

Parks and Green Spaces: Business plan template and guidance

This template will help organisations managing parks and green spaces to write a business plan.

A business plan is helpful even if you do not consider that your organisation is running a business.

A business plan sets out your objectives, your values, what you will do, how it will be paid for and how you will make your park or green space accessible to local people and other potential users.

This template sets out the different sections and gives guidance on what content to include in each section.

Business plan structure

Executive summary (the plan on one page)

This section should give a one sentence summary of all the sub-sections below, so the reader can see all the key information on one page. It should draw the reader in. This section should be written last.

Objectives and goals

Tell the reader what the purpose of your organisation is, what problems it seeks to resolve or benefits it plans to bring. Include your organisational vision, mission and values.

Background and context

This section should include all the relevant external information that will impact on your work. Suggested subheadings are:

- **Space** - Describe your park or green space – include a map and pictures if possible – what is its history, how is it used now, what opportunities are there.

- **External environment** - A PESTEL analysis is useful here (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal).
- **History** - Any relevant information about the background to your plans for your green space. Has a similar approach been taken elsewhere – how did that work?

Competitor analysis

- Who are your customers or users, now and in the future?
- Who else in your local area is aiming to meet the same customer need as you?
Note: this might not be the same product as you. For example, if you are planning a volunteering scheme to do planting in the park, a customer looking to do horticulture might choose to volunteer for their local community farm or school garden, get an allotment or help their neighbours who are struggling to manage their gardens.
- What do your competitors do?
- Which are working well, and which are working less well, and why?
- Why would your customers choose your offer instead of your competitor's offer?
- Could you work with competitors to provide a better experience of customers or users?

Market research

You need to show that there is a need for what you are planning. If your business idea involves customers paying for goods or services, you need to establish that there are customers who are willing to pay.

It's best to do some market research that you can add here as evidence - anything that shows that your potential customers will want and need what you are planning to produce. Market research can be simple – you could talk to people currently using the park or green space, or who live nearby. If it is a paid for service, ask specific questions – for example if we run weekly yoga sessions in the park and we charge £7 per week, would you attend? Also ask, when did you last attend a yoga session and how much did you pay? Make sure you draw conclusions from the market research – what did it tell you?

It can be useful to show your understanding of different types of customers and how you will meet their needs.

Your offer and USP

Describe the different products/services you will offer and the branding you will attach to these. Keep it customer and solution focused. This could be simple, for example, “we will grow organic vegetables and sell them at the wholefood shop”. Your offer may be complicated – for example, we will run fitness classes, a volunteering scheme, a café and music festivals. Make sure you include your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) – this needs to be based on your market research.

Social purpose

- What is your social/environmental purpose?
- How will you balance this with generating money?
- What are your values and how will you capture and broadcast this to your customers?

Community engagement

As a community organisation, it's important to involve local people and users/potential users in the design of your business model. Outline how you will engage with the local geographic community and people using the park or green space.

Strategy for earning income

You may have a business model which relies on fundraising, donations or volunteering. Alternatively, you may trade by offering a product or a service which you will charge for – e.g. operating a café or running green gym.

If your business model is around fundraising and volunteering, set out how you will do this. Who are your potential funders, how will they be approached? Where will you find volunteers, who will co-ordinate their work?

If you plan to trade, how will you attract customers? How will you keep customers loyal and attract repeat business? Think about pricing strategies, segmentation of

audiences and plans for the future. Cover different methods of generating income from the assets that you have.

People spend more time outdoors in good weather. How will you manage over the winter less people use the café, or it is too cold to hold outdoor exercise classes?

Finances

One of the most important sections. Don't worry if you don't understand the terminology below – the terms are explained at the end of this guidance. If you do not have a finance background, getting familiar with common finance terms can be useful.

- Show a long-term cashflow projection and include a narrative explaining it.
- Include overheads and your fixed and variable costs.
- Show your predicted turnover, break-even points, and the projected profit and loss.
- Include any capital, revenue and investment needs.
- Have different scenarios of how many sales you will need to break even.
- Include notes detailing the assumptions made to costs and income.

Find the right level of financial detail for the scale of your plans, so the reader is left convinced rather than asking questions. Provide clear assumptions as without these your reader will not be able to understand the financial information in your business plan. For example, we will earn £500 per year from leeks (100 kilos of leeks @ £5 per kilo).

Resources

Detail resources, assets, systems and equipment needed. This may be quite technical even for volunteering schemes if you use, for example, horticultural machinery. Do you need organisational systems to support this plan, like financial, payment systems, quality systems (an organic veg scheme may want or need to register with the Soil Association), customer relationship management systems etc.

