

BIG Idea Competition

How to Develop Your Business Idea

A business idea is a summary of what could later be developed into a business plan, a formal document that requires extensive components. The BIG Idea competition requires that you address your business idea in the following five sections:

- **Concept Overview (25-75 words)**
- **Product or Service (100-250 words)**
- **Market Opportunity (100-250 words)**
- **Competition (100-250 words)**
- **Management and Operations (100-250 words)**

In addition, you will submit an 30-60 second elevator pitch to provide a verbal description of your idea.

Concept Overview (25-75 words)

This summary of your idea should grab the reader's attention. This is an overview and should include important points from the other sections.

Questions to answer include:

- What is your business idea?
 - What is the problem you are solving or need you are satisfying, and for whom?
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Example: Prairie Hill Lawn Care will serve the newly developed Prairie Hill neighborhood where homeowners want to have a nice lawn but may not have the time or equipment to care for the lawn themselves. In this upscale development, our customers are homeowners who can afford lawn care services.

Resources/Links

Writing a Business Plan

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/businessplan>

Teen Business, Young Entrepreneurs

<https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/5051-young-entrepreneurs.html>

Additional links available at www.BIGIdeaSD.com on the Helpful Tips page under the Student Tab.

Product or Service (100-250 words)

Now that the reader has a general idea about your business, tell them about the specific products and/or services your business offers.

Questions to answer include:

- What is the product or service?
- How will the product be produced or the service performed?
- What are the features and benefits of the product or service and its potential drawbacks?

Example: Prairie Hill Lawn Care will offer lawn care services to the Prairie Hill neighborhood by providing quality service at an affordable price. Prairie Hill residents take great pride in their new homes and are interested in having a good looking, well-kept yard. The services will include cutting the lawn, trimming the edges and bagging the cuttings. Currently, there is not a contracted lawn care provider in this development. That is why our business will be the first mover into this location. No other landscaping services will be provided by this business at this time. We seek to target busy professionals with careers and families as well as renters and owners who do not have lawn care equipment or do not care for their yard themselves. It is estimated that a lawn cutting service is needed mid-April through the end of October for a total of 26 weeks of service but is subject to change depending on weather conditions. It is estimated that the average lawn will need cutting twice a week during the peak season of June-August and once a week during other times, again, subject to weather conditions. I will provide the services myself as owner and seek to develop a relationship with my customers by gathering specific information from them about their lawn care needs.

Resources/Links

Business ideas

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/businessideas>

Additional links available at www.BIGIdeaSD.com on the Helpful Tips page under the Student Tab.

Market Opportunity (100-250 words)

The Market Opportunity means how many people could benefit from your business. Describe the overall industry your business is in and give as much detail as possible about your target customers. Also, what will factor into the price of your products and/or services.

Questions to answer include:

- Describe your industry - size, trends, growth, etc. (industry examples include: retail, service, construction, agriculture, etc.)
- Describe your ideal customer (location, age, income, education, interests, industry, etc.)
- What factors will impact how you price your product or service?
- How will you promote your product or service?

Example: My business is in the service industry which is stable and growing due to more demands on peoples' time. The lawn care service industry is dominated by small businesses with very few large corporations operating in this space outside of chemical application companies. There are currently an estimated 654 households in the Prairie Hill neighborhood of Prairie town (based on the census data for the zip code). It is estimated that over 50% of the households have lawns and therefore might have a need for my service. It is estimated that the average household spends \$100 per year on lawn care services, which would indicate a total market of \$65,400 in the Prairie Hill neighborhood. The neighborhood has a median income of \$58,664 with 84% consisting of households with children where both parents are working. This segment of the population and income demographic is growing and would likely have the ability to pay someone to take care of their lawn. Starting out as a one-person business, I am hoping to gain 15-20 regular customers by the end of the first year, which is a small percentage of the total neighborhood market. I will promote my business through local newspapers and flyers to individual homes. As I gain customers, I will provide incentives to my customers to refer my services to their neighbors. I estimate that I will be charging in the area of \$20 per hour for my services. Jobs can be priced by the hour or by the job.

