

**Rural Community Project Planning:
Six Steps to Make Projects More Successful**
Cher Hersrud, Strengthen ND Special Projects Officer

The key to success for rural community projects is planning; good planning will save time, money and frustration, and eliminate failure. A community project benefits more from broad community engagement; therefore more than a core group of people should be involved in the planning and development of a community project. Bring groups and individuals into the process early to provide new ideas, build ownership, and increase the base of support.

1 Clearly define Project Need/Purpose

- Why is the project needed and who will it serve?
- What community need will the project meet?
- Develop a minimum two-sentence description of the project.
- Who will manage the project when completed?

2 Community Ownership and Collaboration

- Don't "build it and they will come."
- Ask for...and listen to community input
- Seek organizations and groups to collaborate with - make it truly a community project

3 Define Project Budget

- What will the project cost to complete or start up?
- Develop a project expense budget.
- Include donated time, materials and expertise (at standard rates) in the budget as both expense and revenue.
- Develop an operating budget for the project. (a sample is also on our website)

4 Fundraising Plan

- Plan for local individual, and business support
- What is the potential for corporate support? Many make donations in areas that they serve.
- Is it a project that provides naming opportunities?
- Are there grant sources for support? (local, state, foundation?)
- Develop a plan that starts with local support.
- Have a Fundraising Committee.

5 Project Management

- Who will oversee the financial aspects of the project?
- Who will be the main contact for the project?
- Who will provide project oversight?
- Delegate responsibility to more than one person.

6 Project Reporting and Evaluation

- Plan for reporting to all donors to the project, particularly foundations
- Plan for evaluation, if appropriate
- Always acknowledge all donors to a project - including those who provide in-kind contributions.

**Rural Community Project Planning:
Sample Project Plan**
Useful for fundraising and grantwriting

Project Statement: The City of ABCD is renovating an existing downtown building into a Community Center, that will provide an accessible space for programs, services, and community activities. The Center will focus on community health and wellness. The Center will be owned by the City, with a designated board managing and overseeing operations.

Need: ABCD community has 157 residents; however, the population within a 50 mile radius is 475. In 2022, ABCD community underwent an areawide planning process that included surveying all residents of the five townships in the area. A total of 225 surveys were mailed out, with a 60% return.

Residents clearly indicated through surveys and the following public meetings that Senior programs and services were needed (more than 80% of surveys). Adult education and health and wellness activities received a 60% response. There are no services for a 60 mile radius.

Project Description

The development of a community center is a key project within our Community Action Plan that will serve all area residents. The City owns the former hardware store on Main Street that is structurally sound and in good condition, with the exception of the repair of the roof. We have had both electricity and heating examined and both meet all codes. There is water through the building's bathroom.

The building is a large open space that can be used for a walking track, exercise classes, and special events. The large storage room at the back of the building will be renovated to provide small group meeting space and limited space for coffee preparation and food storage. We will not create a kitchen, but will have basic requirements for hot/cold for events.

The facility will be self-supporting through small fees and rental fees. This can include wedding dances and receptions, private classes, regional healthcare services (flu shots, blood pressure checks, etc.) There will be a small fee for exercise classes, and the walking track marked on the floor along the outside of the big room, with distance measurements.

Timeline

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| September - February | Fundraising for renovation |
| March/April | Building clean-up and storage room renovation |
| May | Roof repair, painting, and electrical work completed |
| June | Equipment and furnishings in place |
| July | Grand Opening events |

Potential Sources of Support

- City of ABC
- ND Community Foundation
- Area Business Sponsorships
- Former residents/alumni

Community Project Planning
Sample Budget

EXPENSE

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Roof Repair | \$6,000 - Bid |
| Clean-up - 50 hours @ \$15 | \$ 750 - volunteer - in-kind |
| Painting - 100 hours @ \$15 | \$1,500 - volunteer - in-kind |
| Paint | \$ 300 |
| Electrical - adding outlets | \$ 500 - Bid |
| Folding chair - 150@\$10 | \$1,500 |
| Tables - 8 foot - 8 @100 | \$ 800 |
| Small refrigerator | \$ 150 |
| Coffee pots - large - 2@\$50 | <u>\$ 100</u> |
| | |
| Total Expense | \$13,600 |

REVENUE Projected

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| In-kind donation of time - cleaning | \$ 750 |
| In-kind donation of time - painting | \$ 1,500 |
| Grant - ND Community Foundation | \$ 5,000 |
| Grant - local power company | \$ 1,000 |
| VFW charitable gaming gift | \$ 1,000 |
| Local individual/business donors | \$ 2,000 |
| Donations from alumni mailing | <u>\$ 3,000</u> |
| | |
| Total Projected Revenue | \$14,250 |



StrengthenND®



strengthennd.com



megan@strengthennd.com



(701) 303-0840