

Handbook

**Planning and Implementation of
Community-Based Projects**

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List of Publications/References Cited in this Handbook

Using the Handbook

Who is the Handbook for?

- ✓ New and existing community- based projects
- ✓ Project Managers
- ✓ Management Committees
- ✓ Those involved in drawing up funding proposals

Why Use the Handbook?

The Handbook contains practical information relevant to:

- ✓ project initiation
- ✓ project implementation
- ✓ project development
- ✓ project review

Layout of the Handbook

The Handbook is divided into four sections:

- ✓ Section One: Context and Framework of the Handbook
- ✓ Section Two: Planning the Project
- ✓ Section Three: Implementing the Project
- ✓ Section Four: Review: Evaluating the Outcomes of the Project

How to use the Handbook?

Depending on the length of time your project has been established as well as the size, scope and nature of the project there are a number of ways in which the Handbook could be used:

- ✓ begin at Section Two (planning) and work your way through to the end of the Handbook (review and outcomes)
- ✓ dip into the step which is related to your current needs, for example, Step 3.4: Developing a Strategy for Community Involvement
- ✓ select the section most relevant to the life stage of your project, for example planning the project, and use the Handbook to review this stage

Introduction

This Handbook was developed as a result of a study carried out on the planning and implementation of 142 community-based projects set-up since 1997 under the auspices of the Local Drugs Task Forces (LDTF's). It is based on the learning obtained through the experiences and perceptions of the project managers of the current projects.

The Handbook is aimed at both new projects and projects already established. It is designed to be a compendium of practical information and ideas and issues to reflect on, relevant to different stages in a project's life: planning, implementation and review. Accordingly, depending on its stage of development, different elements of the Handbook will be of relevance to a particular project. Projects vary in size, scope and nature and so the individual project will need to adapt the Handbook to its particular needs and circumstances.

The Handbook will aid people involved in planning and implementing a community-based project; primarily Project Managers and Management Committees. The Handbook should also be useful in drawing up funding proposals and in writing progress reports. Some useful publications are cited throughout the Handbook but these are not the only documents which will be of use for the task in hand.

The Handbook is divided into four sections. Section One outlines the context, basis and framework of the Handbook. Section Two deals with the steps involved in the planning stage of programme development while Sections Three and Four deal respectively with the steps involved in the implementation stage of the project and in the review of its outcomes and impact.

For each step of each stage, the Handbook firstly sets out:

- what is involved in the particular step
- questions to answer
- issues to consider

While the Handbook is laid out according to discrete stages and steps, in practice there will be overlap and the implementation of one step will depend on how earlier steps have been carried out. Accordingly, a Handbook user whose primary concern is, for example, the creation of monitoring systems (Step 3.3) will need to refer back to earlier steps concerned with defining and reaching the target group (Step 2.3) and setting aims and objectives (Step 2.4)

Section One

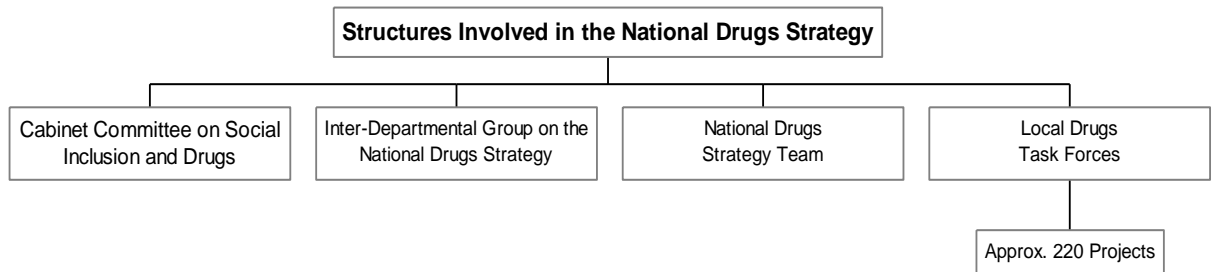
Context and Framework of the Handbook

Context

Establishment of Local Drugs Task Forces and Community Based Projects

As a result of recommendations in the 1996 **Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Measures to Reduce the Demand for Drugs**¹ a number of structures were established (Figure One).

Figure One



The Local Drugs Task Forces (LDTF's) established in 1997 were given the mandate to develop action plans focused on the development of community based initiatives. The subject of this Handbook is the individual projects established under the auspices of the LDTF's.

The projects implemented by the LDTF's are categorised according to their focus: education and prevention (E&P), treatment and rehabilitation (T&R), supply control (SC) and research and information (R&I). Within these categories, the most frequent field of activity is E&P (51%) followed by T&R (36%) with very small numbers involved in SC and R&I (Ruddle, Prizeman and Jaffro, 2001).²

Basis of the Handbook

In the early months of the year 2000, the National Drugs Strategy Team (NDST) commissioned an evaluation of 142 of the projects implemented by the LDTF's, focusing on experiences and perceptions among project managers of the planning and implementation

¹ Department of An Taoiseach *First Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Measures to Reduce the Demand for Drugs*, Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1996

² Ruddle, Prizeman and Jaffro, *Evaluation of Local Drugs Task Force Projects: Experiences and Perceptions of Planning and Implementation*, Dublin: The Government of Ireland/The National Drugs Strategy Team, 2001

stages of project development. The findings from this evaluation study provide the basis for this Handbook.

The feedback obtained from the projects in the evaluation study enabled the identification of key issues involved in the running of the projects, the pitfalls that can arise and the factors that enable or constrain project delivery. The feedback showed that successful planning and implementation of future projects requires attention to certain issues that can arise in the following areas:

- initial planning
- staffing
- funding
- premises
- networking
- community involvement
- research and information gathering

The feedback on these issues provides the basis on which the Handbook has been developed.

The purpose of the Handbook is to build on the experience of the current projects so that their capacity and expertise are enhanced and future projects are enabled to avoid common pitfalls and implement identified good practice procedures.

