



# Business plan tips for ag entrepreneurs.



**Peter Hong** was named director of the ISU Startup Factory in February 2021. He brings experience in manufacturing, management, and business development consulting in both private and public sectors. He has held appointments and leadership roles in Iowa Advanced Manufacturing Council, IEDA Technology and Commercialization Committee, Iowa Innovation Council, BioConnect Iowa, and more. He shares tips on how to develop a business plan that will attract attention and instill confidence in your team and project.

- 1 Start with a compelling hook.**  
Capture your audience's attention in your one-page executive summary and make them want to know more. Make sure the description of the problem and solution is succinct, relatable, and simple to understand. You know you have achieved your goal when someone you've asked to review it does not need additional explanation.
- 2 Avoid technical jargon.**  
This is not a technical white paper or academic paper. A business plan should clearly outline the business model that is going to allow your innovation to create wealth and make an impact on society. Remember the saying "a picture is worth 1,000 words" holds true and can be an especially powerful tool. Make sure the picture is self-explanatory and fully supports the words preceding it.
- 3 Avoid using vague descriptors.**  
Words ending in -er or -ly are not specific or measurable and can be interpreted in different ways by different readers. Use your best customer and market discovery information to quantify the impact of the business. Confidence in the business plan increases with specificity.
- 4 A business plan is only as good as the team.**  
Business opportunities based on compelling solutions to identified problems never materialize without a competent and focused team. Team member bios should include their education and experience, and how they will apply these to make the business successful. Be specific on what role each person will play, and don't be afraid to point out any needs the company has for additional expertise.
- 5 Provide condensed, realistic financial projections.**  
The temptation to create excitement for the project by projecting extreme sales, profits, and market share is also the fastest way to lose credibility. Make sure the projections in your plan are justifiable and not "blue sky" numbers that are unrealistic.
- 6 List milestones and resources needed to get to revenue.**  
Highlighting awareness of the obstacles and the strategies you'll use to overcome them shows a level of management planning that instills confidence in your team. It demonstrates urgency and forethought about the challenges of the "valley of death" to which many businesses succumb.

## The Iowa Advantage

The Iowa startup ecosystem has grown significantly in recent years, and there are a range of resources for companies at every stage of development and commercialization. Beginning at the university level, both the [ISU Startup Factory](#) and [UI Venture School](#) offer opportunities to help evaluate business ideas and help identify business models to support business plan development. Additionally, the [Small Business Development Centers](#) and the five [John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Centers](#) provide business development throughout Iowa. Once a robust initial business plan has been developed, nondilutive funding like the [IEDA Acceleration Fund](#) and Federal SBIR/STTR funding can be applied for with help from [Venture Net Iowa](#) and [BioConnect, Iowa](#) both are part of the state of Iowa's public-private partnerships supporting entrepreneurs.