

Project Consultancy

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Engaged to: troubleshoot project in difficulty

Aim of consultancy:

- To enable the project to deliver a quality service of activities in horticulture, therapeutic horticulture, arts, crafts and cookery.
- To enable the project to provide excellent customer service to clients, support staff and agencies at all times.
- To enable the project to improve on existing partnerships and create new partnerships
- To actively promote the project within the community
- To enable the project to use the time to rewrite the long term business plan, ensuring the focus remains on customer service at all times.

Outcome following intervention:

- Increased customer base by 75% whilst significantly reducing outgoing costs.
- Successfully identified and targeted prominent business people within the community to become volunteer Directors.
- Designed a sensory garden for clients to enjoy.
- Project Plan rewritten to make the project viable moving forward

Post involvement conclusion

The project was relaunched and is now a successful social enterprise within the community.

Consultation Introduction:

(October 2010) The project has been running for just under a year without clear direction and guidance.

The long term goal of the project is to be self sustainable providing multiple financial incomes through client day care services, farming, horticulture and retail.

However, through no fault of the staff the project has grown out of proportion, has grown too fast in an unsustainable fashion in certain area, and the focus has slipped from providing excellent customer service and client care to animal and crop production.

As a consequence, client numbers have dropped, relationships between the project, support staff and agencies has disintegrated and there is a general feeling of negativity at the site.

This came to crisis point when a serious complaint was made, at which point it was suggested that the project is shut down and re-launched. As a result three options have been put forward for consideration.

Results of consultation

It was clear that something had to change - and urgently. Having met with staff, clients and stakeholders, and reviewed all the information and data available the management were presented with 3 options to consider.

Below is a highlight of the report to the management team and proposed options.

Consultation proposal and options 2010 onwards

1. **Option 1:** To shut the project down for the winter altogether giving the management team time to re-evaluate, rewrite the project plan.
2. **Option 2:** To scale back the project, taking out all animal production and care, confine client activities to therapeutic horticulture and small scale horticulture in the kitchen garden and arts, crafts, cookery within the main house. This would be undertaken over a 6 month period, during which time the project will be reevaluated with achievable goals, improved management structure, staff training and support, improve relationships with existing clients and create new client lists.
3. **Option 3** To continue as it is.

Realistic outcomes of these options are:

1. **Option 1** – this would damage the project, would not give potential new clients a chance to visit, would remove the link with the community
2. **Option 2** – this makes a lot of sense, not only will it save a huge amount of money on wages and animal feed, it would give the project the face in the community that it needs, offer opportunities to work on improving and creating new partnerships, continues to provide a service to the few existing service users, gives the management team a chance to re-evaluate and re-launch the project
3. **Option 3** – not an option – it is unsustainable.

Conclusion:

Option 2, is the only viable option in making the project go forward with any real future. This gives the management team time to evaluate and rewrite the 5 year project management plan, phasing it so that it does not get too big too quickly.

It means that the project retains its place within the community, and offers the chance to shift the emphasis back to providing a service for clients and the two EEs (Enjoy and Experience).

Option 2 Project Plan

This is a short term intervention designed to re-launch the project in Spring 2011.

This intervention will reengage with the client base, provide essential training to staff and help develop a volunteer network.

Project Plan Winter 2010-2011

To provide 2.5 days of activities at the project and also as an outreach service to other clients. These on-site activities will be within the kitchen garden, poly tunnel and greenhouse, plus craft room and kitchen of house. The rest of the farm, including the quadrants, will be withdrawn from the project until March 2011.

- **Kitchen Garden:** therapeutic horticulture and horticulture in the existing raised beds in kitchen garden Utilise the poly-tunnel as a potting up/small scale growing area
- **Craft room:** arts and crafts activities
- **Kitchen in house:** cookery activities
- **Quadrants:** front two to be retained for installation of raised beds subject to planning permission and lottery bid. Rear two to be handed over for growing. To be reviewed in the spring.
- **Farm & Animals:** withdrawn from project for winter. All farm animals to be handed back to farm. The two ponies to be re-homed for winter. The two tame rabbits also to be re-homed for winter.

Project opening times

Monday	10am – 3pm
Tuesday	10am – 3pm
Wednesday	10am – 1pm
Thursday	CLOSED
Friday	CLOSED

Staffing hours: Maximum 6 hour days giving prep time and clear up time before and after activities. No additional hours paid.

Staff training:

All staff, present and new must receive urgent training in:

Customer service
Conflict resolution

First aid

Health and safety in the workplace including writing risk assessments

Manual handling

Safeguarding Adults

Forward plan and conclusion

During this period the management team need to work on the 5 year project plan that will be achievable without losing sight of the main aim which is to provide an exceptional service to clients using a variety of interactive activities to achieve this. These activities will include horticulture, therapeutic horticulture, small animal husbandry, arts, crafts, cookery, retail, and farm animal care and management as part of the OCR training programme.

There are certain factors that need to be included in this development

- Planning permission for the shed and barn conversion
- The lottery bid

These are considerations that have to be made especially if the planning permission and/or the lottery bid are unsuccessful.

The whole team also need to work on building relationships with existing partners. These relationships need to be nurtured and developed so that there is a strong working partnership focussed on the same outcome; ie providing an exceptional service to all the clients. This is especially important for the on-site staff where relationships have broken down almost beyond repair.

Health and Safety policies need to be put in place for the welfare of clients and staff. This needs to be done as a matter of urgency and regular reviewed. Risk assessments must be done before any further activities take place.