



INGENS Consulting • Publication Series

Grant and Development Project Basics for Beginners

A practical introduction to project thinking

2026

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Foreword

When working with businesses and projects, we often encounter a similar situation. Someone has an idea for developing their business, modernising a process or introducing a new solution. They also hear that such activities may sometimes receive support through a grant or other external funding.

At this point, many people start looking for information about programmes, forms and application rules. In our experience, however, this is not the best starting point.

In practice, something else matters far more: a clear understanding of the project. Every worthwhile project starts with simple questions: what is not working properly in the current situation, what do we want to improve, what outcome do we want to achieve, and what actions are needed?

Only once the answers to these questions are organised can we speak of a project in practical terms. This is where documentation, applications and funding programmes come into play.

This publication was written with that approach in mind. It is neither a manual for completing forms nor a detailed guide to specific support programmes. Its purpose is to explain project logic in a simple, structured and accessible way.

You will find an approach to thinking about projects, examples from different sectors, common beginner mistakes and practical scenarios showing what a project looks like in real life.

Introduction

If you are reading this material, you have probably already come across grants, subsidies or publicly funded projects. Someone may have suggested that your business could benefit from such funding. Perhaps you have tried to understand how it works yourself.

Many people then turn to documents, rules and forms. Very quickly, the whole subject can seem complicated. In practice, however, the difficulty usually lies elsewhere. Most materials begin with documents rather than with the project itself.

A grant always relates to a project. A project is simply an idea for solving a specific problem. It may involve improving how a business operates, introducing new technology, organising work more effectively, modernising a production process or bringing order to a particular area of activity.

That is why this publication does not begin with forms and regulations. We start with something far more important: how to think about a project.

We will show you how to identify a problem worth addressing through a project, organise your project idea, describe actions and results, and recognise common beginner mistakes.

You will also find examples from different sectors - from vehicle repair workshops, bakeries and small manufacturers to veterinary clinics, farms and local services. This is not an academic textbook. It is a practical guide to understanding project logic and organising your own thinking.

How to use this book

This publication is an introductory resource for anyone who wants to understand the basics of working with development projects and grants.

You can use this book in two ways.

The first is to read it from beginning to end. This helps you understand project logic and the sequence of the different stages of project work.

The second is to use selected chapters according to your needs. For example:

- if you want to understand project logic, start with Chapter 1;
- if you are interested in funding, go directly to the chapter on grants;
- if you want to practise building a project, go straight to the practice projects section.

The second part of the book contains exercises that let you try designing a simple development project yourself. Suggested solutions appear later, so you can first attempt to answer the questions independently.

A short checklist at the end of the publication also helps you assess whether a business is ready to prepare a project and potentially apply for funding.

CHAPTER 1

Project logic - the INGENS approach

Many people begin project work with documents, rules or forms. In practice, this is the hardest route. A project does not start with a form. It starts with an understanding of the situation and the problem we want to solve.

Project logic diagram

Situation → Problem → Project objective → Solution → Actions → Result → Budget

This sequence underpins the INGENS approach to development projects. If any element is unclear, the entire project becomes harder to justify, plan and finance.

1. Initial situation

Every project begins with an understanding of the current situation. We need to ask: how does the business or institution operate now, how is work organised, and what tools are being used?

2. Problem

A problem is an aspect of activity that performs less well than it should. It may involve inefficient work organisation, a lack of suitable tools, excessive customer service times or difficulties in managing information.

3. Project objective

The project objective defines what we want to improve. It should be simple, clear and grounded in a real organisational need.

4. Solution

The solution is an idea for achieving the objective. It might involve introducing a new system, reorganising work, modernising technology or bringing in new tools.

5. Actions

Actions are the specific steps needed to deliver the project. They should be realistic, logical and achievable in practice.

6. Result

The result shows what will change once the project is complete. It should be observable and understandable to the person assessing the project.

7. Budget

The budget defines the resources needed to deliver the project. It usually includes equipment, software, implementation services, training or other costs directly linked to the planned actions.

