

The information below is an overview of requirements and for further more detailed information, support and guidance etc please contact the BVA Group Development team via telephone 01256 423816 or email admin@bvaction.org.uk (please quote "BVA Group Assistance" on title).

www.bvaction.org.uk

Project management is a key competence which charities must demonstrate if they are to bid successfully for grants and contracts and then run these effectively.

These are some of the key principles.

Establish your mandate.

Check out whether your project is really the right project – this will be easier if your organisation has a formal project approval mechanism linked to your strategy cycle within a business plan (and if not, how does it make sound budget decisions?).

Know why you're doing it.

Write down your project's title, purpose, scope, benefits, rationale, assumptions, costs, timescales, methods, desired outcomes and target audience. Clarity at the outset helps to get everyone singing from the same song sheet, elicits helpful critique, and protects against later misunderstandings or external 'course corrections'.

Know who has authority.

Having structure and accountability in place will ensure better control, proper alignment with organisational strategy, and a decision-making route when needed.

Planning.

Write down a clear project plan, and during the roll-out of the project, keep checking that you're still heading for the right outcomes. Define the stages of work and the requirements and interdependencies at critical points, and make sure the people who are involved in delivery know this in advance.

Build in quality and outcome measurement from the start.

Develop an inbuilt way of evaluating and monitoring success, impact and outcomes. Keep it simple. Don't let it become a big issue later.

Resources.

Make sure you have them lined up before you start – including your own time. The rule here, I'm afraid, is 'trust no-one'. Get the money moved into your budget and get confirmation of staff time allocation in writing from managers or your trustee board.

Maintain good communication with all your key players, if only to tell them that everything is going swimmingly. Good news is still news. Or do you only want them to think about you in connection with a major catastrophe or bad news?

Risk management and learning from mistakes.

Finance & Funding Guide

2.11 Running Successful Projects

Try to identify and mitigate risks in advance. Have contingency plans up your sleeve. Not all risks can be anticipated, or avoided – your project structure, however, will give you a natural mechanism for problem-solving and decision-making. Always consider what you can learn from any mistakes or unforeseen incidents – and share useful information with others.

Manage the end of the project.

Make sure it DOES end. It is surprising how often projects don't. End with a final report and recommendations, summarising and evaluating outcomes, and setting out the next steps, including any relevant ongoing monitoring such as regular reporting to funders. This is also the time to make recommendations about areas of future work, and to get these into your organisation's decision-making and fundraising systems. Many funders will insist on an 'end of project report', listing how their grant was spent with audit evidence to back this up.

