

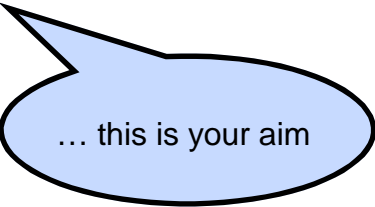
Setting up your Project

a process for planning, monitoring and evaluating your project

1

What difference do you want to make?

You will need to do this **before** your project starts



... this is your aim

Introduction

You will already have an understanding of the issues your project is attempting to do something about. If you don't know what the picture looks like 'before' you won't be able to compare it with the 'after'. Therefore, it is important at this stage that you take some time to paint the 'before' picture before you continue with this process.

Group Work

You need to ask yourself 'what difference will the project make?'

- this **isn't** a question about the activities or services you will offer
- this **is** about the differences you want to make - these are your aims

Make a list of all the ideas the group has for the project. These may be quite varied at this stage so it is important to come to a common mind. Remove anything that is something you are going to do - these are for later. Use the rest to agree your aims, which should be clear and realistic:

- clear - 'to make everybody happy' is too vague
- realistic - 'to make everybody followers of Jesus Christ' is too ambitious

HOPE YOUTH PROJECT

... is planning to employ a Youth Worker and run a Youth Café for the young people of the town. There are currently few, if any, 'safe spaces' for young people in the town, causing many to hang-around the streets or stay at home.

AIM

To provide a safe and supportive environment in which young people can find opportunities for social and personal development.

Conclusion

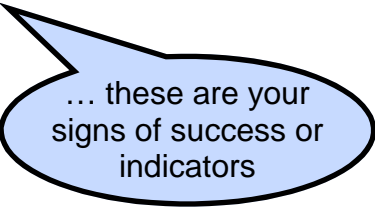
You now have your aim or aims - statements of what you want to achieve. These are the reasons for your project's existence so they need to be clear and realistic.



2

How will you know that you are making a difference?

You will need to do this **before** your project starts



... these are your signs of success or indicators

Introduction

This section requires you to imagine what it will be like at the end of your project. You will know what difference you want to make but what will it look like? These are your signs of success or indicators and they will help you decide what to do - if you know where you are going it is easier to get there.

For example: Your aim might be to get fit. What are the signs of success? Getting slimmer, having more energy and feeling less exhausted; these changes indicate you are achieving your aim. In order to get slimmer you know you will need to eat less and exercise more, hence your indicators help you decide what you need to do.

Group Work

Look at the aims you have agreed. For each one ask yourselves the following questions:

- how will you know you are making a difference?
- what will it look like?
- what changes (eg. in the people, activities, environment, buildings, etc) do you expect?

This process may make you reword some of your aims. If you do this then ensure your indicators relate to your reworded aims rather than the original ones.

HOPE YOUTH PROJECT

... aims to provide a safe and supportive environment in which young people can find opportunities for social and personal development.

INDICATORS

A: the Youth Café provides a safe space for young people

B: young people are aware of the Youth Café and what it offers them

C: the Youth Café meets the needs of young people in the town

D: the Youth Café contributes to the social and personal development of young people

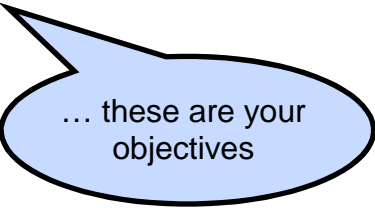
Conclusion

The answers to these questions should enable you to formulate your signs of success or indicators.

3

What will you do to meet your aims and make a difference?

You will need to do this **before** your project starts



... these are your objectives

Introduction

Your objectives are the practical things you will do to achieve your aims. What services, activities, roles, etc. will you provide to achieve the aims you have identified?

Group Work

Consider a number of different ways of achieving your aims and discuss the pros and cons of each.

