

How to complete a Lender-Ready Business Plan in Illinois

Comprehensive SBA-style business plan with executive summary, market analysis, use of funds, and 3-year projections.

What this form is for

This comprehensive business plan is required by most commercial lenders and the Small Business Administration when you apply for a loan exceeding \$50,000 or seek SBA guarantee backing. Banks use it to evaluate your business viability, management capability, and repayment capacity before approving financing.

Before you start

- Three years of business tax returns if you are an existing business, or detailed financial assumptions and owner resume if you are a startup
- Current personal financial statement showing all assets, liabilities, and net worth for each owner with 20 percent or greater ownership
- Market research data including target customer demographics, competitor names and pricing, and realistic sales forecasts
- Detailed breakdown of exactly how you will use loan proceeds, itemized by category such as equipment, inventory, working capital, or real estate
- Profit and loss statements and balance sheets for the past two years if your business is operating, plus interim statements for the current year

Step-by-step

1. Complete the executive summary last, even though it appears first. Write one page summarizing your business concept, loan request amount, and how the funding drives growth or sustainability.
2. Draft the company description section with your legal business name as registered with the Illinois Secretary of State, entity type, ownership structure, location, and brief history or startup timeline.
3. Build your market analysis by defining your target customers, explaining local and regional market size, identifying three to five direct competitors, and articulating your competitive advantages.
4. Detail your products or services, including pricing strategy, supplier relationships, and any proprietary methods or intellectual property.
5. Outline your management team with short biographies emphasizing relevant experience, then describe your organizational structure and any planned hires.

6. Write the use of funds section as a detailed table showing each expenditure category and dollar amount. The total must match your loan request exactly.
7. Create three-year financial projections including monthly cash flow for year one and annual income statements, balance sheets, and cash flow statements for years two and three. Show realistic revenue growth, typically 10 to 25 percent annually for established businesses.
8. Include break-even analysis showing the monthly revenue needed to cover all fixed and variable expenses.
9. Add supporting documents as appendices, including owner resumes, letters of intent from customers, lease agreements, and equipment quotes.

What lenders look for

- Illinois lenders expect realistic projections tied to documented assumptions, not aspirational hockey-stick growth curves. Show conservative estimates and explain every revenue driver with market data or existing customer contracts.
- The use of funds must never include paying off unsecured personal debt or distributions to owners. Banks fund business growth, not personal obligations or catch-up payments.
- Missing or vague management experience is the fastest rejection trigger. If you lack industry experience, add an advisory board or key employee who fills that gap.