Restaurant Business Plan Template and Operations Starter Kit

A working kit for independent restaurant owners. It builds covers and checks by daypart, tests the dining room against its turns, costs every plate from its usable ingredients, finds operating and cash break-even, and scores the plan on six pass-or-fail tests.

INDEPENDENT RESTAURANTS
FREE EDITION · VERSION 1.0 · OCTOBER 2026
19 PAGES · PRINT IT, WRITE ON IT, KEEP IT
LATEST VERSION: BUSINESSCONSULTANT.SERVICES/KITS/INDEPENDENT-RESTAURANTS/
SHARE THIS KIT: LINKEDIN · X · FACEBOOK · BLUESKY · THREADS · EMAIL
BY KAMYAR SHAH · WORLD CONSULTING GROUP

PAGE 2

Start here

A restaurant plan can fail on paper before the first table is seated. The plan describes the menu and the room, but it never prices the cover, the turn or the plate. This kit makes you write those numbers down, then tests whether they hold, before a landlord, a lender or a slow first spring asks.

WHAT IS INSIDE

3	Business plan, part one: concept, guest, location and seats, menu and pricing
4	Business plan, part two, and the six-test pass or fail check
5	Startup budget: build-out and kitchen, setup, pre-opening, working capital
6	Sales forecast builder by sales line, ramp, seasons and a dining room capacity check
7	Weekly prime cost: food and beverage plus labor, with a worked week
8	Operating and cash break-even, break-even covers per day, rent share, debt coverage
9	Menu engineering: which items earn their place
10	Plate cost card with a costed dinner main, and theoretical versus actual food cost
11	Twelve-month cash forecast, expected and slow-start cases
12	Runway, and a worked example scored on the page 4 check
13	What moves the result: the worked example's what-if table
14	Pre-service and close checklists, weekly numbers review and six investigation questions
15	Your first 30 days, lease questions, sources and what the full kit adds
16-18	An AI prompt that turns this kit into your own plan
19	The worked example's twelve-month cash forecast, filled in

HOW TO USE IT

1. Build sales by sales line on page 6 and the restaurant's costs on pages 5 and 8. Run the cash forecast on page 11, then score the plan on page 4. Draft pages 3 and 4 last.
2. Use pencil. Build-out quotes, rent terms and the kitchen crew you can hire change before opening, and every worksheet expects your own figures.
3. Once you open, use the page 14 checklists every service and the numbers review every week. Count covers and turns by service monthly against page 6, and run prime cost every week on page 7.

HOW THIS KIT WAS BUILT

- **AI tools helped create this kit.** Example figures are illustrative, not benchmarks.
- **The owner question** on page 3 is one of the independent restaurant questions published at businessconsultant.services; the answer is general guidance, not a research finding.
- **Investigation questions** on page 14 come from the same published questions, drafted by AI models and checked by a separate AI model. The founder-dependency question is a World Consulting Group working question added to them. None was measured in the field, so each one is a hypothesis to test.

SCOPE

This kit gives general operational information. It is not legal, tax, accounting, employment, food-safety or financial advice. Licensing, permits, health code, alcohol service, signage and seating rules, employment terms and lease terms vary by city and county. Review them with qualified professionals before you commit money.

PAGE 3

Business plan, part one

A lender is going to ask whether the restaurant throws off enough cash for rent, the kitchen crew and the loan before the funding is gone. Answer every prompt in plain sentences here and draft the full sections on separate sheets.

1. Executive summary (write it last of all)

Give the concept, the site, the seats and the money you need, with what it buys from build-out to walk-in. Then name the month in which the page 6 forecast reaches cash break-even on page 8, and the result from page 4.

2. Concept and guest

Who books a table for dinner, who walks in for lunch, and what makes them pass two other restaurants to reach yours? Your own counts show whether a visit is an occasion or a weekly habit; write down what wins each kind of guest.

3. Location, seats and services

Set out the site, the dinner traffic you counted on the street, how many seats you can staff and the service hours. State whether lunch or dinner pays the rent, and list every charge the lease adds on top of base rent.

4. Menu and pricing

Set out the core dishes with a plate cost from the page 10 card, built on usable ingredient weights, and cost the add-ons the same way (the appetizer, the dessert and the drink that raise a check). Watch which one guests give up first, the dessert or the second drink, when prices rise.

DISH	PLATE COST	MENU PRICE	PLATE COST AS % OF PRICE

> *Owner question: Friday sales grow while Friday profit shrinks, so which cost line moves against sales, and have we ever put the two side by side?*
>
> Put them side by side before you add a Friday server. When a busy service earns less than a quiet one, either the check and the mix fell or a cost line rose faster than covers. Page 7 shows which part of prime cost moved, and the page 6 service table shows whether the extra covers came at a lower check or a slower turn. Fix what moved, not the night.

PAGE 4

Business plan, part two

5. Operations

Describe how a plate moves from order to table for dine-in and delivery: prep, the line, the pass, the floor and the close. Name the station that slows Saturday dinner and who checks each step when you are not expediting.

6. Team

List every role, the hours it covers and the pay it costs, including a market wage for your own hours. Name the person who can run a service without you. The first question on page 14 checks that dependency.

7. Marketing

Explain why a guest books a second dinner and what brings the lunch guest back on a weekday. Track repeat visits and reservations in records you own, rather than counting followers.

8. Financials and funding

Attach pages 5, 6, 8 and 11 and the result below. Show how much the restaurant needs, where the money comes from and how long it lasts if covers run below plan.

DOES THE PLAN PASS? SCORE IT BEFORE ANYONE ELSE READS IT

TEST	PASS?
Gate 0. The draft lease, build-out and kitchen quotes and the requirements of every approval the restaurant needs are in writing, reviewed by a qualified professional where needed.	
1. In the expected case, total sales, booked events included, reach cash break-even at the month-12 run rate (page 8) and closing cash stays at or above your cash floor for 24 months (page 11).	
2. Slow start (tested share of sales, page 11): closing cash holds at or above your floor every month (if not, note the reserve that would hold it).	
3. Planning debt service coverage at full-run sales and at the month-12 run rate (page 8) meets your lender's ratio, on your lender's definition.	
4. Covers asked of the dining room in the busiest service of the busiest month fit its seats and turns (page 6), and planned covers per day reach break-even covers per day (page 8).	
5. Expected covers per day rest on evidence (dinner traffic you counted at the site, with a capture rate from comparable rooms, or your own sales history), not on the size of the neighborhood or a broker's estimate.	
6. The full-run steady-state year (seasons in; not the forecast year) leaves net cash above zero after principal, before income tax set-aside, replacements and stock build-up; set aside its largest fall in running net cash, the year run twice.	

