

Business Plan Guidance Note

A business plan is an important tool for managing and growing your tennis venue. A well-designed plan lays out a vision of growth for tennis membership, participation and income and clearly sets out the steps you will be taking to get there. It is also an essential communications tool for attracting funding.

It should set out the vision for your club in the short, medium and long term and the tactics you will be implementing to ensure you achieve your objectives.

A business plan should:-

- Contain objectives that can be measured.
- Answer questions that stakeholders should be asking.
- Identify and quantify risks and set out how these risks can be managed and mitigated.

Why should you plan?

There are many advantages to having a formal business plan in place.

1. It will help you to understand your tennis venue better, understanding what works well and what needs to be improved.
2. It will enable you to efficiently manage your time, especially volunteer time, by allowing you to identify where to focus your time and energy.
3. It will give you clear goals and direction, which will help to shape your thoughts and allow you to make key decisions more effectively.
4. It will allow external stakeholders to understand your tennis venue in more detail, whilst gaining confidence in your ability to achieve your objectives.

Who should be involved in the production of your venues Business Plan?

1. The club committee, especially the Chairman and Treasurer
2. Coaching Team
3. Volunteers/Members with key skill sets.

If your business plan will centre around a major capital development, there could be benefit in establishing a project team or subcommittee who will manage the development, but who report into the main club committee. This will effectively allow you to bring in specialist expertise amongst people who aren't on your committee and will allow the committee to focus on the day to day management of the club.

When can you use the Business Plan

The business plan / action plan can be used whenever you feel it is required, however common times when a business plan is used are:-

1. Management or Committee meetings.
2. Annual General Meetings (AGM's)
3. When key decisions are needed
4. When applying for funding or completing major projects.

The 5 main sections of a business plan are:-

1. About your venue
2. Where you want to be
3. The strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats for your venue
4. How you are going to achieve your mission
5. How do we know we have got there – outcomes

All venues should have a business plan / action plan that helps set the direction of the venue. It is often the case that a business plan is written specifically for a facility development. This is not the ideal situation as ultimately the project is driving the business plan when in reality it should be the business plan that dictates the projects that you need to complete in order to achieve your ambitions as a venue.

Where a business plan is being submitted as part of a funding application, it is best practice to have an addendum to the business plan that provides the necessary information about the project as well as detailing how the project will help you achieve your goals. For this purpose, we have added an additional section at the end of the document which gives an insight in the detail that we would expect to see within the addendum.

The below pointers are provided to help you to structure your document and ensure that you have covered the main areas of the business plan. What we do not want you to do is to simply answer the questions that we have raised one by one.

About your venue

1. History of the venue
 - When was the venue formed?
 - How has the venue evolved since its formation?
 - Membership history
 - Facilities history
 - Previous project development / funding history.
2. Current facilities
 - What facilities does the venue offer to players? This should include courts and floodlights, whether you have indoor courts, what social facilities are present and other sports facilities.
 - How are the facilities looked after and maintained and who is responsible for this?
 - What drawbacks do you have with the current facilities?
 - Are there any things that restrict the facilities you have on offer – i.e. neighbours, land boundaries, court layouts etc.
 - How well is each facility used? Do you have accurate utilisation rates for each court and area within the venue? This will help you with your planning and may give insight on where you priority for development may need to be.
3. How is the venue managed?
 - What is the management structure at your venue?
 - How is the management committee made up, what roles do you have and how often do you meet.
 - Are there any paid members of staff at the venue, do they have formal contracts? What are their main responsibilities?
 - How is the venue managed on day to day basis e.g. who opens the courts, are there fobs to open the courts, what times is it open from and to, how are the floodlights operated.
 - How do you interact with the current membership – website, newsletters, social media etc. If you have carried out initiatives to grow participation, what success have these initiatives had?
 - How do you communicate with potential new members? i.e. what local advertising do you do, do you have set incentives for new members.
 - How do the current members/users book courts – is there an online booking system? Do you plan to put one in place?
 - How do members/non-members book onto the programme at the club?
 - Do you offer pay and play opportunities for the local community.
4. Venue membership
 - How many members do you have, how is this broken down i.e. adult, child, mini
 - Are there any trends in the membership – i.e lots of working age people, lots of children etc.
 - How much is the membership – how have these levels changed over the years? Do you anticipate any increases in the future?
 - How does your membership offer and price compare to other local venues and other sporting / leisure activities locally.
5. Local community
 - How is your local community made up - what is the demographic profile?
 - What can you learn about their desires to play tennis? Can you use insight tools to find out more about their preferences/habits?

- How well does your clubs activities align to the local community? Are the pricing levels affordable and do you make the venue accessible to all members of the community? Is your programme offering structured sessions at a variety of times through the week that promotes accessibility? Are new sessions needed to
 - Are there groups locally who you could partner with to help promote your venue, i.e. schools, community groups etc.
6. Current programme
- How is the programme managed at the venue? Is it run in house or is it outsourced to a coaching team?
 - Who keeps the revenue generated from the coaching programme?
 - Do you have formal contracts in place with your coaches?
 - What programmed activity does the club run – coaching / competition?
 - Does the committee influence the type of sessions offered and the charging points for the programme?
 - Does the venue have teams that enter into team tennis if so how many?

