

Welcome to the Nonprofit Services Canvas, a quick and easy, but comprehensive, way to put your idea on paper. We're going to refer to the tool as a *canvas* because you'll be creating something new on a blank piece of paper, like an artist with a blank canvas.

The Nonprofit Services Canvas is inspired by the Lean Canvas, which, in turn, was based on Alex Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas. Ash Maurya, who created the Lean Canvas, calls it "1-page business modeling" that helps you capture your idea in 20 minutes instead of 20 weeks.

Working with some of my clients, I've taken the Canvas idea and modified it for human service nonprofits and charities to use. It's got the simplicity of putting your idea on the back of a napkin with the rigour of thorough project planning.

This is a new tool to help you create and submit a quick proposal for a new service idea. Created initially with technology or online projects in mind, the Canvas can work for any human service idea, technology-related or not. The goal is to sketch or snapshot the baseline of your current thinking. Perfection is not the goal. It's a tool you'd use with your team or managers to pitch an initial idea. Without spending too much time of your precious time with clients, you'll have a one-page, well thought out pitch for your idea that answers many questions your management and even funders would have. It can move things forward more quickly, and gives you, a front-line worker, a good sense of the types of questions you should be asking and answering when you're creating a new idea for your organization.

I hope you find it useful.

### **Introduction**

This video will show you how to quickly and easily create your proposal canvas. The canvas is broken into a matrix of sections that will be explained as you go. You will be prompted to pause the video to complete a particular section.

The idea here is to create your canvas in about 20 minutes. You're not looking to create a complete project proposal at this stage. You're taking the idea you have and developing it enough so that your manager or supervisor has a good sense of what you're proposing. It's also important that you provide a sense of what the service gap or issue is and how you're proposing to address it. It's essential that your idea be something that your clients need, which we can measure and support.

While this canvas approach is quick, it is still rigorous and you'll need to think it through. We believe you'll find this process helpful to be able to more fully explain your solution and why it's needed.

Make the title of your canvas the name of your idea/solution.

(Insert specific example)

### **What is the problem, gap or issue?**

Outline the key service/gap or issue you're trying to address with your clients.

Ask yourself what your clients are asking you to do for them. What problem are they coming to you to solve? If it's a program you already offer, what's stopping them from being able to access that service/program?

(Insert specific example)

People come to you to resolve a problem, or to get something done. It is often something they may already have been trying to do, but without success. If you can identify what they want done, you can better identify underlying problems and, eventually, define your solution for them.

This ties nicely into the next section, where you will outline how your clients or you are trying to solve their problem today, with existing resources.

You can also use the *Five Why* analysis. You start with the gap or issue and then ask yourself why this is a problem. Do this five times to continuously refine the list of problems, until you have a list of deeper and very specific problems that your service will address.

Take the time now to insert the problem, gap or issue you are trying to address.

(Insert specific example - slide of the analysis in use, like on the Lean Canvas video)

### **How is this gap/issue being addressed today?**

This is where you also want to outline your clients current reality and how they're trying to solve their problem. Even though you may be proposing a new service, or changes to an existing service, you may already be providing this service in an ad hoc or informal way. If it's an idea you've been thinking about for some time, or a client need you've been trying to meet, you're probably already working on ways to provide the service.

What alternatives are you using to provide this service today?

OR

What existing solutions are out there that clients are using today?

Outline here how you're currently trying to meet your client needs, or how your clients are trying to get the help they need (including outside of your organization).

(Insert specific example)

### **Target Group/Client(s)**

Before you start, you need to know who you're proposing to help. You have many different types of clients at your organization, and likely in your project or program itself. Your proposal needs to be specific and target a specific group or groups of clients. Brainstorm the list of possible clients who need this service.

(Insert specific example)

### **Who is your first key target group or client?**

Within this list of clients, who are your priorities? These might be the people who absolutely must be served by this project/program, but can also be "early adopters" who have identified they are ready and want this service. It can be a group that is asking for a particular program, approach or technology to be used.

(Insert specific example)

### **What is the solution?**

Once you've identified the gap/issue, you can start outlining the solution. For each gap/issue you've outlined, sketch out the services that will address those problems.

List the top 3 services you would need to include in order for this solution to address the gap/issue you've presented.

(Insert specific example)

### **How does this solution benefit the client?**

Ultimately, you provide service to help clients with specific needs and outcomes. How will your solution help the client reach their outcomes? What will they get from this new or improved service (After they've experienced the service)? What positive change will they experience? What will the solution give the client that they don't currently have?

You can describe the benefit in any way that makes sense, such as how will they feel, how will it affect them. Think of this as your project outcome. It can include specific changes for your clients including informational, behavioural, or attitudinal change. The change should refer back to the target clients you are focused on.

(Insert specific example)

### **How will you outreach / market?**

Given what you know about your clients, what's the best way to reach them? In many cases, you are already working with the clients you want to serve with this project or technology. Your answer may simply be "I'll tell them!" You should still outline how you will tell or reach them with information about the new idea.

For those you don't already have a service relationship with, how will you reach and inform the clients you want to target about this solution? Do you know how or where they access information? Do you know where to find them? Who can help you reach them? Do you need to use technology or other marketing approaches (radio, TV, TTC ads, newsletters, etc.)?

Do you need to do a bit of research here?

(Insert specific example)

### **How will you measure success?**

How will you define success for your client and program/idea? How will you measure that success? Success should be based on client outcomes, not just statistics such as intakes. At the same time, numbers matter, so you will want to include quantitative statistics or analytics you will measure. Client outcomes should also include qualitative measures, which you might get through surveys, interviews, direct interactions with target groups or clients.

(Insert specific example)

### **Why are you uniquely positioned to provide this solution?**

This is a typical question funders ask on a grant or funding application. It's always something you should think about when you're pitching a new idea internally. Your managers/supervisors/ED will need to be able to justify the resource costs to deliver this solution. Help them understand why your organization should invest resources in your solution.

Why is this a solution that you can and should deliver? Why your organization? Why you?

(Insert specific example)

### **What resources are needed to make this proposed solution possible?**

What will it cost? What resources are required (Human resources, IT, funding, space/facilities, etc.)? How will you pay for your solution? Is a reallocation of resources, or new resources (i.e. new funding streams) required? Do you know of a resource, fund, grant, etc., that can be accessed to resource this solution?

(Insert specific example)

### **What security, privacy & confidentiality concerns do you need to address?**

If you're embarking on a technology-related project, and even if you're not, the security, privacy and confidentiality of your clients' information is essential.

How will you protect your client information? How will you ensure that the interactions you have with them meet or exceed privacy and security your organization already has?

If you're moving into online services, how will you ensure that your own privacy, security and confidentiality as a worker is protected? In an online 24/7, "open by design" world, your own privacy, security and confidentiality is also something you should be thinking about.

Pause the video and take the time to outline how you will protect your client and your own security, privacy and confidentiality.

### **You're done!**

At the end of this process, you should have a complete canvas. This is really a first step in the process. You may want to take some time to review and refine it. But, you're ready to get some input from colleagues, possibly discuss the idea with some clients to help refine it, or move it up the organizational hierarchy to start a conversation with your manager/supervisor. You should expect with each level in your organization the idea moves to, more questions and refinements will likely be necessary.

But, you'll have given them something well thought through that should answer many of the questions your managers might ask.

Well done and good luck!