Not ready: Gate 0 fails. **Green:** Gate 0 and all six tests pass. **Amber:** Tests 1 and 3 pass, but Test 2, 4, 5 or 6 fails, so fix the plan before you sign the lease, order the kitchen or take a loan. **Red:** Test 1 or 3 fails, so change the plan before you commit money. Tests 1 and 3 score the plan as written; Test 2 is the slow start, and the page 13 what-ifs stress-test Tests 1, 3 and 6. Count a test without evidence as a fail. Result: _____

PAGE 5

Startup budget worksheet

Fill the estimate column first, then record each source: a written quote from the contractor, the kitchen dealer or the landlord, or a documented calculation. Restaurant budgets can break on hood and fire-suppression extras nobody quoted, so leave no line blank without a reason.

LINE ITEM	INITIAL ESTIMATE	QUOTE OR SOURCE	APPROVED BUDGET	ACTUAL OR COMMITTED
SPACE AND KITCHEN				
Leasehold improvements (example: second-generation restaurant space with hood, grease interceptor, walk-in and restrooms in place)				
Kitchen equipment and refrigeration				
Furniture, bar and dining room fixtures				
Point of sale, online ordering and kitchen display				
Smallwares, china, glass and flatware				
Signage				
SETUP AND APPROVALS				
Licenses, permits and inspections				
Lease deposit and pre-opening rent				
Insurance down payment				
Business entity and accounting setup				
Hood, fire suppression and plumbing connections				
PRE-OPENING				
Opening food and beverage inventory				
Training and pre-opening payroll				
Soft opening and trial service				
Launch marketing and reservations setup				
Professional fees				
WORKING CAPITAL				
Working capital reserve (cash you open with)				
Contingency for overruns on the lines above				
Total				

Size the reserve in two passes: run the page 11 expected case with opening cash of zero (no reserve, no other cash), set the reserve to your floor, plus one more month of fixed costs and principal as a buffer, plus how far its lowest closing cash falls below zero (zero if it never does), rounded up to the next $100, then rerun. If the Test 6 cushion (page 4) is larger than that buffer, add the difference. If the build-out runs over, the contingency pays first and the reserve second; then rerun page 11.

PAGE 6

Sales forecast builder

Every other number depends on sales, so build sales by sales line from covers and checks, not from the rent you need to cover. Count dinner and lunch covers first, from traffic you counted at the site; add private events only where they are booked.

```
Monthly sales for a line = units times average check times days open in the month (or times 1 for units counted per month)
Days open in a month = days open per week times 52, divided by 12
```

SALES LINE	UNIT	UNITS PER DAY OR MONTH	AVERAGE CHECK	DAYS OPEN PER MONTH (OR 1 FOR MONTHLY UNITS)	MONTHLY SALES
Dinner covers	covers				
Lunch covers	covers				
Delivery-platform orders	orders				
Private events and catering	events				

Full-run month

RAMP AND SEASONS

MONTH	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
Ramp, % of full run												
Season, % of full-run month (M1 = opening month)												
Expected sales												

Expected sales for each month = full-run dinner, lunch and delivery sales times ramp times season, plus private events once each one is confirmed and booked. Use 100 percent where a factor does not apply. Ramp, season and covers per day are your assumptions; write down the evidence for each.

CAPACITY CHECK

```
Daily cover capacity = for each service, seats times the turns that service completes in its hours (time a real turn from seating to reset, not the menu's intent), added up, an estimated ceiling to plan below, with the busiest service checked on its own line below
```

Write, for each service, its hours, the seats you can staff and the turns you complete in it (time a full Saturday dinner from first seating to last reset). The week can have room while Saturday dinner does not, so check that service on its own line here. If the plan needs more covers than this, the plan is wrong, however long the wait list is.

PAGE 7

Weekly prime cost

Prime cost puts the food and drink you sold together with the pay of everyone who cooked and served it, as a share of sales. The kitchen schedule moves it as much as the invoices do, so take the count weekly.

WHOSE PAY COUNTS AS LABOR

Labor is every dollar the restaurant pays the kitchen and the floor: wages, payroll taxes, benefits. Tips that go straight to servers are not labor, or the share reads worse than it should. Hours you work on the line or the floor sit in line 3 (minimum crew) or line 14 at a cook's or server's wage; management time sits in line 4.

```
Cost of what you sold = the opening count of the walk-in and bar + deliveries minus the closing count
Prime cost = that cost + kitchen and floor wages with payroll taxes and benefits, and your own market wage
Prime cost share = prime cost as a share of the week's net sales
```

WORKED EXAMPLE: ONE WEEK AT FULL RUN FOR THE EXAMPLE RESTAURANT (ILLUSTRATIVE WEEK)

LINE	THIS WEEK
A. Opening count (food and beverage)	$9,500
B. Deliveries of food and beverage during the week	$8,632
C. The walk-in, dry storage and bar at the end of the week	$9,200
D. What you sold, at cost (A + B, minus C)	$8,932
E. Labor: hourly kitchen and floor labor (line 14), the kitchen manager and minimum crew on salary (line 3) and the owner's market wage (line 4)	$11,006
F. Prime cost, food plus people (D + E)	$19,938
G. Sales this week, booked before comps and discounts, sales tax left out	$27,914
H. Prime cost share (F over G)	71.4 percent

One week here is the page 12 example's full-run month multiplied by 12 and divided by 52: net sales $27,914; line D at line 13's 32 percent; hourly kitchen and floor labor at line 14's 20 percent with lines 3 and 4 divided across the weeks. Here the deliveries are set so that line D equals the line 13 share. Prime cost weighs heavily in this example: the kitchen opens with the full line crew whatever the night brings; that fixed labor explains why cash break-even on page 8 sits near the first spring's sales.

YOUR WEEK, KITCHEN AND FLOOR

LINE	TARGET	THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK
A. Opening count (food and beverage)			
B. Deliveries of food and beverage during the week			
C. The walk-in, dry storage and bar at the end of the week			
D. What you sold, at cost (A + B, minus C)			
E. Labor: hourly kitchen and floor labor (line 14), the kitchen manager and minimum crew on salary (line 3) and the owner's market wage (line 4)			
F. Prime cost, food plus people (D + E)			
G. Sales this week, booked before comps and discounts, sales tax left out			
H. Prime cost share (F over G)			

Count the walk-in, dry storage and the bar at one cutoff each week, valued the same way every time. Comps, staff meals and waste get lines of their own. When weekly is too much, count monthly and check proteins and liquor each week. Carry your own target into the Target column from your page 8 plan, then follow the direction from one week to the next; the kit names no prime cost benchmark.