Practical note

If a project is difficult to explain in a few sentences, its logic is usually not yet sufficiently organised. In that case, return to the beginning and reconsider the situation, problem and project objective.

Consultant's note

In many businesses, the first instinct is to buy a new tool or technology. In practice, a tool rarely solves a problem by itself. First, understand the current work process, where difficulties arise and which aspects of organisation need improvement. Only then can you assess whether new technology is actually needed or whether a change in working methods would suffice.

Short example - a vehicle repair workshop

Situation	The workshop records customer bookings in a notebook.
Problem	Repair histories and appointment schedules are difficult to manage.
Objective	Improve workshop organisation.
Solution	A job management system.
Actions	Install the system, enter customer data and train staff.
Result	Faster customer service and better work organisation.

CHAPTER 2

Grant basics

Once project logic is understood, we can move to the second element: funding. One way of financing projects is through grants - funds awarded for carrying out specific activities.

1. What is a grant

A grant is funding awarded to deliver a specific project. It is not a loan. The funds are intended for a particular project, and expenditure must be documented.

Depending on the programme, funding may cover the full cost or only part of it, requiring a contribution from the applicant.

2. The project matters more than the grant

Many people start by asking: "Can my business get a grant?" This is not the most useful question. A better one is: do we have a project that is genuinely worth delivering?

3. What grants can fund

- business modernisation;
- the introduction of new technologies;
- improvements in work efficiency;
- process digitalisation;
- employee training.

4. Project examples

Bakery	Introduce an order management system to improve production planning and customer service.
Veterinary clinic	Digital animal medical records to make treatment histories easier to access.
Dental practice	A patient appointment management system to improve practice organisation.
Farm	Introduce herd monitoring, automate selected activities or digitise records to reduce workload and improve control of the production process.

5. How a grant works in practice

- announcement of a funding programme;
- project preparation;
- submission of an application;
- project assessment;
- award of funding;
- project delivery.

6. Why not every project receives a grant

Funding programmes have limited budgets. Assessments usually consider the project's rationale, feasibility, impact and the realism of its budget.

7. A grant is not "easy money"

A grant supports a project, but it comes with responsibilities: carrying out actions as planned, documenting expenditure and demonstrating project results.

Practical note

The most common beginner mistake is to look for grants first and only then try to invent a project. In practice, the sequence is the reverse: the project first, then the funding.

Consultant's note

Grants are often seen as a way of securing additional funds. In practice, funding bodies primarily assess the project's rationale, rather than the need for money itself. A project with a clearly defined problem, realistic actions and achievable results has a much better chance of receiving support than one designed solely around a particular programme.

CHAPTER 3

Key terms in projects and grants

Certain terms appear frequently in project and grant documentation. They may sound complicated to someone new to project work. In reality, most have straightforward meanings.

Term	Meaning
Project	A set of actions intended to bring about a specific change or improvement.
Applicant	A person or business applying for project funding.
Beneficiary	The entity that receives a grant and delivers the project.
Project budget	A breakdown of all costs needed to deliver the project.
Schedule	The project's timeline.
Eligible costs	Expenditure that a grant can fund under the programme's rules.
Application period	The period during which applications can be submitted to a particular funding programme.
Specific objective	A more specific aspect of the overall project objective, relating to a particular area of change.
Project result	The direct effect of project activities, observable once the project is complete.
Indicator	A way of measuring project progress or effects, such as the number of staff trained, shorter service times or the number of solutions implemented.

Practical note

Grant documentation often uses specialist language. In practice, most terms simply describe the basic elements of a project: who will deliver it, what needs to be done, how much it will cost and what the result will be.

CHAPTER 4

How to read programme documentation

When opening grant programme documentation for the first time, people often feel that everything is very complicated. In practice, most of the information can be reduced to a few key questions.

The key question

Is this programme intended for our kind of project at all?

1. Programme objective

Every funding programme has a defined objective, such as technological development, business modernisation, improved energy efficiency or the digitalisation of services.

