

1.1

GENERATING IDEAS: NEED AND OPPORTUNITY

- Generating Ideas - Deciding What To Do!
- Understanding Project Development
- Working With Groups - The Development Role
- Development Notes
- Shiverton Exercise Notes - Setting The Agenda For The Role Play Exercise
- Shiverton Town Council Population Statistics

GENERATING IDEAS - DECIDING WHAT TO DO!

Once a group has been formed and information collected, it meets to adopt a priority list of 'good ideas' to pursue. Selecting ideas, testing them, planning and gathering funds and other resources to get off the ground can be lengthy. Take your time and plan thoroughly.

Finding Business Ideas

There are 3 main ways of finding ideas:

1 : What can local people do? What skills do they have?

It is much easier to build a business idea around real people who have particular skills.

2 : Is someone else running a social enterprise that you could copy or apply locally?

Particularly if you're not competing, the social enterprise may be willing to share their experience with you or even help you set up.

3 : What goods and services are needed in your locality?

There are many goods and services the private sector doesn't think it profitable to supply to some (your?) communities. Make a list of things your social enterprise might provide.

It is usually easier and cheaper to set up a service business than a manufacturing one, especially as the market for the services is more likely to be local, less equipment is needed and less money required starting up. There's usually less risk because market research is easier and there are less likely to be established competitors. You could get ideas from asking local people, advertising in the local paper or radio, asking local businesses or even running a competition with local school children.

At a brainstorming session many ideas will emerge, the more the merrier. But at some stage you will need to prioritise certain ideas and this has to be something the whole group agrees with and is committed to.

Testing The Idea

In many deprived areas, the local economy doesn't have enough money circulating to support new businesses: there's not enough return on investment for the private sector. But for a social enterprise interested in breaking-even while employing local people there may be enough business to make it worthwhile. Alternatively, you could target more affluent areas and customers who might provide sufficient income to make profit, and then return that profit to your home community through donations or supporting community initiatives or projects.

The main task is to answer these questions:

- Is the idea viable?
- Do people have the necessary skills and abilities?
- Will it sell?
- Will it pay?
- Can it be resourced?

Usually, it is fairly obvious whether or not the business can be done and is technically possible. However, a new product or idea may need testing in the market and to see if it will work. You may need to create a prototype, perhaps with the help of workshops in local colleges.

Skills and Resources

Are there enough of the right people with the right sort of skills locally? Or are you going to have to recruit?

The people running a social enterprise must have:

- The technical skills to provide the service or make a product
- The ability to organise themselves and the business, managing people and resources
- The ability to co-operate effectively
- The skill and knowledge to manage finance

Business can be complex and highly competitive. It's important that you assess what skills and knowledge you have, analyse the gaps and come up with strategies for filling them, whether by training, access to expert advice or recruitment. Many skills can be learnt 'on the job' but if you have to be successful from the start, you may need to think about appointing a business manager to ensure the business is set up right and is managed properly.

Will It Sell?

A common mistake is for a group to decide that because they want something, everyone does. Or that because a service is needed, there are enough people able to afford it. Or that a service is needed and it will be able to capture 100% of the market from existing competitors. These assumptions must be tested. Inevitably, this means market research, and not just 'desk research' in libraries, business centres or via the net but actually talking to people, investigating potential competitors, digging deeply into why people buy things, how much they are willing to spend, how much it costs to provide a service or make and sell particular goods and so on. Remember, you are not the customer and may not know what the customer will buy.

Will It Pay?

You may be able to sell your product or service but will you make any money doing it? What will people pay compared to all the costs involved in making the product: do you know? How many products will you need to produce a year or how often will the service be bought? What income will that generate? You need to work out how much it will cost to do a thing and then find out if the price you plan to charge (or that people are willing to pay) will cover your costs. Don't be put off if the sums don't add up at first. You may need to change your product or who you are selling it to or how and where you market it. Planning a business is a kind of back-and-forth discussion between the business (you) and the market/your customers.

Will It Be Funded?

Some brilliant ideas just can't or won't be funded. It is possible to change people's thinking and to persuade them to fund a project they initially oppose or don't see the value of. But you'd be wise to check out the likelihood of getting funding or support for each of your ideas before going too far down the planning stage.

Does It Deliver A Real Benefit?

Things that do are likely to last longer and be supported politically and financially and by the community when it counts. You may need that support and sometimes its better to, say, plan to create more employment and less social profit (because that's what people value) rather than employing fewer people but making more money. **It's not just what you would like to do, but also what works out there.**

UNDERSTANDING PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Why Plan Projects?