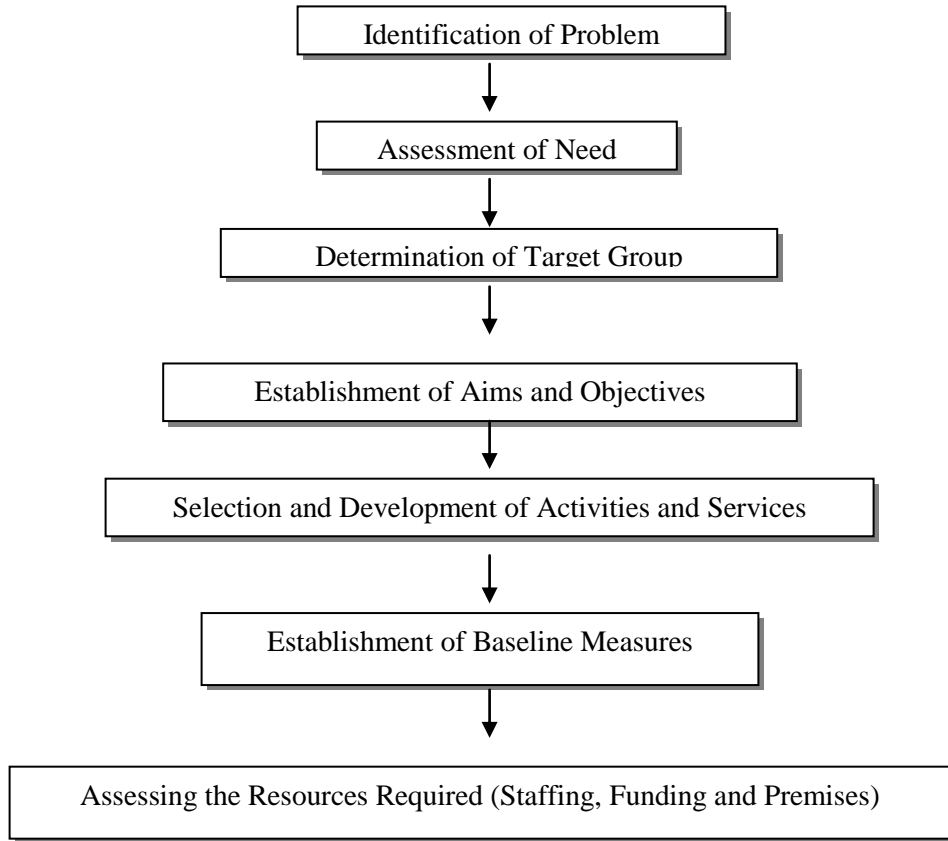
Framework of the Handbook

In seeking feedback from the projects in the evaluation study the model of project development outlined in Figure Two was used as the guiding framework.

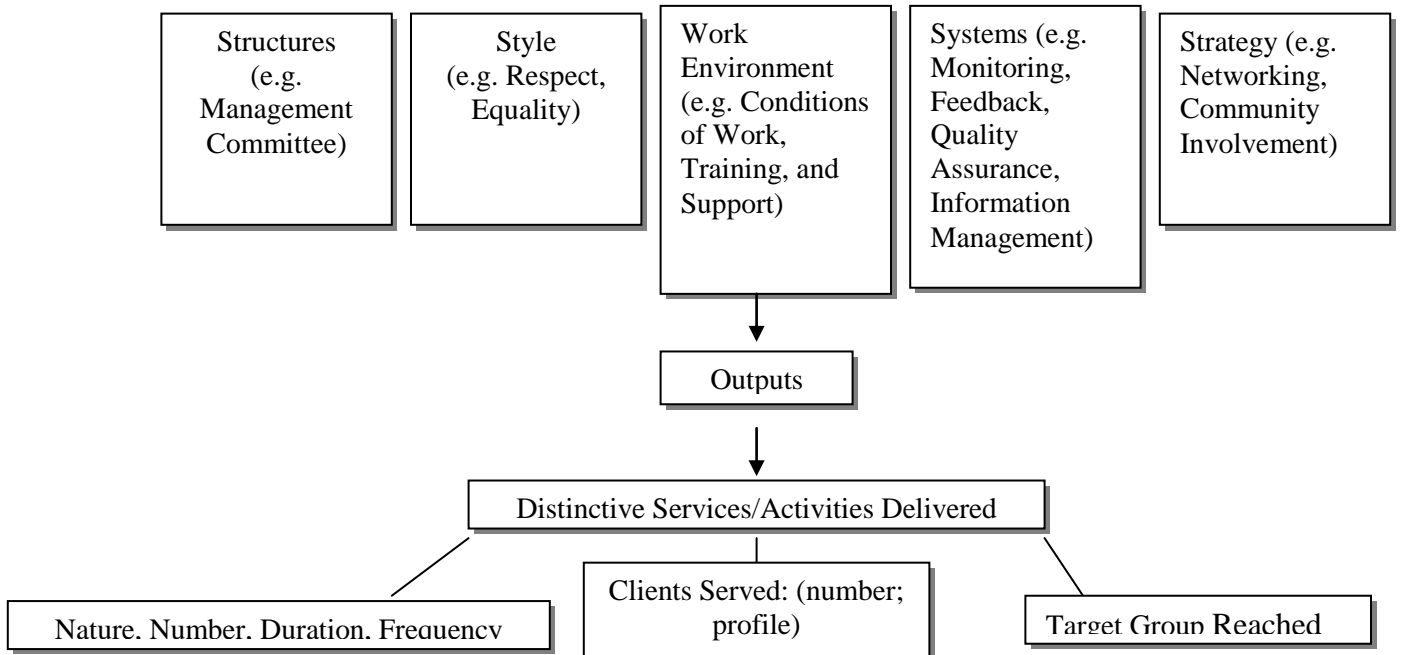
This Handbook follows the same framework and is divided into three main sections concerned sequentially with the issues arising at the different stages in the life of a project: planning, implementation and review.

Figure Two Stages in Project Development

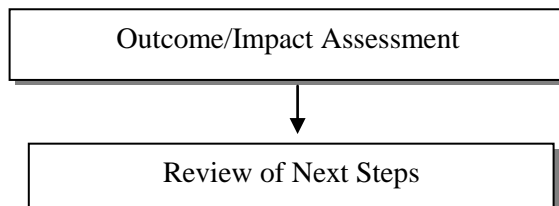
PLANNING



IMPLEMENTATION



REVIEW



Section Two

Planning the Project

This section covers the steps involved in the planning stage of project development. At this stage the main steps include:

- 2.1 Defining the Problem
- 2.2 Assessing Need
- 2.3 Defining and Reaching your Target Group
- 2.4 Setting Aims and Objectives
- 2.5 Selection of Activities/Services
- 2.6 Setting Baseline Measures
- 2.7 Assessing the Resources Required
- 2.8 Preparing for Future Evaluation
- 2.9 Reviewing the Planning Stage

2.1 Defining the Problem

At the outset, you will need to have a clear sense of the problem your project aims to tackle. You will need to answer questions on: the nature, extent and distribution of the drugs problem and the numbers and characteristics of those affected. You will need to have a sense of the causes of the problem and why it continues. Remember that although the nature of the problem may be very obvious to you, it will not necessarily be so to others and so you will need to be able to show why the problem is a problem, what effects it has, how it could be resolved and the benefits of doing so.

Questions to Answer

1. What do you know about the problem your project aims to tackle?

- What is the nature of the problem?
- What is the extent of the problem?
- Where does it occur?
- How long has it been going on?
- Who is affected by it?
- How many people are affected by it?

