

Project Management

PLANNING, DELIVERING AND EVALUATING PROJECTS

“Learning how to plan and manage your projects properly and realistically means your CDAT can deliver better and more timely outcomes for your community.”

John Della Bosca,
Special Minister of State.

The *Drug Action Toolkit* is designed to build CDATs' skills to help them work with their local communities. By developing their skills today, CDATs can sustain their activities into the future. This edition of the *Drug Action Toolkit* covers project management practices.

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Benefits of project management for CDATs

Good project management is about using your time, money, people and resources in the most effective and efficient ways possible. It brings together several common practices, including budgeting, planning, delivery, monitoring, managing risks and evaluation of projects.

There are many benefits for a CDAT and their community from using project management principles and methods. Good project management helps you get 'runs on the board' with quality results.



Important Note

Projects are dynamic. This means that they move and change as they progress. No two projects are ever the same. It is recommended that your CDAT reviews how others did a similar project and adapt it to the way that your CDAT works.



The process to achieve your project is just as important as the project itself. By using a team approach, including open communication, your CDAT can achieve its goals and build stronger community links.

Project management case studies

Projects have a beginning (when research and planning occurs), a middle (when delivery and monitoring happens), and an end (when the final evaluation takes place). The following case studies show how these parts work.



Step 1: Identifying and analysing issues and deciding project objectives and tasks

See *Leeton CDAT – Getting a Clearer Picture*

Leeton CDAT – Getting a Clearer Picture

The Leeton community were concerned about drug issues. An initial meeting with the Leeton CDAT established that research was needed to get a clearer picture of the drug-related issues in Leeton.

The team helped design and undertake surveys, interviews and focus groups. They collected data and analysed themes arising from it. This process helped team members develop valuable research skills that they can use in the future.

The research provided the Leeton community with better information on drug issues and helped the CDAT prepare a well-informed *Local Drug Action Plan*.

Surry Hills CDAT – Evaluating their drink spiking prevention project.

Surry Hills CDAT undertook a drink spiking prevention project in early 2003. The project aimed to raise awareness of drink spiking among young women aged 16-30 years who attend licensed premises, backpacker/youth hostels and entertainment areas in Kings Cross, Surry Hills, Glebe and Bondi. A booklet and information card outlining how to prevent drink spiking and how to get help, was distributed at targeted venues.

The CDAT designed pre and post-project surveys for evaluation. They set targets and quality measures for the information resources. The surveys were distributed, collected and analysed. The analysis informed the CDAT of the effectiveness of the resource materials and will guide any similar projects in the future.

Step 4: Evaluating the original project plan

See *Surry Hills CDAT – Evaluating their drink spiking prevention project*

Corowa CDAT BMX Track

The Corowa CDAT BMX Track project was proceeding according to plan when it encountered unexpected community opposition from nearby residents to the development of the BMX Track beside the local skateboard ramp. A number of community members made official objections to Corowa Council when the BMX Track plans were submitted.

The BMX Track working party met with the affected residents to discuss their concerns. These were based on uninformed perceptions of young people, so the working party undertook a study of the behaviour of young people at the skateboard ramp. The study included observations and gathering statistics of the number of crimes committed in the neighbourhood. The working group also presented a petition highlighting community support for the BMX Track.

The information was presented to Council and the residents who had objected. Corowa Council passed the plans for the BMX Track after the evidence showed a limited likelihood of increased vandalism in the neighbourhood.

Although the project did not go quite according to plan, the CDAT's ability to change strategies and their persistence helped achieve their goal of providing local young people with recreation opportunities.

FOUR STEPS IN CDAT PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Step 3: Delivering and monitoring the project activities

See *Corowa CDAT BMX Track*

Step 2: Preparing the project plan and sorting out roles and responsibilities

See *Peninsula CDAT – Building a Caring Community Project*

Peninsula CDAT – Building a Caring Community Project

Peninsula CDAT used the priorities from their *Local Drug Action Plan* to develop the Building a Caring Community Project. The project aimed to increase awareness and understanding of drug issues amongst three audiences: parents, young people and community members; whilst building stronger connections between generations and encouraging open conversations within the community.

To develop the project plan the CDAT invited stakeholders including parents, young people, local schools, health services, police and youth services to a community consultation meeting. The meeting broke into working groups based on the three target audiences. Each working group suggested possible activities for the plan, including timeframes and responsibilities.

The working groups consulted with their target audiences and brought suggestions back to another large meeting where they were discussed and included in a more detailed project plan. At the meeting people selected activities to participate in based on their skills, experience and areas of interest.

Project management steps

The following four checklists can help you plan and evaluate your projects. They follow the four steps previously outlined.

Project plan headings: Use the sections marked with this symbol as the main headings for your project plan. ★

Step 1. Identifying and analysing issues, deciding project objectives and tasks



There are many drug and alcohol-related issues that your CDAT may feel that it should address. However, before deciding to commit valuable time and resources to a project, ask yourselves the questions below. These questions will identify the issue/problem and how you might start to address it. They can also provide a template for your *Local Drug Action Plan*.

Question	Common terms	Comment	Useful tip	Notes
1. What is the issue/problem? ★	Research/ supporting data/ identified need	Is it clear that there is a problem? Do we have enough facts, figures and other current information to make an informed decision on the issue? If not, where can we get this information? If the issue is a new one, can we point to information gained from community discussion and/or other sources? Is this project supported by other plans?	Copy the relevant sections of other plans to the project plan. If this project is not part of an existing plan, give other reasons why action is needed.	
2. Should something be done about the issue?	Reason/rationale	Does something have to be done about this issue? Is anyone else working on it? Is our CDAT the most appropriate group to do something? Which part of our <i>Local Drug Action Plan</i> does this project fit into?	Refer to the <i>Local Drug Action Plan</i> .	
3. Who or what target group/issue is our project aimed at? ★	Target group/issue	Is the target group/issue clearly defined? Have we consulted with the target group and stakeholders ¹ about the potential project?	Be as specific as possible e.g. <i>parents of high school students in Mudgee</i> .	
4. What do we want to do? ★	Project objective	Is our objective specific and clearly understood? e.g. does it describe the target group/issue? Does it describe what our activity/product will be?	Refer to the target group/issue for clarification. Write the objective in 15 words or less e.g. <i>to improve the knowledge of drug issues of parents of High School Students in Mudgee</i> .	
5. How should we do it?	Delivery options	What are the different ways we could deliver our project objective?	Giving drug information to parents could be done by a parent information evening, information card, poster or other option. Choose the option that best fits the needs of the group. Research evidence of similar projects that were successful.	
6. How much money and resources do we need? ★	Budget and resources	What budget and resources are needed to complete the project? If we do not have the total budget, do we have plans to attract further funds and resources?	Keep checking the budget. Keep a record of actual and expected spending. Subtracting this spending from the budget will show financial progress. Don't forget to include 'in-kind' resources.	
7. Who has an interest in this project? ★	Stakeholders/ partners/ opponents.	Which stakeholders could help us or stop us, and which are neutral?	Drugs are an emotive issue and some people may be opposed to the project. List all stakeholders who have an interest in the project and note if they are supportive, opposed or neutral.	

¹ See *Drug Action Toolkit – Consultation for further information on stakeholders*.

Step 2. Preparing the project plan and sorting out roles and responsibilities

Preparing a project plan is an important part of project management. Project planning helps you to:

- work out your tasks and activities
- set task timeframes
- organise appropriate people for particular tasks
- collect information for later evaluation.



