



Helping communities & entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses

# DO-IT-YOURSELF FEASIBILITY STUDY TOOLKIT

## from New Venture Advisors

### OVERVIEW

Over the past six years, New Venture Advisors LLC has conducted dozens of feasibility studies for food businesses of all types across the country. We have worked with planning groups, municipalities, foundations, entrepreneurs and nonprofits with a strong vision for how they want to strengthen their local food system.

Historically, these studies have been led and executed by New Venture Advisors, including steps such as project management, meeting facilitation, primary and secondary research, analysis, synthesis, recommendations development, financial modeling and stakeholder oversight.

New Venture Advisors is now offering a **Do-It-Yourself Feasibility Study Toolkit** to enable and empower communities to conduct effective feasibility studies on their own. The DIY Toolkit is designed around our proprietary 10-step work plan, and includes over 40 how-to guides, worksheets, templates and examples, guiding you through everything from project initiation to primary research strategy to analysis and recommendations development. Included in the package is coaching support from New Venture Advisors; up to 7 hours to use throughout the project. Also included is the development of detailed and rigorous financial models, specifically designed for your study, an essential component to making the right go/no-go decision.

These tools are based on our extensive feasibility study experience, through which we have refined our approach, and gained a deep understanding of when and how to customize it for different situations. We can help local teams understand trends to look out for, rules of thumb for comparing data and financials, and how to approach decision-making. We know from experience the major pitfalls, and how to address them through effective project management.



## TWO OPTIONS

Here's how the DIY Toolkit compares to a full-service feasibility study led by New Venture Advisors.

	FULL-SERVICE FEASIBILITY STUDY	DO-IT-YOURSELF FEASIBILITY STUDY TOOLKIT
What do you get?	<p><b>Team of experts and specialists</b> who lead each step of the project</p> <p><b>Comprehensive feasibility study</b> and business case validation</p> <p><b>75-100 page report</b> including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– project background</li> <li>– methodology</li> <li>– detailed research findings and maps</li> <li>– business model description and rationale</li> <li>– capacity and financial assessment</li> <li>– financing needs and plan</li> <li>– roadmap and action plan</li> </ul>	<p><b>10-step work plan</b> that makes it simple to plan, manage and track progress</p> <p><b>10 how-to guides</b> to help you through each step and major task</p> <p><b>18 worksheets and templates</b> to organize your work and present your findings</p> <p><b>12 examples</b> to illustrate complex tasks and samples of key communications</p> <p><b>7 custom components</b> where NVA's expertise is needed most</p> <p><b>7 hours of coaching</b> with an NVA expert to help you lead and navigate</p>
Who leads the project?	We lead, and you participate in regular project management calls	You lead following our 10-step work plan
Who leads market research?	<p>We conduct secondary industry research, interviews, surveys, focus groups and lead community meetings</p> <p>You lead outreach to stakeholders and plan and convene community meetings</p>	<p>You lead using our how-to guides, worksheets and examples</p> <p>We customize and host your surveys and provide a high level industry overview</p>
Who analyzes the research?	We synthesize and analyze the data and discuss the findings and implications with you	You analyze using our custom survey platform and examples
Who selects the business model?	We recommend the business model(s) and guide you through the selection process	You select using our how-to guides and examples
Who completes the financial analysis?	We complete your custom financial models and oversee the process of researching and compiling assumptions and inputs	<p>We complete your custom financial models</p> <p>You gather financial inputs based on a list we provide you</p>
Who makes the go/no-go decision?	You do!	You do!
Who develops the final report?	We develop a confidential internal report and an executive summary for external distribution	You develop the final materials, using our examples and template, if you wish

## WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Both approaches have been designed to help teams execute a successful study that, if it results in a “go” decision, would establish a strong foundation for the future enterprise. Here is some guidance to help your team determine which approach makes sense for your context and expertise.