2. What are your sources of information?

Possible Sources

- National Drugs Strategy Team
- Local Drugs Task Force
- Department of Health and Children
- Department of Tourism Sport and Recreation
- Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform
- Department of Social Community and Family Affairs
- Health Research Board
- Partnership Companies
- National/regional/local surveys
- Scientific/popular publications (check European as well as Irish sources e.g. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA))
- Other projects

3. What is your theory of the root causes of the problem?
4. What is your theory of why the problem continues?

Considerations

- Make sure your information is reliable and accurate: do not rely on anecdotal information
- Be systematic in collecting the information; thoroughness is essential
- Consider whether you may need to carry out further/new research
- Use all available sources of information

Examples

- Local Library
- School/College/University libraries
- Government Publications
- Government Departments
- Semi-state agencies
- Local Authorities
- Health Boards
- Partnership Companies
- Central Statistics Office
- European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)
- The Internet

- Consider whether there is any assistance you will need

Try

- Local Drugs Task Force
- National Drugs Strategy Team

- Consider the money and other resources you will require to carry through this step. If you have not got the necessary resources, think where you might gain access to them

2.2 Assessing Need

Initial assessment of need is necessary to enable you to demonstrate that the project is needed and warrants public funding. Assessment of need is also very important in enabling the impact of the project to be measured at a later time. While assessment of need is crucial at the planning stage, it should not be a once-off exercise but something that is checked regularly throughout the life of a project.

Questions to Answer

1. How many people are affected by the drugs problem?
2. How many new cases are there and how often do they appear?
3. What will happen if nothing is done? On what basis do you make this prediction?
4. What else is being done or being planned in relation to the problem?
5. How will the project fit in with what is taking place elsewhere at national, regional and local level? Will it complement/supplement/compete?

Considerations

- Assess the need in a systematic fashion; do not rely on anecdotal information

Possible Means

- Carry out a formal survey
- Use the findings of existing surveys
- Consult formally with key informants (e.g. Health Board, Gardaí)
- Consult with the Local Drugs Task Force
- Use community workshops

- Think about whose views on need you want to have

Possible Viewpoints

- Clients themselves
- Families of clients
- Professionals (e.g. teachers, doctors, Gardai)
- Local community
- Local Drugs Task Force
- Service providers

- If clients are to be directly involved, consider what particular issues this may raise
- Find out whether any assessment of need has been carried out previously in the area
- Find out what others have done in similar situations in other places
- Consider the cost involved in carrying out this step
- Consider the expertise you will need. Is it available within the project or will you need outside help?
- Consider what assistance you may need

Possible Assistance

- Guidance
- Training
- Technical support

- At the planning stage, think about ways and means of giving feedback to the community on an on-going basis to ensure that the needs initially identified continue to be relevant

2.3 Defining and Reaching Your Target Group

With this step you are defining the group the project is intended to help and setting out how you intend to reach potential clients. This step is critical for budgeting and funding and is needed to enable later evaluation of how successfully the project is doing what it set out to do.

Questions to Answer

1. Are you intending to reach one or more target groups?
2. Are you targeting those directly involved in drugs (ultimate target group) or an intermediate group (for example, parents, schools, and local community)?
3. What is the size of the target group? How many do you intend to reach- all or some?
4. What are the socio-economic characteristics of the group?
5. Does the group have any particular defining characteristics?
6. Why have you chosen this particular group?
7. How will you identify your potential clients?
8. What means will you use to make contact with potential clients?
9. Do you anticipate any difficulties in reaching potential clients?

Considerations

- Think about the sources of information you will use so you can draw up an accurate profile of your potential clients

Possible Sources

- Local Drugs Task Force
- Local surveys
- Professionals with knowledge of the group

- Do not rely on personal contact alone to reach your potential clients

Possible Means of Contact

- Word of mouth
- Referrals
- Existing networks
- Local radio
- Open days
- Written materials
- Specific outreach measures

- Consider whether there is anything about the target group that would make certain means of contact inappropriate

For Example

- Use of open days or local radio might not be effective with homeless clients
- Written materials would be of little use to clients with literacy problems

- Consider how to get the information to the target group in an accessible form
- Find out what means of contact other projects in similar circumstances have used and their experience of them
- Consider how you will attract clients to the project and what you can do to keep them motivated
- Consider the amount of time that will be needed for making contact and the people who will carry out the task

2.4 Setting Aims and Objectives

Objectives must be established prior to initiation of activities. This step involves setting aims and objectives that are sufficiently clear and specific that they can act as a guide for the project's activities and, very importantly, provide a criterion against which the success of the project can be evaluated at a later time. Of course objectives do not need to be set in stone - the results of monitoring the implementation and operation of the project may dictate that objectives be revised. If objectives are revised this must be an explicit process so its implications are clearly identified.

Questions to Answer

1. Who is to be involved in setting the aims and objectives?

Possibilities

- Project Manager
- Management Committee
- Project Staff
- Local Drugs Task Force
- Clients
- Local Community

2. What are your objectives - in the short-term/in the long-term?

Example

Education Project

- Short-term : complete programme of study
- Long-term: retention at school

Community Project

- Short-term : raise awareness of drug use
- Long-term: development of Community Spirit

Treatment/Rehabilitation

- Short-term : retention on methadone programme
- Long-term: staying drug-free and moving into employment

3. If you are targeting an "intermediate" group (for example, parents, teachers, schools), how do the objectives for this group relate to the people directly involved in drug use?

4. If you are addressing behaviours associated with drug usage (for example, homelessness, school drop out) rather than drug use per se, how do your objectives for these behaviours relate to actual drug use?
5. What kinds of information will you use to show objectives have been reached? (see step 4.1)
6. What measures will you use to collect the information needed? (see step 4.1)

Considerations

- Consider whether the objectives as set out, show clearly how implementation of the project will affect the identified drugs problem
- Consider whether the objectives as set out, are specific about the activities needed for their fulfilment
- Consider whether the objectives as set out are clear about the expected effects
- Consider whether the objectives as set out are feasible
- Think about how you will involve the different parties you want to be part of the objective-setting process
- Consider the cost involved in collecting the data you will need to demonstrate attainment of objectives
- Consider the personnel time that will be involved in data-gathering and the level of expertise that will be required

2.5 Selection of Activities/Services

This step involves setting out clearly the activities and services that will be implemented to meet the project's objectives. The step also involves presenting the evidence for the usefulness of what the project is choosing to do.

Questions to Answer

1. What specific activities/services is the project intending to offer?
2. What is the time-scale for the activities? What is the duration and frequency of activities?
3. How do the chosen activities/services link with stated objectives? (Refer back to your answers to the questions in step 2.4)
4. What is the rationale for the particular activities/services the project has chosen to offer?
5. What is the evidence for the effectiveness of the services/activities that you are offering?

