NOTE TO USER OF THIS TEMPLATE:

Anyone that has spent any amount of time working in economic development or entrepreneurial ecosystem building in a rural place will know that one of THE biggest challenges in making innovative, purposeful things happen for your community is this:

Finding the money to make it happen.

The second biggest challenge?

The time it takes to fill out the applications and write the proposals.

At Mashup Lab we have a deep appreciation for how folks doing this important in rural places have to wear MANY hats and are often stretch WAY too thin. SO, we wanted to make life a little easier for folks that were interested in finding the money they need to do the awesome things they want to do in their rural communities. We put together this editable template for you to use as a ‘starting’ point to put together a winning “pitch” for the next grant or funding program you’re looking to apply to.

Before starting Mashup Lab, our Founder & CEO, Andrew, spent 15+ years working in the economic development and entrepreneurial ecosystem building space in rural; this template is based on the “formula” he used to take secure $15-million (approx.) in grant and program funding for his rural community. As you know, you can do a LOT in a rural place with $15-million bucks!!

Andrew quickly realized that, while many funders might put a different “label” on the things they were asking for in their grant proposals or funding program applications, they were asking for basically the same thing over and over. This template brings those common elements together in one place, so you don’t have to “recreate the wheel” every time you sit down to put a proposal together.

**REMEMBER**, this is not some sort of ‘silver bullet’ that will in any way guarantee you success in applying for funding; it is simply a template to give you a head start, save you time, and perhaps tip the odds in your favour. We’ve used the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator as the “example” in this template, so feel free to use this information if you are applying for funding to bring that program to your community… BUT, you’re more than welcome to use this template for ANY program, project, or initiative that you’re trying to get money for!

This is our gift to you… the amazing tribe of people, scattered across the countryside, that share our belief that there is untapped potential sitting in **EVERY** rural place… and working your butts off to do something awesome for your community.

You Rock.

Keep Being Awesome.

Cheers,

The Mashup Lab Team

*Grant and Funding Proposal Template*

**YOUR STORY (i.e. of your organization / group)**

NOTE TO USER: This is where you tell a little bit about your story; don’t forget, this isn’t just a chronological record of the journey of your organization (although you may decide to include that if you think it might be important / relevant), this is where you connect the elements of your story and your mission as an organization to the project / initiative you’re asking for money.

***History:*** *How did your organization get started? How long has it been in existence? How has the organization evolved over the years (OR what was the inspiration to start this organization if it is relatively new)? What was the inspiration for stating this organization? Who were the key people that took the initial action steps to bring this organization in to the world?*

*Mission & Vision: Why does your organization exist? What do you hope to accomplish? What does “success” look like for you? What is the problem you’re trying to eradicate in the world?*

*Activities: What is it that you’re actually doing to work towards that mission or solve that problem? What are your core set of programs, services, initiatives, projects? What would be the 2 or 3 sentences that best describe each of those things?*

*[NOTE TO USER: if you’re using this template to find funding to bring the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator to your community, then talk about all the other awesome stuff you’re doing in this section… we’ll have an opportunity to talk about the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator a little later on].*

*Accomplishments: What are the things (i.e. results / accomplishments0 you’re most proud of? What have you already succeeded in doing? Here, you want to show that you are a solid organization capable of creating real change in your community that has already experienced some success.]*

*[NOTE TO USER: This part can be really hard for some folks. This is NOT the time to be modest! If you don’t ‘toot your own horn’ every once in a while, who will!?! That said, don’t exaggerate your results and impact either… funder see right through that stuff. Don’t forget, the funder has a vision and mission THEY are trying to achieve too. You want to show the funder that you’re a legit and capable partner, even if you are a new organization / group and don’t have a huge track record. If you’re just getting off the ground as an organization, then talk about the accomplishments / awards of the core people involved in the organization, both as the ‘doers’ and on the Board of Directors.]*

