

YOUR TURN

PUBLIC HEALTH BUSINESS PLANNING

A practical guide

Chapter Thirteen: The Feasibility Plan

This exercise works best for a group of up to eight members. Read one of the feasibility plans linked to the Chapter 13 front page. Everyone in the group should read the whole thing, with each member of the group responsible for critiquing one part of the plan based on the following criteria:

1. Narrative Description

This section should describe the plan in two or three short paragraphs, in plain language, and should give clear answers to the following questions: What is the new product or service? Do the planners have the resources to do it short- and long-term? Is the plan measurable? Will it work? And is it the same old thing, or is it a creative idea using community partners to address an important problem?

2. Demonstration of Need and Target Market

This section should describe how we know that the need exists, and convince you that the problem is worth solving. It should be clear about the nature of the gap the plan is intended to fill. Here are some things to look for:

- Defines the target market (for example, by zip code or county)
- Identifies what segment of the market (e.g., elderly low-income within that zip code)
- Shows what need is not being met efficiently
- Shows why clients aren't benefiting from current services
- Shows pertinent data (quantitative and qualitative) to demonstrate need in the specific geographic area targeted
- Compares benefits of funding the project to costs of failing to fund it
- Considers tangible and intangible benefits of implementing the project

3. Definition of Plan

This section should describe the idea in detail. It should outline the size and scope of the project, and outline the objectives. Consider the following questions, and note where these items are missing, not clear, or not reasonable:

- What specific services or products or interventions are being planned?
- What is the client focus/geographic focus?
- What is the timeline (include key actions and projected dates)?
- Are the stated objectives achievable?
- Who are all the many stakeholders involved: how will each be affected?

- Are the stated objectives logical? Are they pointed in the same direction?
- What are the critical success factors? Do you know what has to happen for the plan to succeed?
- Does the plan have an end point? Does the Public Health Department remain involved forever, or is there an exit strategy?
- Does the plan explain resource requirements, including personnel (skills and availability), materials, technology (access, capacity, internal capabilities), facilities, strategic alliances?

4. Industry Analysis

This section should describe the industry the plan is in and what the planners know about the structure of the industry. It should include the following:

- The key success factors in the industry
- Barriers to entry
- Any legal, political, regulatory, technological or economic obstacles to implementation of the plan; how planners will overcome these barriers; and how partners can help

5. Measurement

This section should describe the health goal of the plan, and describe data collection that will show progress towards those goals. It should answer the following questions:

- What improvements in community health status can be expected as a result of this project? How will they be measured?
- How will planners measure progress towards the objectives in section 3? In other words, how will we know if the plan is working? What data will be tracked?

6. Competitors and Partners

This section describes how the plan fits in to the planners' organization and community. It should answer the following questions:

- Who will be the community/state/national partners in this project?
- How does this plan fit with their goals and objectives?
- What other potential competitors or collaborators can be seen?
- Is the local environment receptive to this sort of plan?
- What is distinctive about these services relative to others in the marketplace?

7. Timeline

This section should detail the timeline for implementation of the plan, accounting for all activities. The timeline should have ample detail and seem feasible.

8. Financial Resources

This section should describe the financial projections and assumptions regarding the plan. It should consider both internal and external resources available for accomplishing the objectives. It should answer the following questions

- What is the estimated five-year budget for the business plan?
- How are the resources listed above going to be paid for?
- What will partners contribute financially?
- Do the planners marshal in-kind donations? matching funds, or other contributions?
- Do they charge for the service they will provide?
- Do they use other revenue-generating ideas?
- What will have to happen to make the program sustainable in the long term?

