



Business Planning “Go/No-Go” Checklist

SHOULD I PROCEED WITH PLANNING A NATURE-BASED SCHOOL?

It's wise to answer “YES” (or a strong "probably yes") before diving into the work of business planning:

1. Do all the critical decision-makers in the organization support this idea?

Yes

No

I don't know

Not every Board member, staff person, or stakeholder in your organization needs to be enthusiastic about a nature-based school. But if someone who is in a position to veto the project is against it, better to find out now.

2. Do I have a site I can legally use?

Yes

No

I don't know

If the local zoning of the site you hope to use doesn't permit a school or childcare facility, or if the site is in a floodplain or similar unbuildable location, it may be wise to pause planning.

3. Do I have a “safe place” (structure) that is licensable and insurable? (Or a place to build one?)

Yes

No

I don't know

Even a forest preschool that is held completely outdoors must have access to a building for protection from storms or other threats. Usually, this is a requirement of licensing agencies and insurers.

4. Is there a potential customer base?

Yes

No

I don't know

You won't be absolutely sure how much demand there will be for your school until it's open. But is there a significant population of children of the age you'll serve who live within a 10- to 15-minute drive of your site? If there aren't enough children to fill a class, there is likely no reason to start one.

5. Do I have the resources to complete the business planning process?

Yes

No

I don't know

At a minimum, the organization needs to commit enough resources—some combination of staff and/or volunteer time and/or money—to complete a business plan before leaping into the nature-based school business.

Visit [SamaraEL.com](https://www.SamaraEL.com) for help with the next steps!



Reflecting on Your Responses

The process of writing a Business Plan is a time-intensive process. There can also be financial implications--particularly if you hire someone to help write the plan. Thus, we recommend you have mostly "Yes" answers before proceeding with the business planning process.

If you answered "No" or "I don't know" to 3 or more of the questions, it may be wise to do more exploration and discussion before embarking on business planning. For example, maybe it is worth taking a group of stakeholders on a field trip to visit other nature-based schools to increase their buy-in and commitment to the project.

Once you've answered mostly "Yes!" (or at least "probably yes") then it's time to get started planning!

Be sure to download the free Guidance for Developing a Nature-based School Business Plan resource from www.SamaraEL.com/starting-a-school. Also, if you're looking for a Do-it-yourself guide to business planning, be sure to check out our Business Planning E-course. Use code "GONATURE" to receive a 15% discount.

If you have any questions as you proceed, please reach out at hello@samarael.com. We want to help you succeed! After all, the world needs more nature-based schools--including yours!



Samara Early Learning helps educators create nature-based schools or add the nature-based approach to existing programs. With our support on the business or teaching side of operations, educators help young children learn with nature to expand their worlds and live rich, full lives.

Visit www.SamaraEL.com to learn more!