PAGE 8

Break-even and coverage

Use this one numbered cost list everywhere in the kit. Loan interest is a fixed cost here. Loan principal is not an operating cost: it enters cash break-even below and the cash forecast on page 11, so interest and principal are each counted once.

FIXED COSTS PER MONTH	PER MONTH
1. Rent and common area charges	
2. Liability, property and alcohol service insurance	
3. Salaried kitchen manager and the minimum opening crew, with payroll taxes and benefits	
4. Owner's market wage (management time; hours on the line or the floor go in line 3 or 14)	
5. Loan interest (build-out and kitchen loans)	
6. Utilities and internet	
7. Marketing, reservations and loyalty tools	
8. Point of sale, online ordering and software	
9. Accounting, bookkeeping and bank fees	
10. Hood cleaning, equipment and refrigeration maintenance	
11. Linen, waste, pest control, cleaning and other services	
12. License renewals, training and other fixed costs	
Total fixed costs	

VARIABLE COSTS AS A SHARE OF NET SALES	SHARE
13. Food and beverage cost	
14. Hourly kitchen and floor labor above the minimum crew, with payroll taxes	
15. Card fees	
16. Delivery-platform commissions (on the delivery line only; blended share shown)	
17. Comps, discounts and loyalty (sales booked before comps)	
Total variable cost share	

```
Contribution margin ratio = 1 minus variable cost share; contribution = sales times the line's ratio
Operating break-even sales = fixed costs divided by contribution margin ratio
Cash break-even sales = (fixed costs with line 4 even if undrawn, plus principal and other recurring
cash out) divided by contribution margin ratio; page 13 covers a result with no usable number
Break-even covers per day = (daily fixed costs, principal and other recurring cash out minus the daily
contribution from lunch, delivery and events, each at its own ratio) divided by the contribution from
one average dinner check; in the worked example lunch and events run at the dinner line's own share
Month-12 run rate = average monthly sales over a year at month 12's ramp and bookings, seasons applied
Planning debt service coverage (before income tax and replacements) = (full-run sales times contribution
margin ratio, minus fixed costs other than line 5) divided by (line 5 + principal)
```

RESULT	PER MONTH	PER WEEK	PER DAY OPEN
Operating break-even sales			
Cash break-even sales			
Break-even covers per day (use cash break-even)			
Rent share and debt service coverage at full-run sales		ratios, monthly only	

Weekly = monthly times 12, divided by 52; daily = weekly divided by days open per week. Rent share = line 1 divided by net sales.

PAGE 9

Menu engineering

Score each menu section on its own (the dinner mains here) over one full month of dinner service, since guests choose within a section, not across the whole menu.

```
Popular = a dish's share of units sold is at least 70% of an even share (100% divided by the number of dishes)
Dish margin = menu price minus plate cost; total margin = dish margin times units sold
Average margin = the total margins of every dish added, divided by all units sold (weighted by units)
High margin = dish margin at or above that average
```

WORKED EXAMPLE FROM ONE MONTH: THE FIVE DINNER MAINS (ILLUSTRATIVE MONTH)

DISH	UNITS SOLD	MIX SHARE	PRICE	PLATE COST	DISH MARGIN	TOTAL MARGIN	POPULAR?	HIGH MARGIN?	MENU CLASS
Pan-roasted chicken	980	27.1%	$26.00	$4.68	$21.32	$20,894	Yes	Yes	Star
Braised short rib	640	17.7%	$34.00	$11.20	$22.80	$14,592	Yes	Yes	Star
Pasta of the day	820	22.7%	$22.00	$4.60	$17.40	$14,268	Yes	No	Plowhorse
Grilled fish	410	11.4%	$32.00	$11.80	$20.20	$8,282	No	Yes	Puzzle
House burger	760	21.1%	$19.00	$5.10	$13.90	$10,564	Yes	No	Plowhorse

5 items, 3,610 dishes sold, total margin $68,600, average margin per dish sold $19.00; a dish is popular from 14 percent. Menu prices are per dish; the average check on page 6 is per cover, and a cover can hold more than one item. The first plate cost is costed on page 10.

YOUR MENU SECTION: _____

DISH	UNITS SOLD	MIX SHARE	PRICE	PLATE COST	DISH MARGIN	TOTAL MARGIN	POPULAR?	HIGH MARGIN?	MENU CLASS	STATION HEAVY?
Section totals		100%					Average margin:			

MENU CLASS	TEST OUTCOME	OPTION TO TRY
Star	Popular and high margin	Keep the dish as it is, give it the best spot on the menu and let servers lead with it, then test a small price rise.
Plowhorse	Popular, margin below the average	Raise the price in small steps, or lower the plate cost through the portion or the sides, and watch whether orders hold.
Puzzle	High margin, rarely ordered	Move it higher on the menu, have servers describe it at the table, or improve what the guest gets for the price.
Dog	Rarely ordered, low margin	Take it off the menu, unless it uses trim from another dish and takes almost no station time.

Plate cost leaves out labor, so mark the dishes that tie up a station before acting on a class; whenever margins differ, at least one dish sits below the average. Note which station each main occupies: a star that backs up the grill on Saturday can cost covers the margin never recovers. Appetizers, desserts and drinks lift the check and get their own scoring. Method adapted from BC Cook Articulation Committee, Basic Kitchen and Food Service Management, BCcampus, 2015, CC BY 4.0, with the source's profitability test called high margin and share of category sales read as share of units sold. The class names are those in common restaurant use.

PAGE 10

Plate cost card

The classes on page 9 depend on these costs. Cost each dish from what is left after trim and cooking, with the bread, the oil and the garnish, because every plate that leaves the pass carries them.

```
Usable cost per unit = purchase price per unit divided by its yield (write 78% as 0.78)
Line cost = the portion on the plate times the usable cost per unit, rounded to the cent
Plate cost = the line costs added, bread and garnish included; the yield already carries trim and
roasting loss, so do not count that loss again
```

WORKED EXAMPLE: A PAN-ROASTED HALF CHICKEN WITH POTATOES AND VEGETABLES (ILLUSTRATIVE VENDOR PRICES, NOT BENCHMARKS)

INGREDIENT	PURCHASE COST / UNIT	YIELD	USABLE COST / UNIT	PORTION	LINE COST
Half chicken	$0.13 / oz	78%	$0.1667 / oz	14 oz	$2.33
Potatoes and vegetables	batch cost over portions				$1.10
Pan sauce, butter and garnish	batch cost over portions				$0.85
Bread and oil	per cover				$0.40
Plate cost	Price $26.00; plate cost is 18.0 percent of price				**$4.68**

A half chicken loses weight to trimming, roasting and the bones left on the plate, so usable meat costs more than its purchase price. It is bought by the pound and portioned in ounces: convert first. Cost the braised short rib too; a long braise loses more than a roast.

