

Fact-Sheet: Managing Small Community and Capital Projects

Why project management?

Projects involve doing something out of the ordinary for a period of time, something that may stretch an organisation and its people. The only certain thing is that sooner or later a project will come to end and there will be an expectation or legacy (jargon word **outcome**) that project was intended to deliver and question to be answered if the project fails to deliver.

This short guide suggests some simple steps you can take to increase the chances of finding the funds in the first place and delivering for your stakeholders, community and your funders.

What is project management?

Project management isn't rocket science. A lot of it is common sense and anyone who has been involved in running a project informally will find much that is familiar. PM is a set of skills and processes that ensures your project is properly defined (SMART Objectives), tasks and responsibilities clearly and logically set out and properly costed. In an ideal world there should be no surprises! Good project management will follow the following process:



Defining what the project is

The process of defining and presenting the project accurately helps ensure its accountability. The Project Definition provides a clear statement of what the project entails and can be used to make sure that everyone understands what it will do.

The Project Definition is a great vehicle for communication and should be used to avoid misunderstandings of what the project is about, and to build consensus around its objectives. It is better to have the debate about what the project will do (and what the project will not do) at an early stage of the project rather than let different points of view cause problems at a later date.

Community engagement and funders criteria

Nearly all funders, sometimes at a very early stage, will ask for:

- Evidence of need
- Results of community consultation

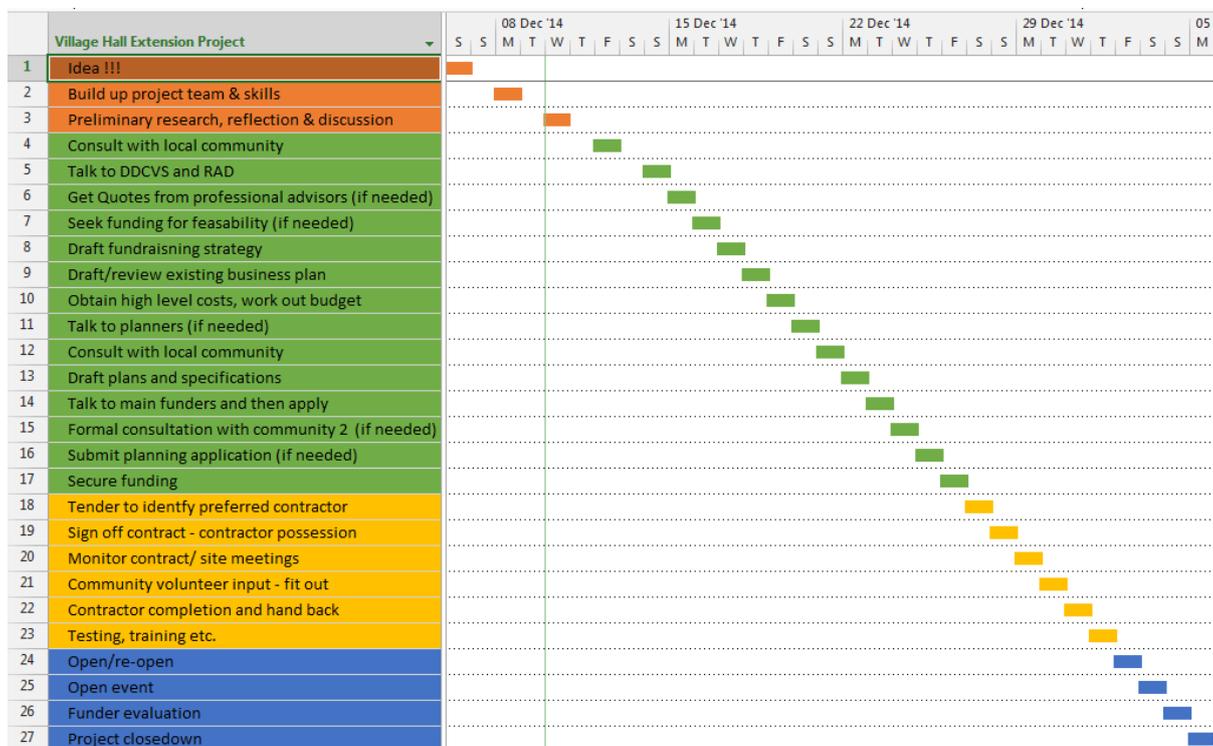
Without these key tasks in place the chances of a successful funding application are significantly reduced. But you need to engage with funders at the right time – too early and you may just get generic advice, too late and you may have committed resources unnecessarily or missed an application deadline. Talk to Sarah or Jonathan at DDCVS who can advise on this

Identifying key tasks (case study: extension to village hall)

Projects where key tasks have not been identified at an early stage and placed in their logical order (the order in which each task needs to be carried out) on a project plan will almost certainly run into problems. It is worth spending quite a lot of time on this part of the project and if you have not done this kind of thing

before it is a good idea to share your draft project plan with as many sources of help as possible and incorporate their feedback.

The (simplified) project plan below relates to the expansion of a village hall to build a new kitchen, toilets and entrance porch to meet modern disability access standards costing about £75,000. It was produced with Microsoft Project but project plans for small jobs like this can be produced just as easily using MS Word or even good old fashioned pen and paper. It's the thought process that's important, making sure every task is included and placed in the right order and getting everyone to understand this. Tasks can be assigned to appropriate members of your committee.



Whilst you're still in the planning (green) phase you can make changes to the tasks and their sequence, but when you're in the project execution (yellow) phase you will need to consider the implications of making changes to the project plan very carefully and ensure all stakeholders are informed of the change. **This is often where projects hit problems - there may be time, cost or scope/quality implications of making such changes at this point!**

Controlling the project

Good project management will reduce the chances of problems occurring, but problems will still crop up from time to time and the best way of dealing with these is to ensure that communications are as good as they can be.

It is best to decide early on how frequently your committee will need to meet, how information is to be circulated, when meetings with contractors will take place and who will attend. Dealing with problems means getting the right advice and then making and communicating decisions quickly.

This is just an introduction

We have just touched on some of the main aspects of managing publically funded capital projects – there is much more: e.g. planning, assessing your own organisation's skills and capacity, identifying and managing stakeholders, developing your strategy, budgeting and resourcing, income sources, match funding, monitoring and accountability, evaluation and much more.

Derbyshire Dales CVS can help you with all of this, so why not give us a call for a free initial meeting – contact: Neil Moulden on 01629 812154 or neil@ddcvs.org.uk