

REGION'S NEW VENTURE CHALLENGE

Guidelines and Rules

Samford University's Brock School of Business and Regions Bank team up annually for the "Regions New Venture Challenge" business plan competition for Samford students which takes place this spring. The business plan competition is one in a series of programs at the Brock School of Business aimed at making it a leading school for training aspiring entrepreneurs.

This document provides the rules and deadlines for the competition. It also provides a recommended format for Open Division business plans beginning on page 3.

The competition takes place in three stages:

- Submissions for the Open Division and BUSA 100 Division are due by Wednesday April 7, 2021 at 4:30 pm. Business plans must be submitted electronically to cmcarson@samford.edu by the deadline to be eligible.
- A semi-final round will be held on the afternoon of Wednesday April 14, 2021 starting at 1:00 pm.
- Finalists will then have the opportunity to pitch their business plans to Regions executives, other business leaders, as well as Samford faculty and students in the Regions Community Resource Room (4th floor of Cooney Hall) on Friday April 23, 2021 starting at 9:00 am.

The competition has two divisions.

1. The BUSA 100 Division is open to students enrolled in the Brock School's BUSA 100, World of Business, course during the current school year.
2. The Open Division will be open to teams consisting of at least 50 percent currently enrolled undergraduate or graduate Samford University students or recent alumni. Samford alumni must have graduated from Samford's undergraduate or graduate programs in the previous three years to be eligible.

Monetary prizes for each division will be as follow:

BUSA 100 Division

1st place: \$ 2,500

2nd place: \$ 1,500

3rd place: \$ 1,000

Open Division

1st place: \$7,500

2nd place: \$5,000

3rd place: \$2,500

All teams and individuals entering the competition will be subject to the following rules:

1. All currently enrolled Samford University undergraduate and graduate students are eligible to enter the Open Division. Recent Samford alumni, defined as those having graduated in the previous three years, may also enter the competition.

2. All teams in the Open Division must be comprised of at least 50 percent of members drawn from any combination of the above list of eligible students or alumni. Thus, teams can include non-Samford students or Samford alumni graduating longer than three years ago, as long as the 50 percent criterion is maintained.
3. All submitted plans in both Divisions must be the original work of at least one of the submitting team's members. Teams will sign a certification attesting to this fact prior to an entry being accepted into the competition.
4. Plans can be submitted for businesses in the idea or pre-start-up phase of the business. Plans may also be submitted for an existing business under the following circumstances:
 - a. If started by a recent alum, the business must have been originally licensed to operate less than one year prior to the current year's submission deadline.
 - b. If started by a current student, the business can have been licensed to operate anytime in the previous five years prior to the current year's submission deadline.

Plans that have previously won prize money in the New Venture Challenge (even if updated) are not eligible for resubmission.

5. All plans will be treated in the spirit of non-disclosure, and none will be distributed outside the judging panel without signed permission from the majority of a submitting team's members. Judging panels for the three rounds of competition will consist of Brock School of Business faculty, other Samford University faculty, and business professionals from outside the University. No other provisions related to intellectual property protection for business plans entered in this competition, however, are provided. Participants should assume their plans will be viewable by members of the general public, especially during the Finals.
6. Deadlines will be strictly enforced, and no exceptions will be made for late submissions for any reason. For all rounds, business plans should be emailed to Dr. Chad Carson at cmcarson@samford.edu.
7. For the Open Division, judges will employ criteria including market viability, potential business competitiveness, and team qualifications when assessing business plans. How close a business is to opening will also be an important criterion, with those nearly ready to launch being viewed more favorably than those that still in the idea stage, everything thing else equal. If no plans meet the judges' minimum criteria, no prizes will be awarded. Throughout all stages of the competition, decisions of the judges are final.
8. The University, in its sole and absolute discretion, reserves the right to disqualify any team from the competition at any time for any reason, including, but not limited to, plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty, intellectual property infringement or misappropriation, misrepresentation of eligibility based on student or alumni status, or failure to meet stated deadlines. Disqualified teams will immediately forfeit any monetary and non-monetary prizes that they have been awarded.

1. **RECOMMENDED FORMAT FOR OPEN DIVISION PLANS**

Business plans can be written in many different formats. A recommended format for Open Division plans includes the information below. Plans should not exceed 15 pages (single-spaced).

1. Executive Summary - Summarize the business plan in one page or less.

1.1. Overview of Idea - Provide a one-paragraph description of the business.

1.2. Mission/Objectives – Why is this business/organization being created?

1.3. Keys to Success – What are the key success factors in this company’s industry? What skills do managers need and what strengths must a company have to be successful?

