

Business Plan and Grant Request Format

Fall 2011

The Business Plan required for the NEXT STEP Business Grant Competition is more accurately described as a Business Feasibility Plan. It does not have a full "Business Operations" section but focuses more on the potential customers, market niche and competitive forces.

Please label your sections as follows:

Part 1 – Business Feasibility Plan

- A. *Company Name* – Include names of team members, and their roles.
- B. *Business Summary* - Describe in a short paragraph just what your business is.
- C. *Customer Problem* - Just what problem are you solving? Document, through research, that individuals or businesses would pay your company to solve this problem.
- D. *Product/Service* - Describe your product or service. How will you produce the product or provide the service?
- E. *Target Market* - Exactly to whom are you selling? Do you know anything about the potential size or characteristics of this market?
- F. *Sales/Marketing Strategy* - How will you try to reach this target market?
- G. *Business Model and Breakeven Calculation* - Just how will your business make money? Given your proposed business model, pricing and costs, what will it take to breakeven? You should specify your assumptions in your calculations.
- H. *Competitors* - Who are your competitors and substitutes? What sustainable advantage do you have over your competitors? Why will your target customers choose you over the competition?

Part II – Grant Request

- A. *Grant Request* – Total dollar amount requested. Note that this can be up to \$2,000 but should be a precise number which you detail in section “B”.
- B. *Detailed Purchases* - Exactly what will you spend this money on? Give a detailed list with vendor names. Do you have price quotes from those vendors? Have you checked into cheaper alternatives? Why have you chosen these vendors?
- C. *Learning Outcomes* - What will you learn from these expenditures of money? What will they tell you about the feasibility of your business plan? This is the most important point since the grant is all about what you will learn from the grant.

Schedule for Spring 2011 NEXT STEP Business Grant Competition

Monday, September 26, 4:00 p.m., 117 Swarts

Submit your PRE-Application with signatures of all team members.

Monday, October 24, 4:00 p.m., 117 Swarts

DRAFT Business Plan and Grant Application

October 25-31, to be scheduled individually

Meet with advisors (Megill megill@pitt.edu and Maguire dsm20@pitt.edu) to review your business plan.

Monday, November 28, 4:00 p.m, 117 Swarts and nak95@pitt.edu

Revised Business Plan and Grant Application due via "hard copy" to Nancy Kloss in Swarts 117 AND via email to her at nak95@pitt.edu.

Friday, December 2, Noon-3:00pm – Presentation to Judges

You will make a presentation to an outside panel of judges. The presentation will be 10 minutes with 15 minutes of interaction with the judges.

Monday, December 5

Grant awards announced and grant payments processed.

January 30, 2012

Receipts and documentation due showing that you spent the money in the way you said you would spend it! Write a short report on the results and what you learned.

Here are more legal details about the grant:

Before a student receives a NEXT STEP Business Grant, he/she must sign a contract in the form of an "Award Letter" stating the intended use of the grant funds. The student must agree to spend this money on the educational project specified in their grant competition submission.

Within 2 months of the Grant Award, the grantee must submit a detailed report, including receipts, outlining how the award was utilized to advance the business plan. If the grantee is delinquent, grades and transcripts can be held as when any student owes funds to the University.

Grantees are responsible for any applicable State and Federal tax liabilities incurred by receipt of the Grant.