

PROJECT MANAGEMENT – DESIGN – Stage 2



Project design refers to the approach your group takes to designing, planning and documenting projects.

Definition of Design

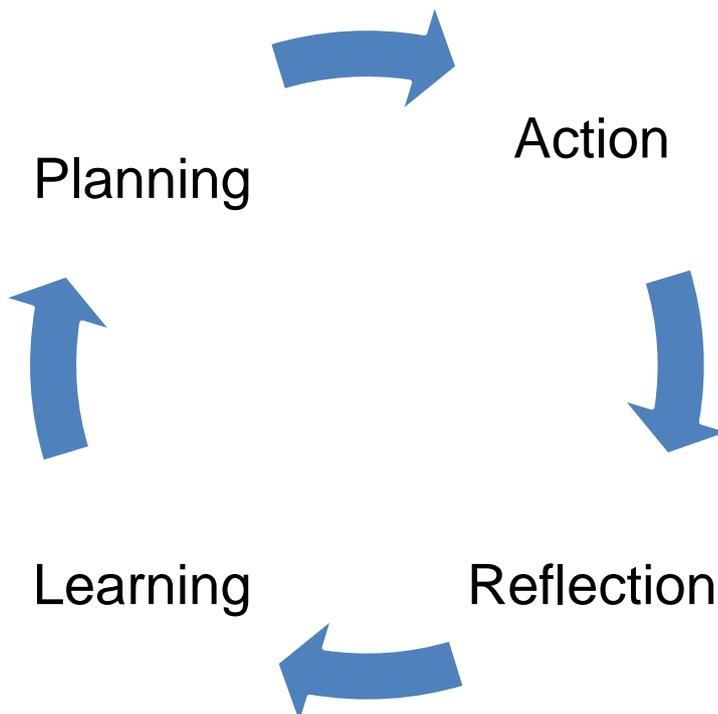
Project design is a process of analysis, decision-making, reflection and adjustment. The outcome of this process is documented in the form of project plans and can help with decision making, what resources you need and facilitating learning.

Basic Principles of Design

Projects operate within diverse and changing contexts. The organisation's knowledge of any particular context is always incomplete (even though you think it is complete!). The context often changes, sometimes in unpredictable ways, and often as a result of larger social, economic and political forces that are well beyond the influence of an individual project (for example recession periods). Good project designs will often emerge over time through cycles of planning, action and reflection as the diagram below suggests. Each cycle should lead to adjustments to the initial design in response to lessons learnt, outcomes achieved and changes in context.

Planning through Action and Reflection

When you start out on a new issue, projects will typically begin on a relatively small scale, sometimes as a pilot or experiment. By using the action / reflection / learning / planning model you can amend and improve projects over time. Through this process, the organisation's understanding of the context grows and successful strategies can be identified. This knowledge and information can then be used to scale up the programme and help to gain funding.



Key Steps in Project Design

The key steps involved designing programmes are outlined below with accompanying explanations. In going through these stages it is important to keep in mind the process; design can be ongoing as your organisation learns