Check

- Research literature
- Evaluations of other similar projects

6. How will the project's activities fit in with other initiatives in the area?

Considerations

- Consider whom you want to be involved in the selection of the project's activities/services

Possibilities

- Management Committee
- Project staff
- Local Drugs Task Force
- Project clients
- Local community

- Find out whether other projects have been doing anything similar and whether they have any evaluation findings on the effectiveness of what they do
- Consider whether you have set realistic boundaries around what you intend to do

2.6 Setting Baseline Measures

Outcome evaluation is considered in step 4.1 of the Handbook but in order to assess the impact of the project at a later point it is necessary to consider evaluation at the planning stage. One of the best means of doing this is to establish the situation existing at the time of project initiation and to use this as a baseline against which changes can be measured on completion of the project.

Questions to Answer

(In answering these questions refer back to your answers to questions in steps 2.4 and 2.5)

1. What information can you collect to establish a baseline against which future impact can be measured?
2. How will this information be gathered?
3. From whom will the information be gathered?

Considerations

- Consider the time involved in collecting the necessary information
- Consider the cost involved
- Consider the personnel resources involved
- Think whether there is any help you may need from outside the project

Possible Sources of Help

- Local Drugs Task Force
- Funding Agency
- Professional expertise
- Technical advice

- Find out what other projects in similar circumstances have done
- Think how you will organise, store and analyse the data you have collected

2.7 Assessing the Resources Required

A critical step in the planning stage is trying to assess the resources the project will need. While some resource needs will be obvious, experience shows that there can be needs that are not so clear at the beginning which, if not identified, can cause problems later in the life of the project. Some needs worth considering in relation to the critical factors of staffing, funding and premises are presented below.

Questions to Answer

(In answering these questions refer back to your answers to questions in steps 2.4 and 2.5)

Staffing

1. Thinking of the different functions involved in the project, what skills are needed for each one?

Possible Functions

- Service-provision to clients
- Administrative
- Secretarial
- Information Management
- Fundraising
- Financial Management
- Public Relations
- Lobbying
- Premises Maintenance

2. How many people are needed to run the different functions?
3. Are there particular qualifications that people will need to have to carry out certain functions?

4. What kind of contract will people carrying out the different functions be offered³?

Possibilities

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Fixed-term
- Sessional
- Community Employment (CE) scheme

5. Will there be volunteers involved? If so, what functions will they fulfil? How many will be involved?

6. Will anybody carrying out any function need special training, particularly in relation to financial and information management?

7. Will you need to have substitute staff for those on training courses?

Funding

8. What are the major items of cost?

Some Typical Items

- Salaries
- PRSI
- Rent
- Office Equipment
- Electricity
- Heating
- Telephone
- Stationery
- Postage
- Travel
- Legal Costs
- Advertising
- Publications
- Conferences

³ The provision of a written statement of terms and conditions of employment (i.e. a contract of employment) for each employee is a legal requirement for an employer. Contact the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs in relation to this. Useful books for reference are: (1) Clarke, Jane, *A Guide to Good Employment Practice in the Community and Voluntary Sector*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1995

(2) Power, Maria, *Report on Employment Policy and Practice in the Community Development Programme*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1997

Apart from the typical costs such as staffing and premises, think also of:

- Staff training (see step 3.2)
- Staff support e.g. supervision (see step 3.2)
- Provision of substitutes for staff in training
- Information gathering (see steps 2.6 and 3.3)
- Research and evaluation (see step 4.1)
- Networking (see step 3.5)
- Supporting community involvement (see step 3.4)

9. What funding sources will you draw on? What proportion of the overall cost will come from each source?

Premises

10. Considering all the functions and activities and services involved in the project, what amount of space will you require?

11. Considering the functions, activities and services of the project, what kind of space layout would be appropriate?

12. Does the nature of the project demand any special space requirements?

Possible Requirements

- Residential facilities
- Space for one-to-one work
- Space for large groups
- Quiet place
- Private place for clients ;for staff
- Space that allows for noise
- Crèche
- Canteen
- Storage Space

13. If what is available/possible does not match the project's requirements, how will the mismatch be managed?

Considerations

- When planning the resources required, think ahead to what may be needed if the project grows in the future; particularly in the case of premises
- Find out from other similar projects what they have found to be the critical requirements when recruiting personnel

Experience shows that some key factors are:

- Having the proper qualifications/skills
- Commitment and motivation
- Ability for team work
- Flexibility

- To attract and retain appropriately qualified staff, ensure funding is sufficient to pay appropriate salary scales. Remember that salary scales must be comparable to those in the public sector (Contact the Department of Finance if you have queries about salary scales)
- If volunteers are to be involved, consider what the work relationship will be between them and paid staff
- Think ahead to items of cost that may arise later in the life of the project
- Allow for hidden costs that may arise in relation to activities, such as networking, that are additional to the project's service-provision activities
- In applying for funding you will need to be able to make a compelling case that shows what will be done with the money and what will be lost if the money is not given. You should talk to the funding agency when you are drawing up your funding proposal as they will be able to offer useful information and support relating to their needs and requirements
- Any funding you receive from the Local Drugs Task Force is public money and you will be responsible for financial accountability in relation to these funds
- Inadequate premises can be a serious pitfall for a project and it is very important to get them right at the start
- Keep in mind that there are certain requirements which have been set down by law in relation to Health and Safety standards⁴

⁴ You can contact the Health and Safety Authority (at 10 Hogan Place, Dublin 2) with any queries relating to health and safety standards.

- Try to have a plan B if plan A should fall through in relation to, for example, premises or funding

2.8 Preparing for Future Evaluation

Project evaluation is considered in detail in steps 3.3 and 4.1 of the Handbook. But at the planning stage you need to bear in mind the subsequent stages and start preparing for future evaluation. The impetus for evaluation may come from within the project or it may be instigated by an external body. For example, project evaluation is a requirement of the National Drugs Strategy Team for continued funding of a project.

There are two main types of evaluation. One type of evaluation is carried out while the project is developing (process evaluation); this form of evaluation examines how effectively the project is operating and whether it is doing what it set out to do (see step 3.3). The second type, known as outcome evaluation, is usually carried out when a project or activity is completed and is used to evaluate the outcomes of the project and the impact it has had (see step 4.1). Both types of evaluation are needed to enable a project to operate both efficiently and effectively.

Whatever the type of evaluation, it will be easier and more productive when built into the project from the beginning.

Questions to Answer

(The questions and considerations below refer to evaluations that are instigated by the project itself rather than by an external body)

1. Do you plan to formally evaluate what happens in the project as it develops (known as process evaluation)?
2. What do you want to find out from the process evaluation?
3. Do you plan to formally evaluate the outcomes of the project (outcome evaluation)?
4. What do you want to find out from the outcome evaluation?
5. Given what you want to find out in later evaluations, what information do you need to start collecting at this time?

