

North Dakota Department of Transportation

# DBE NEWSLETTER

— January 15, 2026 —

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## Contacts

Civil Rights Division  
Ramona Bernard  
Director  
701-328-2576  
[rbernard@nd.gov](mailto:rbernard@nd.gov)

Amy Conklin  
DBE Program Manager  
701-328-3116  
[aconklin@nd.gov](mailto:aconklin@nd.gov)

Jessica Stadick-Feist  
DBE Program Administrator  
701-328-1898  
[jstadick@nd.gov](mailto:jstadick@nd.gov)

DBE Supportive  
Services Consultant  
Project Solutions, Inc.  
701-214-5775  
[dbe@projectsolutionsinc.com](mailto:dbe@projectsolutionsinc.com)

## Advertisements

***Advertisements are not required. The Bid Opening Sign-In System and Advertisement System have been disabled until further notice.***

The North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) will consider every request for reasonable accommodation to provide:

- An accessible meeting facility or other accommodation for people with disabilities.
- Language interpretation for people with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Translations of written material necessary to access NDDOT programs and information.

To request accommodations, contact Heather Christianson, Civil Rights Division, NDDOT at 701-328-2978 or [civilrights@nd.gov](mailto:civilrights@nd.gov) TTY users may use Relay North Dakota at 711 or 1-800-366-6888.

# Upcoming Bid Letting Meeting

[Click Here](#) to access the NDDOT website where you will find the link to join the next meeting.

[Click Here](#) to view the slides from the January 12 DBE Industry Update Meeting.





# Announcements...

## Personal Narrative Workshop Materials Available

The recording, PowerPoint slides, and workbook from the Personal Narrative Workshop are now posted on the NDDOT DBE website: [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise \(DBE\) Program | NDDOT](#) under **Interim Final Rule (IFR) – Information**.

If you were unable to attend the live session, NDDOT recommends reviewing the recording before scheduling a 1-on-1 consultation with our DBE Supportive Services Consultant, Project Solutions, Inc.

If, after watching the recording, you decide not to proceed with the reevaluation process for DBE eligibility, please submit a written withdrawal to [civilrights@nd.gov](mailto:civilrights@nd.gov).

## Reevaluation Process – Target Date May 31, 2026

NDDOT has identified May 31, 2026 as the target date to move forward with completing the DBE certification reevaluation process. This will allow time to update program documents and establish a new triennial goal.

You can find the [NDDOT IFR FAQ](#) document on the NDDOT DBE website: [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise \(DBE\) Program | NDDOT](#) under Interim Final Rule (IFR) – Information.

Firms are encouraged to submit their Personal Narrative (PN) and Personal Net Worth (PNW) statements as soon as practicable to ensure timely reevaluation. North Dakota-based firms certified prior to October 1, 2025 that have not submitted reevaluation documents or requested withdrawal by May 31, 2026 will remain ineligible for DBE participation until those actions are completed.

Once ready, please upload your documents to the open Q&A section of your Certification Record in the Certification and Compliance System. If you choose not to proceed with reevaluation, please submit a written withdrawal to [civilrights@nd.gov](mailto:civilrights@nd.gov).

You can review the IFR and IFR FAQ here: [October 2025 Interim Final Rule | US Department of Transportation](#).

# BUILDING A STRONG BUSINESS PLAN

Creating a robust business plan can be a useful process for any business owner. A well-crafted business plan not only serves as a roadmap for your venture, but also helps you secure funding, attract partners, and inform your strategic decisions. In this article, we will explore the essential components of a strong business plan. While not every business plan needs to contain all the components we will discuss, understanding them will help you decide which ones suit your needs so that you can begin crafting a successful business plan.



## Executive Summary

A strong executive summary is vital to a successful business plan. This will be the first thing readers see, so it's your opportunity to make a strong first impression. You need to quickly communicate information that is engaging and informative while resisting the temptation to get overly detailed. As a foundation, include the name of your business, the services or products it provides, what market it operates in, why it exists, and what makes it unique. Don't get too deep in the weeds – this section should only be a few sentences long at most – but give enough information that any reader would have a basic understanding of your company from this section alone.

While this section should be the first in your completed plan, it can be useful to write it last. The rest of your business plan will give more details on the ideas you introduce in this section, so writing it after you have a clear idea of what later elaboration will reveal can make the process easier. Even if you write this first, taking the time to review it at the end of the process can help make it more specific and punchier.