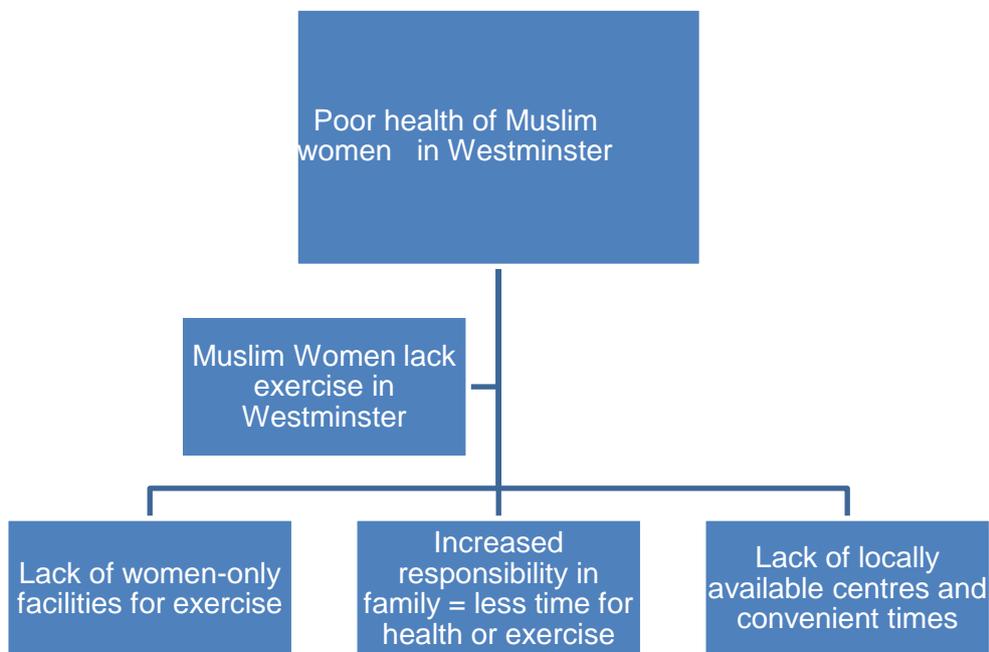
1. Describe the beneficiary group

What are their strengths and weaknesses? What experiences do they have in relation to your organisation's goals/objectives? Describe the social relations (for men and women), any relevant data or statistics. For example, Muslim women in Westminster – what are the social relations? Why are they an important beneficiary group? Do you have any statistics or data on this group?

2. What are the specific issues relating to this beneficiary group?

What are the root causes of these issues (can be visually represented in a problem tree)? What are the smaller issues that lead to any larger issues? What causes these smaller issues? What are the effects of these issues on men? On women? For example, Muslim women might not access health services well.