Where you want to be?

In this section we are looking for you to define the vision and mission for your tennis venue. e.g.,

“Example Tennis Club aims to be a vibrant, healthy and progressive club that thrives on providing accessible and enjoyable tennis playing opportunities for all. We strive to promote and encourage the playing and enjoyment of tennis for all ages, abilities and backgrounds for the local community”.

This vision/mission need to be unique to you and should be set on where you want to be

The strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats for your venue

This section ideally will provide a current snapshot of where you are as a tennis venue. We feel that this is best done using a SWOT analysis that captures your:-

- Strengths - what your venue is good at.
- Weaknesses- what your venue could improve on.
- Opportunities - what changes could improve your venue for the better.
- Threats - what obstacles you may have to overcome in the future as you attempt to reach your goals.

A good swot analysis is short and simple and must remain relevant to your venue at all times. Rather than completing the SWOT analysis as a committee, it could be good to canvas the thoughts of a cross section of members within the club. Gaining the view different age groups, genders etc within your membership is also a good idea so you get a full understanding of your venue as different sections within the club may perceive the club in different lights.

Once you have completed your SWOT analysis it could be a good idea to start to rank the items listed in order of how they will affect your venue going forward. This will become critical when you start to produce your action plan of how you will reach your goals. Most business plans are created to cover a 3-5 year period, therefore you may need to look into the future slightly when considering your opportunities and threats.

How you going to achieve your vision/mission?

In this section you need to identify the steps you will take towards achieving your vision. Within this you will start to identify your key priorities as well as starting to identify the people within your venue who can help you deliver these priorities. In some cases you may need to look externally to bring expertise in to help you with certain actions.

There could be benefit in setting some short, medium and long term goals for your venue to achieve. Not only does this allow you to focus on things that can be fixed easily and quickly, but it also helps to keep people motivated towards the achievement of some of your longer term goals. Purely focussing on long term goals may mean that motivation and momentum is lost, and the overall plan fails to be delivered.

Each section should have realistic timeframes and you should focus on allocating costs to each of the actions. Once allocated, the costs should be checked against your cashflow to ensure that you have sufficient funds to

complete the actions. Should funds not be in place then it could be that fundraising is needed to allow you to complete these actions.

How will you know you have got there?

Once you have finalised your action plan, you need to ensure that you set milestones and outcomes to monitor your success. How often and when these milestones are set need to be agreed by you as a venue. It is good practice to have your action plan as an agenda item when you meet as a committee, thus allowing everyone to be updated on progress and to input when appropriate to ensure the plan remains on track.

Reviewing your plan at regular intervals also allows you to ensure that the plan is still relevant to your venue. It is a common misconception that once a plan is set, it can't be changed. We would promote the changing of a plan if you identify that certain tasks can't be completed or other factors emerge that need to be tackled so that they do not have adverse impact on your progress.

Addendum items to be included within Business Plans being submitted alongside a capital funding application

1. Capital project identification
 - What projects are you looking to complete? If you have multiple projects over multiple years, these should all be included as this detail will need to match financial information contained within the cashflow section of the application form.
 - What is the project scope and why has this scope been identified.
 - What additional justification is there around completing the project?
 - Have your current members/users inputted into the plans?
2. Project Costs
 - What is the anticipated project cost?
 - How is the project going to be funded?
 - What potential sources of partnership funding can you identify and apply for?
 - What are the other costs that you need to consider i.e. planning, technical services, project management.
 - How is the project going to be sustained – you will need to link this to the member projections and the cashflow in the application form.
3. Project Development
 - Planning - will planning be required for your project?
 - Who will complete the application?
 - How much will it cost and what are the timeframes?
4. Scheme Development
 - How has the scheme been developed?
 - Have you had input from external bodies to ensure that your scheme is deliverable and will be built in line with the LTA minimum standards?
 - How will the project be managed going forwards? Do you have internal expertise or will you need to outsource this, if so, how much will this cost and has this cost been factored into the overall project cost?
5. Project Impact
 - Will the project have any impact on the way that your club operates? May a change in operation be needed?
 - How will you project manage putting in place online court booking?
 - How will the developments benefit the current members? Think about the increased playing time but also, increased options for your programme. You will need to work with your coaching team to demonstrate how the programme can be improved if the project goes ahead. The [LTA Programme Costing](#) tool is a good tool that can be used to show income and expenditure levels that can be achieved through the coaching programme.
6. How will the developments help the venue attract new members?
 - Who lives in your local area?
 - What type of tennis offer will best attract the local community?

- How will you promote your offer and communicate it to the local community?
7. Ensuring your project is sustainable?
- Have you identified what your breakeven point will be when loan repayments and sinking fund contributions are factored in?
 - Can you achieve this breakeven point with your current charging levels or do your membership fees need to be increased to provide more income going forward.
 - Will your project help you cut expenditure in any way?
 - Is there the opportunity to generate more income from your coaching programme?
 - Are there any new income streams that you can unlock to help your venue become more sustainable?