

Building a Team, Project Planning and Implementation for Grant and Other Projects

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*"It takes an entire village to raise a child."
African proverb*

I. The Reasons for Teamwork

Teams Get Big Results. Volunteers working in groups can have a bigger and more immediate impact than one person working alone. A team of fifteen persons for example, can conduct foundation research and develop a prospect list in a day, while it would probably take one person ten weekends.

Teams Build Unity. By uniting people from all segments of society and/or organization, team service fosters a spirit of community, a feeling of "I'm part of something bigger than myself." And it demonstrates that people, pulling together, can make change happen.

Teams Promote Equality. Team service is an equal-opportunity activity, crossing age, race, ethnic, social, religious, and economic lines. It provides a level playing field, where every player is equal because everyone has something to contribute.

II. Developing the Project and Team: Search Conference

One effective method of need's identification; project planning and team development is a Search conference. It's a sixteen hour tasked focused conference where the "whole system"-all the parties who have a stake in an issue and/or project-are directly involved in envisioning a desired future and action planning for creating it.

A Search conference involves performing the following tasks.

Search Conference Tasks

- * Reviewing the Past: Local to Global
 - * Assessing the Present: Local to Global
 - * Exploring the Future: Local to Global
 - * Creating a Future Vision
 - * Engaging in Action Planning
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A search conference is based on and governed by the following beliefs and assumption and values.

Search Conference Beliefs, Assumptions & Values

- * Ordinary people have knowledge of the real world and can organize this knowledge without experts.
 - * Creating shared perceptions of reality is critical to understanding the colorfulness of a turbulent world.
 - * Creating shared perceptions create a new context for creating the future and action plans.
 - * People can create their own futures.
 - * People want opportunities to engage their bodies, minds and hearts.
 - * People prefer cooperation to competition.
 - * Equalitarian participation supports more productive and effective conferences, visioning and action planning.
 - * Effective and successful change arises from involving all stakeholders in the design, development and implementation process.
 - * Diversity ought to be respected, appreciated and valued.
 - * Ordinary people can self-organize and perform tasks without facilitators.
 - * Designing the conference and change process is as critical as conducting the session and implementing plans.
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A Search conference is most successful when the following conditions exist.

Search Conference Conditions for Success

- * Broad Spectrum of Views
 - * Open System Exploration
 - * Future Focus
 - * Peer Participation, Tasks and Roles
 - * 16 Hours of Work Sessions across Three Days
 - * Full Participation & Attendance
 - * Public Action Commitments
 - * Healthy Conditions
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Action Planning

Action planning is simple. It involves three phases.

Action Planning Phases

- (1) identifying needs,
 - (2) create action plans and
 - (3) review and assess process.
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The following is a simple set of questions that facilitate action planning:

- (1) what is the need?,
- (2) is this need agreed upon by these affected?,
- (3) to whom does it apply (need) apply?
- (4) to how will we know if we have affective?
- (5) is anyone else likely to be affected?
- (6) what methods, techniques or actions shall we adapt?,
- (7) what other resources will be needed?,
- (8) what time scale shall we adopt?
- (9) how shall we measure progress? and
- (10) how will we assess whether further action is necessarily?

Next, complete an action plan and responsibility chart. It identifies:

- (1) what actions are to be taken to achieve an outcome, desired future, goal and/or objective,
- (2) who or whom is responsible,
- (3) resources allocated and/or needed to implement the action step,
- (4) milestone or expected completion date, and
- (5) remarks or additional information.

Action Plan

What	Resources	Milestone	Standard	Comments	Expectations
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

III. Team Membership

A team can be two people or it can be 100. It ought to include anyone who has a "stake" and/or can contribute value to the proposal and/or project.

No matter who else is involved, your team should also include people who live in the community in which project will be implemented, especially those who will directly benefit from your project. When to involve them will vary depending on the nature of the project. They need not be directly involved in writing the letter of intent and/or proposal. However, they should be solicited for their ideas and input. Ideally, the more people you bring to the table, the greater the impact the project will have -- not only when it's implemented, but also after it has been completed.

Team Roles

A team is usually made up of team volunteers, paid staff and a project leader and/or director. Specific responsibilities will vary from team to team. There are some general "job descriptions."

Team volunteers:

Volunteers are the backbone of the team, the people who make a project happen. Their responsibilities can range from fundraising, to locating a place to hold an event, to data gather for the proposal. They are just not "free labor." Volunteers contribute invaluable talents, skills, ideas, and experiences to a project.

Project leader:

A project leader serves as the key coordinator for a team's project before, during, and after the project. He or she plans and organizes the group's activities with the help of staff, volunteers and possibly with other NGOs. The project leader also monitors the project from beginning to end.

Other Player:

Many projects also involve partners. One such organization might be another NGO. Universities and local governmental departments maybe others. Seek out NGOs and other players, which directly relate to the project. The team ought to conduct a partnering brainstorming session to identify other players to contact. When meeting with them, have a general proposal hand. This general proposal and presentation need to explain the project and why the project is mutual beneficial and the other need to be involved.

Local Business:

Businesses can also be project partners. Companies are recognizing the value of community service, and many would be more than happy to donate lunch, supplies, personnel, and/or funds for a project.