Possibilities

- Information on needs
- Baseline measurements
- Clear and specific objectives
- Details on potential clients

6. Who will collect the necessary information?
7. How do you plan to manage the information?

Elements of Information Management <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Collection- Storage- Analysis- Usage

Considerations

- The collection of data and information gathering is a very necessary process for any project regardless of size or nature. The extent of data collection will of course depend on the size and scope of the project
- Systematic collection of information and record keeping will make future monitoring and evaluation easier and more effective. Consider establishing a database on computer from the beginning
- Consider who will have access to any information gathered and how you will protect confidentiality
- Evaluation can be costly. Consider what resources will be required for whatever evaluation you intend to carry out and build the cost of preparing for it into your funding request
- Consider what expertise will be required and whether it will be available within the project or whether you will have to buy it in
- Evaluation can be time consuming. Think about the time involved and how it will be scheduled into the project's plan
- Consider who would need to be involved

Possibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Staff- Management Committee- Clients- Clients' families- Local community- Local Drugs Task Force
--

- Think about the assistance you will need and from whom

Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Expertise- Guidance- Training- Funding- Technical Support

- From the beginning make evaluation part of the project's policies and strategies
- From the beginning create an evaluation culture so that any reviews and evaluation exercises are conducted in an atmosphere of safety and are taken seriously

2.9 Reviewing the Planning Stage

The planning stage of project development has many varied aspects that require much thought and analysis. Having completed the various steps involved, the final task is to review how the stage has worked out and to identify the lessons that have been learned in the process.

Questions to Answer

1. Who was involved in the planning? Was everyone who needed to be involved actually involved?
2. Did you get all the information you needed for the implementation and review stages of the project?
3. Did you get whatever help or support you may have required?
4. What were the most useful sources of help/support?
5. What pitfalls, if any, were experienced?
6. What were the strengths of the planning process?
7. What lessons have been learned?

Considerations

- Are there any principles of good practice you have identified that would be valuable to share with other projects of a similar nature?
- What are the principal issues to watch out for in the next stage of the project's life?
- Considering the different lines of communication involved, how well did each work? Are there weak links that need to be addressed? Which ones work well and why?

Section Three

Implementing the Project

This section covers the steps involved once the planning stage has been completed and the project is being put into action. At the implementation stage, the critical steps include:

- 3.1 Deciding on Structures and Style
- 3.2 Creating an Effective Work Environment
- 3.3 Creating Systems for Monitoring the Project's Operations
- 3.4 Developing a Strategy for Community Involvement
- 3.5 Developing a Strategy for Participation in a Network of Links

3.1 Deciding on Structures and Style

This step involves decisions on the structures that will be used in managing the project and the particular style of operation and values that the project will adopt.

Questions to Answer

Useful sources of Information for answering these questions:

- Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs
- Revenue Commissioners

1. What legal form will the project adopt⁵?

Typical Structures

- Company Limited by Guarantee with no share capital⁶
- Unincorporated Association

2. Who will draft the Governing document, Memorandum and Articles of Association or Constitution?
3. If the project is to be a company limited by guarantee, who will the members be? What powers will they have?
4. Will you seek 'charity status'? ('charity status' as such does not exist in the Republic of Ireland but a charitable organisation can apply to the Revenue Commissioners for a Charity (CHY) number which is used for the purposes of exemption from certain taxes)
5. What management structures will the project have?

Typical Structures

- Management Committee
- Advisory Council/Committee
- Board of Directors
- Sub-Committees
- Project Promoter have responsibility
- Funding Agency have responsibility

⁵ A useful reference for this task is: Cousins, Mel, *A Guide to Legal Structures for Voluntary and Community Organisations*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1994

⁶ A further useful publication is: Clarke, Jane, *Becoming a Limited Company*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1996

6. If there is to be a Management Committee:
How many members will it have?
Who will be represented on it?
How will members be chosen?

Representation Possibilities

- Community
- Statutory agencies (e.g. Garda, Health Board, Probation and Welfare Services)
- Voluntary Sector
- Professional Bodies
- Staff
- Clients

7. What values will guide the style of operation of the project?

Examples

- Needs Driven Approach
- Respect (for clients and employees)
- Empowerment
- Participation
- Emphasis on Feedback

Considerations

- Bear in mind that the legal form adopted will have consequences for the liabilities of the project and can also have an influence on the decision of different bodies to provide funding
- Bear in mind that having ‘charitable status’ influences the taxes the project will have to pay
- You will need to be informed on the various conditions and requirements attached to the attainment of legal status such as ‘company limited by guarantee’. For example, there will be documents to be filed with the Revenue Commissioners and you will need to notify them if any changes are made to the name of the organisation, its objects or its board membership
- If the project is a company limited by guarantee you will need to be aware of company law

- You will need to be aware of the legal duties and responsibilities of Directors/Management Committee Members. All have Common Law Duties, Fiduciary Duties, Duty of Care and, if Directors, they carry civil liability
- Think through what roles and functions Management Committee Members will be expected to fulfil
- The relationship between the Management Committee and staff members is very important. Experience shows it is good practice to appoint one of the committee members as staff liaison officer in order to maximise this relationship
- The quality of the Management Committee is a key influence on the success of a project and its composition requires careful thought⁷
- Consider how project values will be communicated to staff and clients; how adoption of these values by staff and management will be encouraged; and what behaviours will show that the values are being implemented

⁷ The following publication will be useful: Clarke, Jane, *Managing Together: A Guide to Working Effectively as a Committee*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1993

3.2 Creating an Effective Work Environment

Experience shows that the people working in the project are its most important resource and are a critical factor in its success or failure. This step involves consideration of the issues and responsibilities involved in creating a work environment that is fair to both employer and employee. The step involves setting out terms and conditions of work, roles and responsibilities and expectations; it involves showing how the project intends to treat its employees and how it plans to provide for respect, equality, satisfaction and development.

Questions to Answer

Recruitment

1. What process does the project use to recruit the required personnel?

Aspects of Recruitment⁸

- Application Form
- Job Specification
- Advertising
- Shortlisting
- Interview panel
- Interview process

2. Does the project have a policy on recruitment?
3. Have you prepared work contracts for each employee?
Are these: Permanent, Fixed-Term, Other?
4. Have you prepared job descriptions with clear job titles for each employee?
5. To whom is each employee accountable and to whom does s/he report?

Terms of Work

6. What salary scales are to be employed? What will the increments be? Will there be overtime pay? Will expenses be paid? What mechanisms are there for review of salaries?

⁸ The following documents could be of help for this process:

Clarke, Jane, *Staff Selection and Interviewing*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1997

Clarke, Jane, *The Staff Recruitment Process*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1996

7. For each employee, what are the hours of work and annual leave entitlement?
8. What are the project's policies in relation to leave other than holidays?

