

Working in project form

Projects and project work

Project planning

- Concept
- Preliminary study
- Acceptance
- Project organisation
- Detailed planning and confirmation of project plan
- Execution
- Follow-up
- End report
- Evaluation
- Conclusion



PHOTO: JAN NOREKE

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Working in project form

A project is usually defined as an activity that is limited in time, has a defined goal and has its own resources. This means that every project has a beginning and a conclusion, has activities according to a pre-determined project plan and differs from the RC's basic activities, but without being totally separate from them. It is important to have good project planning, clear project organisation and sufficient time to complete the project.

Projects and project work

Work in RCs is based on a combination of ongoing activities, what we call basic activities and projects. Continuity can be maintained through forward-looking project leaders, boards and members developing plans for new projects while other projects are in progress.

A project must have a *purpose* or *aim*, the reason why you want to conduct a project. An example of an aim might be to strengthen women's position in the labour market and in the business world. The *goal* is more easily measured and concrete and can often be explained as *how* you want to achieve the aim and what you want to achieve. It is a matter of what you are going to do in concrete terms to achieve the aim of the project.

To run a project well it is important to constantly keep the goal in view. The project plan is constructed from the steps it is necessary to take to achieve the goal. Remember to allow time for reflection, reporting and financial follow-up. It often takes a lot longer than you think.

Project planning

Planning and conducting projects can be split into ten different phases:

1. Concept
2. Preliminary study

3. Acceptance
4. Project organisation
5. Detailed planning and confirmation of project plan
6. Execution
7. Follow-up
8. End report
9. Evaluation
10. Conclusion

1. Concept

The initiative to start up and ideas for projects that RCs work with can come from many different sources. The basis should be a need that is felt among a group of women. The concept has to gain acceptance among the women concerned, the board and the members of the RC. The concepts are adopted and processed within the RC. At the concept stage all wishes are not always recorded. At this stage it might be a matter of fairly vague thoughts that are difficult to formulate clearly. If this is the case it might be appropriate to conduct a preliminary study.

It might be possible to apply for funding for the preliminary study. Regardless of whether you conduct a preliminary study or not, before going ahead with planning you need answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What concrete needs do the project concepts correspond to?
- ❖ What are the most important arguments for putting time and energy into this project?
- ❖ Where are the possible users of the project concept?
- ❖ In what way can the project contribute to achieving a more equal labour market and business world?
- ❖ Is there support for or resistance to the concept?
- ❖ Is it possible to overcome the resistance?
- ❖ Are there any reasons for not proceeding with the concept?

Draw up some criteria for determining whether you should proceed with the idea or reject it.

2. Preliminary study – gather background information for the project plan

A preliminary study should provide an overview of the entire future project. It should also provide better background information for a final evaluation of the project concept and for deciding on the way to proceed. Making a list of previously conducted studies and projects is an important part of the preparatory work. Look for information on the topic area before drawing up the project plan. Discuss with the board and members involved about limitations and goals. Assess whether the idea is realistic or not. Make a list of personal, economic and material needs. Provide the board with material on which to make a decision.

3. Acceptance

In this phase the project's concepts should be described and accepted so that a decision can be made about whether there is sufficient substance for running the project and to get it financed. Try to describe the concept briefly and find out who is interested in the project. In this phase it is important that the RC contacts possible funders and presents the concept and listens to what they have to say. It is necessary for the concept to tally with the various existing policy programmes that govern the funds that the RC intends to apply for to finance the project. That's why it is important to read up on the respective organisation's/authorities' policy statements and regulations for applications.

The instances where it is most important to gain acceptance are with the board of the RC, with funders and with the participants in the project. In general every funder has its own checklist of how they require the application to be laid out. Items it is always important to describe are: goals, target group, activities that are to be carried out in order to achieve the goals, time frame, project organisation, costs, income, conclusion, evaluation, marketing, checkpoints.

During the work towards gaining acceptance for the project it is necessary to answer the following questions:

- ❖ Are the members, the board and the funders in agreement about the project concept? If there is disagreement is it possible to change the project in order to satisfy all concerned?

- ❖ What arguments are important to put forward to assure the project is carried out?
- ❖ Who might be interested in the results of the project?
- ❖ What expectations do the board, participants and financers have of the project?
- ❖ How have the various interested stakeholders perceived the information they have received so far? Does it need to be complemented, made more concrete?

4. Project organisation

A project organisation must be created. For small projects it might be sufficient to appoint a project leader with overall responsibility and a person responsible for finances. They report to the RC's board/steering group.

For major projects it is necessary for the board/steering group to define a clear project organisation. Project management should include a project leader who is responsible for the project, a person responsible for the finances, and a representative of the board. Project management sets up a partnership, a steering group for the project comprising e.g. representatives from collaborative partners who are involved in the project and representatives of the board. The steering group acts as a board for the project. In addition it might be a good idea for the project management to ally themselves with a reference group. The reference group should be made up of people who in different ways are experts in the subject area the project concerns and who can pass on valuable knowledge to the project leaders.

5. Detailed planning and confirmation of the project plan

After a formal decision that the project can proceed the board or equivalent formally appoints a project leader who is responsible for the project, steering group, reference group, evaluators and project members.

The board can act as the steering group. The board can delegate tasks including dealing with the finances to the project leader. Delegation always means that the person who has been assigned the task should report till the board.

The detailed planning should include activities and the time frame during which the activities should be carried out.

Questions that can help in planning are: How do we achieve the goals? How do we ensure that those in the target group are involved and active? How do we start? How do we end? At this stage you should reflect deeply on how much detail you should go into in describing the activities. Regarding the time plan, you should think about when respective activities should be concluded and when there should be checkpoints for reflection, continued planning, and revision of the plan if necessary. You can also think through alternative ways of achieving the goals. A project gains from concrete results. Make the time scale realistic.

6. Execution

When planning has been completed and financing arranged it is just a matter of working in accordance with the activity and time frame. While the project is in progress it is important to keep written records. Everybody's function must be defined and clear. The project needs a plan for in-project and external communication. Those involved must be well informed about the work in progress, both in their own part of project, and about project as a whole. The same applies to the steering group, financiers and external collaboration partners.

To achieve successful results the working group must feel motivated in their work, with each person's role clearly defined, and there should be a clear group feeling. You also need to discuss how the working group should function together. What norms for decision-making, management and openness are important? Should the project leader be responsible for information or should the entire group be active?

7. Follow-up

While the project is in progress there should be continual follow-up. Follow-up means going through the project plan. You check that the project is progressing according to plan. If this is not the case you have to make the necessary changes to ensure that the aim and goals can be achieved. Interim reports should also be filed at those points indicated in the project plan and when requisitioning funds that have been granted.

8. End report

Follow the project plan and describe what has happened. Check with the goals and participation from the target group. Produce a financial report. The financiers of a project often have detailed regulations about how they want the final report presented.

9. Evaluation

In connection with the start of the project you must decide how the evaluation will be conducted. A simple evaluation is an account of goal achievement and how the target group has experienced the project. More thorough evaluation is conducted through what is known as process evaluation, where an evaluator follows the process and notes what happens. Finally, conclusions can be formulated about what has been good and what has been not so good and an in-depth analysis of goal achievement and the target group's participation can be made.

10. Conclusion

A clear conclusion of the project is important. A good way of doing this is for the project leader to present a final report and the evaluation to the project members, board, reference group, steering group, participants and funders. Analyse and express what is felt to be important to work further with. This can form the basic background information for future projects. Good results should live on and form the start of something new.



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