2. Who can apply

Programmes may be intended for small businesses, medium-sized enterprises, public institutions or non-governmental organisations.

3. What can be funded

The documentation specifies which activities the programme can fund, such as technology purchases, IT system implementation, training or consultancy services.

4. Funding level

Grant programmes specify a maximum funding amount or the proportion of costs that a grant can cover.

5. Project assessment criteria

- project rationale;
- project feasibility;
- project impact;
- budget realism.

Practical note

You do not need to read programme documentation from beginning to end like a book. First, locate the key sections: the programme objective, who can apply, what can be funded and the assessment criteria.

CHAPTER 5

How to build a project step by step

Once you understand grant basics and how to read programme documentation, you can move to the most important part of project work: building the project itself.

Step 1 - Analyse the situation

The first step is to understand the current situation of the business or organisation. How is work carried out now? What processes are used? Where do constraints arise?

Step 2 - Identify the problem

A problem is an aspect of activity that works less well than it should, such as slow customer service, difficulties in organising work or frequent documentation errors.

Step 3 - Define the project objective

The project objective shows what we want to improve. It should be simple, clear and justifiable.

Step 4 - Design the solution

The solution is an idea for resolving the problem, such as introducing a new system, reorganising work or modernising technology.

Step 5 - Plan the actions

Actions are the specific steps needed to deliver the project. They should be realistic, logical and achievable.

Step 6 - Define the results

Results show what effects the project will produce. They should be as specific and understandable as possible.

Step 7 - Prepare the budget

The budget defines the resources needed to deliver the project and should follow directly from the action plan.

Practical note

If a project is well thought through, describing it in a grant application form becomes relatively straightforward. The main difficulty is not writing the application itself, but organising the project beforehand.

Project logic summary

Situation → Problem → Objective → Solution → Actions → Result → Budget

CHAPTER 6

Project scenarios

This section presents project examples from different sectors to show how the same logic works in practice.

Case Study 1 - Digitalising a bakery

Initial situation: A small bakery takes most orders by telephone or directly in the shop. Orders are recorded by hand in a notebook or on slips of paper. Many arrive simultaneously in the morning, making production planning difficult.

Problem: Manual records lead to order errors, a lack of quick access to orders for the coming days, difficulties in planning production and a greater administrative workload for staff.

Project objective: Improve order intake and production planning in the bakery.

Solution: Introduce a simple digital system for managing customer orders.

Actions: select a system, purchase software, install and configure it, enter customer data and train staff.

Result: Better control of orders, easier production planning, fewer errors and more efficient customer service.

Project budget: Order management software, system configuration, staff training and basic computer equipment, if needed.

Practical note

For many small businesses, the first modernisation step is a simple digital information management system. This often improves work organisation more than expensive technological investments.

Case Study 2 - Modernising work organisation in a vehicle repair workshop

Initial situation: A small vehicle repair workshop mainly books customers by telephone. Repair appointments are written in a notebook or on slips of paper. Information about completed repairs is stored in different places.

Problem: No central vehicle repair history, difficulty in planning workshop activities, a greater risk of booking errors and more difficult service for regular customers.

Project objective: Improve workshop organisation and customer service.

Solution: Introduce a simple system for managing repair jobs and vehicle histories.

Actions: analyse needs, select a system, purchase software, install it, enter customer data and train staff.

Result: Better organisation of mechanics' work, faster customer service, easy access to repair histories and a lower risk of errors.

Practical note

In many small workshops, the biggest problem is not a lack of customers, but the absence of a structured job management system. Introducing a simple system for organising work often improves efficiency more than investing in new equipment.

Case Study 3 - Modernising work organisation in a veterinary clinic

Initial situation: A small veterinary clinic sees a dozen or so patients each day. Appointments are booked by telephone, and some animal treatment information is recorded on paper.

Problem: No quick access to animal treatment histories, difficulties in organising appointments, a greater risk of documentation errors and additional administrative work for staff.

Project objective: Improve clinic organisation and the management of patients' medical records.

Solution: Introduce a digital system for managing appointments and animal medical records.

