



Bedfordshire & Luton  
Community Foundation

## Identifying Need

*This is the starting point for any project. Need is the term we use to describe a problem, issue, or situation where something needs to change to make things better for a person, a group of people, an environment or an organisation.*

If you have a good idea why you want funding, you will be aware of problems or unmet needs in your community. Careful analysis of the need is an important first step when planning your project. This will help you decide how best to address the problem. It will also keep everyone involved in the project focussed on the priorities.

You shouldn't start a project plan with who you want to work with or what activities you want to do.

### *Need – key points checklist*

- What is the problem or issue you want to address with your project?
- What evidence is there that this need exists?
- What are the reasons for the need?
- Have you carried out any research?
- Why have you prioritised this need?
- Why is your project an appropriate response to the need?
- Have you consulted with the people your project will benefit and other relevant stakeholders?
- Do you know about relevant local strategies or initiatives, or other projects working in this field and how your project will fit in?

You will need to demonstrate how you know the unmet need exists and will have to provide some **recent and relevant** evidence. This can come from a combination of sources, such as:

- asking people with experience of the need
- your own experience, or what you have seen
- research into the scale of the need
- local statistics about the population in the area or levels of deprivation (such as from the census or other more recent surveys) or other statistics
- local authority initiatives or partnership strategies between statutory and voluntary sector services that are in place because the need is already well known and evidenced.

## Outcomes

Outcomes are the changes that your project can make over time to address the need(s) you have identified. They are the result of what you do, rather than the activities or services you provide. For people, this might be things like improved health, new skills, more confidence or getting a job.

Outcomes are best described using words of change, such as: 'more', 'better', 'less' or 'improved'. In some cases outcomes may involve keeping a situation stable, or stopping things from getting worse.

Depending on your project, outcomes can occur at different levels, including:

- Individuals and families. E.g. fathers improve their parenting skills resulting in stronger family relationships
- Communities. E.g. fewer young people involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour as a result of participating in a range of positive activities
- The environment. E.g. improvements in local habitats will lead to higher levels of species biodiversity
- Organisations. E.g. charities have greater skills and capacity to meet local needs
- Systems and structures. E.g. a decrease in congestion city-wide from an increase in cycle routes.

A single project may identify outcomes at many levels. For example, a family centre may identify outcomes for children, their families and for local schools.

Even in small or highly targeted projects with only one or two outcomes it is still possible to differentiate between the aim and the outcome. For example, a small benefits advice project for lone parents could still have as its aim 'to address poverty among unemployed lone parents in the area' with an outcome of 'increased financial security amongst lone parents leading to reduced stress and anxiety'

## Project Activities

Project activities – The tasks, actions or services that will take place

Project activities:

- specify what will be done, how it will be done, who will do it and when in order to achieve your outcomes
- form the main content of your project planning
- determine the resources and budget that you need to run your project.

Having identified the changes you want to achieve, you can now plan how to make them happen. Activities will bring about the changes that your project will deliver. They are the core of the project planning process, setting out what will happen, how it will happen, who will do it and when. They should be the most appropriate and effective way to address the need(s) that the project is addressing.

Activities are best described using words of action to describe what those working on the project will actually do, such as: to provide, run, organise, or produce.

At the initial planning stage of a project (for example when you are using the planning triangle), activities are best identified at a broad level by considering how best to achieve the outcomes, before moving on to specify activity levels and timescales.

When you get to the detailed project planning stage (for example before you prepare your application for funding), the activities should be specific and measurable, so rather than simply stating "talks at the community centre", you should specify something like "one talk at the community centre each month for two years, each attracting an average of 30 young people".

The more specific the activities are, the more accurate you will be able to be in setting your budget and planning your resources.

### *Activities – key points checklist*

- Does each activity have a direct link to one or more of your outcomes?

- Have you used words of action to describe your activities?
- From your activities, can you develop a project plan showing what you will do, how and by when in order to achieve the outcomes?

*(Information taken from the Big Lottery Fund explanations)*