People

Think about the skills and background of your committee (board), volunteers and any staff. Consider providing profiles of key personnel. Think about how this will need to evolve as the organisation grows and changes. Who are you reliant on and what will happen if they move on? Some schemes will have a high turnover of people involved – for example volunteers at a school garden may be mainly parents who leave when their children leave the school.

Partnerships

For community organisations, local partnerships are often important for success. Outline any local organisations or businesses you will need to work collaboratively with to make the model work. Think about those that could help you sell your product/service (through cross-promotion, for example) and those that could help you enhance your product/service offer (through adding a follow-on service, for example).

Route to market

How will customers find you? This covers marketing strategies, repeat sales and ongoing communications. Is social media useful – what is best for reaching customers and users? How will you make a splash, build loyalty and remain relevant to customers?

Being well used is not just important in terms of paying customers. If you apply for grants, funders will want to know who uses your facility and what benefits they derive from it. If you are developing a volunteering scheme in the local park, funders may be more interested in your ability to reduce loneliness by encouraging people to volunteer than they are in how much nicer the park is because there is a better floral display.

Risks and mitigations

What are the main risks, their impact, and how can you mitigate or manage these? This is relevant even if you do not trade and have no paid staff. If you are the organiser, you must identify the risks and take action to deal with those risks.

Think about what could go wrong in, for example, a voluntary horticulture project. People could fall over equipment, develop skin conditions from chemicals, hurt their back digging. Mitigations will include insurance, proper training and guidance, etc.

Think about all risks – risks to the organisation (like running out of money or lack of volunteers), health and safety, risks in running an event, etc. Risk is not confined to one area of your operation.

Risks	Potential impact	Likelihood		Mitigation
Risk one	High	High		
Risk two	Medium	Low		
Risk three	Low	High		
Risk four	High	Medium		
Risk five	Low	Low		
Risk six	Medium	High		

Governance and legal

Demonstrate that you have considered relevant legislation and you have plans for the suitable types of insurance required. Consider the legal structure your enterprise will use. This will vary depending on the objectives of your organisation.

Specific to your business

Give details of the specific work that you will be doing and say why you are taking this approach. Include any technical information which is relevant. For example – a priority in the first two years for our organic veg project is to plant fruit trees to provide a wind break for our main beds. Within five years this will enable us to

expand the range of crops we can grow and so meet the requirements of our customers

Timing and roll-out

Think about the roll-out of your offer. If you are taking over the park or green space, it may take several years to fully achieve your plans. Add an overview of the proposed timing for implementing the business plan. List each activity and the timing – a simple table like the one below is useful.

	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month	Month
Activity									
Activity									
Activity									
Activity									
Activity									
Activity									

This Guide

Financial terminology

If you are not familiar with financial terminology, it is useful to learn the basics as part of the business planning process.

- A cashflow forecast estimates income and expenditure on a monthly basis, based on when transactions are actually expected to happen rather than when they should happen. For example, you may carry out work in January but not get paid until March.

- A cashflow forecast is an estimate so it is important to explore what happens if your estimates are wrong. What happens if you have 50% less customers, or 50% more? What happens if utility bills go up by 15%? Often called sensitivity analysis, working this out can help you to be confident about your future finances.
- Turnover is the amount of income of a business in a specific period, usually a year. Your breakeven point is when income equals expenditure. Profit is the amount by which income exceeds expenditure, loss is the amount by which expenditure exceeds income.
- Overheads is the name given to the costs of running the organisation (e.g. getting annual accounts produced). The cost of delivering a specific service or product can be divided into fixed costs (for example premises) and variable costs (for example staff costs or raw materials). Fixed costs are things which take time to change, variable are costs which can be altered in the short-term.
- Expenditure is divided into capital and revenue. Capital expenditure is spending on land, buildings and machinery – which are called fixed assets. Revenue is day to day income and expenditure related to operating the business. Investment is raising finance to start or develop a business. Investment may be a grant, loan or community shares and bonds to, for example, buy a building, cover start-up costs or deliver a service. Most investment other than grants is repayable with interest.

Additional resources

This guide gives a brief overview of the key sections in a business plan. These links provide more detailed guidance:

- **Voscur Key Fund** – guidance and templates for writing a business plan and cashflow forecast if you are seeking social investment: [Voscur Key Fund Resources](#)
- **Locality cashflow guidance** – guidance on putting together a cashflow forecast:
 - [How to write a cashflow forecast – PDF](#)
 - [Cashflow – worked example](#)
 - [Cashflow – Standard blank template](#)