Any project which is properly planned and managed has a greater chance of success. And success is important if you are trying to create self-sustaining processes of regeneration, development or meeting changing social and community needs.

Project planning involves certain basic and common activities:

- Allocating resources
- Setting timetables
- Identifying targets for achievement

Project planning will also usually depend on the co-operation and support of other people. You usually have to co-operate with others to get a project going or sustain it. People will need to be persuaded the project is a good idea. And those with political or financial support will also need to be engaged with.

The Project Planning Process

The **first stage** in project planning is to **set goals**

The **second stage** of project planning is to consider the **external factors** that will affect the project (like 'the market' or 'funding opportunities')

The **third stage** is to discuss and adopt **appropriate strategies** based both on your goals and the external environment.

Project planning requires both a clear focus, and appreciation of other people's goals and agendas and flexibility to accommodate both. Any group managing a project planning process needs to be **pragmatic, open-minded** and **willing to adapt**.

Phases Of Project Development

Winning Support For The Project - the project needs to be well thought out and have a match with the goals of key players and stakeholders

Clarifying Goals - to work you first have to identify all the people with a stake in the project or who might be affected by it and get them on board through a series of meetings or interviews

Researching Possible Solutions - once goals have been identified its easier to identify potential solutions which will need to be looked into and tested. Are they practical? Will they work locally? What factors for success must be present? Has the idea worked well elsewhere, and why?

Making Proposals - these must be detailed statements of the aims, means and requirements of the project in terms of money and other resources. The aim of the proposal is to win or retain the support of the individuals and stakeholders involved. At this stage it's always a good idea to have an alternative proposal to hand in case the first is rejected or needs extensive modifying.

Reviewing And Agreeing The Action Plan

Your plan must:

- Be broadly compatible with the needs and goals of those involved
- Have a fit with the goals of funders and stakeholders
- Be broadly supported both internally (within the group and community) and externally (with key players and interest groups)
- Be robust and defensible
- Have identified counter-arguments and potential (worse) alternatives

Undertaking The Project - once you get approval, start early in order to ward off criticism, damp down scepticism and prevent competing groups 'recalling' the decision to go ahead.

Make sure you have achievable milestones in place and measurable progress indicators.

Make sure decisions can be made quickly, especially decisions about putting things right when they're going wrong.

Ensure allies are kept informed about the project's progress.

Ensure that there is sufficient time for the project to succeed; don't let people with other agendas impose early evaluation on the project.

WORKING WITH GROUPS - THE DEVELOPMENT ROLE

An individual working in the community may have to take on a development role. They may be asked to lead or work as part of a team developing a new local service. They may be assisting an organisation draw up plans. They may be helping put plans into practice.

One mistake that is often made is that 'development' and 'training' become confused. One is seen as a substitute for another or a precondition for progress.

Training is any learning situation with an underlying purpose and an ongoing process.

Development is about putting 'lessons' into practice, actually making use of acquired skills, assisting a group to maximise the benefits from learning. Keeping training and development properly focused and balanced can be very hard to do. Planning group development and having a clear timetable for development, properly monitored, can help.

Some Development Issues

1 : Developing Ideas Together

- a) How will the group share information and ideas? Are there problems in how it plans to use information?
- b) How do the interactions between group members affect the development process?
- c) Is the right information coming to the group in a way that is understood and can be used?

- d) Does decision-making leave members empowered or do they feel left out/disempowered?

Different levels of participation affect how people engage with and contribute to the project or group aim and therefore how a project develops. Those leading the process will need to make decisions about the kinds of information that can be given to all or part of the group and monitor and balance out 'inequalities' that may arise because of different levels of participation in the development and/or learning process.

2 : How Do You Combine Training And Development Work?

- a) How will you measure learning success? What access to training will people in the group have?
- b) How will you apply what is learnt?
- c) How will you deal with different levels of competence/confidence/skills?

The development process will go better if all people involved engage and interact positively, share tasks and fairly delegate, get and use feedback, encourage discussion and questioning and develop an agreed decision-making process.

3 : Managing Development Work

The first rule is to be flexible. There are no hard and fast rules about the development process. Decisions will need to be made about time and resources (especially). There will need to be some structure. But this may well be different each time. Making the right decisions about who to involve and what needs to be done and how is crucial.

The group will also need to correctly assess its ability to carry a workload, deal with unexpected developments, delegate and co-ordinate work and so on. Some groups accept work willingly, others do not. Some groups depend on outside assistance, others may resist external help or involvement.

