

Why design a project?

Core funded, accredited learning activities run in a UK online centre may not cover all of the needs of the centre beneficiaries, or cover all of the centre's overheads and staffing costs. It is difficult to build into outcome related training streams enough costs to cover such things as new training materials development, staff training costs, marketing time and resources, volunteer programme development and so on.

Design a grant-funded project for your beneficiaries, and you can also build in legitimate costs for your centre, such as;

- A contribution to overheads, or room or equipment rental (paid by the 'project budget' to the centre')
- A project preparatory phase: staff or volunteer recruitment costs, staff/volunteer training, co-ordination and planning, new materials research or commissioning; advertising
- Full or part-time staff (co-ordinator/tutor costs, administration time); session tutors or specialist speakers
- Visits, Open Days, publicity
- Evaluation costs
- New equipment or software

How to design a project

Too often the designing and planning of a project or activity for a new funding bid is left to one person, working to a short deadline on a funding opportunity that has suddenly arisen. While this document can just act as an aide memoire or list for one person in a hurry, it can also provide a framework for a group of people to sit round and discuss what is needed, how it will be achieved, and how it fits with future planning. This approach will help to draw in resources and ensure ownership of the project idea from partners, staff, board, volunteers and users. It also opens opportunities to delegate tasks to various people. Follow this format, and project design and bid-writing should become easier. For funding advice, see other DirectSupport resources.

Getting the benefit for your centre

Whilst resources won for a project must be spent on that project as described in your bid, there are many benefits that can accrue to the centre. Plan to reap the benefits in terms of staff training, re-use or sale of materials developed, increased publicity, joint working with partners, using products and skills developed in beneficiaries, and building on experience. Plan a coherent range of projects for the future development of your centre and to accommodate the changing and developing needs of beneficiaries.

This resource has been developed by DirectSupport Mentor Betsy Gray-King and programme manager Jane Berry. DirectSupport has many other centre support resources available to community and voluntary UK online centres, and whilst funding lasts, we will facilitate workshops to support a range of aspects of centre development. Call 0800 026 0202 or visit www.directsupport.org.uk

Project name:

Step 1: Overall Project Description

The information to be included here explains why the project is interesting and why a centre might want to run it. It is best written as the project framework is being developed, as each step of the planning will contribute more information. When the Project Framework is complete, this section will become the 'marketing' paragraph for the whole Project.

Add your project description here.....

For help:

try the QuickThink Activity in the DirectSupportFunding Plan guide

try CuriosIT materials at www.directsupport.org.uk/curiosit

look at the Project Stack Activity in the DirectSupportFunding Plan guide

Step 2: Assumptions

The foundation of the project needs to include the following assumptions which will become explicit in the course of the eventual project framework. The right hand columns below are used to fill in information, basically, answers to the questions posed in columns one and two. If you are completing this as an exercise, the specifics need to be the titles of functions or the sorts of locations ('Manager', not 'Pippa'; 'A meeting room', not ENTA Community Room etc). Also, the answers you give will need to indicate what you think are the optimum choices. If what you have in mind would work best in a large centre with a big meeting room, then use that answer as the where. If it is "for real" then be more specific!

Who	Project intended to be used by:	<i>Add here expected clients, users, etc</i>
	To be organised by:	<i>(Is there project Manager? A project Team? Who might they be?)</i>
What	Project Title	<i>(What is the project exactly? is it an event for learning? Series of events / sessions?)</i>
When	When will it be and is it based around a specific event?	<i>(A local or national project? Preparation for a campaign? What time of day, week and month is best?)</i>
Where	Where will the project be held?	<i>(In the centre? Or community outreach? Local building?)</i>
Why	Why is this project needed? What may be achieved by doing it?	<i>Add market research or other data?</i>
How	How will the project be resourced and funded?	<i>Also see section 3.3 below</i> <i>What do you have already?</i> <i>What will partners contribute?</i> <i>Where can you get funding - See DirectSupport's Funding Plan</i>

Step 3: Details

Once all the assumptions are clear, then the project needs further detail in the following areas:

3.1 Timing: How much time will be necessary for...

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Informing/including participants * Project management team meetings prior, during, post event/s * Negotiating partners or support 	<p><i>Expand details here... (who will organise marketing? Advertising?)</i></p> <p><i>(who will chair? steward the event?)</i></p> <p><i>(who will source local VIPs? Find other help?)</i></p>
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Deciding, designing and delivering the project content 	
When	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Deciding, negotiating event/s with external timing constraints 	<p><i>(other local events, when 'outside' people are available etc)</i></p>
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Negotiating location pre event/s * Preparing location pre event/s * Cleaning location post event/s 	<p><i>(what is the best location, what about access, utilities?)</i></p> <p><i>(who will help set the room up? What will you need to set up?)</i></p> <p><i>(how will things return to pre event status?)</i></p>
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Encouraging participation in event * mentoring and outreach for participation 	<p><i>(local media?)</i></p> <p><i>(encouraging people to take part in the project)</i></p>
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Raising the funding required 	<p><i>Timescales?</i></p> <p><i>Detail further in a Fund raising Schedule?</i></p>

3.2 Success Measures: How will it be known (and how will people be told afterwards)...

Who	* If the right people were involved as planners, partners, participants or some were missing	
What	* If the content of the project was pitched well or could have been changed	
When	* If the timing was in line with the need of the event/s, participants, partners, community	
Where	* If the location, location quality and resources and time of day/month/year were right	
Why	* If it fulfilled the original purpose	

When you have decided the project success measures, they can be used as evaluation points after the event. (Evaluation can be done by participants as well as by organisers)

3.3 Resources: Among many resources, you'll need to provide resources or point to resources for help with...

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Needs analysis * Marketing * Team working * Finding partners 	<p><i>(links to discovering needs)</i></p> <p><i>(resources for networking, advertising, etc)</i></p> <p><i>(links to resources for project management)</i></p> <p><i>(links to partnership sourcing and arrangements)</i></p>
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Content for activities * Activity delivery styles and methods 	<p><i>What have you got already?</i></p> <p><i>What can partners/support agencies provide</i></p> <p><i>Do accredited programmes fit in?</i></p>
When	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ways to find out local or national information * Ways to establish the timing of other events or activities 	<p><i>Will there be clashes? What are partners doing?</i></p>
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ways to find out the best locations for the events suggested 	<p><i>(good practice in networking, sourcing local knowledge)</i></p>
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Stories of similar activities which were successful 	<p><i>(links to successful models of similar projects)</i></p>

Step 4: Planning

When all your details are addressed, you'll need to make a timeline for each section of your project. The answers you gave in the earlier sections will merge to give you a whole set of tasks and timings for them. For instance: the answer to 'project intended to be used by' on 'Step 1: Assumptions' would merge with 'informing/including participants' on 'Details: Timing' so you could have a task moving from "contact young people in Yarmouth centre for ideas: week 3" to "check out ideas with young people: week5." through to "collect young people's focus group feedback: week 16".

- * The answers you gave in 'Assumptions' will give you the names and content of each activity
- * The answers you gave in 'Details: Timing' will give you the duration of each part of your project.
- * The answers you gave in 'Success Measures' will tell you where to place your evaluation
- * The answers you gave in 'Resources' will give the project organisers support for finding out details in the information gathering tasks.

A project timetable could look like the one below at the start of the project, but would move on to the event itself and post event evaluation. It is worth working on the detail of a project timetable. You'll see that in the example, Weeks 4 and 'etc' hold meetings - the agendas can be found in week columns, gathered from the task timelines. This will help a newly formed project committee tremendously.

Task	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	etc
Call the project planning meeting	Volunteers Coordinator draws up list of possible members	Centre Manger sends invitations	VC and CM follow up	Meet		meet
Decide event/ project shape			Gather some ideas from groups in your centre	Look at suggestions	Check out suggestions with those groups	Decide the project shape from feedback
Negotiate a venue				Quick-think possible locations	Check out locations with your centre groups	Narrow down list
Decide when to run project / event			Contact the Council and Community Association	Quick-think possible timing	Check out timing your centre groups	Agree draft timing - set date
Secure Funding				Quick-think possible funding sources	Research funding sources	
Etc						

Other Notes: