

STEP 1

CARRYING OUT A SKILLS ANALYSIS

This guide explains why a skills analysis is important when preparing for a community asset acquisition project. It also highlights some of the key skills that your group should have access to throughout the process.



A BOARD SKILLS ANALYSIS IS A KEY STEP IN THE EARLY STAGES OF A NEW PROJECT:

- **YOU WILL, COLLECTIVELY, NEED TO HAVE ACCESS TO A GOOD RANGE OF THE RELEVANT SKILLS TO EXPLORE AND DEVELOP YOUR PROJECT IDEAS**
- **KNOWING HOW TO ACCESS THESE SKILLS WILL MAKE SURE THAT YOUR GROUP IS PREPARED AT EVERY STEP IN THE PROCESS**

New needs will emerge and board composition will change as things move along, so it's important to assess and address any skills gaps regularly.

HOW WILL YOU CONDUCT THE SKILLS ANALYSIS?

There is no one set in stone way to approach a skills analysis, but there are some fundamental guidelines to follow which should make the process simple but effective. This might include:

- identifying the skills required for your specific project
- establishing the baseline of skills already available on your group
- identifying gaps between the skills required and those available
- establishing and carrying out a plan to address these gaps
- revisiting the skills analysis at key project stages
- identifying future potential skills gaps as your project develops

WHAT SKILLS ARE TYPICALLY REQUIRED TO MANAGE COMMUNITY ASSET PURCHASES?

The first step is to look at the skills required to take your project forward and match them with the skills of members of the steering group/board.

GENERAL SKILLS:

Some key skills are suggested below; there may be others of specific relevance to your project. Ask each steering group/board member to rate their ability in relevant skills.

- chairing and facilitating meetings
- agenda planning and writing notes or minutes of meetings
- communications (verbal, written, digital) – for the organisation and the wider community
- community engagement
- dealing with difficult situations
- business and project planning, including risk analysis
- working with volunteers
- financial management
- funding and fund raising

SPECIFIC SKILLS FOR AN ASSET OWNERSHIP PROJECT:

Depending on your particular proposal, some of the following skills will also be valuable. After identifying those which relate to your project, again ask each member of your group to rate their ability.

- legal
- architecture/planning
- quantity surveying/civil engineering
- capital project management
- procurement
- sector specific skills such as forestry; renewable energy; tourism; crofting; social care
- local history
- land management
- running a business or social enterprise

Going through this process in the early stages of project development will help you to put a strong team in place to take the project forward.

HOW WILL YOU GO ABOUT ADDRESSING ANY SKILLS GAPS?

It is likely that you will identify gaps during this process, and it is important to set a clear plan to address these gaps. Perhaps a member of your group will know someone with the relevant expertise, or you could approach the wider community seeking these specific skills. You could also consider bringing in skills from outwith the community.

Often people won't volunteer themselves for these things so it might be better to approach someone personally. Try to make your request specific so that they have a sense of purpose and understand the commitment. Consider asking a young person to ensure your board is both representative of your community and taking the future into consideration.

You could ask if they would be willing to sit on a subcommittee, be co-opted onto your board, or complete a specific task (such as managing a Facebook page; running a fund raising event; providing some consultancy).

SKILLS THAT MAY BE REQUIRED IN THE FUTURE:

As your project matures, particularly post-acquisition, new skills are likely to be required so the skills analysis should be repeated and gaps identified and addressed as before. Some key skills at this stage include:

- employing and managing people
- recruiting and managing volunteers
- working with young people
- working with vulnerable people
- corporate planning, strategy and review
- project evaluation
- succession planning
- crisis management!

WHERE CAN YOU GET MORE HELP?

Local or national support agencies may be able to offer advice and guidance on specific areas. Speak to your HIE Development Manager who should be able to signpost you in the right direction.

Consider bringing in independent specialist advice or consultancy for certain tasks to help move your project to the next stage (see 'Finding expert help'). Typical areas of work where this can prove valuable include preparation of a feasibility study, business planning or carrying out a specialist survey.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE SEE

www.hie.co.uk/ten-steps

or contact us on community.assets@hient.co.uk



Highlands and Islands Enterprise
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