Actions: analyse the clinic's needs, select a system, purchase software, install it, transfer patient data and train staff.

Result: Faster access to animal treatment histories, better appointment organisation, a lower risk of documentation errors and easier working conditions for staff.

Practical note

In medical services, access to a patient's treatment history is essential. Digital records support faster decisions and improve organisation across the practice.

Case Study 4 - Work organisation in a takeaway restaurant

Initial situation: A small takeaway restaurant serves customers on site and takes telephone orders. Orders also arrive through delivery apps. A large number arrive simultaneously in the evening.

Work observation: During peak periods, staff write orders on slips of paper, telephone orders become mixed with counter orders, food preparation times become difficult to predict and kitchen staff often have to ask for order details.

Problem: The main issue is not customer numbers, but how orders are organised. The absence of a single order management system creates confusion in the kitchen.

Project objective: Organise the restaurant's order intake and fulfilment process.

Possible solution: Introduce a point-of-sale (POS) system with a kitchen display that brings all orders together, sends them directly to the kitchen and controls the sequence of fulfilment.

Actions: analyse the current service process, select a POS system, install it, configure kitchen displays and train staff.

Result: Better kitchen organisation, shorter order fulfilment times, fewer errors and easier handling of high customer volumes.

Practical note

In many small restaurants, the biggest problem is not the number of orders, but the absence of structured information management. Organising the flow of orders often improves performance more than adding staff.

Case Study 5 - Production organisation in a small business

Initial situation: A small manufacturer makes products across several workstations. Production is driven by customer orders, and production jobs are passed to staff as paper notes or verbal instructions.

Problem: As orders increase, difficulties arise: no clear job sequence, idle time at some workstations, difficulty tracking production progress and problems in planning machine use.

Project objective: Improve production organisation and the planning of machine and workstation activities.

Solution: Introduce a production planning system covering simple job management, a production schedule and progress tracking.

Actions: analyse the current process, identify organisational constraints, select a planning system, implement it and train staff.

Result: Better production organisation, less machine idle time, better control of order fulfilment and more predictable production times.

Practical note

In many small manufacturers, the biggest problem is not a lack of machinery, but the absence of structured production planning.

Case Study 6 - Modernising a dairy farm

Initial situation: A small dairy farm uses an older milking system and keeps some livestock records manually.

Problem: The process is labour-intensive, herd health is harder to monitor and opportunities to increase productivity are limited.

Project objective: Improve milk production efficiency and reduce the farm's workload.

Solution: Introduce an automatic milking system and a digital herd monitoring system.

Actions: analyse the farm's needs, select a milking system, purchase and install it, implement herd monitoring and train the user.

Result: Less working time, better control of animal health and more stable milk production.

Practical note

On farms, a project does not have to mean a major technical investment alone. Better work organisation, easier access to data and less labour-intensive repetitive work are often equally important.

Case Study 7 - Work organisation on a vegetable farm

Initial situation: A small vegetable farm produces seasonally and sells some produce to local buyers, shops or directly to customers. Harvesting, packing and order dispatch are planned mainly through paper notes, telephone calls and day-to-day arrangements.

Problem: During busy periods, difficulties arise in sequencing work, tracking orders and organising harvesting and packing. This increases the risk of errors, delays and losses caused by poor organisation.

Project objective: Improve farm work organisation and the planning of harvesting, order preparation and customer service.

Solution: Introduce a simple work organisation system covering harvest planning, order records and a structured schedule for preparing and dispatching produce.

Actions: analyse current work organisation, identify common operational problems, select a simple planning and record-keeping tool, implement the system, organise information flows and train the user.

Result: Better seasonal work organisation, easier harvest and order planning, fewer errors and more predictable deliveries.

Practical note

On many small farms, the problem is not the scale of production itself, but the absence of organised seasonal working methods. Even simple planning and record-keeping tools can make activities much more predictable and reduce organisational losses.

CHAPTER 7

Common mistakes in project preparation

Preparing a project may seem difficult, especially the first time. In practice, most problems arise from a few recurring mistakes rather than from a lack of technical knowledge.