**THE NEED**

[NOTE TO USER: Provide the funder with some insight in to the unique and specific challenges that faced by your community. While they may be generally familiar with the challenge(s) you’re addressing at the ‘20,000-foot’ level, give them some insight into how those issues actually show up in your community. AND if you can capture those issues and challenges by telling the story of a local person, organization, business in your community as a ‘real life’ example, even better!! Include some high-level details around demographics, the current state of the local economy, and the specific population / group you’re hoping to help with project. IMPORTANT: wherever possible, use pictures / graphics / an infographic to communicate this statistical information; this is where most organizations get tripped up… they throw a bunch of stats and data in their pitch and end up bewildering the funder with the “numbers” and the people reading the proposal or reviewing the application begin to drift off BEFORE you’ve had the chance to tell them about all the awesome stuff you’re going to do with their money. Rule of thumb: keep it short, keep it simple, and use pictures to represent the numbers whenever possible. Investing a little time upfront on this part will save you a TON of headaches down the line… AND, you can use that infographic over, and over, and over, and over… you get the point ☺ In the case of applying for funding for the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator, you’ll want to highlight why you believe activating untapped entrepreneurial potential sitting on the sidelines in your region is important to your strategy to create vibrant, thriving rural communities. Here is what this what this section could look like if you were making the case to bring the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator to your community… ]

The old economic development strategy of ‘chasing smoke stacks’ may have worked at one point in time, but that strategy isn’t going to serve our rural communities as we thing about rebuilding and revitalizing our rural economies over the next decade or more.

The challenge is this: multiple studies have shown that half of all new businesses fail within the first five years in business. This isn’t necessarily because of some fundamental flaw in their business model or because of a lack of a market opportunity for the product or service they offer (although that may be the case in some situations); more times than not, it has more to do with the fact that the entrepreneur behind the idea or the business was not well-equipped with the tools, skills, resources, coaching, and mentorship they needed to succeed.

We believe that each one of these situations is a missed opportunity for our rural community. We know that over 60% of all new net job creation comes from small businesses (corporations with 500+ employees have experience net job loss over the pass 5 years). A diversified rural economy that is built on dozens of smaller businesses is stronger than an economy that is dependent on a handful of large corporations, many of which are head-quartered in far-off places that have little connection to our community.

When an entrepreneur in our community succeeds, the ripple-effects of that success can have a significant impact on generational wealth creation, as well as unleashing the entrepreneurial potential of the family, friends, and neighbors surrounding that entrepreneur. The economic impacts of the jobs that entrepreneur creates and the money that circulates around our economy because of their success are clear; but these other ‘ripple-effects’ can impact the vibrancy of our rural community for generations to come.

We believe that, while there are many training programs and support services that may be available (and perhaps even accessible), not all of it feels ‘approachable’ to the type of entrepreneurial people that are ‘sitting on the sidelines’ in our community with an idea for a potentially awesome new business, or ideas for how they can grow their existing business. We know that if we can ACTIVATE that untapped entrepreneurial talent, and get them ‘off the sidelines and in to the game’, we have an opportunity to strengthen the economic fabric of our rural community.

[NOTE TO USER: If there are other needs that you’re looking to address with this project that are specific to your community, or a specific population of people in your community (i.e. BIPOC community, women entrepreneurs, youth, veterans, newcomers / immigrant populations, etc., etc., etc.) include those in this section as well.]

**THE PROJECT (i.e. your plan for addressing the need)**

We want to tip the odds in our favor, and surround new entrepreneurs and existing small businesses in our rural region with tools, resources, coaching, and mentorship they need to give them the best chance of starting and growing strong businesses in our communities, helping them make better strategic decisions faster.

To address the need and challenges highlighted above, [INSERT THE NAME OF THE *ORGANIZATION APPLYING FOR FUNDING HERE*] plans to work with Mashup Lab to bring the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator to our community.

Since 2013 Mashup Lab has been creating and delivering entrepreneurship and business programming SPECIFCALLY designed to address the challenges of rural-based entrepreneurs and small business. Mashup Lab has built specific expertise around designing culturally competent programs, as well as a specialization in creating effective online learning environments having delivered their programs 100% virtually since 2014, including in rural regions with notoriously bad access to reliable and affordable broadband internet.

The Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator is a cohort-based program that is delivered 100% online over 6-weeks, facilitated by experienced entrepreneurs that have put business and entrepreneurial “theory” in to practice with their own entrepreneurial ventures; some very successful, some being massive failures. While the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator programs achieves specific technical assistance and training outcomes around business fundamentals, they have a singular objective they work towards over the 6-weeks of the program:

To help the entrepreneurs and business owner figure out if there is a great BUSINESS to be built from their great idea; be that an idea for a brand-new business startup or an idea to grow an existing business in a new direction.

Mashup Lab is focused on helping entrepreneurs and business owners grow themselves, their businesses, and – as a result – the rural communities they choose to call home. We are excited to partner with Mashup Lab to bring this proven model for activating untapped entrepreneurial potential in rural place to our community, better supporting our entrepreneurs and small businesses.

There are several things we believe make the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator the right fit for our community:

**Cohort-based Design That Facilitates Peer-To-Peer Sharing and Collaborative Learning:**

The Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator is designed to work with small groups of up to 15 entrepreneurs at a time, every week for 6-weeks for 2-hours. The trained Mashup Lab Online Facilitation experts create a group dynamic that allows for participants to open up and collaborate in a ‘safe-to-share’, supportive learning environment, with specific expertise in making 2-hour Zoom calls not FEEL like a 2-hour Zoom call. This format not only provides the structure and framework entrepreneurs and business owners need to work ON their business (versus IN their business), but it also creates a level of accountability people often need to. This exponentially increase the likelihood that the participants completing the 6-weeks of the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator find the confidence and courage they need to put their “plans” in to action, turning their great ideas in to successful, thriving businesses in our community.

**Accessible AND Approachability**

The entire process and curriculum of the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator is not only meant to make the process of exploring a new business opportunity more accessible for a wider audience of entrepreneurs (especially given the 100% virtual delivery model), but the tools, resources, concepts, and language used are designed to be more APPROACHABLE. People participating in the program do not need any past training or formal education to grasp the material and get value from the process. Rather than having to spend time and energy trying to understand terms and concepts that may be unfamiliar to them, participants can focus on getting clarity around the fundamentals of their business model, what problem they are solving in their market, and what makes them and their business the best alternative for the RIGHT kind of customer. Simple.

**Injecting Local Context And Local Connections**

While many of the fundamental business principals and proven best practices used in the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator are widely applicable, Mashup Lab appreciate that there are unique circumstances and important nuances in every rural community that we need to pay close attention to. Hence, a key part of Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator is the inclusion of other local (as local as possible) experienced entrepreneurs and support organization as guest speakers throughout the process.

**Unlimited 1-on-1 support over the entirety of the program, as well as support AFTER the 6-weeks.**

Most people going through the Mashup Lab Virtual Business get everything they need during the weekly group meetups. However, sometimes participants may need a little extra help understanding the concepts explored on the group calls, or applying those concepts to their specific business or their specific situation. To accommodate all learning styles participating, Mashup Lab offers unlimited 1-on-1 coaching throughout the entire 6-weeks of the program. Additionally, sometimes it can take longer than 6-weeks for entrepreneurs to put some of the concepts, strategies, and action plans developed over the course of the program in to ‘real-world’ practice. For this reason, Mashup Lab also offers EVERY participant accepted in to a cohort (regardless if they completed all 6-weeks of the program; sometimes life happens and people have to drop out of the process) three (3) FREE 60-minute 1-on-1 sessions to coach them through the process of applying the concepts and addressing the challenges that come up as the entrepreneurs begin to put their plans in to action.

