

Business Planning for The Voluntary Sector

Introduction

Expectations about the ability of voluntary and community organisations to present their organisation and project plans in a systematic and coherent manner is increasing. Where significant resources are being sought, funders often want organizations to have developed a case for this and to present it in the form of a business plan. But for many, this will be a new challenge and unfamiliar territory.

This course helps you understand the business planning process and examines how a business plan can help your organisation express and achieve its goals. The course will look at the business planning cycle and when it is necessary to write a plan, or update an existing one. You also have the opportunity to prepare a simple outline plan for your organisation during the course.

What will you learn?

By the end of the course you should be able to:

- Understand the development process of a business plan.
- Understand the reasons for the production of a business plan in a voluntary sector context.
- Describe the elements contained in a typical business plan.
- Produce a simple plan which is clear, consistent and easy to read and includes all the relevant headings.

Who is this course aimed at?

This course is most suited to those people involved with a voluntary or community organisation that has identified the need to prepare some form of simple business plan, but who lack experience or knowledge in preparing one. This course is also suitable where an organisation already has a plan in place and wants to review this and reflect on the planning processes and content they have included. This course is suitable for staff and particularly trustees and management committee members, of small to medium sized organisations. This course is not suited to individuals seeking to establish self employment.

What are the entry requirements? (If applicable)

There are no formal entry requirements. Participants should be involved in running and management of a voluntary organisation either in the capacity as a trustee/committee member or member of staff with business planning responsibilities.

How is it taught?

The course is taught using a variety of methods including small and whole group discussions, exercises, scenarios and tutor input. Emphasis is placed on each student supporting the learning process by working collaboratively and being willing to contribute to discussions and activities and having an interest in the long term development of their organisation. Elements of business planning theory are linked to best practice and compared

to what happens in the 'real world' of the voluntary sector; to identify where and how improvements can be made.

How will you be assessed?

Assessment will be by a mix of task based activities, plus some written work to evidence your learning and understanding. There will also be a presentation of your organisation's current and future business planning developments. An outline business plan, or reflection on a current plan will also form part of the assessed work.

What will you achieve?

If you complete the course successfully you will achieve Open College Network (OCN) Credits at either Level 1 or Level 2. The OCN Credits you achieve are part of a national system for recognising and accrediting the learning you have undertaken on this course. Once you complete this course you can build the number of credits you have achieved by undertaking further short courses as detailed below.

What can you do after this?

There are other courses in the Voluntary and Community short course programme that may support further learning and development of you and your organisation. These include; Strategic Planning for Voluntary and Community Organisations, Understanding Budgets and Finance and Developing a Fundraising Strategy.

Who are the tutors?

The course is delivered by Iain Sharp. His experience of the voluntary and community sector spans over 20 years in a variety of capacities as; staff member, volunteer, chair of a small national charity and independent consultant.

When does it run?

This is a three day course which includes two nights residency at the College. Courses start at 5.30pm on the first day and finish around 3 pm on the third day. Please check our website or short course guide for course dates. Alternatively you can contact our Short Course office.

Is there a cost?

This course is free if you are claiming certain types of benefits. Otherwise it is £70 for individual learners or learners from voluntary organisations (£195 for statutory/private sector organisations). If you have already received a mandatory grant while studying at a UK institution for higher education there is a £10 surcharge – this is to partly recoup the resultant loss in funding for the College.

How can you apply?

For more information please contact the short course office on 0121 472 0116 or email shortcourses@fircroft.ac.uk. You can apply online at www.fircroft.ac.uk, by post or in person.

