



Section six **What to do when things don't go to plan – common problems faced and possible solutions**

“We can't deliver as we expected to be able to”

This often happens, so don't think you are the only project this has happened to. Think now of the options open to you and what you can do to get back on track or to re-work the project. (Are there other people that could help who you hadn't thought of before?)

If it's not possible to get the project back on track, then gather data on the reasons why. (Perhaps the circumstances have changed so much it doesn't make sense and another approach would be stronger.)

Your funder doesn't want you to fail, so see if you can negotiate changes with them. If you can, you should:

- Be open about why things are different to when you put in the bid (in other words, why you couldn't have predicted needing to make changes).
- If you want to deliver less in one area, try to make sure your new proposal will deliver more in another area.
- Try to make sure any changes won't change the impact you have been funded to make.

They may be restricted in what changes they can make, but this is likely to help them if they can keep funding you.

If you are going back to the funder, you must be prepared for them to say 'no'. They may not be able to change your agreement, or may not want to, and you need to decide in advance what you will do if this is the case.

If they can't help, and you can't deliver what they want, then you may need to agree to end the project early. Make sure you know the funders' expectations regarding the money you have already spent before you agree to end the project.

Finally, try not to be too upset if it does end despite your best efforts – you can be sure everyone will have learned a lot and will do things differently next time.

“We have under-estimated costs”

Your first port of call should be for you to look for other sources. Could you put on a fundraising event? Or ask members and supporters for donations? Do you have ‘unrestricted’ funding you could use? How can you cut back on expenditure?

If you really have no other options, you could try going back to your funder. Rather than ask for more money, you should explain what you can do with the money you have and see if you can re-negotiate your targets so that you can keep going.

You need to be aware, however, that they are unlikely to be impressed by this, and you need to decide what you would do if they said ‘no’. Would you then have to shut down your project?

Talk informally with your main contact about your situation before developing your final proposal so you have a better understanding of where you stand. They might have no flexibility to help but, on the other hand, they might welcome you being open about the problems you are facing. It is important to talk to them as soon as you can see you have a problem – they will prefer to be treated and involved as partners.

“We have over-estimated costs”

Your contract agreement(s) should specify what you need to do in this situation. If it doesn’t, you should explain you have underspent to your funder, and offer to give it back to them. You could at the same time, however, suggest alternative ways you could use it and how much further this will help you help your beneficiaries.

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