**Sample Business Plan Outline**

The single most important aspect of a good Business Plan is that it must be based on your market and your customers’ desires. What you want and think as a business owner is much less important than what your customers want and think. The reason for your business to exist is to create and serve customers. In general, a good Business Plan includes the following questions:

**Executive Summary/Letter**

This contains a brief description of your business, a plan of action (if applying for loan, describe purpose(s) of loan), and why you think this plan makes sense.

I. Ownership

• Who owns the business

• What type of organization is it? (proprietorship, partnership, corporation, limited liability)

• The division of responsibility between owners/employees (if applicable)

II. Description of Business

• History of business

• Products/services presently offered described in detail and briefly whom you sell to and how (store, shows, catalog, wholesale, cold calls, etc.)

• New products/services described & brief description of customers and sales methods

• Number of employees and if planning to expand, increase in jobs

• Suppliers & inventory levels/turnover

• Facility – (own or rent, description of location, size, special features)

• Improvements planned (if applicable)

• Equipment owned

• Equipment you plan to purchase (if loan is for equipment)

**III. Market information**

[To help you write a complete Marketing Plan, visit Creating a Marketing Plan in our Resource Library.]

• Industry - (depending on type of business, may not apply)

• Industry outlook (nationally, statewide, locally -if applicable)

• Factors affecting the industry currently (supplies, changes in legislation, market trends, new technologies)

• Your customers

• Describe major customer groups in detail (i.e. by age, geography, income, business type, sex, local or tourist, wholesale or retail) and assign percentages to each group (for example, 40 percent local, 60 percent tourist)

• Buying patterns for each group (season, time of day, day of week, how often, etc.)

• Why these customer groups choose your business

• Trends affecting their choices/decisions/behavior

• Your competitors

• List your major competitors and describe how their businesses are similar/different to yours

• Describe where your business fits into the market

• Discuss your strengths/weaknesses relative to your competitors and how you will use/improve them

• Describe your relationships with your competitors

• Your marketing strategy

• Your image, advertising/promotion plan, and pricing and how they match your target market(s)

• Detail on how you sell, distribute, and service your product/service and why

• Sales goals, strategies for the next year

IV. Management

• Include a resume which describes your relevant experience and education

• Key personnel and their job descriptions (if applicable)

• Describe accounting and record-keeping systems

• Other relevant management systems or techniques (inventory, production, etc.)

V. Financial information

• Historical

• Your past three years of tax returns

• Past three years of business tax returns (if applicable)

• Balance sheet and income statement (if available)

• Source and use of funds (if plan is for financing/start-up or expansion)

• Include estimates for purchases of equipment, renovations, etc.

• Lists of inventory, supplies, etc

• Projections

• Sales goals, in dollars and units (if applicable)

• Break-even analysis, if new business

• One-year, monthly cash flow projection

• Projected balance sheet/income statement (if applicable)

VI. Other Information

• Lease Agreement or a Purchase & Sales Agreement

• Sales materials (brochures, sell sheets, price lists, etc.)

• Pictures of products

• Pictures of facility

• Customer lists

• Letters of commitment or contracts

• Letter of recommendation

• Market research data

• Other, as appropriate