YOUR ITEM: _____

INGREDIENT	PRICE PAID / UNIT	YIELD	USABLE COST EACH	PORTION	LINE COST
Plate cost	Price: _____		Plate cost as a share of price: _____		

Theoretical food cost against actual

Theoretical food cost is what the covers you served should have cost from the cards. A gap can come from portions over the spec, comps, staff meals, waste, remakes, unit errors or the count itself, so read the records before blaming the line.

```
Theoretical cost = each dish's units sold this month times its plate cost, all dishes added
Gap = the actual cost of what you sold this month minus the theoretical cost; gap share = gap as a share
of net sales
```

LINE	THIS MONTH
Theoretical cost	
Actual cost of what you sold (opening count + deliveries minus closing count)	
Gap, in dollars and as a share of net sales for the month	

PAGE 11

Twelve-month cash forecast

Profit and cash are different numbers: loan principal, build-out bills and the losses of thin first months before the regulars arrive all drain the bank account. Enter amounts in thousands of dollars (51.25 means $51,250). Enter receipts net of sales tax; closing cash excludes the bank account holding collected tax.

EXPECTED CASE ($000)	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
Opening cash												
In: sales receipts (page 6), excluding sales tax												
In: owner money and loans received												
Out: food, beverage, card fees, platform commissions and comps (lines 13, 15 to 17)												
Out: payroll, line 4 if drawn in cash (lines 3, 4, 14)												
Out: rent and common area charges (line 1)												
Out: other costs, with loan interest (lines 2, 5 to 12)												
Out: income tax set-aside, equipment replacement, stock build-up												
Out: loan principal												
Out: startup bills still to pay												
Net cash flow (in minus out)												
Closing cash, expected (your floor: _____)												
Actual closing cash, once open												
Memo: sales tax collected (not in closing cash)												
Memo: sales tax remitted												
Memo: tax owed = last month's + collected minus remitted												
SLOW-START CASE												
Sales receipts, slow start												
Out: variable costs, slow start (lines 13 to 17)												
Out: fixed, principal, bills, less funding												
Net cash flow, slow start												
Closing cash, slow start												

Month 1 opening cash is cash on opening day after startup spending is paid; each closing balance opens the next month, and the slow start opens with the same cash. Your floor is at least one full-run month of fixed costs plus principal. Delivery-platform payouts and event invoices may arrive after the month of service, so enter them in the month the cash lands. For the slow start, test 70 percent of expected sales in every month (a stress assumption, not a benchmark; a higher share only with evidence); fixed costs, other cash out, principal, startup bills and funding stay as expected, and all variable lines fall with sales; line 14 holds only hours you would cut. The first month either case falls below your floor is your planning deadline: act before it. Then run a second year at the month-12 run rate (page 8), month by month with the seasons continuing, and check the floor holds.

PAGE 12

Runway, and a room a slow start empties

```
Runway = the number of consecutive future months, counted from the latest closed month (before opening,
from opening day), before the first month in which closing cash falls below your floor
```

Worked example: a hypothetical single independent restaurant

Illustrative figures for the arithmetic, not benchmarks. Six days a week (26 days a month), 60 seats in 2,200 square feet of second-generation restaurant space; opens in April. Cash floor $41,524. Guests, platforms and event hosts all pay within the month; the owner draws the wage; no new money.

Page 5, budget	Total startup budget $365,000, funded by a $150,000 loan (10.5 percent over 10 years) and $215,000 of owner money, including a $103,300 opening cash reserve. The reserve on page 5, two passes: the floor $41,524, plus a one-month buffer, $41,524, plus $20,221 (how deep the first pass, with no opening cash, goes below zero), rounded up to $103,300.
Page 8, costs	Fixed costs $40,777 a month, including $7,500 for rent and $1,277 of loan interest; principal $747 a month (each a first-year average); variable share 59.5 percent, which leaves a contribution margin ratio of 0.405. The five variable lines together take 32, 20, 2.8, 3.2 and 1.5 percent of sales. Lines 1 to 12 come to $7,500, $900, $18,000, $5,500, $1,277, $2,800, $1,500, $450, $500, $800, $1,100 and $450 a month.
Page 8, break-even	Operating break-even is about $100,684 a month, $23,235 a week, $3,872 a day. Cash break-even (fixed $40,777 plus principal $747, divided by 0.405) is about $102,528 a month, or $3,943 a day: 65.7 covers a day from dinner covers after the contribution from lunch, delivery and events (the delivery-platform orders line carries the 24-point platform commission on top of the main line's share, so the variable share is 56.3 percent on dinner covers and 80.3 percent on delivery-platform orders; lunch and events run at the dinner line's 56.3 percent), so 66, against the 85 that the plan expects.
Page 6, sales	Dinner covers: 85 covers a day at $34. Lunch covers: 50 covers a day at $19. Delivery-platform orders: 20 orders a day at $31. Private events and catering (booked): 4 events a month at $1,250. A full-run month is about $120,960; restaurant sales ramp 64, 71, 77, 83, 87, 91, 93, 95, 98 percent in months 1 to 9, then 100 percent; the seasonal shape is 100, 105, 100, 95, 95, 100, 105, 105, 120, 85, 90, 95 percent for months 1 through 12, with booked events outside the ramp.
Page 19, expected case	Month 1 sales $79,214; month 1 ends at $93,915, month 12 at $124,099. Low: month 5, closing $83,079, $41,555 clear of the floor.
Page 19, slow start	Every month held to 70 percent of the plan: month 1 sales $55,450; month 1 ends at $84,274, month 12 at minus $31,627. The restaurant drops below its floor in month 4 (closing $39,775) and below zero in month 9 (closing minus $103), so from opening night the runway is 3 months.
Page 8, coverage	At full-run sales of $120,960, planning debt coverage, before tax on income and kitchen replacement, is 4.69 beside the example lender's 1.25; at the month-12 run rate the ratio is 4.59, and Test 3 asks for both. Rent share is near 6.2 percent.

