How to deliver an effective grant-funded project on technical and professional education

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This guide is for institutions that are considering applying for a grant. It is also to be used as a guide and reference point throughout the life of the project. Further detail and explanation behind the 12 steps below is available overleaf.

Preparation

1 What are the needs of young people and industry that you are seeking to address?

2 Who will be interested in this project?

3 Have you confirmed internal and external partners' involvement?

5 Have you carried out a comprehensive and specific risk assessment?

4 What are the project's key objectives and outcomes?

You are now ready to complete and submit your Funding Application

Implementation

Evaluation

6 How are you going to set up the delivery plan for the project?

7 How will you allocate and monitor the grant?

8 How are you going to review the delivery plan and keep on task?

9 Have you included outcomes in your evaluation to identify whether outcomes have/have not been achieved and the reasons why?

10 Beyond your key outcomes, what are the other impacts?

11 Was your risk assessment effective and appropriate?

12 Have you allocated time to provide a concise summary and clear evaluation of your project?

You are ready to complete a concise and comprehensive Evaluation Form

Preparation

The initial phase of your project is the preparation. This is vital work to be carried out prior to your funding application. Ensuring good foundations is hugely important and will save you time and effort later on. Thorough preparation will inform the necessary aims, support networks and resilience required for the delivery of a successful project.

1 What are the needs of young people and industry that you are seeking to address?

✓ Identifying gaps and growth areas in the employment market will increase the likelihood of getting young people and employers interested. Market research would be a useful task to undertake – there are free tools available at http://www.lmiforall.org.uk

Career Ready wanted to move into the logistics sector as their research showed that this sector employs 1.7 million people across 194,000 companies. Only 10% are under 25. Managers comprise 21% of the logistics workforce. Sector forecasts indicate that at least 750,000 additional workers will be required by the sector by 2017. Demand will be for managers (150,300) and customer service positions (117,200).

✓ Identifying needs in the employment market will increase the likelihood of getting young people and employers interested. Market research would be a useful task to undertake.

✓ Think about scale - what are the local, regional, national needs?

✓ What will be the benefits for young people, employers (and your staff) from this project?

2 Who will be interested in this project?

✓ Approach employers early and be targeted. What professional bodies represent the industry you want to get involved with? Who are the most influential (not necessarily the largest!) employers?

✓ Be aware of time, availability and cost constraints if approaching schools, colleges and employers.

✓ Consider and target the age range and ability of young learners carefully. Additionally, it is important to understand the characteristics of the young learners and the barriers they may face. For example they may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

3 Have you confirmed internal and external partners' involvement?

✓ After thinking about who may have an interest, you need to confirm if they are willing to get involved as required (eg at strategic planning and/or delivery level).

✓ Having a working group of partners will provide support, knowledge and expertise.

One grantee confirmed a partnership with a large employer from the outset. The employer sponsored the project and provided equipment at reduced costs and staff development. In another example, PROCAT worked with employers and schools to create a virtual Careers Academy called CAREA (Careers Academy for Railway Engineering and Aviation). They also utilised trained groups of Apprentice Ambassadors from employer partners to visit schools to discuss what it is like to be an apprentice and what opportunities are available.

✅ Employers can direct you towards skill needs and preferred specific professional qualifications.

> Ayrshire College was directed by industry partners towards offering the City and Guilds Level 1 and 2 Professional Cookery as well as the National Certificate Hospitality for its pupils.

✅ Make sure you have considered practical questions like public transport routes for young people to reach your services.

> In one project, although some schools were able to attend, the cost of transport prevented one school from participating in an event. As this example illustrates, the cost of transport can hinder young people from accessing some learning opportunities.

✅ Check the health and safety regulations of employers and your targeted industry sector. Will these effect young learners in any way?

4 What are the project's key objectives and outcomes?

✅ Establishing the key objectives and outcomes of your project will define its focus and will facilitate a straightforward implementation and evaluation.

✅ Be clear on definitions. Objectives are what your project intends to achieve. Outcomes are what are achieved in reality. Impacts are the consequence of your outcomes.

> An example: your **objective** might be to create ten new apprenticeships; your **outcome** is achieving eight; your **impact** is a) strengthening your links with industry, b) one young learner being offered permanent employment, and c) all eight apprentices further developing their employability skills.

✅ Having big ambitions is great but you need to set viable and actionable objectives.

✅ Set realistic and achievable timescales that plan your delivery across time, for example what do you intend to achieve in the first year, the second and further into the future, and beyond the lifetime of the project.

✅ Be mindful that you do not sacrifice quality for quantity in regards to meeting your objectives.

✅ An effective way to set your objectives is to think about what you want the learners to have achieved by the end of the project. Think carefully about how objectives can be measured. Make sure you can summarise these in a few sentences to share with funders, staff and partners.

5 Have you carried out a comprehensive and specific risk assessment?

✅ There is a requirement to carry out a risk assessment. Failure to undertake one may lead to poor delivery or non-delivery of the objectives you have set.

✅ Your risk assessment should cover all aspects of your project.