You need to ensure that activities are designed:

- to achieve your aims
- to be relevant to those they are aimed at
- to be of high quality
- to be affordable
- not unnecessarily duplicate what others provide

These objectives also need to be **SMART**:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-based

HOPE YOUTH PROJECT

... aims to provide a safe and supportive environment in which young people can find opportunities for social and personal development.

OBJECTIVES

- 1: to employ a full-time, professionally qualified Youth Worker
- 2: to establish a team of appropriately trained and qualified volunteers to work alongside the Youth Worker
- 3: to regularly open the Youth Café
- 4: to ensure the Youth Café is a 'safe and supportive' place for young people
- 5: to establish a team of young people to take some responsibility in the running of the Youth Café
- 6: to provide a programme of challenging events and activities led by responsible and qualified adults
- 7: to offer a regular Youth Worship Event, with ecumenical partners

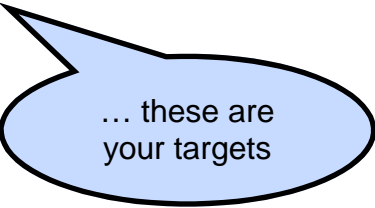
Conclusion

Under each of your aims list the objectives that will enable you to achieve your aim.

4

How will you plan your activities?

You will need to do this **before** your project starts



... these are your targets

Introduction

This exercise will help you set your targets for each of your activities or objectives. Targets are never vague and need to be easily measurable – using numbers is an easy way of doing this and enables you to be clear about your results but it is not the only way of doing it. Whatever method you use good record keeping is essential - this comes later.

Setting targets is an important part of planning because it clearly demonstrates the difference you want to make. Remember that targets also need to be SMART!

Group Work

Targets are not simple to decide and need to be worked on. You will need to work together, always ensuring that what you end up with is SMART (see below). Your targets also need to balance two things:

- to do enough to make the difference you want to make
- to be cost effective

These targets need to be SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-based

HOPE YOUTH PROJECT

OBJECTIVE 2:

To establish a team of appropriately trained and qualified volunteers to work alongside the Youth Worker

TARGETS

- 2.1 to involve 10 volunteers in year 1**
- 2.2 to develop training programme in first 3 months**
- 2.3 to ensure all volunteers trained within 3 months**

OBJECTIVE 7:

To offer a regular Youth Worship Event, with ecumenical partners

TARGETS

- 7.1 to offer 4 events in year 1, with average attendance of 20 young people**
- 7.2 to establish Worship Team, to plan and lead events, from at least 4 different churches in the town**


Conclusion

When you are agreed on your targets list them under each of your objectives.

5

How will you collect information to help you check your progress?

You will need to **plan** this **before** your project starts



... this is monitoring

Introduction

Collecting information requires you to be organised and systematic. For some people this is easier than others, as some like to rely on their 'gut feelings'. These have their place but you also need evidence that can be shared with other people. With this evidence you can: learn from your mistakes; make the necessary adjustments and keep on track; without it you are in danger of drifting away from your original aim and objectives.

You need to collect information that answers two questions:

- are you meeting your targets? – this will require **quantitative information**
- are you achieving your indicators of success? – this will require **qualitative information**

Each type of information is important, but to paint a complete picture both are necessary. This will allow you to check your progress on a regular basis allowing you to recognise success and identify problems at an early stage - enabling you to make any necessary adjustments.

Group Work

Quantitative Information

evidence you are meeting your targets

This requires the recording of information like names, frequency, numbers, dates, etc. that are linked to the targets you have identified. This kind of information is usually recorded in registers, log books, databases, membership files, etc. and needs to be recorded regularly.

As a group you need to decide:

- what information you need to collect?
- how you are going to collect it?
- how often this will be done?
- who will be responsible for it?
- how you will use the information?

