



Section four Managing a project and reviewing progress

4.1 Trade-offs in project management

With a lot of projects it is possible to spend all your time just making sure every project tool is put into place and used, rather than actually achieving anything with your beneficiaries.

As such, you may need to think about what your priorities are, and be prepared to prioritise in order to ensure you are successful overall. It is a good idea to discuss your priorities before an emergency arises, so that you have some understanding of where you are all coming from.

This process is commonly known as 'trading-off', and the three key areas you need to balance are:

- Time
- Cost
- Quality

Trade-offs arise naturally to some people through a good understanding of their circumstances. It is really important that you are aware of the biggest risks to your project and that you focus on dealing with these as your number one priority. You may therefore want to talk through your analysis of the risks and their causes frequently in the earlier days of your project, in a way that you won't need to later on.

Trade-offs should be informed by this risk analysis and not by one person's style or preferred way of working. It is good practice to adapt your style to fit with the needs of your situation.

4.2 Human resource management

This is an area of expertise in itself, and if you are planning to either engage volunteers or employ staff, you will need to understand relevant UK laws and brush up on the latest thinking around good practice. The aim of good practice in human resource management is to help ensure your staff and/or volunteers are able to do their jobs well and that they feel rewarded in their roles.

Different people are rewarded by different things. Being able to help them feel rewarded whilst ensuring that the organisation reaches its goals is often thought of

as good practice. Apart from staff feeling rewarded, there are also other organisational benefits to this which includes staff staying longer in their roles (and so performing effectively for you for longer), staff being more highly motivated (so achieving more on a day to day basis), and enabling the organisation to attract other high calibre staff as you develop a good reputation as an employer.

To ensure RCOs don't feel overwhelmed by the tasks involved in becoming an employer, it needs to be pointed out that this is best practice, and something to which the majority of employers in the UK still aspire.

Managing people in a project is more complicated if you don't line manage them. Important to 'project managing' people is mutual respect and an open, communicative relationship together with a mechanism for resolving differences of opinion (on priorities for their work, for example). This can usually be resolved by the project manager, project worker and the project worker's line manager having a conversation about the issue.

4.3 Budget management

You will have set your project budget during the set-up phase. What you need to do now is:

- Make sure you understand what the funder expects from you in terms of reporting financially. Some funders will hold a 'set-up' meeting with organisations so they can explain their expectations. Follow their lead but don't be afraid to ask questions so you know what they expect from you - it's important you understand their expectations.
- Make sure you know what your organisation needs you to do to operate legally and what systems you will need to fit into (for example keeping receipts and filling in expenses forms, through to using their financial monitoring system, and doing end-of-year reports and accruals).
- If you 'delegate' responsibility for any part of the budget make sure the rules the funder gives you are understood and adhered to.
- Keep an eye on expenditure and make sure you aren't going over budget – if you are and you can't see a way round talk about it to your manager / the Board / whoever is the right person. Openness about money is important so don't hide a problem!

4.4 Monitoring and evaluation, quality management and learning

You will have set up your system(s) in the development phase. Now you need to roll it out and keep going with it. Many organisations tend to focus on the 'doing' (as this needs to happen) and to let other areas, such as monitoring, slip – this is particularly true at the start of projects when things are always busier than anyone ever expected.

If it gets dropped, pick it up again as soon as you can. If the system is too complicated, make it easier. It's fine to start with the basics and then see what more capacity you have.

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