Question	Common terms	Comment	Useful tip	Notes
1. What are we going to do?	Activities/tasks/steps	★ What are the main activities/tasks we need to do?	List all the tasks and steps in order. Break up large tasks into smaller sub-tasks.	
2. When should we do it?	Timeframe	★ When will the project start and finish? When will sub-tasks need to be done? Could our project tie in with another event? e.g. Drug Action Week or Youth Week.	Put tasks on a timeline, calendar or chart to show 'due by' dates for tasks and activities. Set realistic, achievable deadlines.	
3. Who will do it?	Responsibility	★ Do all people/groups involved know what tasks they are doing?	Delegate tasks to individuals or working groups.	
4. Where will we do it?	Location	★ Where will each activity/task take place?	Be specific about locations e.g. CDAT committee meeting, high school hall etc.	
5. How will we know if anyone is better off?	Evaluation plan	★ Have we set project quantity and quality targets to evaluate our success?	These targets will help answer the later question "Is anyone better off?". A simple evaluation could include: The quantity of things done e.g. number of sessions conducted or number of participants. A quality measure of things done e.g. percentage of people surveyed at the sessions who said they knew more about drugs, or percentage who considered session worthwhile. It is very important to prepare the evaluation before the project begins.	
6. Have we written down our tasks and steps?	Project plan	★ Have we recorded all of the above issues on a calendar, chart or other document?	Refer to it regularly during the project and during the final evaluation. Use the sections marked with this symbol as the main headings for your project plan. ★	

Step 3. Delivering and monitoring the project activities

Monitoring your project is an important part of project management. It helps you to:

- start and finish tasks on time
- keep track of how money and resources are used
- make sure that people are given tasks that suit their skills
- collect information for later evaluation.

This checklist can be used to identify possible risks before you start as well as help you monitor the project.



Question	Common terms	Comment	Useful tip	Notes
1. What issues or risks may come up during the project?	Risk management	What are 3-4 risks we could expect to arise during the project? What actions would minimise their impact on the project? e.g. an angry parent says the CDAT is promoting drug use; or a person trips on the display stand and injures themselves.	Ask others if they had unexpected issues and how they dealt with them. Build in extra time for tasks outside the team's control. Try to solve the cause of the issue – not just the symptom.	
2. How well are we going?	Monitoring	Have we set regular times to check how the project is going? Are we on track with things like: budget, contractors' deadlines, people attending sessions etc? If something is not on track, have we adjusted our plan to cope? Are we collecting our evaluation data as planned?	If something unexpected comes up (e.g. a printer misses a deadline) go back to the plan and adjust the dates and other tasks to fit the new timing.	

Step 4. Evaluating the project

Evaluation is a vital part of project management. Evaluation is important because it answers the questions “Did we achieve our objective?” and “Is anyone better off?” Evaluating your project is an essential part of project management because it helps you to:



- tell others of your successes and areas you intend to improve

- be accountable to your target group and wider community
- improve your management practices by not wasting time and money
- plan for the next project by learning from strategies that work and changing strategies that don't.

This checklist can be used once the project is completed. Answer each of the questions below to help you begin the evaluation process².

Question	Common terms	Comment	Useful tip	Notes
1. Was the CDAT the best group to do the project?	Appropriateness	Were we the appropriate group to do this project? If we weren't, why did we do the project?	Sometimes the most appropriate body is unavailable for a project. Noting this shows that the CDAT did consider other options before starting.	_____
2. How well did the product/activity meet the needs of the target group?	Effectiveness	How suitable was the product for the target group? How far did the product/service meet the needs of the target?	Effectiveness is when the needs of the target group are met and the project has a positive impact e.g. providing current and relevant drug information to parents will make the information sessions more effective.	_____
3. How much money and time did we spend on the product/activity?	Efficiency	Did the project come in on budget? Were tasks completed on time?	Keep accurate records of all your spending for audit purposes.	_____

² This is a simple checklist. More detailed methods can be found at www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/drugs_action



Resources

Visit www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/drugs_action for more details and information on project management practices and methods.



Feedback

Drug Action Toolkit welcomes feedback. Please call **(02) 9228 3731** or email drugaction@premiers.nsw.gov.au