HOPE YOUTH PROJECT

OBJECTIVE 2: TARGETS

- 2.1 to involve 10 volunteers in year 1
- 2.2 to develop training programme in first 3 months
- 2.3 to ensure all volunteers trained within 3 months

INFORMATION REQUIRED

- details of each volunteer: personal details; qualifications and experience of working with young people
- details of training programme
- lists of attendees at training sessions

Group Work

Qualitative Information

evidence you are achieving your indicators of success

This is about recording those changes in behaviour and attitude that you identified when you were working on your indicators of success. Collecting information on these is not as easy as with quantitative information but is easier if you have managed to identify some specific indicators. The methods you could use to record this kind of information are observation, feedback, discussion groups, surveys, questionnaires, etc. However you do it, it needs to be done regularly and systematically.

As a group you need to decide one way of recording information about each indicator of success and you need to be clear how this can be achieved, eg. if you decide to use a questionnaire who does it need to go to? It is not worth having feedback that doesn't provide the information you need.

Monitoring

You need to check or monitor the information you collect as this will help you to get the best out of your project. You need to establish a regular pattern of collection and you need to plan when this will take place.

As a group you need to decide:

- how often you will collect information?
- who will collect it?
- how it will be recorded?

HOPE YOUTH PROJECT INDICATORS

A: the Youth Café provides a safe space for young people

B: young people are aware of the Youth Café and what it offers them

INFORMATION REQUIRED

Questionnaire to be given annually to 200 young people from local school to assess the success of meeting these indicators:

- targets set for results to demonstrate success, eg. for B: 50% aware in year 1; 60% aware in year 2; etc.
- some indicators cannot be assessed in this way, eg. A: will require an analysis of the comments made

HOPE YOUTH PROJECT

- attendance record every time Café open
- membership records updated as necessary
- twice yearly members feedback questionnaire
- annual non-members questionnaire

Conclusion

You should now have in place a list of the information you are going to collect, and when, for each of your targets and indicators of success. You also need to create opportunities to analyse and reflect on this information.

6

How will you assess the overall impact or value of your work?

You will need to do this **at regular intervals** during your project



... this is evaluation

Introduction

The final stage of this process is to evaluate your project. This requires comparing the 'before' and 'after' pictures and must be based on evidence rather than personal opinion. Because of the work you have previously undertaken you will have a sound basis on which to make informed judgements, ie. you will have:

- clear and realistic aims and indicators of success
- objectives for each aim together with targets for each objective
- lots of information you have collected, which you have monitored on a regular basis

Group Work

As you undertake the evaluation process you need to ask yourself the following questions:

- did the work achieve its objectives?
- did its activities run as planned?
- which ones worked well and why?
- what didn't work and why?
- did the work lead to any unexpected results?
- what lessons have you learnt?
- how does this affect the future?

HOPE YOUTH PROJECT

... aims to provide a safe and supportive environment in which young people can find opportunities for social and personal development.

EVALUATION

After the first year it was clear that the Café was meeting its targets but that the awareness levels amongst young people in the town were not as hoped. They felt this demonstrated their work with those who used the Café was successful but that there were many more young people who could be using it. They decided to explore ways of building better relationships with the local school to create better awareness of the Café.

Writing the Report

Once you have answered some or all of these questions you need to think about writing an evaluation report. This may be needed by some of your funders, but even if it isn't it is a valuable annual exercise to evaluate the work.

Evaluation Report

There is no right way of writing a report but here is one suggestion:

Evaluation Report

Your organisation and its aims

- *a couple of sentences that describes this*

The background to your project

- *a short description of the needs and problems your project was initially designed to respond to*

Your aims

- *what you set out to achieve (section 1)*

Your objectives

- *what you did (section 3)*

A description of how you monitored the project

- *your indicators of success (section 2)*
- *your targets (section 4)*
- *what information you have collected (section 5)*
- *how you have kept a regular check on progress (section 5)*

Your conclusions

- *how well you have done overall?*
- *what lessons you have learnt?*
- *what you need to change?*
- *towards the end of your project you will need to decide if it is going to continue and how?*

This booklet is based on *A Guide to Self-Evaluation - How to tell you are making a difference: a basic guide for voluntary organisations*, produced by The BBC Children in Need Appeal in 1999.