other tips regarding business plan writing.

### **SCORE Business Templates**

[www.score.org/template\\_gallery.html](http://www.score.org/template_gallery.html)

SCORE provides a number of useful business planning and financial templates, covering competitive analysis, balance sheets, break-even analysis, and more. These templates can be downloaded to your computer and modified for your business needs.

## **Demographics**

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Demographic sources can provide information about your prospective markets and customers, based on geographic location or other criteria.

### **American FactFinder**

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

View, print, and download statistics about population, housing, industry, and business. Using FactFinder, you can also find U.S. Census Bureau products, including the in-depth demographic-rich American Community Survey; create reference and thematic maps; and search for specific data.

### **American Generations: Who They Are and How They Live**

*Book at the Hill Library; Reference HC110.C6.M58 2010*

This book explores generations and age groups, including statistics on population, families, households, income, spending, health and fitness, and attitudes and behaviors. Other titles in the series (and also

available at the Hill Library) include *The Baby Boom: Americans Born 1946 to 1964* (Reference HC110.C6 R87), *Generation X: Americans born 1965 to 1976* (Reference HC110.C6M5), and *The Millennials: Americans Born 1977 to 1994* (Reference HC110.C6M55), *Older Americans: A Changing Market* (Reference HC110.C6 A5).

### **County Business Patterns**

<http://www.census.gov/econ/cbp/index.html>

If your customers are businesses, not consumers, you'll need business demographics to identify market potential, possible customers, and so on. County Business Patterns can help you determine the number of businesses that match your industry, size, or geographic considerations. It can help to answer questions like – How many competitors do I have in my city? How many potential customers would be there be? What is the average size of businesses in my industry? Industry categories are determined by NAICS codes.

### **Gale DemographicsNow**

*Subscription database available at the Hill Library*

DemographicsNow is a company database and can be used to identify demographics for business-to-business companies. It has very detailed industry codes and flexible location categories. A major advantage is being able to download lists of companies that match your criteria, which is particularly helpful if you are looking for marketing leads.

### **IBISWorld**

*Subscription database available at the Hill Library*

This tool provides some demographic information under the heading of US Business Environment Profiles. These provide insight into these key drivers, which include exchange rates, commodity prices, interest rates, weather conditions, consumer attitudes, demographics and many more.

### **SimplyMap**

*Subscription database available at the Hill Library*

SimplyMap is a web-based mapping application that can be used to gather data on demographics, consumer spending, housing, and more. This demographic information can be customized to your specific geography. Basic demographic variables include population, age, income, race, education and so on. Additional information about consumer expenditures, retail sales, market segments, businesses, and MRI data is available as well. Data can be mapped or downloaded to excel files.

## **Financial Analysis/Benchmarking**

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### **BizStats.com**

[www.bizstats.com](http://www.bizstats.com)

Provides business statistics such as financial and operating ratios, turnover, profitability for sole proprietorships, employee productivity, industry averages, and more. Also includes statistics on specialized topics.

### **Business Expenses Survey**

<http://www.census.gov/econ/bes/>

Published as part of the Economic Census, the Business Expenses Survey provides information on business operating expenses in different industries. Expenses covered include: advertising, fuel, repairs, leases, operating expenses, benefits, payroll, and more.

### **CAPS Benchmarking Reports**

<http://www.capsresearch.org/Research/Benchmarking/Benchmarking.aspx>

Industry-specific reports as well as cross-Industry data to help purchasing professionals compare their performance against that of their peers in the same industry. Free registration required for full access.

### **Corporation Tax Stats – Data by Industry or Sector**

<http://www.irs.gov/uac/SOI-Tax-Stats-Corporation-Tax-Statistics>

These reports from the IRS provide various financial statistics on corporations by broad industry heading. Use these stats to compare your balance sheet and income statements to industry averages.

### **Financial Studies of the Small Business**

*Book at the Hill Library; Small Business Resources HF5500.F53 2007*

This resource contains sample balance sheets, income statements and financial ratios for over 60 types of small business operations, including such businesses as fast food restaurants, liquor stores, printing businesses, and gift shops. Data is sorted by asset size, sales volume and type of company. Information in this resource is based on businesses with total capitalization under \$2 million.

