

DEDICATED TO HELPING MAINE'S SMALL BUSINESSES SUCCEED

TO Maine SBDC CLIENTS:

The Maine Small Business Development Center (Maine SBDC), hosted by the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG), wants to be of assistance to you. Our goal is to help existing businesses grow and improve operations. The Center also aids individuals who have a well thought-out plan and the resources necessary to start their own business.

To accomplish these goals, it is important that you, the client, understand what the Maine SBDC can and cannot do for you. Additionally, counselors need information from you to be able to advise you properly.

CLARIFICATION OF THE MAINE SBDC ROLE: The Maine Small Business Development Center, located at the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, is funded by the Small Business Administration (SBA), a federal agency, the State of Maine and the University of Southern Maine to counsel small businesses and individuals for NO CHARGE. The Maine SBDC Counselors **do not** take the place of a lawyer or accountant. SBDC Counselors provide advice and counseling, but **DO NOT TELL YOU WHAT TO DO**. All decisions **ARE YOURS TO MAKE**.

The Maine SBDC is NOT a lending agency, but provides advice and guidance in loan application preparation. However, this type of assistance does not suggest an intent to approve your loan request by any lending institute or guaranty institution, public or private. Counselors provide advice on technique and sources for developing the necessary information for a financial proposal. It is your (the client's) responsibility to collect the needed information.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION: The Maine SBDC acknowledges that clients from time to time divulge confidential and proprietary information during counseling. Unless otherwise expressly authorized by the client, the Maine SBDC staff will not reveal to any person or entity the identity of any client to whom they have rendered services or any confidential or proprietary information obtained from the client and identified as such by the client. However, the Maine SBDC relationship with SBA requires the Maine SBDC to disclose to SBA's Project Officer all counseling records on SBA clients or SBA-referred clients.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT/ANALYSIS: In order for a Maine SBDC Counselor to properly advise and help a client, we must develop an in-depth understanding of all aspects of your business or potential business. The Maine SBDC develops a full knowledge and understanding of your business by conducting a needs assessment and analyzing the complete business or potential business idea.

We are interested in assisting small businesses. If you have any questions, please call (207) 783-9186 or write the Maine Small Business Development Center, AVCOG, 125 Manley Road, Auburn, ME 04210.



Date:

Name:

Mailing Address:

Email Address:

Telephone number:

Proposed Business Name:

Small businesses succeed due to a combination of market opportunity, management ability and sufficient start-up capital and cash flow. The following questions are designed to assist you in considering a number of these fundamental and important aspects related to your business idea. Think of your answers to these questions as a preliminary assessment of what it will take for you to be successful.

Once received at our Maine SBDC office, all of your answers will remain confidential.

1. A Few Questions about Your Basic Business Information:

Every good business starts with a well-defined idea. In a paragraph or two, write down your business idea and why your business will be successful.

It takes time to plan and start a new business. What is your time line for getting your business started?

Pre-Business Start-Up Questionnaire

Within your first 12 months after starting your business, what specific goals do you want to accomplish? (Remember: Goals can be measured, so please let your answers reflect how you will measure your success. For instance: I want to reach \$50,000.00 in sales by the end of my first year. Or, I will earn \$10,000.00 my first year.)

2. A few questions about Your Marketing:

Many people say the key to small business success starts with a good marketing plan. These questions will help you define the building blocks for successfully selling your goods or services to your customers.

. Specifically, what goods or services will you sell?

Please explain how you will set prices for your goods or services?

Now, describe the group of people (market segment) to whom you will sell. What do they have in common (For instance: age, gender, education, location, number of children, etc.)?

How will your future customers know that you are in business? How will you advertise and promote your business to them?

Why will these people buy from you and not from your competitors?

And finally, how will you get your product or service to your customers? Will they come to you, or will you deliver to them?

3. A Few Questions about Your Business Operations:

At the heart of your business will be the issues of what, and where and how you conduct your trade. Think a moment:

Where will you locate your operation? Why is this a good spot?

Will you need to hire anyone to help you run the business? If so what will they do for work?

Please make a list of the functions that *you* expect to perform as you run your business (i.e. selling services, making your products, purchasing materials and supplies, communications with vendors and customers, billing, money management, etc.).

It can be both very exciting *and* very lonely to start a small business, when you do all the planning, make all the decisions and perform most of the jobs. Who do you plan to turn to for support and advice to help you through the inevitable challenges you will face?

Since small business success requires the owner to perform a number of tasks, each requiring specific skills, we have included a **MANAGEMENT SKILLS ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET**. Consider your work history, education and life experiences as you answer these questions.

MANAGEMENT SKILLS ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS	PLEASE RANK YOURSELF ON THIS SCALE OF 1 TO 5 5 = Strong experience or knowledge 1 = No experience or knowledge
Bookkeeping & Accounting	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Planning	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Organizing	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Financial Management	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
People Management	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Time Management	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Personal Selling	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Marketing	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Decision Making	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Personnel Policies	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Pricing of Products/ Services	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Computers	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>

4. What about “The Money”?

Every small business requires cash to get started and to operate. Very often potential owners underestimate the costs of starting up and operating their businesses. This can lead to serious problems. For this reason we recommend that you fill out the following ESTIMATING FORM as best you can.

What will it cost you to buy everything you need to start your business?

I. ESTIMATED START-UP COSTS	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Advertising	\$	Promotion for opening your business
Beginning Inventory	\$	Amount required to open for business
Building Construction	\$	Contractors' estimates
Building Improvements	\$	Contractors' estimates
Cash (working capital)	\$	Cash in the bank on opening day
Computer	\$	Hardware, peripherals and software
Decorating	\$	Contractors estimates
Deposits	\$	Utilities, including phone, fuel, heat
Fixtures and Equipment	\$	Estimated/researched costs
Insurance	\$	Agency quotes
Lease payments	\$	Equipment rental estimates
Licenses and permits	\$	State and Federal
Professional fees	\$	Accountants, lawyers fees
Rent	\$	Down payment, security deposits
Services	\$	Contractors' estimates
Signage	\$	Inside and outside business
Supplies	\$	Office, operating, cleaning, etc
Other	\$	Other unique to your business
Other	\$	Other unique to your business
Other	\$	Other unique to your business
Miscellaneous	\$	Add 10% to Total of above costs
TOTAL	\$ 0.00	Add all costs together

The cash to start your business can come from either your savings or borrowing.

In order to borrow money you may need to apply for a small business loan. Banks consider start-up businesses risky. They have no sales history. And the owners and managers have no track record to evaluate. In order to determine if you can borrow money, a lender will want to know several things about you. Please answer these questions to the best of your ability.

Of the total amount of **capital** (cash) required to start your business how much will you contribute?

Do you have **collateral** to offer the bank? Please list your collateral.

How would you assess your credit history (excellent, good, fair or poor)?

CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed an important first step toward starting your small business – you have evaluated a number of critical issues that can lead to small business success.

Review your answers and make sure that you have completed the questionnaire to your own satisfaction, then mail or email the form back to:

**America' SBDC
Maine at AVCOG
125 Manley Road
Auburn, ME 04210**

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