ON PAGE 4 THE RESTAURANT SCORES: AMBER

Gate 0 is treated as met for the example. Test 1 passes: the month-12 run rate is about $120,477 a month, above the $102,527 break-even at that mix of sales (contribution ratio 0.405); the restaurant holds its floor for a second year at that rate (its lowest close $131,564, month 1 of year two). (For context, unscored: restaurant sales first reach cash break-even in month 6.) Test 2 fails: at 70 percent of covers, cash breaks the floor in month 4; about $73,200 more cash at opening would see the restaurant through it. Test 3 passes: the planning formula covers the loan, on the lender's own definition still to be confirmed. Tests 4 and 5 fail: Saturday dinner was never timed from seating to reset, and nothing yet backs the planned covers, neither a site count nor a sales history. Test 6 passes: a steady full-run year leaves about $87,237 after principal, with every full-run month at or above zero, so no cushion is set aside. That full-run year is not the restaurant's first: the page 19 first year leaves about $20,799 in cash because the regulars take months to arrive. Test 2 needs more cash; the winter months still need the full kitchen crew.

PAGE 13

What moves the result

Each row changes one input of the page 12 example and reruns the forecast. A row names Test 1, 3 or 6 when the change would newly fail or pass it; a test the example already fails stays failed. The last column also gives the slow start, which is Test 2.

WHAT MOVES THE RESTAURANT'S RESULT (MONTHLY CHANGE AT FULL RUN; EACH DEADLINE RERUN THROUGH THE FORECAST; SLOW-START LOSSES MOVE WITH SALES)

CHANGE	MONTHLY CASH	CASH BREAK-EVEN AND DEADLINE
Ten percent less sales on every line, events included (variable costs fall with them)	minus $4,899	Expected case holds the floor
Dinner covers: average check 5 percent higher, same volume (card and comp costs rise)	plus $3,595	Break-even covers fall from 65.7 to 59.2 a day, so from 66 to 60: per-unit costs stay the same, so the ratio rises from 0.405 to 0.422 on the new sales (sales-linked fees, lines 15 and 17, take 4.3 percent of each added dollar)
Fixed costs $800 lower	plus $800	Cash break-even drops to about $100,553
A new restaurant nearby takes 15 percent of dinner covers, from month 7 onward	minus $4,925	Expected case still keeps the floor; slow-start deadline the same (month 4)
Food cost rises 2 points, menu prices held	minus $2,419	Cash break-even lifts to about $107,855; expected case still clears the floor; slow-start deadline the same (month 4)
Build-out overrun of $18,000 past the contingency, drawn from the opening reserve	no change	Expected case still keeps the floor; the slow start breaks the floor in month 3 (closing $35,936)
Opening 3 months late (rent, insurance, loan interest and principal, $10,424 a month, paid while closed; no sales; the ramp starts at the new opening, and seasons stay on the calendar)	no change	Expected case holds the floor; its low falls to $50,076 in month 6 from the planned opening, $33,003 lower than on time; the slow start breaks the floor in month 5 from the planned opening (month 4 on time)

WHEN A PAGE 8 FORMULA GIVES NO USABLE NUMBER

```
Contribution margin ratio zero or below: break-even is N/A; score Tests 1 and 6 as failed
One unit's contribution, or the count it is multiplied by, zero or below: break-even units are N/A;
score Test 4 as failed
Other lines already cover fixed costs and principal: break-even units are 0, never a negative number
No loan: coverage is N/A; score Test 3 as passed
```

PAGE 14

Pre-service and close checklists, weekly review, six questions

These are operations checklists, not a food-safety plan. Add every task, limit and corrective action your local requirements set.

BEFORE SERVICE

- ☐ Walk the line and check each station's prep against the day's par sheet.
- ☐ Read walk-in temperatures and product dates, and fill in the records your approved food-safety procedures call for.
- ☐ Go through reservations, large parties and any event sheet for the service.
- ☐ Review last service's 86 list and what was fixed.
- ☐ Test the register, online ordering and the kitchen display.
- ☐ Count the opening till and the bar bank.

AFTER THE LAST TABLE

- ☐ Record covers and checks by service, dine-in apart from delivery.
- ☐ Log each 86 with the time it ran out and the prep shift that owned it.
- ☐ Log waste, remakes and staff meals with the reason.
- ☐ Count the till and reconcile sales, voids, comps and tips.
- ☐ Record labor hours by station against the covers served.
- ☐ Write tomorrow's prep list and order from today's actuals and the weekday.

THE WEEKLY NUMBERS REVIEW

MEASURE	TARGET	THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	VARIANCE FROM TARGET
Net sales and sales per labor hour, lunch against dinner				
Covers a day and the average check, dine-in and delivery				
Checks carrying an appetizer, a dessert or a second drink (attachment rate)				
Prime cost share from page 7				
Covers in the busiest service against seats and turns				
86s, waste in dollars and comps				
Reservations kept, no-shows and returning guests				

SIX QUESTIONS WORTH INVESTIGATING

1. **Founder dependency.** Does the owner expedite most services, sign off most comps and voids, and place most of the orders with suppliers?
2. **Prep and 86s.** Do the 86s cluster on one prep shift instead of the busiest nights, a sign that prep, not demand, sets the limit?
3. **The dining room.** If a rival opens nearby, do lunch covers slip first while dinner holds steady?
4. **Price and the check.** After a price increase, did the cover count hold while the average check slipped, because desserts, drinks and appetizers dropped off?
5. **Two channels, one line.** In the busiest service, do dine-in tickets slow down while delivery orders get cooked first?
6. **Delivery.** Do platform orders reach new addresses, or are your own regulars now ordering through the app at a thinner margin?

Questions and their sources are described on page 2. Check each one against a record: the cover report by service split by dine-in and delivery, the 86 log, the comp and void report, or the average check by week.

PAGE 15

Your first 30 days

WHEN	DO THIS
Week 1	Start the weekly numbers review and record covers by service, dine-in and delivery separately. Log the hours the owner spends on the line or the floor, and record every permit and inspection renewal date in one place.
Week 2	Recheck every plate cost on the page 10 card against actual invoices and portions. Time a full Saturday dinner turn from seating to reset.
Week 3	Fill the page 6 service table and work out sales per seat-hour for lunch and dinner.
Week 4	Enter actual closing cash on page 11 and recalculate runway. Write the decisions a manager may make without calling you.
After month 1	Keep prime cost weekly on page 7 and compare theoretical to actual food cost on page 10. Set prep pars by day of week from four weeks of 86 and waste records.

BEFORE YOU SIGN A LEASE, GET WRITTEN ANSWERS TO THESE

- [ ] Will you have to sign a personal guarantee, how much does it cover, and when does it end?
- [ ] Which charges sit on top of base rent, such as common area, property tax and insurance, and how are they settled each year?
- [ ] What does the space need before you can open, and who pays to add or upgrade it?
- [ ] Does the landlord contribute to the build-out, when is that money paid, and must any of it be repaid if you leave early?
- [ ] When does rent start: at signing, at permit approval or at opening?
- [ ] Are there limits on operating hours, signage, parking, deliveries or the uses allowed in the space?
- [ ] What happens to the lease and the fixtures if you sell the business?