Mistake 1 - Starting with the grant rather than the project

Many people begin by asking: "Which grant can we apply for?" The resulting project fits the funding programme rather than the business's actual problem.

Mistake 2 - An overly general project description

A description such as "business modernisation project" says nothing about what will actually be done. Be specific instead: for example, introducing an order management system in a bakery.

Mistake 3 - No clearly defined objective

A project should always answer the question: what do we want to improve? An unclear objective makes it difficult to assess the project's rationale.

Mistake 4 - An unrealistic budget

The project budget should follow from the planned actions. Including unrelated costs undermines its credibility.

Mistake 5 - An overly complicated project

If a project is excessively elaborate and difficult to explain, its logic is usually not yet sufficiently organised.

Mistake 6 - No link between actions and results

Every project action should lead to a defined result. If actions and results are not connected, the project loses coherence.

Practical note

Most project mistakes can be avoided by following a simple logic: problem → objective → solution → actions → result.

Consultant's note

Excessive complexity is one of the most common project problems. Many projects can be simplified by asking one question: what is the simplest effective solution to the problem? A well-designed organisational change or a simple tool often produces a greater benefit than an elaborate, expensive technology project.

A good project does not need to be large or complicated. Above all, it must be logical, coherent and achievable.

CHAPTER 8

Practice projects

The examples below let you practise building a project using the structure presented in this book. For each scenario, identify the problem, project objective, possible solution, actions and result.

Exercise 1 - A small shop

A small grocery shop keeps stock records manually. Staff often do not know how many products are currently in stock. Some products occasionally run out during the trading day.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 2 - A hair salon

A hair salon books appointments only by telephone. During busy periods, it is difficult to answer every call. Some customers abandon their booking because they cannot get through.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 3 - A bicycle repair workshop

A small bicycle repair workshop receives many jobs during the summer. Mechanics often do not know which repairs should be completed first.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 4 - A restaurant

A restaurant takes orders on site, by telephone and through delivery apps. During peak periods, order fulfilment becomes disorganised.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 5 - A small manufacturer

A manufacturer of metal components receives an increasing number of orders. Production jobs are passed to staff verbally, causing errors and machine idle time.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 6 - A dental practice

A dental practice keeps patient records on paper.

Finding information about a patient's previous treatment takes a long time.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 7 - A hotel

A small hotel manages bookings mainly by telephone and email. During the tourist season, room availability is difficult to track.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 8 - A bakery

A bakery produces bread and other baked goods based on customer orders and expected demand. Sometimes too much is produced, and the products do not sell that day.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 9 - A transport company

A small transport company plans drivers' routes manually. Some vehicles are often overloaded with work while others remain idle.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 10 - A veterinary clinic

A veterinary clinic is seeing more patients. Staff struggle to schedule follow-up appointments and remind customers about vaccination dates.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 11 - A dairy farm

A farm keeps some herd, animal health and livestock management records in notebooks and loose notes. The owner finds it difficult to check individual animals' histories quickly and schedule certain activities at the right time.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

Exercise 12 - A vegetable farm

A farm sells vegetables to several local buyers. During the season, difficulties arise in planning harvesting, packing and timely order fulfilment. Some information is passed on verbally or recorded in different places.

Task

Task: describe the project using this structure: problem, project objective, possible solution, actions, result.

CHAPTER 9

Exercise solutions

The examples below illustrate one possible approach to the scenarios presented. In practice, a project can be designed in different ways. What matters most is a coherent structure:

problem → objective → solution → actions → result.

Exercise 1 - A small shop

Problem: A lack of up-to-date stock control means staff do not know how much stock is currently in the shop. As a result, some products run out during the trading day.

Project objective: Improve stock control and reduce empty shelves.

Possible solution: Introduce a simple inventory system or a sales system with stock control functionality.

Actions: analyse current record-keeping, select a sales and inventory system, install it, enter product data and train staff.