Resources/Links

Business Research

<http://www.bplans.com/dp/article.cfm/16> ** need new link here – doesn't work

Census Data

<http://www.census.gov>

See industry demographics & marketing section on the Helpful Tips page under the Student Tab at www.BIGIdeaSD.com

Competition (100-250 words)

Customers have choices. If they don't buy the product or service from you, where do they buy it? To assess why they will do business with you, you need to understand there are other choices in the marketplace and what is most important to the customer. Don't try to compete on price alone, if price is not the most important buying factor for the customer.

Questions to answer include:

- Who are your competitors? What other choices do your customers have?
- Compared to your competitors, what is unique about your product or service and how does it differ from the competition? (Why will people do business with you instead of your competition?)
- Know the strengths and weaknesses of your business. Compare and contrast your strengths and weaknesses of your business to your competitors.
- How easily can others compete with you?

Example: While there are 14 lawn care businesses in the county, there are no established lawn care services within the Prairie Hill neighborhood since the area is fairly new. I plan to differentiate my business from other services by my close proximity to my customers and by offering a reliable, efficient and affordable service that is personalized to fit each customer's needs. Competitors are primarily full-service, large-landscaping and lawn care businesses located five miles or more from the neighborhood. These competitors are well-established businesses with an existing client base, and therefore have less capacity to serve new clients, particularly in an area some distance from their location. Services provided by the competition include not only lawn mowing services but also landscaping and weed spraying services. Their average charge is \$30 to \$40 per hour. At closer to \$20 per hour, Prairie Hill Lawn Care will be an attractive alternative for new homeowners who want a nice looking yard but have other demands on their disposable income with new homes and families. The charge for a typical residential yard is estimated at \$15-\$20 for a basic cut. New customers will be interviewed to gather pertinent information about their yard maintenance needs (times of service, obstacles or specific features in the yard, any special events, etc.). Customers will also be confident knowing the person gathering this information will also be cutting their lawn each time. Possible weaknesses of the business are the inexperience of the business owner and limited services.

Resources/Links

Researching the competition

<http://articles.bplans.com/writing-a-business-plan>

Industry sizes (Census Bureau's Economic Fact Sheets)

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

Understand your Competition

<https://www.bplans.com/business-planning/how-to-write/market-analysis/industry-analysis/#competition-and-buying-patterns>

** Need new link

Additional links available at www.BIGIdeaSD.com on the Helpful Tips page under the Student Tab.

Management and Operation (100-250 words)

In order to create your products and/or services you will need people and equipment. Explain the skills needed to create and sell your products and/or services and the equipment and space needed to do so. Use the Startup Cost and Business Expense sheet to help you identify relevant costs for operating your business. These resources can be found on the Resource tab.

Questions to answer include:

- Identify the key persons and skills needed to implement your idea.
- What physical equipment or technology are needed to produce or deliver the product or service?
- Once established what will be your biggest ongoing expense? Please explain.

Example: I will provide the labor for services as well as management and promotion of the business with no employees for at least the first year. I could manage 15-20 customers based on an average of 1 hour per yard two times a week during the peak season. As I acquire more than 20 customers, a second employee will need to be considered in order to help run an efficient business. Gathering customer data and yard specific information will require me to meet with the customers and learn what the customer wants done with their lawn so that we can satisfy their needs. Customers will be quoted a price for their lawn services, and payment will be expected at the time of service in order for smooth business operations. Bookkeeping will be completed during off peak hours. The equipment needed for the business consists of riding and push lawn mowers, a trimmer, rakes, bags for the cuttings and a gas can. The necessary vehicle and trailer will be stored in my father's garage at no cost to the business. Other expenses would be printing of flyers, fuel for equipment and vehicles, insurance, cell phone, licensing of the vehicle and trailer, and bookkeeping materials.

Resources/Links

Management Plan

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/manage-your-business>

Estimating Start Up Costs

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/220342>

See Start Up Costs & Business Expense Worksheets under the financing section on the Helpful Tips page under the Student Tab at www.BIGIdeaSD.com.