Problem Tree Diagram Example

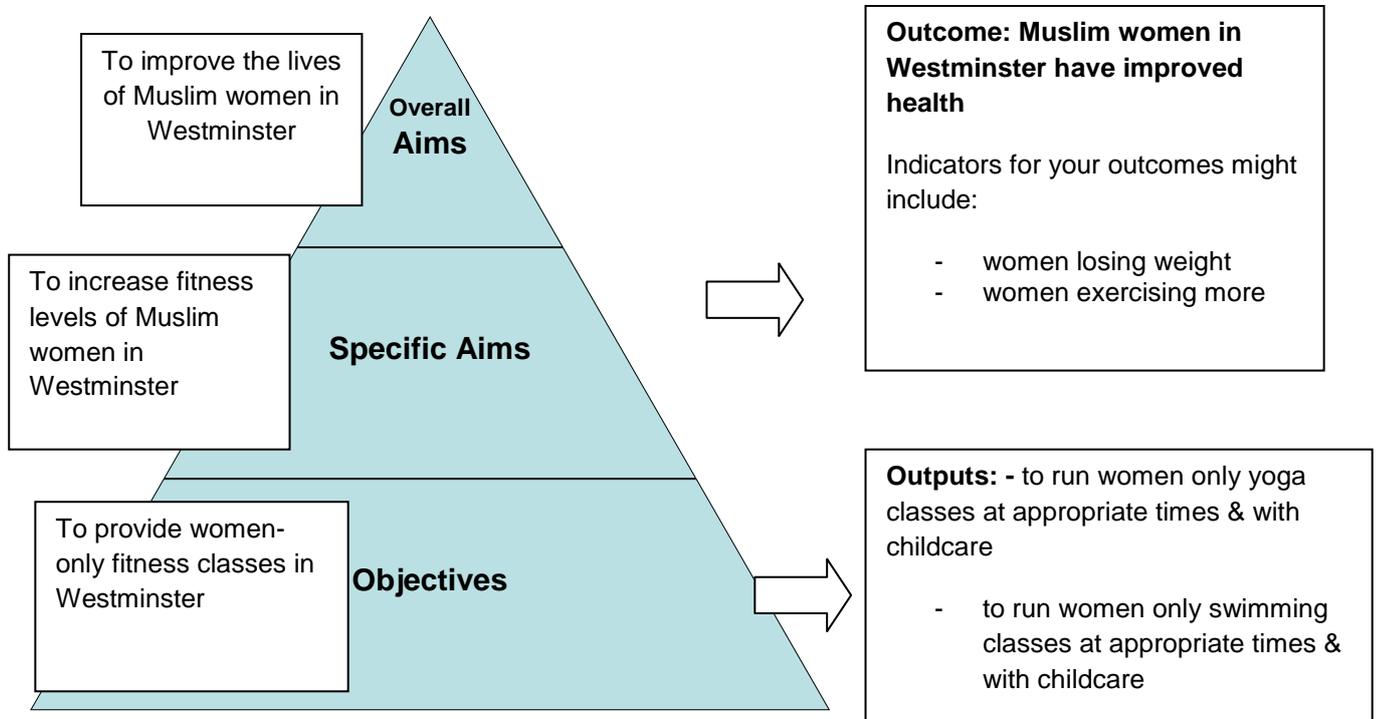


3. What outcomes or positive change does your organisation want to achieve?

By using the problem-cause tree analysis of your users and the issues they face, you should be able to identify an overall aim for your project. Remember to check that the overall aim of the project fits with the vision and mission of your organisation. For example, one of your overall aims might be to improve the lives of Muslim women in Westminster. From this overall aim, and based on your problem-cause tree, you might be able to identify some specific aims (perhaps not all the problems in the tree, but focus on the ones that you are able to deliver on). A key question to ask at this stage is WHY? It can also be useful to help to develop your specific aims by turning a problem tree into an aim tree. In this example, it might include: to increase health and fitness levels of Muslim women in Westminster. From these specific aims you can identify the objectives (activities) that you will undertake to achieve the specific aims, for example; to provide women-only fitness classes/facilities.



This information can then feed into your outcomes and your outputs, such as is represented in the outcomes triangle¹ below.



The outcomes are what you hope to achieve. The outputs are what you will do to achieve them. For each outcome you should have some indicators to measure whether you are achieving your outcomes and show how you will collect this information, who is going to collect it, and what you will do with the information – or how you will learn from it. Sometimes you might achieve some unexpected outcomes, and whilst this was not planned, it is still important to document them. One last thing to remember is that each time you plan a project, you are making assumptions that one particular activity will lead to another. It is important to recognise the assumptions you make when planning a project so that you can explain any changes to your outcomes or any unexpected outcomes.

Note: When you start to discuss numbers in regards to your projects, for example numbers of people, numbers of classes that will be run etc. these are often termed 'targets'. For example, you might want to include targets in your project (50 Muslim women will attend swimming classes over the course of the year).

¹ Charities Evaluation Service



All this information about your project, including outcomes, outputs, monitoring and evaluation, can be tabled visually in a log frame matrix as below:

Specific Aims	Outcome	Outputs	Outcome Indicators	Indicator collection methods	Who will collect this information and by when?	How you will report and use this information	Assumptions
To increase fitness levels of Muslim women in Westminster	Muslim women in Westminster have increased fitness	To run women-only yoga classes at appropriate times & provide child care To run women-only swimming classes at appropriate times & provide childcare	Women are exercising more Women losing weight	Number of fitness classes each woman attended Heart rate measurements Body Mass Index (BMI) measurements	Project coordinator will collect information through role calling at each class Heart rate & BMI measurements before & after fitness programme	Report and use this information to demonstrate success, to feed into future projects (including design and to help get funding)	Other lifestyle factors of Muslim women are not detrimental to fitness. That women attend the whole series of fitness classes

Above mentioned are some of the key methods to help plan your project, using an outcomes framework. For more information on tools to use to help you monitor and evaluate see stage 5. However before you dive into the implementation of your project, think about who else is involved.

4. Analyse relations of key actors or stakeholders in your project²

Stakeholders are people or organisations who have an interest in, will be affected by, or will be a key influencing player in your project in either a positive or negative way. Internal stakeholders could include your staff and trustees, whilst external stakeholders could include your user group, funders, the local council. In some cases they could include those likely to oppose your project e.g. other organisations could see you as competition and object to your project.

During a stakeholder analysis organisations need to:

1. identify stakeholders and their interest in the project
2. assess stakeholder power and influence in relation to the proposed project
3. prioritise between stakeholders
4. determine whether and how to involve each stakeholder in the design process.