Have a qualified professional review the lease before you sign. These questions prepare you for that conversation; they do not replace it.

WHAT THE FULL KIT ADDS

The full Restaurant Business Plan and Operations Kit adds an editable business plan, a three-year financial model with profit and loss, cash flow and a debt schedule, a daypart cover model, a dining room and kitchen capacity planner, a plate costing worksheet, prep par templates, pre-service and close procedures and hiring checklists. Release status is on the kit page.

SOURCES

World Consulting Group material. Independent restaurants owner questions, businessconsultant.services, 2026.

SCOPE AND DISCLAIMER

General information only. Not legal, tax, accounting, employment, food-safety or financial advice. Provided as is, without warranty. © 2026 World Consulting Group. Free diagnostic tool at businessconsultant.services. The site's privacy page explains what the diagnostic tool sends to an AI provider for analysis and the third-party analytics on the site.

About the author. Kamyar Shah is the founder of World Consulting Group and works as a fractional COO and CMO. He has more than 25 years of experience and more than 650 engagements across more than a dozen industries. Contact and the latest version: businessconsultant.services.

PAGE 16

Customize this kit with AI

Attach this PDF to ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini, paste the prompt below, and answer its questions with your own services, dishes and restaurant costs. A copy-ready version is on the kit page.

BEFORE YOU RELY ON THE ANSWER

Check every service total and plate cost with a calculator. An AI assistant can misread a file or slip on arithmetic, even when it runs code, so rerun every figure you will act on with the page formulas. Check your AI provider's data settings first, and never paste personal data, account numbers, passwords, customer-level records or anything an agreement restricts, such as employee records, reservation guest lists or bank account details. Totals and rounded figures serve the arithmetic, though rounding does not make a record anonymous, and you can run the arithmetic on your own computer.

I am opening (or running) an independent restaurant. I have attached the Restaurant Business Plan Template and Operations Starter Kit from businessconsultant.services. Help me turn it into my own plan for my site, my room and my services, using only my real numbers.

Follow these rules for the whole conversation:
1. Use only numbers I give you, or numbers you calculate from mine with the formulas below. Never invent a rent, wage, plate cost, check, cover count, traffic count, percentage or benchmark.
2. The numbers in the kit, including the example restaurant's services, turns and dishes, are worked examples. Never use them as my numbers, not even as a placeholder.
3. If a number you need is missing, ask me for it. If I ask you to estimate or use typical figures, write [NEED: ...] and tell me which quote, traffic count, sales report or calculation gives the real number. Label my own estimates MY ESTIMATE.
4. Use these formulas exactly, and show your arithmetic for every number you calculate:
- Monthly sales for a sales line = units times average check times days open in the month (or times 1 for units counted per month). Days open in a month = days open per week times 52 divided by 12. Each month's expected sales = full-run dinner, lunch and delivery sales times the ramp percentage times the seasonal percentage, plus confirmed events as booked. Unconfirmed events stay out of the expected case.
- Net sales exclude sales tax. Labor = kitchen, floor and manager wages, payroll taxes and benefits, plus a market wage for my own hours, management, line and floor. Shift hours count as cash even if I skip my own pay, so the plan still holds when I step back from the pass; only line 4 may go undrawn, and Tests 1 and 6 count it anyway.
- Contribution margin ratio = 1 minus variable cost share; a line's contribution = its sales times its own ratio. Operating break-even sales = fixed costs divided by contribution margin ratio. Cash break-even sales = (fixed costs with line 4 even if I do not draw it, plus monthly loan principal and any recurring other cash out) divided by contribution margin ratio; only the cash forecast drops an undrawn wage. A blended ratio holds only at its own sales mix: name that mix beside each break-even, and recompute from each line's own contribution when a what-if changes one line. Loan interest is fixed; principal is not an operating cost, so it never enters operating break-even or operating profit.
- Weekly = monthly times 12, divided by 52. Daily = weekly divided by days open per week.
- Break-even covers per day = (daily fixed costs, principal and other recurring cash out minus the daily contribution from lunch, delivery and events, each at its own ratio) divided by the contribution from one average dinner check; in the worked example lunch and events run at the dinner line's own share. If the other lines already cover fixed costs and principal, report 0 and say so; never report a negative break-even count. Daily cover capacity = for each service, seats times the turns that service completes in its hours (time a real turn from seating to reset, not the menu's intent), added up, an estimated ceiling to plan below, with the busiest service checked on its own line below.
- Rent share = line 1 divided by net sales. Planning debt service coverage, before income tax and equipment replacement = (full-run sales times contribution margin ratio, minus fixed costs other than loan interest) divided by (loan interest + loan principal).
- Month-12 run rate = average monthly sales over a year at month 12's ramp and bookings, seasons applied (not month 12's own sales). Test 1 needs that rate at or above cash break-even and my floor held 24 months; Test 3, coverage at full run and at that rate.
- Test 6 = 12 months of (full-run sales minus their variable costs, minus full-run fixed costs, line 4 included, minus principal), seasons applied to every sales line but booked lines, which run in their own months, and seasonal fixed lines at each month's amount. The cushion to set aside = the largest fall in running net cash from a high to any later low, the year run twice so a dip can cross into month 1 (zero if it never falls).
- Full-run figures (break-even, coverage, floor) take booked lines at full bookings averaged over 12 months, a late-starting fixed line at its full amount, and a seasonal fixed line at its year average.
- For pages 7, 9 and 10, use the formulas printed on those pages of the attached kit, exactly as written, with my own figures.
- Cash forecast: closing cash = opening cash + cash in minus cash out. Month 1 opening cash = cash on hand on opening day after startup spending is paid. Place every receipt and payment (deposits, supplier invoices, startup bills, funding) in the month the cash moves. Income tax set-aside, equipment replacement and stock build-up go in their own row. Enter delivery-platform payouts and event invoices in the month the cash actually lands. In the slow-start case, every month's sales, events included, are the tested share of expected sales; fixed costs, other cash out, principal, bills and funding stay as planned; all variable lines fall with sales, each figured from the slow-start sales of the same month, on the same payment timing as the expected case (fair because line 14 holds only hours I would cut). Runway = the number of consecutive future months, counted from the latest closed month (before opening, from opening day), before the first month in which closing cash falls below my cash floor.
(Continued on page 17.)