## Company Description

Now that your readers have a basic grasp of your company on a conceptual level, it's time to help them understand how it all works. A great place to start is by describing your company as an organization. This is where you can expand on the reason your business exists, what makes it unique, and what market it operates in. Add more details like specific clients your business has worked with before or plans to cater to, other businesses you have partnered with, unique advantages that give your company an edge, what the general structure of your company is, and its short- and long-term objectives to give readers a clearer picture of how your company operates.

## Products and Services

In addition to how your business functions, you should explain what it provides. Use this section to offer a description of your products and services, why they have value, how much they cost, and how they address the problems your company seeks to solve. This is also your chance to talk about what makes your offerings superior to your competitors'. Is it your top tier craftsmanship? Do you have an important patent? If your offerings are products, describing the production cycle can give potential investors great insight into your business's functionality. If you focus more on services, explaining how you maintain a high quality of service can fulfill that purpose instead.



## Day-to-Day Operations

You spoke to your company's general organization earlier, so now that readers understand your company and what it offers, detail how your business runs on an average day. This should include your business's location(s), its supply chain, and specific information about the routine tasks that keep your business running.

## Management and Staff

Who does the work at your company can be just as important for investors as the work itself, so it's worth devoting a section to highlighting the quality of your staff. Devote time to a few key figures, providing information on their experience, qualifications, and how they benefit your company. Additionally, include general information on the responsibilities and capabilities of your staff. The Operations section explained what needs to get done to keep your business running, but here you can explain who does it, how you make sure they do it well, and the value that adds to your business.

## Market Information

Now that readers have a clear understanding of your company, explain where your company sits in the broader market. If your business exists in an already established industry, explain the current state of that industry. If your business is creating a new space, explain what that looks like and why you feel it's likely to be successful. Then, explain how that market situation affects your company specifically. What trends are affecting your business right now? Who are your competitors, what are their offerings, and how will you outperform them? Who are your intended customers and what is your strategy for reaching them?

## Financial History and Projections

Financial numbers are a great way of showing stability and growth, which is important to those looking for businesses to partner with or invest in. Including some information about your company's financial history and your projections for its future can help show that your business is profitable, reliable, and here to stay. If your business is just starting and does not have a financial history, you can still include information on how you are keeping it operational while you work towards profitability and when you predict your venture will become profitable.



## Funding Needs

If you are developing your business plan to pursue funding, this is where you explain how much you need and why you need it. Give details on how that funding will help your business, what you will use it for, and what results that funding will bring that will be profitable for investors. Be clear about not only how much funding you need, but what form you want that funding to take, what you are willing to offer in exchange, and how you plan to ensure that investors see returns on their investments.

These steps outline an effective, traditional business plan that you can use to advertise your company to investors, attract partners, or refer to during internal meetings to inform decision making. You may find that you don't need all these categories for your plan, or that you want them in a different order. It's okay to shift the structure around to suit your business, or to use a different structure altogether. What matters is that your business plan is engaging enough to attract readers (you may want to include some graphics to improve the visual flair of your document for just that reason) and detailed enough to encourage them to make an informed decision to support your business.



## Upcoming Events/Training

**Jan.  
21**

### **Budget for Impact**

Webinar

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 | 11:30 A.M. CT | Cost: Free

[Learn More >](#)

**Jan.  
22**

### **Learn About The Essentials Of Small Business Lending**

Webinar

Thursday, January 22, 2026 | 6:30 P.M. CT | Cost: \$10

[Learn More >](#)

**Jan.  
29**

### **Be in the Know - Essential HR for Q1**

Webinar

Thursday, January 29, 2026 | 11:00 A.M. CT | Cost: \$10

[Learn More >](#)

**Feb.  
10**

### **Get Found Online: Business Visibility in 2026**

Webinar

Tuesday, February 10, 2026 | 3:30 P.M. CT | Cost: Free

[Learn More >](#)

**Feb.  
10-11**

### **OSHA 10-Hour Training (Includes Certification)**

Fairfield Fire Hall, 12825 20th St SW, Belfield, ND 58622

Tuesday & Wednesday, February 10-11, 2026 | 9:30 A.M. CT | Cost: \$25

[Learn More >](#)

## Did You Know...

Project Solutions Inc is the Supportive Services provider for NDDOT and is available for one-on-one assistance to DBEs who would like help drafting their personal narrative for the recertification process.

To schedule time with a consultant, email [dbes@projectsolutionsinc.com](mailto:dbes@projectsolutionsinc.com).

# Crafting an Authentic Brand Story



As the global market expands, it is becoming more and more difficult for businesses to make their product offerings stand out from the crowd. At the same time, as customers become increasingly inundated with an ever-expanding list of purchasing options it can be difficult for them to decide which businesses deserve their money. A strong brand story solves both problems simultaneously by giving your business something it can offer beyond its products while also giving customers a reason to care. In this article, we will discuss how you can create a brand story that works for you, no matter what your business is.

