

BUSINESS CASES: SUGGESTED STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

SECTION	SUGGESTED CONTENT	NOTES
Executive Summary <i>What are the key points of your case?</i>	What are you asking for? Why is it worth approving? What are the one or two facts that demonstrate this? What are the main risks and how will they be managed?	<i>If you can keep the main body of your business case brief, an Executive Summary may not be needed.</i>
1. Proposal <i>What are you proposing?</i>	What, precisely, are you asking for? Will it solve a problem, correct a wrong, comply with a requirement, introduce a new opportunity? Something else? Who has been consulted?	<i>Be clear; be brief.</i> <i>Use appendices for any significant detail.</i>
2. Rationale <i>Why are you proposing this?</i> <i>What will it achieve?</i> <i>What other options have you considered?</i>	Why, precisely, are you asking for this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background/history/context. <i>[If this is more than a couple of bullet-pointed paragraphs, put full version in an appendix.]</i> • Focus on facts that relate specifically to the business case. • Present facts as facts; opinions as opinions. • Why now? What will be the benefits? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial <i>[Revenue generation, profit growth, costs avoided, cashflow improvements, working capital reduction, etc.]</i> • Non-financial <i>[Safety, quality, customer service, compliance, etc.]</i> How can these benefits be measured? How does the proposal align with current strategic goals? What alternatives were considered? <i>[Provide high level cost/benefit/risk assessment for each – detail in an appendix.]</i>	<i>Including too much detail in the main body of your business case will break the flow of your argument. Consider putting the detail in clearly labelled appendices and refer to these appendices in the main body. This applies to all sections of your business case.</i> Be realistic: <i>Success will be measured against your claims.</i> Remember: <i>You will be challenged.</i>
3. Resourcing <i>What will it cost?</i> <i>What return will there be on investment?</i>	Include money, time, people – total effort required. Provide enough information to make a business decision. Graphics are generally better than text and spreadsheets. Identify expenditure over the full timeframe, including any intermediate steps.	Remember: <i>You will be challenged.</i>
4. Risk Management <i>What are the risks?</i> <i>How can they be managed?</i>	Financial? Technical? Regulatory? Reputational? Employee relations? External stakeholder relations? Others? What could go wrong? What would be the likely consequences? How can these risks be mitigated?	<i>Your risk management strategy can be presented in a simple 4 column table, which can be an appendix:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk to be managed • Potential severity (High/ Medium/ Low) • Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low) • Mitigation strategy
5. Oversight and Reporting <i>Who's in charge?</i> <i>Who's watching?</i> <i>How will progress be reported?</i>	Who's in charge? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Manager? • Project team? Who's watching? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project sponsor? • Steering committee? How will progress be reported? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will report progress? To whom? What will be reported? When? For how long? Who will fill key roles? Performance metrics?	<i>The aim of this section is to have the evaluation committee feel confident that any resources allocated to your business case will be managed responsibly. This can make or break a business case.</i>
6. Recommendations <i>What, precisely, do you want the evaluation committee to do?</i>	What, precisely, do you want the evaluation committee to do? Provide clear and detailed recommendations.	<i>In this section you will be restating information presented in Section 1.</i>
Appendices	Relevant and useful material referred to in the body of your case.	<i>Present as much of this information as you can in attractive, well structured, tables.</i>