



## REGION'S NEW VENTURE CHALLENGE

### Guidelines and Rules

Samford University's Brock School of Business and Regions Bank have teamed-up for the seventh annual "Regions New Venture Challenge" business plan competition for Samford students to take place in April and May 2015. 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 will take place in three stages:

- Submissions are due April 17, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. (Central Time). Business plans must be submitted electronically to [ftlohrke@samford.edu](mailto:ftlohrke@samford.edu) by this deadline to be eligible.
- A semi-final round will be held in the Brock School of Business on Monday, April 27 from 12:00-5:30 p.m. BUSA 100 teams will compete from 12:00-2:15 p.m. and Open Division teams will compete from 2:30-5:30 p.m.
- Finalists will then have the opportunity to pitch their business plans to Regions executives and other business leaders at Regions' headquarters on Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

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 2014-2015 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 May 2012 or later 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 May 2012 or later 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 prior to May 2012 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, but the business must have been originally licensed to operate on April 1, 2014 or later. Plans that have previously won prize money in the New Venture Challenge 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 at Regions headquarters.
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 Professor Franz T. Lohrke at [ftlohrke@samford.edu](mailto:ftlohrke@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.

## **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?

**2. Products/Services and Key Problem to Solve**

2.1. Product/Service Overview – What is the product or service? What problem does it solve?

2.2. Relevant Technology or Expertise – What technology is used in the product or service?

2.3. Key Opportunity – Summarize why this is a good business opportunity now.

**3. Market Analysis**

3.1. Market Overview (Current size, growth rate, etc.) – How big is the industry? How fast is it growing?

3.2. Target Market – How large is the target market? How fast is it growing?

3.3. Main Competitors (Present and 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 – 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?

#### **4. Management Summary**

- 4.1. Organizational Structure – What will different managers be in charge of? Will the company be a sole proprietorship, partnership, S-corporation, C-corporation, or LLC?
- 4.2. Current Management Team – Who is currently a manager in this company?
- 4.3. Future Management Team – What positions does the company need to hire for in the near future?
- 4.4. Board of Advisors/Directors – Who is on the company’s advisory board or board of directors?
- 4.5. Personnel Plan – How many people does the company need to hire in the next few years?

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

- 5.1. Patents, Trademarks, Copyrights (if applicable) – Does the company own any intellectual property?
- 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 it is a low-profit industry.)

#### **6. Financial Information**

- 6.1. Current Sources of Funding - How much money has managers raised for/contributed to the company? What are the company’s current sales?
- 6.2. Funding Needs – How much 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 are the key milestones for the next one to three years that will show the company is on the road to success? How close is the company to reaching these milestones?

**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 and its competitors? Does the company have any strengths in terms of its current financial situation?

7.2. Weaknesses - What weaknesses does the company have compared to its industry's key success factors and its competitors? Does the company have any 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? Do competitors have any weaknesses that provide the company with opportunities?

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?

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