✅ Ensure mitigations are appropriate. Mitigations are the plan of action you intend to take should a risk occur. These need to be a real alternative path.

> An example: a **risk** might be that there are not enough local employers in an industry sector to offer sufficient apprenticeships. **Mitigation** could be to consider broadening the geographical and sector scope.

You are ready to complete and submit a funding application

Implementation

To ensure a steady flow of work through the project you should develop a delivery plan for implementation.

6 How are you going to set up the delivery plan for the project?

✓ Engage all team members/project partners. Organise regular team meetings with clear agendas and other ongoing ways to maintain the momentum of the project. For example briefings, newsletters, progress measures against objectives. Additionally, you could have more frequent meetings for those involved in the delivery and less frequent strategic meetings at a partnership board/ steering group level.

Activate Learning gained seven employer partners through the project. These joined the Technology Campus Advisory Board which met on a termly basis.

✓ Consider the inclusion of the following in your implementation plan: a timeline with tasks and meetings and milestones for delivering your objectives. Specify what will be achieved by when and by whom.

7 How will you allocate and monitor the grant?

✓ Estimate the amount of time needed to carry out tasks. Allocate time and costs to these tasks.

✓ Consult partners to ensure estimates are realistic.

✓ Specify the ways in which spend will be tracked/monitored.

✓ Regularly monitor and update your budget.

8 How are you going to review the delivery plan and keep on task?

✓ Ensure that tasks are realistic for achieving project objectives.

✓ Make sure you don't change/shift your objectives or outcomes during the course of the project without confirmation with funding organisations and letting your partners know.

Activate Learning amended their objective to recruit young people 14 years old and over to their Construction Centre, with their funding organisation's agreement. They postponed recruitment for an academic year due to concerns about direct recruitment at age 14.

Evaluation

Evaluations identify successes as well as areas for improvement. You should evaluate throughout the delivery of the project and identify successes and their enablers, the barriers and challenges and areas for improvement. Allow for reflection throughout and revise delivery according to your ongoing evaluation findings. An evaluation cycle will enable you to monitor, evaluate and review project progress.

9 Refer to outcomes in your evaluation to identify whether outcomes have/have not been achieved and the reasons why

- Referring to your objectives and outcomes in your evaluation creates project cohesion.

- Are your objectives and outcomes progressing as expected?

10 Beyond your key outcomes, what are the impacts?

- What impacts has your project had? What has been successful? What has been unsuccessful and why?

- Assess what your project has achieved for your institution and your community. What, if any, other impacts have been realised? Have there been any positive or negative unintended consequences of your project?

Ayrshire College analysed their enrollment data and discovered that increasing proportions of their students were coming from more deprived parts of the local community with higher levels of youth unemployment, increasing their overall social impact.

- How have these impacts benefited your young learners and your links with industry?

The Sir Frank Whittle Studio School (SWFSS) noted that two young learners undertook placements with a large employer which resulted in both being offered full-time employment. The employer offered SWFSS four more placement opportunities in the subsequent year, both strengthening young people's prospects and industry links.

- How will your current evaluation inform further work?

11 Is your risk assessment effective and appropriate?

- Evaluating your project allows you to reflect on what went well but should also be used to identify what needs to be improved. This process highlights the importance of acknowledging when things don't work provided we understand why and use the lessons learned to improve provision.

In one project tutors were not given support from senior leaders regarding working arrangements resulting in the cancellation of a trip to an employer and taster session at a college.

This example illustrates the need to secure agreement from senior leaders for staffing the delivery of the project prior to implementing the plan.

- Have unexpected risks arisen? If so, your risk assessment should be updated.

- If expected risks did occur, how effective were your planned mitigations?

- Do any of your mitigations need to be improved?

12 Take time to provide a concise summary and clear evaluation of your project

- Include all the relevant information from your evaluation as succinctly as possible. Avoid referring readers to additional reports for sections of your evaluation. The evaluation should be self-contained.

- Aim to complete an evaluation report that when attached to your application form, will give an individual with no prior knowledge of your project a clear and accessible overview.

You are ready to complete a comprehensive but concise Evaluation Form

The findings in this document have drawn on the 11 projects funded by the Edge Foundation as part of their Innovation and Development Grant Fund launched in 2014. The 11 projects funded were:

1. Activate Learning, Career Pathway College in Construction and Heritage Crafts

2. Ayrshire College, Skills Centre of Excellence

3. Barking and Dagenham College, The Siemens Mechatronics Academy

4. Blackburn College, Regional Automotive Technology Development Programme

5. The UK Career Academy Foundation (Career Ready), The Logistics Sector – more than driving a truck

6. Coleg Y Cymoedd, Centre for Excellence for Railway Training

7. Eden Project, Eden Education

8. Oldham College, The Digital Career College (DCC)

9. Prospects College of Advanced Technology (PROCAT), Careers Academy for Railway Engineering and Aviation (CAREA)

10. Lutterworth College, The Sir Frank Whittle Studio School – Logistics Centre

11. Hackney College

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