

Business and Project Plans

Business and Project Plans

A business plan is a clear statement of the developments your group or organisation plans to undertake over a period of time - typically three to five years. A business plan can be for your group/organisation and its development as a whole, or it could focus on a particular project.

Your plan will present a combination of your ideas and the costs of putting them into practice. It should be a well-presented document, based on research informed from a feasibility study or some other planning process(es) that you have undertaken.

Why do you need a Business or Project Plan?

- to establish the feasibility of the project
- to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your aims (or project) and to consider responses to these
- to make the strongest possible case to funders, banks, investors, and any other potential stakeholders
- to identify a common set of goals for not only your committee (or board) but also any additional volunteers and/or paid staff who may be involved in delivering your group's activities or services

Putting together a business or project plan

Your group's Business Plan should be developed and written by the committee as a team task and not by just one or two committee members working in isolation. It should contain certain key elements:

Executive summary

This should be a brief overview of the main points of your plan. You need to have written the rest of the plan before you can even think about pulling this summary together.

Introduction

Start with a brief but concise explanation of what your group does. If you have a **Mission Statement**, include it.

Background

Give a brief history of the organisation, a broad description of what it does, its legal status, staff and volunteer numbers, who uses the facilities/services

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Research

One way of making decisions about how your group should change or could develop is to identify the positive aspects and the limitations that currently exist. Get the committee together as a team to carry out a review of the group's strengths and weaknesses, and to identify potential opportunities and threats (also called a SWOT analysis). Prior to drawing up your Business or Project Plan you may need to carry out a feasibility study. Include the findings in your plan.

Aims and Objectives

To draw up a plan of action (or strategy), you will find it helpful to set aims and objectives.

- Think about what you want to achieve in the long term - what are the changes that you hope to make as a result of your project? These will be your aims. Prioritise the aims of your group and decide on the specific tasks and time period for achieving each one.
- On the way to achieving your aims, what will be your goals or objectives? What can be reasonably achieved within the timescale of your project and with the resources you have available? Make sure that your list of objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART). Set yourself realistic targets. For example, these might be a specific numbers of events held in a community hall or the number of passengers on your community bus, on a weekly/monthly/annual basis.
- The things that you do to achieve your aims and objectives will be your 'outputs'.
- Wider context
- How does your groups development or project fit into the bigger picture. This might be within your local community or wider depending on your group or project. Are you filling a void or complementing the work of other groups?

Demand

What particular needs will be met by your project and the range of user groups benefiting

Management implications

Will your committee need to make any changes to itself in order to bring the plan into reality?

Resources

Staff, volunteers, equipment, buildings. Allocate tasks and decisions to people. Allocate funds and other resources available to you

Budget

You will need to identify all the costs associated with your plan. How will you cover these costs? Your plan should ideally include a breakdown of all income and

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expenditure with an indication of cash flow. If the plan is for 3-5 years you will need to project the costs over this period.

Track record

Can you demonstrate that your group has the capacity to deliver your plan? Has your group got a track record for effective management? Does the committee include people with suitable skills?

Monitoring and Evaluation

Outline how your committee will measure progress

Detailed deadlines

Outline the dates and times for achieving short, medium and long-term plans. Decide which tasks are the most urgent and most important; and which are less important and urgent. Assess the order in which they will have to be completed and insert a deadline for achieving the tasks. Decide which decisions are the most important and when they need to be taken



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