### **Fintel Industry Metrics**

*Subscription database available at the Hill Library*

Find standard financial ratios for industries at the SIC or NAICS level. Information includes Media Company Statements in %, Median Company Statements in \$, and Financial Ratios.

### **RMA Annual Statement Studies: Financial Ratios and Benchmarks**

*Book at the Hill Library; Reference Desk HF5571.R61*

This annual publication provides widely used composite financials and operating ratios for more than 600 lines of business, organized by NAICS code. Financial benchmarks for each industry are shown for companies of various sizes, based on both assets and sales, with historical information as well.

### **Sample Business Plans**

See listing of resources above

Looking at sample business plans for similar types of businesses can be very helpful for determining what others have included in their financial sections of each business plan.

## **Financing**

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See the Hill Library's [Guide to Grants and Small Business Financing](#) for resources on this topic.

### **U.S. Small Business Administration: Loans & Grants**

[www.sba.gov/financing](http://www.sba.gov/financing)

The SBA guarantees major portions of some loans made to small businesses, enabling its lending partners to provide financing when funding is otherwise unavailable on reasonable terms. This web site provides information on loan programs, forms, lending statistics, and various studies. Some information about grant programs is also provided.

## Industry Overviews, Competition, Market Research

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Information and statistics relevant to your industry, competition, and market research can be vital assets to a business plan. See the Hill Library's guides [Researching an Industry](#), [Researching a Company](#), and [Market Research](#) for information on researching these specific topics.

## Selected Small Business Resources

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### **Nolo.com**

[www.nolo.com](http://www.nolo.com)

This free online resource specializes in "putting the law into plain English". The Small Business portion of this web site offers practical information about starting a business, choosing a business structure, writing a business plan, legal concerns, and business taxes.

### **SBA Export Library**

[www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/internationaltrade/exportlibrary/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/internationaltrade/exportlibrary/index.html)

Developed by the Small Business Administration's Office of International Trade, this resource is designed as an informational tool to assist American businesses in developing international markets.

### **Small Business Administration**

[www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

The Small Business Administration's home page provides information on starting, financing and expanding a business. The site provides links to local SBA offices, small business statistics, business laws, regulatory assistance, links to disaster recovery programs, and training opportunities.

### **U.S. Patent and Trademark Office**

[www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov)

The web site for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office provides general information on patents and trademarks, how to apply for patents and trademarks, and access to patent and trademark databases.

## Minnesota Resources

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### **[Guide to Starting a Business in Minnesota](#)**

The Department of Employment and Economic Development publishes this free *Guide* annually, which provides information on such topics as business formation, regulatory considerations, business loans, and more. A resource directory provides addresses and phone numbers of organizations referenced in the text, as well as a listing of all licenses and permits required by the state of Minnesota.

**Minnesota Small Business Assistance**

<http://mn.gov/deed/business/help/sbao/>

The Minnesota Small Business Assistance Office places a special emphasis on providing in-depth information. They offer individual consultation services along with a comprehensive series of business guidebooks.

**SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives)**

<http://www.score-mn.org/index.htm>

Phone: 612-370-2324

SCORE is a volunteer organization sponsoring monthly Going into Business seminars. SCORE also offers individual counseling on all aspects of small business management for anyone starting a business.

**The University of St. Thomas Small Business Development Center**

[www.stthomas.edu/sbdc](http://www.stthomas.edu/sbdc)

Phone: 651-962-4500

The SBDC offers free one-on-one business management counseling to help clients meet their business goals. Counseling focuses primarily on five areas: business planning, business assessment, financial analysis and loan packaging, marketing, and access to business information.

**WomenVenture**

[www.womenventure.org](http://www.womenventure.org)

Phone: 651-646-3808

WomenVenture guides entrepreneurial women and men who want to start and grow their own businesses.

**Questions? Consult with a Business Information Specialist**

877-700-HILL / 651-265-5500 / [www.jjhill.org](http://www.jjhill.org) / [info@jjhill.org](mailto:info@jjhill.org)