Difficulties may arise from:

- a) Outsiders playing a leadership rather than a support role. In the reverse case, some groups expect 'experts' to lead and the process stalls when this isn't offered.
- b) Incorrect decisions about task allocation and individual levels of involvement.
- c) Bad resource allocation, misdirected effort or misunderstanding the symbolic significance of situations or decisions.

4 : Planning Group Work

Planning involves:

- a) Resource analysis
- b) Assessing and choosing appropriate development techniques
- c) Analysis of group needs
- d) Assessment of skills and experiences

Planning the development process can either be worker-led, group-led or a joint/collective decision between all parties. Whichever applies, **someone must be in control**.

Group involvement in planning the development process can be very important in validating it.

Someone in the group must schedule and manage regular reviews of progress and how development is going. Changes to the process may need to be negotiated and agreed within the group. Sometimes reviewing and making decisions may take place in a formal process, sometimes informal. Both have equal validity but one may be more appropriate than the other.

DEVELOPMENT NOTES

Learning And Progress Indicators

Relationships

How have intra-group relationships developed?

Is there a sense of everyone understanding their roles?

Has the group formed positive relationships with key individuals and stakeholders?

Focus

Is the group focussed and business-like?

Is the group committed to realistic ideas and achievable goals?

Is there a clear understanding of what needs to be done next?

Negotiation And Communication Skills

What are the kinds and levels of intercommunication between group members?

Does the group negotiate effectively with external stakeholders and/or with each other?

Are decisions recorded and information shared properly and effectively?

Leadership

Have strong and effective leaders emerged?

Or do all members of the group share in the leadership role?

Is there clear agreement between 'leaders' and 'followers'?

Are leaders trusted and respected by group members and external stakeholders?

Practical Ideas

Has the group adopted achievable and realisable goals?

Are all members of the group engaged?

Do they make practical and sensible proposals?

Does the group have the capacity to objectively consider and evaluate ideas?

Development Of A Culture Of Aspiration

Has a positive and business-like culture developed?

What are energy levels in the group like?

Is effort focused on achievement or discussion and debate?

Effective Resource Allocation

Are resources being allocated to the right places?

Is there effective delegation and/or co-ordination?

Do certain individuals control the group or command an excessive share of resources?

Does the group assign tasks to the right people?

SHIVERTON EXERCISE NOTES

- SETTING THE AGENDA FOR THE ROLE PLAY EXERCISE

(Please note that Shiverton is a fictitious town and any similarity to another area is purely coincidental)

Role Play Notes

This exercise is about understanding why different people with different roles will come up with different solutions. It also aims to test the listening and consensus-making abilities of any group you are working with.

The background to the exercise is that the Local Authority or other funder/stakeholder is asking community representatives to develop a 'wish-list' or priority program for social enterprise development which will contribute to local regeneration.

There needs to be at least three participants but there is no hard and fast rule about how the roles are divided amongst people present.

The Shiverton Town Council Population Statistics provides the necessary information to structure the discussion. The group needs time to read and assimilate this information.

The list of 'Possible Projects' is simply a list of ideas that people have come up with in the past and currently. The group should discuss and (hopefully) challenge these ideas and come up with new ideas and proposals meeting the needs of Shiverton and its various communities.

Ensure that the participants understand the roles they are playing, then 'convene' the meeting, making clear the aim is to come up with an agreed list which is deliverable and meets priorities.

Allow the 'meeting' up to 30 minutes.

Did the group have the right information to make decisions and how did the different information they possessed effect decision-making?

Did the discussion reveal the differing priorities of the participants? Was communication open and honest?

Did the group properly consider the feasibility of each proposed idea? How good were they at suggesting new ideas?

Were the group able to compromise and develop consensus or did one participant/group dominate decision-making?

Were ideas challenged over their practicality or achievability or did everyone just 'go along'?

How realistic was the list of projects that the group finally agreed?

Did the group agree any next steps?

Setting The Agenda For Shiverton The Partnership Workers Brief

You are drawing up a program of projects and initiatives from a variety of sources to be commence in Years 1 and 2 of an EU-funded partnership program. £750k has been allocated to cover the costs of this program.

The Local Authority Housing Department has bid for £300k for a Phase 1 housing regeneration program and the Learning & Skills Council locally has successfully bid for £150k of training-related programs designed to get young and long-term unemployed people into work. Your projected support costs are £100k so you have £200k to spend on community initiatives.