List the key stakeholders (including users, other organisations, local government and individuals). Identify how they might be affected by the problems identified and their motivation to solve the problem, as well as the impact they have on your project. This will provide a good starting point about which stakeholders you need to convince/pay more attention to in order for your project to succeed.

² For more information on stakeholder analysis see Strategy Planning worksheet
Voluntary Action Westminster, 37 Chapel Street, London NW1 5DP
Tel: 020 7723 1216 Fax 020 7723 8929 Email: general@vawcvs.org
Registered charity 1068824 ♦ Registered company 03518124



Stakeholder	Power and Influence	Motivation for project	How to involve
Muslim women not accessing fitness services	Low power, low influence	High since want to improve circumstances	Need to involve to find out needs, but do not need to convince
Local government health services	Medium power, high influence	Medium motivation wants to improve health of women, but may not have the resources to provide facilities at the local leisure centre	Need to convince to come on board – identify ways to work together to handle extra classes and diversify fitness services to suit beneficiary group
Another high profile health NGO that works with Muslim women	Low power, medium influence	Motivation low, since sees competition, influence is medium, since has the strength to influence other stakeholders	Discuss options of partnership working

Best Practice Tips

A participatory approach to involving stakeholders in project planning often leads to a better project. Some of the benefits of a participatory approach include:

- creates a shared vision
- generates ownership of and commitment to the project
- improves the relevance and quality of the project plan
- improves the effectiveness of the project plan
- identifies risks and risk-mitigation strategies
- improves accountability
- strengthens legitimacy and credibility.

5. Assess your organisational capacity.

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation's existing work on this issue (SWOT analysis)³. Assess resources available including staff time, capacity, knowledge and skills and money. Include an assessment of staff capacity to address the key issues in your project. For example a SWOT analysis, particularly the strengths and weaknesses, helps you to identify if yours is the best group to provide this service (see example below).

STRENGTHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - highly motivated volunteers - good links with user group (Muslim women) 	WEAKNESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - funding is tight, things are done on a shoestring
OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - few other fitness services in Westminster for Muslim women - enthusiastic user group 	THREATS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - other organisations are also considering implementing the same project (may compete for target group or funding) - funding environment tighter each year

³ For more information on a SWOT analysis, see Strategy Planning worksheets



6. Develop a strategy

- Identify areas of work that your organisation is able to focus on according to the issues that your user group faces, their needs, your project with outcomes, and your stakeholder analysis
- Identify gaps in resources and how these will be filled e.g. recruiting new staff, strengthening staff skills, capacity building and/or attracting funders.
- List all the activities to help you reach this outcome and when you plan to undertake these activities – a Gantt Chart might help with this (see below)

Activities	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12
Recruit staff & volunteers												
Set up fitness venues & types of classes												
Publicise project												
Take initial monitoring information												
Run fitness classes												
Final evaluation												
Reporting and closing												

Note: During the planning stage it is important to include monitoring and evaluation in your planning, including who will do the work. Once you are at the end of the project, it is too late to realise that you have not looked at how your project is progressing. See stage 5 for more ideas on planning the monitoring and evaluation of your project

Other things that you might want to consider as part of your project:

- A risk analysis
- A monitoring, evaluation and learning framework.
- A budget and funding strategy.
-

Some considerations for including monitoring and evaluation in the design phase may include:

- agreeing the process for engaging different stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation, in determining data collection needs and how you will do it
- the key information to gather from the evaluation (including at the start of the project for baseline data gathering) and who needs to know about it
- the appropriate methods for data collection, analysis and reporting (eg feedback questionnaires – see stage 5 for more ideas on monitoring and evaluation tools)
- how monitoring and evaluation will feed into a learning process for staff, volunteers and partners and how you will use this information to improve current or future projects



- monitoring and the use of information arising from monitoring should not be seen as a one-off activity but an ongoing process to continually make projects better for users and therefore more successful.

Ensure that all information regarding the analysis of the issues and the various capacities of partners/staff to respond is documented, as this is all key information for baseline data.

Now you are ready to move onto the budgeting and resourcing stage!



One Westminster, 37 Chapel Street, London NW1 5DP
Tel: 020 7723 1216 Email: general@vawcvs.org
Registered charity 295501 ♦ Registered company 2052268