PAGE 17

The prompt, continued

Paste this part directly after the rules on page 16, as one message.

5. Do not give legal, tax, licensing, permit, health code, food safety, alcohol service, employment, wage or lease advice. Do not name laws, license or permit types, agencies, government fees or wage rates, even as examples. When my question touches these, write only "Review this with a qualified professional" and continue with the rest. You may record and use figures I give from my own records, such as my sales tax rate and when I remit it, without checking, interpreting or advising on them.
6. Do not quote statistics, studies or sources that are not in the kit. For the market and marketing sections, use only what I tell you, and list the local facts I should gather, such as dinner traffic by hour and nearby restaurants.
7. Work every total line by line and recheck it in total. In the cash forecast, show the arithmetic for month 1, one later month and the year total; give plain numbers for the other months.
8. If a formula would divide by zero or a contribution margin is zero or below, write N/A, say why, and do not continue that calculation. If my lender defines coverage differently, show both results and label each. If cash never falls below my floor in the forecast, write the runway as more than 24 months; otherwise give the runway in months and, separately, the first month below it, counting year 2. With no loan, Test 3 passes.
9. Use business figures only. Do not ask for names, home addresses, bank account or tax ID numbers.
10. Mark every output: Draft for my own planning. Not for a lender or investor until a qualified accountant has reviewed it.
11. If your full answer would be very long, deliver outputs 1 to 4 first, then stop and ask me to type "continue" for the rest.
12. Build the cash forecast month by month from the sales build, the cost lines, my payment terms and my opening cash; it does not need the inputs for pages 7, 9 and 10. Each month: cash in = sales receipts plus money arriving; cash out = each variable cost, calculated from the sales that created it and placed in the month it is paid under my terms, plus fixed costs (lines 1 to 12, with line 4 only if I draw it in cash), plus loan principal, startup bills and other cash out. Loan interest is already in line 5; never add it again. Supplier payments follow the cost of what I sold plus any stock build-up I give; if I buy ahead or carry supplier balances, ask me for purchases and payments by month instead. If you can run code, do every calculation in code.

Step 1. Before you write anything else, ask me for the inputs below in three rounds, one message per round. Ask round A as one numbered list, then wait for my answers. When I answer, ask round B and wait; then round C and wait. Start Step 2 only after I answer round C.
Round A, sales, capacity and evidence:
a. Concept, guest, lunch and dinner services, location and seat count, and whether I take delivery-platform orders and private events.
b. Sales build: for dinner covers and lunch covers (covers per day), delivery-platform orders (orders per day) and private events (events booked for each month), the average check for each, days open per week and service hours; for each service, the seats I can staff, the turns it completes in its hours (timed from seating to reset) and the covers I plan for it in the busiest service of the busiest month; a ramp percentage for every month from 1 to 12 (ask me to confirm any month I leave out); a seasonal percentage for each month; and the slow-start percentage I want to test (this kit sets a 70 percent stress test, a kit rule rather than my estimate; use it unless I give evidence for a higher share). Give counts at full run, with month 1 as my opening month. Give the evidence behind each count (dinner traffic I counted at the site with a capture rate from comparable rooms, or my own sales history, which pass Test 5; a broker's estimate or the size of the neighborhood does not; signed contracts for the events line), and for each booked line (private events and catering) its bookings, and its count once fully booked, for each month 1 to 12.
c. For prime cost: the food and beverage count at the start and end of the week, the week's deliveries, the week's labor with payroll taxes and benefits (tips passed straight to servers left out), and the week's sales, booked before comps and discounts and without sales tax (weekly owner wage: line 4 from item e, multiplied by 12 and divided by 52).
Then wait for my answers.
Round B, costs, the startup budget and my lender:
d. Startup budget: an amount and its source (contractor or kitchen-dealer quote, or calculation) for each line on page 5, from build-out to the contingency.
e. Monthly fixed costs for each numbered line on page 8, from rent (line 1) to license renewals and other fixed costs (line 12), including loan interest and my market wage for management time (line 4; my hours on the line or the floor go in line 3 (minimum crew) or 14 at a cook's or server's wage), whether I draw that wage in cash, and my monthly loan principal. Give interest and principal as year 1 monthly averages for break-even and coverage, and, for the cash forecast, any payment, fixed line or other cash line that changes in months 1 to 24 (a payment holiday, a balloon payment, a rent step) with its month.
f. Variable cost shares of net sales for lines 13 to 17: line 13, food and beverage cost; line 14, hourly kitchen and floor labor above the minimum crew, with payroll taxes; line 15, card fees; line 16, delivery-platform commissions (on the delivery line only; blended share shown); line 17, comps, discounts and loyalty (sales booked before comps); and any sales line whose own shares differ, given for that line.
g. Menu items for one category: price, plate cost and units actually sold in a full month for each, its station and whether it is prep-heavy or uses trim (if I am not open yet, label the result a forecast, not a classification).
h. For one item: each ingredient's purchase price and unit, yield and portion, plus packaging, and the item's price.
i. The debt service coverage ratio my lender requires and how the lender calculates it, if I know them.
Then wait for my answers.
(Continued on page 18.)

PAGE 18

The prompt, last part

Paste this part directly after the text on page 17, still as one message.

Round C, cash timing, sales tax, deposits and Gate 0:
j. Payment terms: when guests, platforms and event hosts pay me (at the table, through the platform payout and how many days later, or on invoice), deposits I collect for events and when, and when I pay my food and beverage suppliers.
k. For every other cash line (payroll, card settlements, insurance, loan payments, rent and fixed bills), when it is paid, or confirm it is paid in the month it is incurred.
l. Monthly cash out beyond operating costs: income tax set-aside, kitchen equipment replacement and stock build-up.
m. Cash on hand on opening day after all startup spending, build-out bills still to pay by month, owner money or loans still to arrive by month, and my minimum cash floor (at least one full-run month of fixed costs plus principal).
n. If I am already open: what customers owe me and what I owe suppliers and staff, each by the month it will be paid, deposits I already hold, and sales tax already owed with its payment month.
o. Sales tax: the rate I collect on taxable sales, from my own registration, which sales lines (or what share of each) are taxable, and when I remit what I collect (each month, each quarter or another schedule), so the forecast holds collected tax apart until it is paid.
p. Gate 0: which agreements, quotes and approval requirements I already have in writing.
Then wait for my answers.