Select a program of Year 1 and 2 community initiatives bearing in mind that the priorities already established are:

- Getting up to steam quickly
- Generating favourable publicity to lever in money in Year 2
- Communicating with local residents
- Building public sector partnerships
- Enabling the community to acquire a track record
- Building capacity in the community - acquiring credibility

* You are free to suggest other initiatives if you think it necessary

Setting The Agenda For Shiverton The Central Shiverton Residents Association Brief

You represent people living in the inner core of Shiverton, an area of dense housing and often affected by business operations (congestion, lack of parking, litter etc). CSRA has been asked by the Partnership Team in the Local Authority to come up with a list of projects and initiatives it thinks would help with the regeneration of Shiverton **long-term** and address problems of Long-Term Unemployment, Juvenile Delinquency and Lack of Community Facilities.

You have been sent to this meeting to represent the aspirations and agenda of the CSRA. You have heard that the Shiverton Partnership has £500k over 2 years to spend on community initiatives.

Select a program of Year 1 and Year 2 community initiatives you would like to see funded, bearing in mind that the priorities of the Residents Association are:

- Improving the local environment
- Making the area safe for residents
- Job Creation
- Training opportunities for women
- Local Pride

* You are free to suggest other initiatives if you think it necessary

Setting The Agenda For Shiverton The Sunnyside-Burnside Alliance Brief

You represent the two overspill /peripheral housing estates of Burnside and Sunnyside on the edge of Shiverton. The main concerns of the Sunnyside-Burnside Alliance (a local community association made up of residents) have traditionally been unemployment, bad housing, lack of opportunities and a poor local environment.

The Alliance have been asked by the Partnership Team in the Local Authority to come up with a list of projects and initiatives you think would help with the regeneration of your community and the town of Shiverton generally. You have been sent by the Alliance to ensure its priorities are catered to under the program.

You are just one of a range of community organisations throughout the area likely to be putting forward proposals and you want yours to succeed.

You have heard that the Shiverton Partnership has £1m over 5 years to spend on community initiatives.

Select a program of Year 1 and Year 2 community initiatives you would like to see funded, bearing in mind that the priorities of the Alliance are:

- Appropriate local employment and training initiatives
- Directly increasing income levels in poor households
- Job Creation
- A community centre
- Childcare and help for young people

* You are free to suggest other initiatives if you think it necessary

SHIVERTON TOWN COUNCIL POPULATION STATISTICS

Population

The population in 2001 was 48,530. A demographic profile of the town showed it to be considerably older than the Borough average. Almost 23% of the population were aged 60+. 29% of all households were occupied solely by pensioners. It is estimated that the population has decreased by 500+ between 1991 and 2001.

Housing

Shiverton has the second highest proportion of people housed by the Local Authority - almost 35% of households. There were also substantial numbers of houses without inside toilets in 1981 though since then a considerable amount of work upgrading houses has been done. Overcrowding is higher than average.

The Local Economy

Levels of car ownership are extremely low compared to the Borough average. Almost 60% of households have no access to a car. Shiverton also has the highest proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled people in the Borough, together with the highest rates of unemployment. In 2001 the unemployment rate was 12% with youth unemployment (-21 years) rising to 22%. Women are confined to low-paid, low-skilled and casual work but are often the main or only wage-earner. There are high levels of household debt in the area (20% higher than the Borough average).

Environment

Shiverton suffers from pockets of very dense housing in the old part of the town with few environmental amenities, 'urban' plantings on roundabouts and roadsides and large areas of expensive-to-maintain verges and green spaces on the Burnside and Sunnyside Estates. Asthma, low IQ /under-achieving and heart and weight problems are due to poor housing, pollution and poor diets. The Council spends a lot on the environment and leisure but there is only a small municipal park and no Sports Centre.

Social

Burnside district in Shiverton has the highest proportion of single parent households in the Borough. Nearly 8% of households in Burnside are single parent. The ethnic minority population is 2%, slightly lower than average.

Change In Population Structure Since 1991

Age	1991	2001	Change
0-4	2975	2876	-99
5-14	4292	2951	-1341
15-29	8523	8365	-158
30-44	12721	12641	-80
45-64	13527	14326	+799
65-74	5743	6023	+280
+75	990	1348	+358

Source: Census 1991, 2001

Possible Projects

Your aim is to select those projects which you feel would best meet the needs of the area and could operate as sustainable social enterprises creating social and economic benefits for local people.

The currently proposed projects are:

Community Enterprise Centre

A community enterprise and training would be based in an empty 'low-rise' block of flats on the Sunnyside estate. This block is a base for drug users, dealers and squatters. The enterprise centre would rent office units to small, new businesses and a fully-equipped training room. The centre would supply office services and a switchboard and reception service. The project would cost £100,000 to set up but would be self-sustaining within 2 years. Funding requirements in the first year of operation would be £30,000 dropping to £15,000 in Year 2 and then zero. 5 jobs will be created directly and there is potential for 100 indirect jobs to be created.