**Expertise in Online Facilitation. For Entrepreneurs By Entrepreneurs.**

Some organizations facilitating programming in-person believe that setting up a zoom call and create a different PowerPoint presentation allows them to go from a in-classroom program to virtual program offering. Mashup Lab understands that simply is not the case; just because someone is an amazing “in-classroom” facilitator does not mean they can effectively facilitate group learning and peer-to-peer support in a 100% virtual environment; there is a VERY different skill set required. All facilitators of the Mashup Lab Virtual Incubator are not only experienced entrepreneurs in their own right, each of them has gone through a rigorous process that takes great facilitators and trains them to be expert ONLINE facilitators.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM PROVEN RESULTS**

Mashup Lab has worked with dozens of regions across rural Canada and rural America to bring the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator to their community. They have a proven track record for producing results for rural communities. Here are some highlights from the impact Mashup Lab has had that are of particular interest to our rural community:



* Over 80% of Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator participants have never applied for any business or entrepreneurship program before… even though there may have been several other programs available to them in their community; they are a part of the massive pool of untapped entrepreneurial talent “sitting on the sidelines” in EVERY rural community.
* 75%+ are WOMEN... 60% of them with kids under the age of 12
* ~30% self-identify as BIPOC
* ~35% are YOUTH (12 – 30)
* 25%+ are NEWCOMERS
* ~60% of participants produce active & growing ventures with 18-months of completing the program

**PROPOSED ACTIVITY**

Based on all the factors highlighted above, we believe that the design, approach, delivery framework, and learning methodology makes the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator the best fit for our community to address the needs and challenges we see in our community.

With your support, we propose to deliver [*NUMBER*] cohorts of Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator in [THE COMMUNITY / REGION], with the goal of supporting [15 PEOPLE x # OF PROPOSED COHORTS] entrepreneurs and business owners over the next [MONTHS/YEARS] in our community.

**IMPACT**

While it isn’t realistic to guarantee results, based on the past results achieve through the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator in other rural community, this initiative has the potential to produce approximately [TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS x 60%] active & growing businesses in our community within 18-months of completing the program.

**SUSTAINABILITY**

[NOTE TO USER: It is important to explain how you plan to sustain the activities that are having the desired impact beyond the “end date” of the project activity. Wherever possible, identify what your plan is for sustaining the project activities in to the future. Even if those plans aren’t necessarily ‘set in stone’, share your current thinking around how you see the impact of this work continuing on beyond the end of the program. What does this project look like long-term, beyond the project end date? How will you fund this important work after you spent this current funding? Mashup Lab has seen lots of creative ways communities have figured out to keep Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator cohorts happening without having to constantly write grant proposals and filling out government funding applications. Feel free to [book a FREE Discovery Call](https://tidycal.com/mashuplab/discovery-call) if this is something you’d like to brainstorm around with us, we’d be happy to help!!]

**THE BUDGET**

Income

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Funding Sources | Amount | Notes |
| Source 1 | $[X] |  |
| Source 2 | $[X] |  |
| Source 3 | $[X] |  |
| TOTAL | $[TOTAL] |  |

Expenses

[NOTE TO USER: If you are using this template to apply for funding to bring the Mashup Lab Virtual Business Incubator to your community, to [book a FREE Discovery Call](https://tidycal.com/mashuplab/discovery-call) and we will give you all the details you need to fill in the blanks of this part of the budget]

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Amount | Notes |
| *Program Facilitation*  |  |  |
| # of cohorts x investment per cohort  | $[TOTAL] |  |
|  |  |  |
| *Program Materials* |  |  |
| # of cohorts x materials cost per cohort | $[TOTAL] |  |
|  |  |  |
| Program Marketing & Promotion |  |  |
| [Marketing Expense 1] | $[X] |  |
| [Marketing Expense 2] | $[X] |  |
| [Marketing Expense 3] | $[X] |  |
|  | $[TOTAL] |  |
| *Other* |  |  |
| Program Administration | $[X] |  |
| [Other Expenses 1] | $[X] |  |
| [Other Expenses 2] | $[X] |  |
| [Other Expenses 3] | $[X] |  |
|  | $[TOTAL] |  |
| In-kind Contributions  |  |  |
| [In-kind Contribution 1] | $[X] |  |
| [In-kind Contribution 2] | $[X] |  |
| [In-kind Contribution 3] | $[X] |  |
|  | $[TOTAL] |  |
| TOTAL | $[TOTAL BUDGET] |  |