Types of Leave

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sick leave- Maternity leave- Parental leave- Adoptive leave- Special leave |
|--|

9. Does the project have a pension scheme? A health insurance scheme?
10. What is the project's redundancy policy?
11. What is the project's policy with regard to probation periods; notice of termination?

Conditions of Work

12. Does the project have a policy on staff training?
13. Does the project conduct a training needs assessment?
14. What does the project provide in terms of training and development of employees?
15. What are the opportunities for promotion and career development?
16. Does the project have a policy on staff supervision?
17. What supervision and support systems does the project provide?
18. What are the project's disciplinary and grievance procedures?
19. What is the project's stance on Trade Unions?
20. What is the project's policy on equal opportunities?

21. What measures does the project employ to protect the employees' health, safety and welfare?

Examples of Issues

- Stress
- Health and Welfare
- Violence
- Work overload
- Harassment/bullying

22. What is the project's policy on sexual harassment?

23. What is the project's policy on flexible work practices?

Examples

- Career breaks
- Job sharing

24. What mechanisms does the project have for giving feedback to employees? For canvassing employees' needs?

25. What mechanisms does the project have to ensure policies are put into practice and are monitored?

Considerations

- Think through what the project expects from its employees and put your specific expectations on paper
- Provide an opportunity for employees to spell out their expectations of you as an employer
- Ensure you are fully informed of your legal responsibilities and obligations in relation to employees

Possible Sources of Information

- Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs
- Books and Manuals *
- Local Drugs Task Force
- National Drugs Strategy Team

*For example, Clarke, Jane, *A Guide to Good Employment Practice in the Community and Voluntary Sector*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1995

- Check out with other similar projects what their experiences are of good employment practice
- If you feel you do not have sufficient experience on employment policy and practice, consider seeking funding for further training in the area
- Ask yourself how salary scales offered by the project compare with similar work in other sectors. Salary scales must be comparable to those in the public sector (Contact the Department of Finance if you have queries about salary scales)
- Ensure that payment adequately reflects the work being done and the value of that work
- Encourage staff to discuss their training and career development plans
- Supervision should be available to all staff. If supervision is not available within the project, staff should have access to an outside supervisor⁹
- Draw up a complete document detailing the terms and conditions of work and the project's policies
- If changes were to be made in the future in conditions of work or in the project's policies or in the scope and size of the project, consider how you would manage this
- Training is important in ensuring the quality of the services delivered. Training should be relevant and appropriate. Make sure staff are aware of training options
- Training is most effective when it is planned strategically and designed in response to individual needs. Analysis of training needs must be a regular exercise
- Consider how it will be shown to staff that they are appreciated and that their work is valued
- If volunteers are involved, think what their training and support needs might be and how they might be addressed. Experience shows that some critical issues in relation to volunteers are:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear guidance - Affirmation - Training - Support |
|--|

⁹ A useful reference here is: Clarke, Jane, *Staff Support and Supervision*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1997

- If volunteers are involved, think whether there may be any issues arising from how they work alongside paid staff
- Ensure that all staff are fully aware of and understand all of the project's policies
- Bear in mind that an important influence on the successful implementation of policies is the extent to which there has been involvement from the different parties concerned – manager, staff, Management Committee - in their development

3.3 Creating Systems for Monitoring the Project's Operations

This step involves the monitoring of what is taking place in the project so you are in a position to say exactly what is being done, how well it is being done, whether things are going according to plan and how well the project is being received (process evaluation). Monitoring means collecting, analysing and interpreting data in relation to: the activities/services delivered; clients' take-up of services and their responses to them; staff morale; information management; and the resources available to the project. Monitoring the implementation of the project needs to be an on-going process. In addition to the review which project staff and management themselves carry out on a continual basis, a project may decide to carry out a formal process evaluation at a specified time in the project's life. A formal process evaluation is also likely to be required by the National Drugs Strategy Team, the project promoter or funding body.

Questions to Answer

Activities/Services

In answering the questions in this section refer back to your answers to the questions in step 2.5

1. What activities/services are being implemented?

Keep Records on

- Type
- Number
- Frequency
- Timescale
- Duration
- Location

2. Is the project implementing the services/activities set out at the planning stage? If not, what are the reasons for this; what are the implications of this?

3. Are any new services required? Any improvements needed?

Possible Actions Needed

- Inform the Local Drugs Task Force
- Inform the funding agency
- Possible change of direction
- Address newly identified needs
- Review objectives
- Review needs
- Review strategies

Clients Served

In answering the questions in this section refer back to your answers to the questions in step 2.3

4. How many clients is the project serving?
5. What is the socio-economic profile of your clients?

Keep Records On

- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Employment
- Other relevant details

6. Are you reaching the people you had targeted in your original plan? How well does the profile of your actual group match the profile of your targeted group? If there are discrepancies, what are the reasons for this? What are the implications of this?
7. What is the project's client capacity and how many are actually taking up the service? (take-up rate). If take-up is low, what are the implications of this? What do you do about it?
8. Is there a waiting-list? How long is it?
9. What is the project's retention rate for clients?
10. What means do you have for consultation with clients on the planning/development of services?

11. What means do you use to assess client satisfaction with services?

12. Do you have a complaints procedure for clients?

13. What is the project's policy on confidentiality?

Aspects of Policy

- How is information on clients stored?
- Who has access to client files?
- How long are files held?
- Is there third party access to files?
- Have Data Protection issues been considered?

Quality of Services

14. Have you developed, or do you have available to you, standards for the quality of different aspects of the project?

Examples of some areas to check

- Access to service
- Provision of information
- Referral system
- Appointments procedures
- Client record keeping
- Assessment of client needs
- Development of care plan
- Follow-up procedures

15. What procedures do you use to assess whether the services are meeting quality standards?

16. What procedures do you use to get feedback on the quality of the project's services/activities?

17. From whom do you seek feedback?

Possibilities

- Clients
- Families of clients
- Service-providers
- Local community
- Professionals in the area
- External evaluator
- Independent observer

18. Are you getting feedback from all those from whom you want it?

19. What methods do you use to obtain feedback?

Possibilities

- Personal interviews
- Questionnaires
- Checklists
- Discussion groups
- Focus groups
- Review sessions
- Observation
- Written reports

20. How often do you seek feedback?

21. Who has access to the feedback? Who do you want to have access to it?

22. Who collects the feedback: is it an external evaluator or someone within the project?

23. Who analyses and interprets the feedback?

24. How do you use the findings? What do you do if there is negative feedback?

Staff Morale

25. Are any problems emerging in staff relations?

26. Are staff raising any issues in relation to the working environment?

Examples of Issues

- Workload
- Stress levels
- Pay
- Tenure
- Work conditions

27. How do you find out what the staff's experiences are?

Possible Means

- Feedback sessions
- Individual appraisals
- Feedback forms
- Regular meetings

28. Are staff doing what you expect of them?

29. Are lines of communication working effectively? Are they clear, direct, speedy and accessible?

30. Are lines of accountability clear?

Information Management

In answering the questions in this section refer back to your answers to the questions in step 2.8