	<b>THE FULL-SERVICE APPROACH IS IDEAL FOR...</b>	<b>THE DO-IT-YOURSELF TOOLKIT IS DESIGNED FOR...</b>
<b>Scope</b>	<p>Studies with a broad or vague vision of the identified opportunity. For example, a community that knows it wants to support its local farmers, but does not have a clear sense of whether to focus on meat, grains or produce.</p> <p>Studies focused on commodity or product types where the industry is still nascent, such as local grains or local beans.</p>	<p>Studies which have a relatively clear vision or identified opportunity to evaluate, such as a commercial kitchen, a food hub or a meat processing facility.</p>
<b>Complexity</b>	<p>Highly complex studies, such as a study incorporating numerous potential business lines or with a series of multi-faceted decision points across the sequence of work.</p>	<p>Studies exploring a single type of enterprise in a more straightforward way.</p>
<b>Expertise</b>	<p>Local teams that do not necessarily have expertise in research, analysis, strategy, project management and/or financial assessments.</p> <p>Situations in which an outside, unbiased perspective is critical, to ensure that the feasibility study and resulting go/no-go decision is not unduly influenced by the desires of the planning group.</p>	<p>Local teams with collective expertise in research and analysis that can bring strong strategic thinking to their projects.</p> <p>Local teams who are comfortable with project management, navigating decision making and adjusting course if needed as insights are gained.</p> <p>Local teams with some comfort and acuity with business and financial concepts.</p>
<b>Relationships</b>	<p>Organizations or planning groups that are somewhat removed from the stakeholders their project would serve and therefore need in-depth coaching and support to forge connections and gather data for the study.</p>	<p>Organizations or planning groups that have strong relationships with the clients their envisioned entity seeks to serve, such as food entrepreneurs, farmers and/or food buyers.</p>
<b>Time</b>	<p>Local teams that cannot devote more than 1-2 hours weekly to the study.</p>	<p>Local teams with ample time to devote to the planning and execution of these studies. Depending on a project’s scope and breadth, 300-400 total hours across your team may be required.</p>
<b>Budget</b>	<p>Local teams with a higher budget for planning.</p>	<p>Local teams with a relatively limited budget for planning.</p>

## QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

<p>For what types of studies could this toolkit be used?</p>	<p>Feasibility studies and market assessments for food hubs (including brick and mortar aggregation and distribution businesses, online market places, food brokering businesses, etc.), produce processing facilities (fresh cut, IQF), kitchen incubators and commercial kitchens. Tools for additional types of food businesses are in development.</p>
<p>What kind of support will New Venture Advisors provide?</p>	<p>At each of the steps of the process, NVA will offer 30-60 minute office hours for the project leader. During this call, the project leader can ask questions about each step and get feedback on their desired customizations. During each of the last three phases – data analysis and synthesis, business model development and go/no-go decision – NVA recommends longer sessions with the project leader to provide more strategic guidance, if desired.</p>
<p>What is included in the toolkit?</p>	<p>See “TWO OPTIONS” on the second page for a list of the elements and services provided in the toolkit.</p>
<p>What format is the toolkit?</p>	<p>The toolkit includes a printed binder, electronic materials for you to customize yourself, surveys and financial analyses we customize for you, and one-on-one coaching for the project leader. The project leader will receive one copy of the printed and bound toolkit, and a flash drive with the electronic components. The components we customize will be provided electronically throughout the project.</p>
<p>Is the toolkit customizable?</p>	<p>Yes, you can customize most of the steps as you want or need! For example, you may believe an alternate project plan or interview guide may work better for your needs. You are free to make those changes and we are happy to provide guidance on this during the office hours described above. It is important to note that the toolkit is based on dozens of studies already conducted by NVA so the tools are rigorous and well tested. Additionally, analysis and synthesis using NVA’s guidance document may be more difficult if research tools have been modified substantially.</p>
<p>Can I share the toolkit with others?</p>	<p>The toolkit will be made available to you under a licensing agreement. The license will permit electronic elements of the toolkit to be shared within the project team. The printed material is protected by copyright and may not be reproduced.</p>
<p>What kind of team do I need to execute a feasibility study?</p>	<p>The work can be done by an individual but we usually work with teams of diverse stakeholders because these relationships can be important to the success of the business, and a good feasibility study requires a fair amount of work. If you are working with a team, we recommend thinking through who will be the local project leader, who else will contribute to the work effort, and who will be decision-makers and advisors.</p>
<p>How long does it take to complete?</p>	<p>Our full-service projects take an average of six months to complete. A DIY project could take longer depending on how the team divides responsibility and the time they have to devote to the project.</p>
<p>What is the cost?</p>	<p>We will provide you with a cost estimate once we confirm this approach is a fit with your team, so that you will have confidence in the conclusions of your study. Please use the <a href="#">contact form</a> on our website to set up a call to review the options.</p>