Step 2. When I answer, produce these as plain tables I can copy back into the kit:
1. Business plan sections 1 to 8 for my restaurant, drafted from my answers, with gaps marked [NEED: ...].
2. The sales build by sales line and month, with annual sales and the capacity check from page 6.
3. The completed startup budget with the total, listing build-out and kitchen first. Size the reserve by the page 5 rule; if I gave another, show both and the result for each.
4. Operating and cash break-even per month, per week and per day open; break-even covers per day (use cash break-even); rent share and planning debt service coverage at full-run sales, labeled before income tax and equipment replacement, and on my lender's definition too if I gave it.
5. The 12-month cash forecast for the expected and slow-start cases, in thousands of dollars to two decimals (51.25 means $51,250) to match the kit, with, for each case, the first month below my cash floor and the first month below zero, and the runway; the second year's lowest closing cash (month 12's ramp and bookings held, each month with its own season, not a flat average); any extra reserve the slow start needs; and the Test 6 cushion, with whether the page 5 buffer covers it (add any excess to the reserve). Add a sales tax memo for each month: collected, remitted, and owed at month end (last month's owed + collected minus remitted), kept out of closing cash.
6. Weekly prime cost and prime cost share, if I gave its inputs.
7. The menu engineering table with each item's class (star, plowhorse, puzzle or dog) and the kit's option to try.
8. The plate cost card for that item, with cost as a share of price.
9. The kit's page 4 check: Gate 0 and pass or fail for each of the six tests with the reason (if Gate 0 fails, the result is not ready), and the overall result: not ready if Gate 0 fails, with no color; otherwise green, amber or red under the page 4 rules.
10. A final checklist: every MY ESTIMATE figure, every [NEED: ...] gap, every traffic count or quote I should verify, and every question that needs a qualified professional.

WHEN THE ANSWER COMES BACK

Copy each table into the matching kit page in pencil. Check every [NEED: ...] gap and MY ESTIMATE figure, starting with covers per day and the room's turns, before anyone sees the plan, and recheck the page 4 result with a calculator.

The worked example's twelve-month forecast, filled in

The page 12 example entered on the page 11 form, month by month, in dollars. Parentheses mean minus. Each column adds up as printed, so a row can move by a dollar between months with the same sales; each closing balance becomes the next month's opening cash. Cash floor $41,524.

LINE ($)	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
EXPECTED CASE												
Opening cash	**103,300**	**93,915**	**89,469**	**86,169**	**83,734**	**83,079**	**86,331**	**92,696**	**100,044**	**115,746**	**116,190**	**118,975**
In: sales receipts	79,214	91,448	94,289	96,434	100,841	110,524	118,235	120,670	141,369	103,566	109,364	115,162
In: owner money and loans received	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Out: food, beverage, card fees, platform commissions and comps (lines 13, 15 to 17)	31,232	36,081	37,207	38,058	39,804	43,642	46,699	47,664	55,869	40,885	43,183	45,481
Out: payroll, line 4 if drawn in cash (lines 3, 4, 14)	39,343	41,789	42,358	42,787	43,668	45,606	47,147	47,634	51,774	44,213	45,372	46,533
Out: rent and common area charges (line 1)	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500
Out: other costs, with loan interest (lines 2, 5 to 12)	9,777	9,777	9,777	9,777	9,777	9,777	9,777	9,777	9,777	9,777	9,777	9,777
Out: income tax set-aside, equipment replacement, stock build-up (none in the example; see below)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Out: loan principal	747	747	747	747	747	747	747	747	747	747	747	747
Out: startup bills still to pay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net cash flow (in minus out)	**(9,385)**	**(4,446)**	**(3,300)**	**(2,435)**	**(655)**	**3,252**	**6,365**	**7,348**	**15,702**	**444**	**2,785**	**5,124**
Closing cash, expected	**93,915**	**89,469**	**86,169**	**83,734**	**83,079**	**86,331**	**92,696**	**100,044**	**115,746**	**116,190**	**118,975**	**124,099**
SLOW-START CASE (70 PERCENT OF EXPECTED SALES IN EVERY MONTH)												
Opening cash, slow start	**103,300**	**84,274**	**68,704**	**53,936**	**39,775**	**26,859**	**16,679**	**8,677**	**1,363**	**(103)**	**(12,249)**	**(22,757)**
Sales receipts, slow start	55,450	64,014	66,002	67,504	70,589	77,367	82,764	84,469	98,958	72,496	76,555	80,613
Out: variable costs, slow start (lines 13 to 17)	32,952	38,060	39,246	40,141	41,981	46,023	49,242	50,259	58,900	43,118	45,539	47,959
Out: fixed costs (lines 1 to 12), principal, bills, less funding	41,524	41,524	41,524	41,524	41,524	41,524	41,524	41,524	41,524	41,524	41,524	41,524
Net cash flow, slow start	**(19,026)**	**(15,570)**	**(14,768)**	**(14,161)**	**(12,916)**	**(10,180)**	**(8,002)**	**(7,314)**	**(1,466)**	**(12,146)**	**(10,508)**	**(8,870)**
Closing cash, slow start	**84,274**	**68,704**	**53,936**	**39,775**	**26,859**	**16,679**	**8,677**	**1,363**	**(103)**	**(12,249)**	**(22,757)**	**(31,627)**
STEADY-STATE YEAR FOR TEST 6 (RAMP DONE, SEASONS IN; NOT THE FORECAST YEAR)												
Net cash flow, steady-state year	**7,465**	**9,805**	**7,465**	**5,125**	**5,125**	**7,465**	**9,805**	**9,805**	**16,826**	**444**	**2,784**	**5,125**

Reading this forecast. It is in whole dollars, rounded so each column adds up, so a row can differ by $1 between like months; the page 11 form uses thousands. The floor is cash you never plan to spend. The page 5 buffer holds one more month of fixed costs and principal above it, so a small miss spends the buffer, not the floor. The opening cash was sized by the two passes on page 5, buffer included. Variable costs use each sales line's own shares, so a month can differ by a few dollars from the blended share. The example sets aside no income tax (it depends on the owner's whole return, so take the figure from your accountant), replaces no equipment in its first two years and builds no stock beyond the opening stock in the startup budget; enter your own amounts. Second year at the month-12 run rate (about $120,477 a month, against month 12's own $115,162): closing cash runs $131,564 in month 1 and $211,337 in month 12, lowest $131,564 in month 1, above the floor. Sales are net of sales tax, and the example pays each month's tax in the month it is collected, so it owes none at any month end; enter your own rate and payment timing in the page 11 memo rows. If you borrow the reserve, add its interest and principal to the forecast and run both passes again. The slow start lets variable costs fall with sales, which is fair only because hours you cannot cut sit in line 3; waste or purchases you cannot cut make a real slow start worse.