



A 'Kantha Shakthi' team member runs a community workshop in Sri Lanka.

HANDBOOK 1

MODULE 1

Tools for Effective Project Planning in Community Development

Introduction to Project Planning for Community development

Guaranteeing that your work is both impactful and sustainable requires investment in the planning and design process. Although the development of programs can vary in time and scope and is highly dependent upon the complexity of the problem and context, there are a number of underlying principles that hold true for all project designs.

We cannot emphasise enough the importance of being methodical in your approach to project planning. Whilst it may be frustrating, and you feel like you want to put your great idea into practice straight away, it is essential to first take a step back and plan methodically. Follow the steps outlined in this course one after the other to give your great idea the best chance of turning into a successful project.



Download Resources

As you complete this course, use **'Resource 1 - A Checklist for Effective Project Planning'** which can be found as a download alongside this module on our website. Use this resource as a guide when you are planning and designing your own project to ensure you have completed every step.

Who should be involved in the planning process?

When you start planning, the best approach is to work through your project planning and design as a team, including as many stakeholders as possible. This includes beneficiaries. Be prepared to spend some time working together as a group, so that you can brainstorm ideas in a cooperative manner. Not only will the group present an array of ideas, but the diversity of different perspectives will lead to informative discussions and a broader perspective.



STEPS TO THOROUGH PROJECT PLANNING

- analyse the situation
- set clear goals
- identify who is involved
- recognise risks
- find opportunities
- choose interventions
- develop monitoring tools
- synthesise project design

Starting Activities

The advantages of thorough and methodical planning

Properly planned projects not only address the needs of beneficiaries, but do so in an efficient manner, maximizing resources to leverage greater impact. A properly executed design process will help you work through the feasibility of not just your plans, but also your goals. It can help you identify risks, as well as opportunities and by correctly identifying key stakeholders within the community, it will lead to a more effective, appropriate and lasting project.

Handbook overview

This handbook will provide an overview of some of the most important tools and resources to facilitate discussion amongst your planning team. Throughout the handbook, we will introduce key planning advice, as well as specific frameworks and ready-to-use models in the context of participatory design that your organisation may want to use to increase the impact of its work.

Most organisations who use these tools adapt them to meet their needs. Use this handbook with your own goals and processes in mind so that you can begin thinking about shaping the tools or mixing-and-matching them to meet your specific needs.

Module	Goal/Aim	Tool	Material/Downloads
1 Introduction to Project Planning for Community Development	Explore why thorough project planning is important for effective development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checklist for Project Design
2 Using a Situational Analysis to explore the context of your development project	Identify the context, broad project goals and important relationships	Situational Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Analysing Your Context' Checklist • SWOT Analysis • 5C Analysis • SCOPE Analysis
3 Setting realistic project goals using a Problem and Objective Tree	Understand the problem, identify objectives and create clear goals	Problem Tree Objective Tree Alternative Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Tree Template • Objective Tree Template • Alternative Analysis Template
4 Using a Stakeholder Analysis to identify who is involved in your development project	Find out who will be impacted by your project, how they are involved and how they might influence the project's success	Stakeholder Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categorising Stakeholders Framework • Stakeholder Interest/Influence Analysis • Stakeholder Analysis
5 Choosing the best intervention for your development project	Compare different intervention strategies relating to feasibility criteria and decide upon a specific initiative	Feasibility Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Identifying possible solutions' Checklist • Solution Analysis Framework
6 Using the Theory of Change to understand how your development project will practically meet its goal	Identify the specific activities and outputs that will help you achieve long-term change	Theory of Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory of Change Framework
7 Incorporating Monitoring and Evaluation when designing your development project	Establish a group of activities and indicators to measure your project's ongoing success	Monitoring and Evaluation Analysis Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and Evaluation Analysis Plan
8 Using a LogFrame to synthesise project design in Community Development	Combine the elements of your project design into a single framework	Logical Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LogFrame Template
9 Analysing how Gender Relationships in the community will interact with your development project	Understand the gender context, analyse gender dynamics and explore how these will affect your project	Gender Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Analysis Matrix

**Helpful Hint**

If you are receiving support from an outside funder or international donor, be aware that despite (sometimes) good intentions, donors may seek to impact your project design by favouring certain types of projects. They may seek to incorporate their own organisational priorities into your work, attempting to change the objectives or activities of your project to make it more relevant to their donors or mission.

This may impact the effectiveness of your project and how well you can support local beneficiaries. It is up to you, the grassroots implementers, to push back with the reality of how the design effects local communities. Try to steer clear of top-down influences by using your local knowledge to develop plans that maximise benefits to the community with value for time, money and resources. For more information on this topic, check out our 'Accountability in Community Development' article that can be found in the Grassroots Hub section of our website.

Before you start, a quick word on sustainability

A successful project is one that not only achieves its stated goals, but also continues to function towards these goals once the original impetus and source of support withdraws.

**Helpful Hint**

For a project to start, people have to believe in a tangible and immediate benefit from their participation. For it to continue, they have to see that their work is making an impact.

Thinking about sustainability when you are planning and designing your work ensures for greater success. The communities you work with will be left with programs that facilitate the change they themselves wanted. They will take ownership of the project and will keep improving and adjusting it to their needs long after your organisation is gone.

Sustainability is a term that can mean a variety of things:

- environmental considerations
- education and training
- continued operational support
- long-term financial viability
- facilitating hand-over through adequate involvement of the community
- The ability for the local community to repair or maintain any required equipment

Ultimately, the hope should always be self-sufficiency for the communities you work with, where beneficiaries are trained to continue programs or facilitate the same intervention without your continued involvement.

Finishing up

Now that you have a basic understanding of why thorough project planning is important, it's time to begin our planning process. The first step is to examine your project's context through a situational analysis which we will explore in **Module 2**.



Helpful Hint

If you are promoting a practice that will not survive once you take away the incentive or your support, then it is not a sustainable project.

This resource was produced by Grassroots Collective.

This is Module 1 of our 9-part handbook for project planning. Find the full handbook at: www.thegrassrootscollective.org/grassroots-hub

Have a question about project planning for community development or want to learn about how we can support your organisation on its mission? Contact us at: info@thegrassrootscollective.org

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