

Quick Guide:

Developing a plan

A guide for a voluntary or community group

Having a plan for managing and developing the work and activities you want to carry out is important if you are to have a clear direction and are to be in control of what you do. Your plan will state what you aim to do for the short and medium term, usually covering the next three to five years. It will also contain your mission and vision, an assessment of the environment in which your services operate including who your stakeholders are and what risks are out there. Having a plan helps you to focus and avoid "strategic" or "mission" drift which is often caused by chasing funders' criteria rather than staying true to your own vision.

There are three types of plan a voluntary and community organisation or social enterprise may wish to write:

A Strategic Plan: Concentrates on the big picture. It follows directly from your mission statement. It looks over a long term period (often around 5 years). It maps out the key aims of an organisation and shows the overall direction the organisation wishes to take.

When making decisions about projects, contracts or funding, your Strategic Plan is the blueprint that helps you make shorter term decisions and keeps you focused on your overall aims.

A Business Plan: Helps you put on paper how you will turn your vision (or strategic plan) into reality. It normally deals with a timescale of around 3 years (with more detailed planning for year 1). It should be a working document, written in plain English and understandable by all those likely to read it (staff, volunteers, Trustees, funders).

A good business plan will outline what your organisation is about and wants to achieve and provides a summary of how it plans to do this, who will benefit from the work and evidence of need, what resources are needed, who will deliver and manage it, where funding and resources will come from and how you know you have succeeded.

A Project Plan: May form part of your business plan. A project plan is a detailed plan, concentrating on a specific project or area of work. It will contain very detailed planning for a year (though can cover a period of up to 3 years). A project plan will cover details such as what you want to do and why, how you will do it (details of activities planned such as number of training sessions etc.), who you will work with, what will be achieved and how much it will cost. It should also describe what you will do at the end of the project and how you will record the difference it's making.

For more information or support in developing a plan, have a look at the full guide from Devon Voluntary Action (DeVA) at http://www.devonva.org/information_and_guidance or contact DeVA on 0845 6099901 or by emailing support@devonva.org.