

Hints and Tips

Keeping Going

Why groups need to plan ahead

Most groups get by very well with gentle on-going planning. Every year or so you get in the usual grant applications, you have the annual report and the new committee gets elected at the AGM. There are some changes to your activities in response to suggestions from members, and you produce a new leaflet when the old one runs out or to include the new activities.

But sometimes you have to do a bit more planning ahead, when the changes are bigger, faster or more significant. Typical situations are:

- Starting a new development - for example, when your grant application for a new activity is successful.
- When the numbers begin to grow more than you expect.
- When the numbers coming to your activities begin to drop.
- Working in partnership with other groups or with a team in the Council or health service.
- Keeping the committee going.

"We needed more space quite quickly. We asked lots of people - people who came to our group, other groups that we knew, staff in the health centre, staff in the community services department of the Council and our local Councillor. The local day care centre got in touch with us. They had a room that wasn't used in the evenings that we could use. We had never thought about asking them."

Growing what you do

One of the situations groups can face is demand for what they do increasing when they are not ready for it.

The first step is to decide if you want to expand.

- Is this something your group thinks is important, and is it the sort of activity you want to see happening?
- Do you have the capacity? Enough volunteers or paid staff time? Enough space?
- What do the current members or people getting a service from you feel about this? Do they want to see friends and other people benefiting? Or are they less comfortable with having more people they do not know?
- How does the committee feel about the added responsibilities?
- Is taking on this additional activity the right thing for your group?

If the answer is Yes, then you can start looking at the practical aspects.

- How can you get the resources you need? - space, transport and the like?
- Do you have the skills and experience you need? Where can you get any training quickly?
- How will you get any additional funding you will need? And for all of your extra costs, not just the obvious costs for the new activity but also for expenses like additional insurance and training for the committee as well as people delivering the new activity?

If the answer is No, there may still be ways you can support more opportunities for people. Examples can include helping another group take on the increased activity, with your members helping with the planning for a service which will be delivered by someone else.

Another situation where groups take on new activity is when you are successful in getting a grant application for a new project or increasing your activity. Even though you had decided to do this, it can come as a bit of a surprise when you hear you have the money and it is really happening.

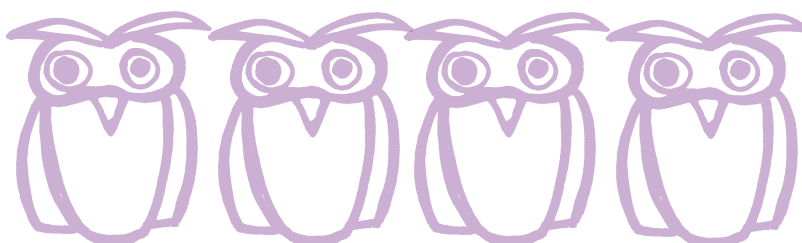
These are our tips.

- Go back and look at the application you sent in. Read it slowly and mark everything you said you would do.
- Decide how you will keep track of the money side. If you have not had a grant before, or not a grant as big as this one, talk it over with another group which has done this sort of thing or with someone from a service like the local TSI (see the Further advice section at the end of these Hints).

- If you are not sure about what the funder will expect of you in terms of record keeping, or anything else, ask them. They are usually very helpful.
- Plan out how you will deliver the new activity. Things might have changed a bit since you first came up with your ideas and wrote the application, so plan around what is happening now.
- Look at what information you need to gather about the numbers of people who use the service and what the difference is for them. It is much easier if you do this from the beginning. That way it is all there when you come to do the end of grant report.

This is our suggestion for a simple plan which works well in most situations, whether they are planned or not expected. Here is an example.

Timing	Delivering the activity	Organising things
Year 1: Months 1-3	Develop information leaflet - ask members to help with photos and examples of benefits people get from group now	Volunteer training Get extra insurance cover Order equipment
Months 4-6	Start publicising the new service Aim to start extra sessions at centre	Update on progress in our summer newsletter Review spend to date 6 month progress report to funder
Months 7-9	Start outreach service	Review/training session with people involved in new services Plan for any changes
Months 10 -12	Open day for wider membership, people interested in the new service and other organisations	Recruit more volunteers if needed End of year report to funder Revise plan for year 2
Year 2: first 6 months	Continue with sessions at centre Expand outreach service if there is the demand	More training for volunteers if needed Gather feedback from people involved on impact for them Review impact overall and make plans for after the grant ends
Second 6 months	Continue with service Keep people informed about progress on plans for follow on	Funding applications for follow on, and/or discuss with possible partners End of grant report



Looking for new members

Sometimes the change is that fewer people are coming to your group, or to one particular activity.

You may think you know what the problem is, but it is worth checking out as it might be something else.