Flexible is critical. A bank may be tapped out for monetary contributions for the year. However, it may be willing to coordinate a company-wide drive to collect pencils, books, and paper for a project.

Company recognition is also critical. The company needs to receive some type of project and public recognition. This is great advertising for the firm.

Partnering with an American Association or Organization

The following are some helpful hints:

(1) use the internet, world wide web: (a) got to a search engine, (b) put in your organization's title as key words (For example, a Haircutters' association might put in as a key word, "haircutters or haircutting), (c) review the results of the search by going to each site listed, (d) if the organization's site looks like a potential partner, print a copy of the staff directory, board of directors, their e-mail addresses and the page with the association's and/or organization's address, phone and fax numbers on it (You might also want to print or download information pages such as the organization's mission and services);

(2) create a potential partners file and/or list of the potential partners;

(3) write a partnership letter. It should explain the project, describes your organization, state why you think a partnership would be mutual beneficial, explain the grant program, characterizes what you expect and/or need from the partner, discuss who will be responsible for what, present what the next step for creating the partnership will be, and provide a contact person's name e-mail address, phone and fax numbers.

(4) send your e-mails;

(5) review your responses and decide which would be the best choices. Either send them an e-mail to arrange a teleconference or begin to partner through e-mail.

(6) send the other a "thank you" e-mail or letter. Explain that you appreciate their interest, why you don't see them as a good partner for this project, that you will keep them informed about the project and/or the organization and that you are keeping them informed because there maybe a future potential partnership; and

(7) begin your partnership.

Helpful Partnering Hints

(1) Find a good translator.

(2) Rehearse with your translator before calling and talking with your partner.

(3) Follow-up phone discussions with an e-mail summarizing the discussions. Ask your partner to confirm your summary. Be as specific as possible.

(4) Engage in "straight talk." If there are problems and/or misunderstandings inform the partner of problems and clarify misunderstanding. Always express your desires and expectations.

(5) Do your homework. Don't play hidden agenda games and engage in wishful thinking.

(6) Treat your partner as a professional and a "good friend."

(7) Define one team member as the partner contact. This person should be responsible for developing the relationship. Request your partner to do the same.

IV. Developing a Project

When it comes to planning projects, there are no hard and fast rules. Be creative. Use your judgment. And remember: There are no small projects. A service activity doesn't have to be elaborate to be effective.

Planning and Project Hints

1. Be inclusive. Think along the lines of working with people rather than for people. The best projects are those that draw upon the insights and experiences of community residents.
2. Recognize what each person has to offer. When it comes to service, no one is better or more important than anyone else is. Every person brings to the table special skills and personal characteristics, all of which enhance the project.
3. Know the mission of your project. Be clear about what you want to accomplish before you start planning project details. If you don't have a set goal in mind -- and if you don't stay focused on that goal -- you and your volunteers will only be spinning your wheels.
4. Be Hands-On. Try to develop a project that puts you in the middle of the community and that give you something concrete to show for at the end of the day. It's best to steer clear of projects that involve a lot of paper-pushing or data entry.
5. Meet Real Needs. Take direction from the community. Do not "impose service" -- create it in partnership with the members and/or the community.

V. The Stages of Team Problem Solving

All project encounter problems. The following is a simple process, which may support your team in dealing with encountered problems.

- I. Problem Identification. This is the phase where the problem is identified by the team
- II. Problem Definition. This is the stage where members characterize the problem. They develop a problem statement.
- III. Problem Analysis and Data Collection. Team members collect data on the problem. For example they might conduct interviews or draw of process map.
- IV. Identify the Specific Problem Causes. Team members use such techniques as a "Cause and Effect Diagram" to define the causes of the problem.
- V. Generate Alternatives. On the basis of on their understanding of the cause of the problem, team members brainstorm possible solutions.

VI. Select the Solution. This is the stage where members decide on the solution to be implemented based on "consensus."

VII. Action Planning. Team members develop a plan of action for implementing the solution. They also develop a plan for evaluating whether the solution was successful.

VIII. Evaluation of the Outcome of the Selected Solution. Team member monitor implementation and using the evaluation plan determine whether the solution was effective.

IX. After Action Review. Team members evaluate their performance as a team and creates an action plan for improving future performance.

VI. A To-Do List for Events

The following is week before an event checklist.

I. Call volunteers and staff to make sure they're coming.

II. Make sure each volunteer and staff understands the five W's: where they should go, when they should be there, who they should report to, what they are expected to do and bring, and why their role is important.

III. Send each volunteer a written "confirmation" and a map to the project site.

IV. Set a project agenda and a timeline, if you haven't already done so.

V. Create an equipment check-off list.

VI. Reconnect with your project partner(s). Send them a copy of your project schedule, as well as confirmation of their role in the project.

VII. Check lunch arrangements. Make sure you have enough beverages or snacks for your volunteers and staff during the day, as well as enough plates, utensils, and clean-up supplies. If a project partner is supplying food or beverages, you need adequate storage facilities for those items.

VIII. Confirm transportation arrangements. If possible, have your team meet at a convenient spot and travel together.