1.4 Overall Summary – Does an attractive market exist for this product/service? Is the founding team qualified and the proposed startup equipped to compete in this market? Will the prize money (if awarded) be a good investment in this company?

2. Products/Services and Key Problem to Solve

2.1. Product/Service Overview – What is the product or service? What problem does it solve or joy does it create? What is the primary customer group that it will serve? What is the product’s current development stage?

2.2. Relevant Technology or Expertise – What is the underlying technology or expertise used to make or power the product or provide the service?

2.3. Key Opportunity – Why is this a good business opportunity now? (Provide a brief summary of important issues that will be discussed in detail below in Section 3).

3. Market Analysis

3.1. Market Overview (Current size, growth rate, etc.) – How large is the overall industry? How fast is it growing on a national level? What are the key political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and/or legal trends that will affect sales, costs, and competition in this industry over the next one to five years?

3.2. Target Market – How large is the target market? How fast is it growing? What are the key political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and/or legal trends that will affect sales, costs, and competition in this market niche/geographic location over the next one to five years?

3.3. Main Competitors (Present and potential future) – Who are the company’s main competitors? What are each competitor’s strengths and weaknesses?

3.4. Distribution Strategy – How will the company deliver the product/service to the customer?

3.5. Market Entry – What steps are needed to open the business? Where will it be located? How will managers promote/advertise the company’s product/service?

3.6. Pricing Strategy – What is the pricing strategy? What are the fixed and variable costs of production that have to be covered by this price? How will the product/service be priced relative to competition?

3.7. Scalability / Ramp Up – Can this business grow beyond just a local business? How?

1.1. 4. Management Summary

4.1. Organizational Structure – Will the company be a sole proprietorship, partnership, S-corporation, C-corporation, or LLC? Why?

4.2. Current Management Team – Who is currently a manager in this company? What will different managers be in charge of? What skills and work experience do these managers bring to the company?

4.3. Future Management Team – What positions does the company need to hire for in the near future? What is the current timeline in hiring these managers?

4.4. Board of Advisors/Directors – Who is on the company’s advisory board or board of directors? What skills and networking benefits do these advisors/directors bring to the company?

4.5. Personnel Plan – How many people does the company need to hire in the next few years? What are the projected personnel costs?

5. Defensibility (Intellectual Property and/or “Know-how”)

5.1. Patents, Trademarks, Copyrights, Domain Names (if applicable) – Does the company own any intellectual property? Is any being developed?

5.2. Expert Knowledge and Trade Secrets (if applicable) – What expert knowledge do managers have to run this business successfully? Does the company have any trade secrets?

5.3. Barriers to Entry – What makes it difficult to enter this industry? How will the company overcome these barriers? (Note: If the answer to this question is “It’s easy to enter this industry,” then, by definition, it is a low-profit industry, and, thus, not an attractive opportunity.)

6. Financial Information

6.1. Current Sources of Funding - How much money has management raised for/contributed to the company so far? What are the company’s current sales?

6.2. Funding Needs – How much more money does the company need to start or grow? Why?

6.3. Breakeven Analysis – At what level of sales (in terms of dollars or units) will the company start making a profit?

6.4. Proposed Milestones – What important strategic and financial milestones has the business achieved, to date? What are the key milestones for the next one to three years that the company is positioned to achieve that will show it is on the road to success? How close is the company to reaching these milestones?

1.1. **7. Competitive Advantage and Defensibility** - What does the company’s SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis look like?

7.1. Strengths - What strengths does the company have compared to its industry’s key success factors (section 1.3) and its competitors (section 3.3)? Does the company have any strengths in terms of its current financial situation (section 6)?

7.2. Weaknesses - What weaknesses does the company have compared to its industry’s key success factors and its competitors? What are the company’s weaknesses in terms of its current financial situation?

7.3. Opportunities - What opportunities does the company have based on positive trends in its industry and target market (section 3)? Do competitors (section 3.3) have any weaknesses that provide the company with opportunities? Are competitors ignoring any viable markets that the company can serve?

7.4. Threats - What threats does the company face based on negative trends in its industry and target market? Do competitors have any strengths that threaten the company?

7.5. Competitive Strategy – Based on the SWOT, how will the company compete successfully? Will its business strategy be based on cost or differentiation advantages? Will it focus on a broad or niche market?

Adapted from <http://alabamalaunchpad.com/wp-content/uploads/ALP-BPlan-Guidelines-Oct-2014.pdf>.