

## Assignment Two Discussion

Online Learning: OL 204 Designing and Funding Non Profit Projects. The Community Focus

Center for Sustainable Development: <https://nonprofit.csd-i.org/ol-204-designing-and-funding-non-profit-programs-4/>

### Assignment Two. Engaging the community in project launch and assessing management skills

We've worked very hard up to this point to build on community ownership. Until now this has been largely theoretical: talking about activities that will happen in the future.

Beginning this week, we will begin a process over several weeks of engaging community members in the launching of the project, in the co-management of the project, in the implementation of activities, and in possibly taking over and continuing project activities after your non profit has gone.

Community members may have things that they need to learn how to do. Some of them will be management and oversight techniques (for committee members), others will be manual skills and techniques, and behavioral changes that they will need to learn to adopt in order to achieve the impact the project has been designed to deliver. Here is a simplified outline of what we will be exploring over the next few weeks

#### Project Launch Assignment

Communication

Co-management

Assessing management skills sets

Mentoring

#### Developing New Skill Sets Assignment

Program activity skills sets (such as learning how to compost as part of the soil restoration activity)

Integrating behavioral changes (such as learning the importance of hand washing and incorporating it into daily routine)

#### Project Handover and Future Planning Assignment

Long-term oversight and maintenance (such as collecting fees, and maintaining and repairing a community garden water system)

Access to future technical assistance, services, and resources (learning where to turn when an unforeseen problem arises in the future (such as a broken water pump)

In reality, these different project stages may be spread out in your project's schedule over a 12 or 18 month period—so in this course we're going to learn how to do these things, but it might be impractical to actually accomplish them during a six week long course. It is possible to do the first two of these three assignments before the end of the course. Even though you won't be able to "hand over" the project before the end of the course, it will be a valuable experience to learn how to do it so that you know what things the community will need to know how to do in the future that you need to be teaching to them now.

This week we're going to focus on engaging the community based project in launching the project and learning how to co-manage it. Last week, you organized the activities that the community has committed to doing, and prepared a simplified presentation of the project. You now have the tools to give them that shows them what they need to do and how it relates to the global picture of the project.

We're going to begin by developing a clear line of communication with the community committee, engaging them in co-managing the project with us, and assessing what management skills they may be lacking.

Communication is just that. Simply meeting with the committee (or specific members) to share the new list of activities, the simplified project outline and the schedule is a good way to begin clear communication. You might discover in this first meeting that your presentation materials are too complex, and that you will need to present them in a different format.

Simply beginning to agree to do things in support of each other within certain time frames begins the process of co-management. In my example in this Assignment, one of the things the community has agreed to do is to organize the location of the workshops on the correct dates. The fact you will discuss this with them begins the communication process; the fact that they will follow through on this activity and that you will show up to facilitate the workshop begins the process of co-management.

The next step of the process is for you to observe which management skills they may be missing, and to ask for regular feedback in your meetings in order to make sure that they're understanding everything that you're sharing with them. You should begin making notes about things that they would like to learn about in order to build their capacity to be able to oversee their project responsibilities now and oversee the future continuation of the project after you're gone. Once identified, the skills can be shared over the next 12 or 18 months of the project so that when they take over they will know how to manage it.

Sharing these management skills with them might be something that you can do by demonstration over the span of time, or you may choose to hold a specialized workshop with the committee—or members of the committee—in order to get specific information across (how to collect water fees, simplified bookkeeping, how to hold elections for future committee members). It will be important to consider including someone from the committee as part of your team so that they can see how you do what you do—so that they will be able to do it after you're gone: this is the mentoring component.

I look forward to seeing your work this week -- please move on to assignment 2.

Sincerely,

Tim Magee

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