



JAMES J. HILL CENTER GUIDE TO BUSINESS PLANNING RESOURCES

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INTRODUCTION

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 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 front desk at 651-265-5500, or email us at info@jjhill.org.

BUSINESS PLANS: GUIDES AND SAMPLES

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/sample_business_plans.php

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

For more information on using Bplans, check out our Guide to Using Bplans.

Bplans.com – Business Plan Template

http://www.bplans.com/business_plan_template/

By creating a free account, users can download a template to input their own data and create a viable business plan.

For more information on using Bplans, check out our Guide to Using Bplans.

The Business Plans Handbook

Book at the Hill Library; Small Business Resources HD30.28.B87

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.

Starting & Managing a Business

<https://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/starting-managing-business>

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

<https://www.score.org/resources/business-planning-financial-statements-template-gallery>

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

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

AtoZ Databases

Subscription database available at the Hill Library

AtoZ is a company database that can be used to find the market saturation of any industry in any area, showing how many companies in that industry operate in that area. It has very detailed industry codes and flexible location categories, and lists can be downloaded to Excel files.

For more information on using AtoZ, check out our Guide to Using AtoZ.

SimplyAnalytics

Subscription database available at the Hill Library

SimplyAnalytics is a web-based research application that can be used to gather data on demographics, consumer spending, housing, and more. This demographic information can be customized to specified geography. Basic demographic variables include population, age, income, race, and education. Additional information about consumer expenditures, retail sales, market segments, businesses, and MRI data is available as well. Data can be mapped or downloaded as Excel files. For more information on using SimplyAnalytics, check out our Guide to Using SimplyAnalytics.

American FactFinder

<http://factfinder.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.

County Business Patterns

<http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cbp.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.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS/BENCHMARKING

IndustriusCFO

Subscription database available at the Hill Library

Find standard financial ratios for industries at the SIC or NAICS level. Information includes Median Company Statements in %, Median Company Statements in \$, and Financial Ratios. For more information on using IndustriusCFO, check out our Guide to Using IndustriusCFO.

BizStats.com

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

<https://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.

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.

FINANCING

See the Hill Library's Guide to Finding Funders for resources on this topic.

U.S. Small Business Administration: Loans & Grants

<https://www.sba.gov/loans-grants/see-what-sba-offers/sba-loan-programs>

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 website provides information on loan programs, forms, lending statistics, and various studies. Some information about grant programs is also provided.

INDUSTRY OVERVIEWS, COMPETITION, MARKET RESEARCH

Information and statistics relevant to your industry, competition, and market research can be vital assets to a business plan. See the Hill Center's guides *Guide to Researching an Industry*, *Guide to Researching a Company*, and *Guide to Performing Demographic and Market Research* for information on researching these specific topics.

SELECT SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCES

Nolo.com

<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/small-business>

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.

Small Business Administration

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

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

Guide to Starting a Small Business in Minnesota

<https://mn.gov/deed/>

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. The link is available at

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

<https://www.stthomas.edu/centers/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

Phone: 612-224-9540

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

Questions?

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