Community Food Co-operative

The Area Health Authority have recently started a healthy eating campaign in Burnside. Volunteers who have been involved with this campaign have found out that although most people know about healthy eating they can not often afford to buy fresh fruit and vegetables at the prices charged by local shops even when they are available. This group wants to set up a food co-operative with a shop and a van in the shopping centre in Burnside. The business would create 2 full-time and 2 part-time jobs. Funding of £10,000 has been obtained from the Health Authority. The project needs a further £10,000 to start. No further funding will be required.

Grassroots Volunteers

This is a 'Community Program' type project in which 200-300 young people would be recruited to undertake environmental improvement work on housing estate green space, roadside verges, canal cleaning, improving tourist attractions like the floral gardens, 'gateway' avenues and creating small community gardens and forest-planting initiatives. It would create employment for up to 12 supervisors and managers and the people involved would receive training which would count as credits towards NVQs. It would cost £220k in Year 1, £150k in Year 2 and there is a possibility of 50% matched EU funding and private sponsorship.

Landscape And Gardening Business

This small business proposal is to create 3 jobs for adults with learning disabilities in gardening and landscaping. The partners are qualified landscape gardeners and aim to win contracts for maintaining the council's land and gardens both in Shiverton and Burnside. They will employ adults with learning disabilities at the minimum wage or slightly higher. Funding of £15,000 is needed to provide suitable skills training for future employees.

Women Into Enterprise Training

Women Into Enterprise Training is a feminist group who aim to encourage women into self-employment and business generally. The training will concentrate on new technology, finance and business skills and will 'signpost' appropriate vocational skills courses, in line with the particular business and existing skills. Funding of £30,000 has already been obtained from the ESF but a further £20,000 is needed to refurbish and equip the training centre.

Recycling Project

The project aims to set up paper, aluminium and clothing recycling ventures across the Borough. Appropriate 'banks' will be sited at convenient locations and collections and educational activities will take place in schools, colleges and with community groups. It is not envisaged that the project will become self-sustaining but it will be able to cover about half its costs within three years if paper and aluminium prices remain at current levels. 1 full-time and three part-time jobs created. Funding required is £25,000, £15,000 in Year 2 and £7,500 annually.

Project For Elderly Persons

This group would like to set up:

- a) A 'Meals-On-Wheels' service at a cost of £10,000 annually;
- b) An Elderly Day Centre at a cost of £7,500 annually;
- c) A 'Take-A-Break' service offering relatives of elderly people the chance to hand over care responsibilities to trained personnel for short periods at a cost of either £10,000 annually employing a full-time worker and charging carers or £4,500 if a volunteer-run free service;
- d) Training courses for carers at a cost of £10,000 annually.

Credit Union Development Agency

Loan sharking is a major cause of poverty in Shiverton. Banks and Building Societies are not very interested in the residents of Burnside as potential customers especially as many are in debt. A development agency, based in Burnside, would work to set up a Credit Union on the estate but would then expand to the whole area, setting up 3-5 Credit Unions in the next 3 years. A Credit Union Development Agency would need £60,000 annually and would create 3 full-time jobs: 2 Development Workers and 1 Administrative Worker.

Canal Banks Project

The Grand Northern Canal passes through an old industrial area scheduled for re-development. It is proposed to refurbish some of the warehouses as a 'foyer project' combining low-cost accommodation with enterprise advice and incubator workshops for young people. The area would be landscaped and retail shops and a theme pub created. Though planned to cost £600k over 5 years, it would lever-in £300k from ERDF. It would house up to 15 businesses and give advice and counselling to 1500 young people per year.

Co-operative Nursery

Childcare provision for the under-five's is very poor across Shiveron and childminders are very expensive and not very good. A co-operative nursery would cost £20,000 to set up in a school scheduled for closure, £10,000 to set up in the community centre or portakabins or £50,000 to set up through a self-build project. Running costs would be: nil after 1 year if all places were charged at a commercial level; £10,000 per year if 5 free places were offered; £20,000 per year if 10 free places were offered; £36,000 if all 18 places were free. These figures are based on children aged 2+ years, children younger than this require 50% more money per place because of legal staffing ratios.

The Shiveron Steamer

A local group of unemployed people have proposed that a Community Freesheet be set up (The Shiveron Steamer) which would contain local news but also be large enough to attract business advertising and small ads. Because it would use new technology, printing costs would be low and it would stimulate local businesses and generally act to create a good image for the area. It would require £20,000pa for three years but would create three part-time, then full-time jobs at the end of the period.