31. How systematic is the project in collecting the information it needs on:

- Clients
- Services
- Staff
- Needs
- Feedback

32. How are the data stored?

33. Who analyses and interprets the data? How skilled are they at data analysis?

34. Who has access to the data?

35. What use is made of the data collected?

36. How well are information systems working?

Resources

In answering the questions in this section refer back to your answers to the questions in step 2.7

37. To what extent does the project have what it needs in relation to staff:

- Numbers
- Qualifications
- Experience

38. To what extent does the project have the premises it requires?

- Consider**
- Space
 - Layout
 - Location
 - Appearance
 - Facilities
 - Furnishings

39. To what extent does the project have the funding you feel it needs?

40. What procedures are in place for financial tracking of funds? ¹⁰

- Examples**
- a Receipts book where all income is recorded
 - a Payments book where all expenditure is recorded
 - a Petty Cash book - ideally the responsibility of one person with all receipts kept on file
 - Bank reconciliation on a monthly basis

NOTE: If a computer programme is used for financial tracking you should:

- make back-up copies of all files regularly
- keep original paper receipts/invoices etc.

¹⁰ A useful document in relation to financial management is: Power, M., *Financial Management for Community and Voluntary Groups*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1997

41. Does the project have the technological supports it needs?
42. If new or improved services are found to be needed, what resources will be required for this to happen?

Considerations

- Bear in mind that there are now increasing requirements from organisations with regard to standards and accountability. Check with the Local Drugs Task Force about the legal requirements involved
- Monitoring/evaluation may show that things are going to plan but also be prepared for it to identify problems. See this as an opportunity to initiate action to resolve the problems identified
- Consider what the results of the monitoring/evaluation process imply for the next steps in the project's implementation and development
- Bear in mind that if any changes are to be made within the project as a result of monitoring/evaluation procedures, in order to obtain sanction you will need to consult with external bodies such as:
 - The Project Promoter
 - The Local Drugs Task Force
 - The Funding Body
- Think whether any lessons have been learned that could usefully be shared with other projects
- Consider whether there are any lessons to be learned from how other projects in similar circumstances have managed monitoring/evaluation
- Consider whether the results of the monitoring/evaluation process have any implications in the context of new services or activities that may be coming on stream in the area
- Bear in mind that monitoring must be an on-going process

- Consider whether the project needs any help with the monitoring process

Possibilities

- Technical support
- Funding
- Technology
- Training
- Guidance

- Setting standards for quality for the different aspects of service provision is a detailed and complex undertaking. Seek help from the Local Drugs Task Force and other projects
- Information and communication technologies (ICT's) can be very powerful tools for a whole variety of the project's monitoring tasks: information storage and retrieval, information sharing, network co-ordination, publicity and fundraising. Consider whether you might need training in the use these technologies

Possibilities

- Dublin City University has developed Certificate and Diploma programmes for voluntary and community organisations in Information Media and the Internet (www.dcu.ie)
- Check with your Local Drugs Task Force what options may be available

Consider creating a **Project File** which would contain all the information relevant to the project. This file should contain at least the following:

- *Project Plan* (including aims and objectives)
- *Terms of Reference* (for example in relation to activities/services being offered)
- *Progress Reports*
- *Cost Estimates* (and how they were calculated)
- *Minutes of all Meetings*
- *Requests Made* (for example to the Local Drugs Task Force or the funding body)
- *Health and Safety Statement*
- *Copies of all Project Policies*
- *Contracts* (with external services e.g. suppliers/sub-contractors)

Any other documents/information that you feel would be useful to maintain close to hand could also be included here.

NOTE: The CREW Network (www.thecrewnetwork.ie) have developed an interactive website, www.drugsinireland.ie, to act as a portal site for projects working with drugs issues in Ireland

3.4 Developing a Strategy for Community Involvement

Experience shows that being able to bring the community with you is a critical influence on the success of a project. Right from the start, the project must consider the ways and means it will use to create goodwill and ensure involvement of the community. Before a strategy for community involvement can be developed each project must decide on a definition of 'community' that is most relevant to their project. Community can refer to the project's user groups, to a selected group of people within a particular area or indeed to a much wider group of people.

Questions to Answer

1. At the beginning of the project, what kind of involvement do you want from the local community in relation to:-
 - Setting the project's objectives?
 - Planning the project's activities?(see steps 2.4 and 2.5)

2. At the beginning of the project, what means will you use to involve the community?

Possibilities

- Focus groups
- Open forum
- Interviews
- Written feedback
- Community workshops

3. When the project is up and running, what kind of involvement do you want from the community? (see step 3.1)

Possibilities

- Join the Management Committee
- Paid work in the project
- Voluntary work in the project
- Champion the project to others
- Fundraise

4. How do you plan to keep the community informed?

Possibilities

- Representative on Management Committee
- Local forum
- Information leaflets
- Oral presentations
- Reports
- Consultation with community groups
- Newsletter
- Open days
- Local radio

5. How do you plan to get feedback from the community?

Possibilities

- Community workshops
- Focus groups
- Written feedback
- Interviews

6. What actions will you take if there is hostility within the community to the project?

Considerations

- Think through why you want to have the community involved
- Involvement is likely to work best when encouraged from the beginning
- Ensure that you make it clear that you want the community to be involved
- Think about how you can make the project attractive enough so the community want to be involved

Possibilities

- Be seen to be responsive to needs
- Be open
- Give information
- Seek feedback and listen to it
- Be ready to listen to any negative attitudes and responses
- Employ local people
- Be seen to be efficient and effective
- Check needs regularly
- Provide easy access

- Be prepared for the possibility of community hostility
- Find out how other projects in similar circumstances have managed community involvement and, if it exists, community hostility
- Training may be needed for certain kinds of involvement. Think about the kind of training that might be required and build the cost into the project's budget
- Think about the resources, other than money, that community involvement will require (see step 2.7)
- Think about what assistance you may need and from whom; especially in the case where any community hostility is evident
- Consider how involvement of members of the community will be acknowledged
- Consider whether certain types of involvement could be acknowledged by certification

3.5 Developing a Strategy for Participation in a Network of Links

With the establishment of over 200 drugs-related projects in 13 Local Drugs Task Forces since 1997, a large reservoir of experience and expertise is being built up. The creation of links with other projects enables you to tap into this reservoir and makes you part of a potentially very valuable network. Apart from other similar projects, in an effective network there are other important links including statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, professional bodies and community groups.

Questions to Answer

1. What do you want out of networking with others?
2. Who are the significant links for your particular project? Why are these the significant ones?
3. What channels will you use to link with others?
4. How will you evaluate the usefulness to the project of networking?
5. Who from the project will be involved in networking?