## **Step 1 – Understanding Your Customers and Yourself**

No business can be everything to everyone. To draft a story that will connect you to your audience, you first need to understand your audience and the ways in which your business serves them. To draft a truly effective story, you should understand who your audience is, what challenges they are facing, and how your company and its products fit into the solution to those challenges, because understanding your customers allows you to draft a story that caters specifically to them. Tracking demographic information for your customers, how they find your products, and what they have to say about them afterwards can be a great starting point for developing that understanding and distributing surveys or asking for other forms of personal feedback can help nail it down.



At the same time, you need to understand your business. Before you begin writing, make sure you have a clear understanding of your company's values and goals. Why does your company exist? What does it stand for? How does it help the world? What are its values? If you aren't sure what the answers to these questions are, you won't be able to write a story that's specific and relatable enough to resonate with your audience. During this part of the process, you also need to establish your brand's voice, which will define the tone and style of your story. It should be tailored to your brand specifically, but keep in mind that it needs to be consistent and authentic. You want the voice you tell your brand story in to be the same one used when posting on LinkedIn, drafting replies to customer service requests, or advertising products, so make it something that you can maintain long term. If your brand's voice varies across platforms or between conversations, it creates friction for the customer, and makes your story feel inauthentic.

Once you have a clear vision of your customers, your company, and your goals, it's time to start writing.

## **Step 2 – Developing Your Origin Story**

The driving force behind the establishment of your company can resonate with and inspire your customers, providing them with a sense of connection and motivation. As you begin your brand story, explain how your company came to be. Did you have a frustrating experience where a product you needed was unavailable and decide to fill that gap? Did you have a goal for a future where more people would have access to a service that was once prohibitively expensive? Explaining the reasoning behind the decision to start your business can put your values on display draw in customers and investors alike and build loyalty and trust in your business by positioning your brand as a problem solver. This is also a chance to describe the hard work it took to get your foot in the door in your industry. Did your business start out of your garage? Did you work those first years while holding down a full-time job elsewhere? Details like these humanize your business, display your devotion to it, and highlight the progress you have made so far. If the process of starting your business was simple and easy, that's great, too, but do not make up mythologized origins. People will find out, and it will hurt your credibility in the long run.

## **Step 3 – Opening Up About Your Struggles and Your Victories**

Regardless of the way your business began, every company faces hardships. Highlighting those struggles humanizes your business and further builds relatability. However, this is not a chance to complain or wallow in self-pity. The challenges your business has faced are important because they give you a chance to show how you overcame them. When describing challenges, frame the narrative around how you overcame them and why that's valuable rather than how miserable they were in the moment.

Along with the challenges you've faced, you want to highlight the victories you've earned. It's important to show that your business is doing well, but make sure that you are not simply bragging about revenue. Focus on how you are solving problems and display metrics of success in values other than profit. If your company manages paving projects, talk about how many miles of paving you have overseen, the accolades and positive testimonials you have received, and the increasing size of the projects you have been entrusted. Make it clear that your success isn't just benefiting you, it's making their roads safer and their commutes more pleasant. Making money is awesome, but what matters to customers is that you are improving their lives. A great way to highlight this is by including feedback from your customers themselves through testimonials. In addition to showing victories on a macro scale, zoom in to focus on one or two key moments that were important wins for you and your company and made you realize your business was going to last.

## Step 4 – Discussing Where You Are Now and Where You Plan to Be

Once you have provided a picture of your company's history, it's time to discuss your company's current situation. How many people does your company employ? What is it working on right now? How is it making a positive impact on its community and its industry? How does its current state show adherence to the original vision that inspired you to start it? Have you remained true to your original vision or has that vision evolved? Answering these questions helps demonstrate the immediate relevance of your business to customers and clarifies what they are endorsing by choosing your services.

Finally, you can round your story off with visions of the future. What's next for your brand? What does it hope to achieve? Let your audience know where you see your business in 10 years, how their current support helps you get there, and why that's good for them. Remember, you can't be everything for everyone. Make your goals specific and achievable for your company and valuable for its customers.

## Step 5 – Show the World

Now that you have written your brand story, it's important to package it effectively. Depending on your brand and its voice, that might be posting it to your company's website in text, preparing a video with a speech, or something else. It might include infographics, pictures of your work, or audio testimonials. Ensure that any communication accurately reflects your brand's image and resonates with your audience. Share it widely to inform everyone that supporting your brand means backing something unique and valuable.