- The starting point is to talk to people. Ask your members why they think people are not coming. Talk to people who have left (if possible).
- Talk to other groups – find out if they are having similar problems.
- Talk to any people such as health service staff and social workers who tell people about your group and what you do.
- Are there any practical problems? It might be a transport issue, for example.
- Are people's circumstances changing? More of the people who joined a while back may be now too frail to come.
- Check out if your group is affected by something else that has started happening in the area. The day and time might overlap with a new service or another group might have extended what they do. Or another service which told people about you might have gone away.

It is often a mixture of factors, so you will have a mix of solutions. These are steps that many other groups have found useful.

- Have a campaign to find new members - people who could enjoy and benefit from what you offer but who don't know about you yet.
- Update the information for staff in the Council and NHS teams. Some people will be new to this job or new to your area, and other people may have forgotten about you, or just run out of leaflets to give people.
- Look for different ways to deal with each of the practical aspects.

"We thought everyone knew about our group. We were surprised when they said they hadn't heard about us."

"We wanted to find more men for our Men's Shed. We asked to put up posters in places that men went to. Barber's shop, Doctors' surgery, Miners' Social Club, Library. We told them about our Shed when we handed the poster in."

Partnerships with other people

Sometimes it is good to do things with another group, rather than try to do it all yourself.

It often helps to have a written agreement, explaining what each group is going to be doing. That way, other people in the groups now what has been agreed. It is also useful if you have to give it to someone else, such as when you apply for funding for your shared venture.

This does not have to be a long or formal agreement. These are points which groups find it is useful to include.

- What you are doing together. It could be a one-off event or project, or working together more generally for the next few years.
- What you each contribute: ideas, people, practical resources such as a building, money, contacts with people in the area, experience.... You decide what is relevant to this shared activity.
- Who is responsible for which practical aspects.
- If it involves sharing costs or an asset such as a building or equipment, who owns the asset? Who actually pays the bills even if the cost is shared?
- If you are using volunteers or staff, whether you each responsible for your own volunteers, or will you use one group's arrangements and policies.
- Who takes responsibility for the overall task. It is often best to have one group or person being responsible, in case something needs decided or done quickly.
- How you will keep each other informed. Having a named person or post-holder as a link between the groups is useful.
- Confirming that the link people will then feed back to the rest of their committee or group.

The main point to remember is that you want to find an agreement which feels fair to the people involved. For example, 2 groups of a similar size might split the cost 50/50. But for another partnership the cost is shared 75/25, because one group has more money while the other is bringing more of the volunteer effort.

Getting more people involved and helping out

Sometimes a smaller and smaller group of people are left doing all the work on the committee or organising things at the group.

It might be because people have left the area or they are no longer able to come to the group as they get older and less able.

These are groups have said helped them to getting new committee members.

- Ask the members of your group as individuals, rather than just a general notice at the AGM.
- Encourage members to help in small groups such as planning publicity or organising the Christmas event, and give them a taste for being more involved.
- People can share a role.
- Let people learn about the roles before taking them on.
- Advertise through other organisations.
- Make a list of what the committee is responsible for and what each role in the committee does.
- Tell everyone about the training that is available through the newsletter and similar routes, so people know this will be there for them if they get more involved.

Have a look at our Hints and Tips on Getting Organised for more ideas.

Sometimes even when there isn't much to organise you need some extra helpers, as people are less physically able to sort things out or go to the shops to buy the tea and coffee for the group.

These are steps which some groups said they found helpful.

- Break existing volunteer roles down into smaller tasks – share things out in different ways, so lots of people can help with the bits they can do.
- Have rotas so that people don't always have to do the same things all the time.
- Have back ups, so people who want to volunteer can still do that but there is always someone to pick up something if needed.
- Explain what you need help with.
- Recruit volunteers to come and help at the group (word of mouth, friends of friends, volunteer centre, through doctors surgeries and so on).

Further information and advice

Your local Third Sector Interface (TSI), sometimes known locally as CVS and Volunteer Centre, provide support and help to community groups.

You can find your local TSI at www.vascotland.org or phone: 0141 353 7318.

Some TSIs have a community toolkit on their website with lots of helpful information for community groups. They are similar to this one: <http://www.slcv.org.uk/Community-Toolkit/ctoolkit?PageName=toolkit-home.htm>

Your local Council may have community workers who can help local groups.

About Wisdom in Practice

Wisdom in Practice is a project which supports and promotes the development of services and other activities led by older people. It is funded by the Scottish Government through the Equalities Programme and is run by Outside the Box.

There is a range of resources for groups, including publications, how to guides, events and development support for individual groups and projects.

This is one of a series of Hints and Tips on topics which groups led by older people have said help them in starting their groups, getting organised, keeping going and finding funds.

There is more information at www.wisdominpractice.org.uk



Outside the Box, Unit 23, 150 Brand St,
Glasgow G51 1DH
T. 0141 419 0451 E. admin@otbds.org
www.wisdominpractice.org.uk