Considerations

- Consider the time commitment involved and build it into the project's time schedule at the planning stage
- Consider the cost involved and the resources that will be needed and include these from the start in the project's budget (see step 2.7)
- Consider whether there is any assistance you may need in setting up the links

- Consider the obstacles that might get in the way and take account of these in the links you choose to make

Some Possible Obstacles

- Different principles
- Different values
- Different priorities
- Different agendas
- Territorialism
- Competitiveness

- Choose links that are compatible with your values and principles but which will also be challenging
- Networking is about the development of relationships and must be based on trust and some accepted common ground

Some Requirements

- Openness
- Trust
- Shared principles
- Common end goals
- Mutual respect
- Mutual recognition
- Respect for boundaries
- Co-operation
- Willingness to share

- Consider the practical issue of whether the project has the necessary communication systems

Section Four

Review: Evaluating the Outcomes of the Project

This section covers the questions and considerations involved at the stage where the project has been up-and-running for some time and now needs to evaluate what outcomes it is producing and what impact it is having.

4.1 Evaluating the Outcomes of the Project

At some point in the life of the project you will have to be able to answer questions on whether it is achieving the objectives set out at the planning stage, whether it is meeting the needs initially identified and whether it is having any identifiable benefits. This is critical for the project itself and will also be required by the funding body to determine whether to continue funding (it may also be used by the local community to determine whether they want to continue to be involved). The answers to the above questions will determine whether the project should continue as it has done or whether modifications, additions or new directions are required. Evaluation is necessary both for young projects that need to assess the first run of their services/activities and for older projects that have carried out their services/activities many times over a period of years

As noted in Step 2.8 evaluation may be instigated by the project itself but it is important to bear in mind that the National Drugs Strategy Team or the funding body will also want such an evaluation. Where a project instigates its own evaluation, the perspective on the evaluation process may differ from the perspective of the National Drugs Strategy Team or the funding body. In the latter cases each project, while operating individually, is seen as part of a bigger picture in the response to the drug problem and is only one element in a public service response to the issue.

Step 4.1 involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of information about the outcomes and impact of the project in a systematic, rigorous and objective manner.

Questions to Answer

(The following questions and considerations apply primarily in the situation where the project itself instigates the outcome evaluation. Where an external body instigates the evaluation it will develop its own procedures and methods. In the latter case, the following questions and considerations can provide useful guidelines for any consultations between the project and the external body about the nature of the evaluation to be carried out)

1. At what point in the project's life will the evaluation be conducted?

Some Possibilities

- After the first run of services
- After the first year
- After several runs of services
- When money is found
- On some significant anniversary
- When required by the funding body

2. Will the evaluation be conducted by project staff or by an external evaluator?
3. What framework will you use to guide the evaluation's process, procedures and methods?
4. What questions do you want answered?
5. From whom do you want to get information?

Some Possibilities

- Clients
- Clients' families
- Local community
- Service-providers
- Professionals in the area

6. What indicators of success do you intend to employ?
Indicators should relate to your objectives (see step 2.4)
7. What means will you use to collect the information you need?

Some Possibilities

- Personal interviews
- Questionnaires
- Checklists
- Written reports
- Discussion groups
- Observation

8. What do you know of the data collection means you intend to employ?

Questions to Ask

- How reliable?
- How valid?
- How comprehensive?
- How easy to administer?
- How readily understood?

9. What resources will be needed? (see step 2.7)

10. What time scale will be involved? When will the data be collected and how often?

11. How will staff be involved? Who else will be involved?

12. How do you intend to use the findings?

13. Who will be informed of the outcomes?

Possibilities

- Staff
- Management Committee
- Clients
- Families of clients
- Potential clients
- Local community
- Funding bodies
- Local Drugs Task Force
- Funding agency
- Service providers
- Policy-makers
- General public

14. What means will you use to communicate the findings to the different audiences involved?

Possible Means

- Written Report
- Extracts/summaries from the Report
- Oral presentations
- Workshops
- Radio
- Newspapers

15. When will you make the findings known?

16. How do you plan to create support for the evaluation exercise?

Possibilities

- Show the need for it
- Identify the benefits
- Consult on what should be covered
- Re-assurance on the use of it
- Give information on it
- Show how it will be used
- Use appropriate procedures

Considerations

- Evaluation is most useful when built into the project from the planning stage (see steps 2.6 and 2.8)
- The ease with which the evaluation is conducted, the level of co-operation obtained and the extent to which it is taken seriously will depend in large measure on the extent to which you have managed to create an evaluation culture within the project and have made evaluation integral to the project's strategies from the beginning
- Success will be influenced by how well you have prepared all parties involved, by the extent to which you have managed to create support for the exercise and how credible you have made it seem
- The kind of evaluation carried out should reflect the nature of the particular project and should be tailor-made to fit the project's needs
- Draw clear boundaries around the information you collect. It is more effective to analyse thoroughly a smaller amount of information than to collect large amounts that cannot be handled
- Consider the costs involved and how much the project can afford and take this into account in setting the boundaries of the evaluation exercise
- Consider the demands that the evaluation will make on staff time and possibly on clients and take this into account in setting the boundaries of the evaluation exercise
- To avoid bias allow for a range of perspectives on the project's outcomes and benefits
- Do not rely on one measure of success; use different methods to reflect the project's different objectives

- The evaluation measures used should reflect the objectives of the project and refer to the needs identified at the planning stage (see steps 2.2 and 2.4)
- Try out your measures before embarking on full-scale evaluation; a pilot test will save you time and money
- Find out what evaluation methods and procedures other projects in similar circumstances have found to be effective
- The level and means of communication of the evaluation findings should be tailored to fit the needs of the particular audience involved
- Consider how you will respond to any issues the evaluation may identify. If it shows that expected outcomes have not been reached, you will need to consider the implications and the effects on future decisions
- Consider how the findings compare with evaluations of other similar projects
- Consider whether any lessons have been learned that could usefully be shared with other projects

List of Publications/References Cited in this Handbook

1. Clarke, Jane, *Managing Together: A Guide to Working Effectively as a Committee*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1993
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9. Power, Maria, *Report on Employment Policy and Practice in the Community Development Programme*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1997
10. Power, Maria, *Financial Management for Community and Voluntary Groups*, Dublin: The Combat Poverty Agency, 1997
11. Ruddle, Prizeman and Jaffro, *Evaluation of Local Drugs Task Force Projects: Experiences and Perceptions of Planning and Implementation*, Dublin: Government of Ireland/The National Drugs Strategy Team, 2001
12. The Crew Network - (www.thecrewnetwork.ie) have developed an interactive Website - www.drugsinireland.ie - to act as a portal site for projects working with drugs issues in Ireland.

NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list of publications or references that could be useful in planning and implementing a community-based project. This list should be viewed as a starting point for project managers and Management Committees.