

Larger-scale women-owned businesses, which have made it past many development hurdles, often have these qualities:⁷⁹

- They plan for growth.
- They set specific long-term goals, track their progress, and make adjustments as necessary to meet those goals.
- They sell to other businesses.
- They constantly upgrade their skills.
- They bring in business partners.
- They develop strategies for getting the funding they need to support expansion.

STARTING OFF RIGHT: CREATING A BUSINESS PLAN

Starting a successful green business involves generating your business idea and following a well-thought-out, step-by-step process to turn that green idea into a real product or service. Entrepreneurs usually begin with an idea for a new product or service, a new business model, or a way to improve an existing business. Green entrepreneurs focus on processes that will reduce waste or preserve natural resources, or products and services that help others “go green.”

You should also think about your longer-term goals for the business venture. Where do you want the business to be in one, two, and five years? Some entrepreneurs develop their businesses and then sell them once successful. Other entrepreneurs keep their businesses, which may stay small or grow. Green business practices and technology are changing rapidly, and you should expect the needs and expectations of your potential customers to change as well. Successful entrepreneurs must embrace change and be nimble in adapting to a rapidly-evolving business environment.

A good business plan is fundamental to being a successful entrepreneur. This plan is a well-thought-out strategy for creating, growing, and sustaining your enterprise. It’s the how-to-guide for your business. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, every business plan should include something about each of the following areas.⁸⁰ (Each item on this list is described in greater detail on the Small Business Administration website at http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/plan/writeabusinessplan/SERV_ESSENTIAL.html.)

- **Executive summary:** Give a concise overview of your plan.
- **Market analysis:** Show your knowledge of the industry, describe your target market, and demonstrate the potential demand for your product or service.
- **Service or product line:** Describe what you’re selling and who will benefit from it. Demonstrate that people will be willing to pay for your service or product.
- **Company description:** Include information about the nature of your business and the key elements that will make it successful.
- **Organization and management:** Outline the organizational structure, including profiles of the management team and qualifications of the board of directors where applicable. You should also discuss the type of legal entity you want to establish (sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporation).
- **Marketing and sales management:** Describe your plans for creating customers and growing your business.

ENTREPRENEURIAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Dedication
- Energy
- Interpersonal skills
- Management skills
- Realistic
- Strategic
- Willingness to take risks

INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE

WHY IS GREEN GOOD FOR WOMEN?

GREEN OCCUPATIONS

EDUCATING YOURSELF FOR A GREEN CAREER

FINDING YOUR GREEN JOB

GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WOMEN SUCCEEDING IN GREEN JOBS

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES ON YOUR CAREER PATH

PLANNING YOUR GREEN CAREER

TABLE OF CONTENTS 

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE 

GLOSSARY 

- **Funding request:** Lay out how much money you need to create or expand your business and how it will be spent.
- **Financials:** Analyze your business's expected finances, including forecasted income statements, balance sheets, cash flow statements, and capital expenditure budgets.

HOW GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS DIFFERENT

There are some aspects of being a green entrepreneur that are different from entrepreneurship in other areas. One key difference is that customers might need to be educated about the green product or service before they are willing to buy. Customers often don't understand the benefits of a green product over a traditional one. So, investing time up front with customers is essential to getting sales. In addition, because green products can be more costly than non-green ones, a green entrepreneur needs to think carefully about how to convince customers that the extra cost is worthwhile for them.

Another major difference is the speed at which green technology is changing. As a green business owner, you will need to stay on top of new information and industry developments to be sure that you can be competitive in the market. Continually educate yourself by reading, going to conferences, taking classes, and participating in relevant organizations.

Sustainability is another consideration for the green entrepreneur. As part of your business plan, consider how you will distribute your product or service in a sustainable way. You might be able to move your product only so far from its origins without having big environmental or financial costs. Also, consider how your products can be sustainably packaged and marketed, and how your company can reduce waste and be energy efficient.

MYTH: The focus on green jobs is a fad.

FACT: Currently, most green jobs are found within the energy efficiency sector, but other opportunities are available and are projected to grow. According to a 2009 Pew Center report, *The Clean Energy Economy: National Numbers*, its research showed that, between 1998 and 2007, jobs in the clean energy economy grew by 9.1 percent, while total jobs grew by just 3.7 percent.⁸¹ Increased support for green jobs by state and federal governments will likely spur growth long into the future.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Even the most successful entrepreneurs encounter obstacles along the way, and you can count on some struggles. Anticipating issues and preparing to deal with them are important steps on the path to success. Some of the challenges you could face include:

Family obligations. Some women like the idea of self-employment because it can provide a more flexible work schedule to help balance work and family demands. At the same time, starting and running a new business requires a lot of work and will affect your family. You might spend a lot of time on the road, on the phone, and working on paperwork and planning. Include your family members in your business planning process and talk to them about how everyone can contribute to its success.

Managing multiple needs. Many women consider themselves adept at multitasking. However, asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Don't try to do everything on your own. Sometimes it can be useful to hire staff to give yourself more time to focus on those aspects of your business at which you are most skilled. For example, perhaps you are strong in managing projects but aren't as skilled in marketing. Sometimes it will be best to call on lawyers, bankers, accountants, insurance agents, and other experienced professionals who can help you with more complex issues.