Result: Up-to-date stock control, fewer stockouts and easier delivery planning.

Exercise 2 - A hair salon

Problem: Booking appointments only by telephone means some customers cannot get through during busy periods and abandon their booking.

Project objective: Make appointment booking easier for customers and improve salon organisation.

Possible solution: Introduce an online appointment booking system.

Actions: analyse the salon's needs, select a booking system, configure the appointment calendar, train staff and inform customers about the new system.

Result: Easier appointment booking, fewer telephone interruptions and better salon scheduling.

Exercise 3 - A bicycle repair workshop

Problem: A large number of repair jobs arrive during the summer. Mechanics have no clear information about which repairs should be completed first.

Project objective: Improve workshop organisation and establish a clear sequence for completing jobs.

Possible solution: Introduce a simple repair job management system.

Actions: analyse current job intake, select a job management system, install it, enter customer data and train staff.

Result: Better workshop organisation, a clear repair sequence and faster customer service.

Exercise 4 - A restaurant

Problem: The restaurant receives orders from several sources, creating confusion in the kitchen during peak periods.

Project objective: Organise the order intake and fulfilment process.

Possible solution: Introduce a POS system with a kitchen display.

Actions: analyse order handling, select a POS system, install it, configure kitchen displays and train staff.

Result: An organised flow of orders, shorter fulfilment times and fewer kitchen errors.

Exercise 5 - A small manufacturer

Problem: Production jobs are passed to staff verbally, leading to errors and machine idle time.

Project objective: Improve production organisation and workstation scheduling.

Possible solution: Introduce a production planning system.

Actions: analyse the current production process, identify constraints, select a production planning system, implement it and train staff.

Result: Better production organisation, less machine idle time and more predictable production.

Exercise 6 - A dental practice

Problem: Patient records are kept on paper, making treatment histories difficult to retrieve quickly.

Project objective: Improve access to patients' medical records.

Possible solution: Introduce a digital patient records management system.

Actions: analyse current record management, select an IT system, install it, digitise records and train staff.

Result: Quick access to treatment histories, better record organisation and easier working conditions for staff.

Exercise 7 - A hotel

Problem: Bookings are handled mainly by telephone and email, making room availability difficult to track.

Project objective: Improve hotel booking management.

Possible solution: Introduce a hotel booking management system.

Actions: analyse current booking methods, select a booking system, install it, configure the room calendar and train staff.

Result: Better control of room availability, easier booking management and a lower risk of double bookings.

Exercise 8 - A bakery

Problem: Production of bread and other baked goods relies mainly on forecasts, leading to overproduction of some products.

Project objective: Improve bakery production planning.

Possible solution: Introduce production planning based on orders and sales history.

Actions: analyse sales data, select a production planning system, configure it and train staff.

Result: Production better matched to demand, less waste from unsold baked goods and more predictable production.

Exercise 9 - A transport company

Problem: Drivers' routes are planned manually, creating uneven vehicle workloads.

Project objective: Improve transport route planning.

Possible solution: Introduce a transport route optimisation system.

Actions: analyse current routes, select a transport planning system, configure it and train staff.

Result: Better vehicle utilisation, shorter transport times and lower fuel costs.

Exercise 10 - A veterinary clinic

Problem: Staff struggle to schedule follow-up appointments and remind customers about vaccinations.

Project objective: Improve appointment organisation and customer communication.

Possible solution: Introduce an appointment management system with SMS or email reminders.

Actions: analyse the clinic's needs, select an appointment management system, install it, configure reminders and train staff.

Result: Better appointment organisation, fewer missed appointments and more convenient customer service.

Exercise 11 - A dairy farm

Problem: Some information about the herd, animal health and livestock management is held in scattered records, making quick data access and work planning difficult.

Project objective: Organise farm information and make herd monitoring and selected livestock management activities easier to plan.

Possible solution: Introduce a simple digital system for basic herd records and the planning of selected activities.

Actions: analyse current record-keeping, identify the farm's main information needs, select a suitable tool, implement the system, enter basic data and train the user.

Result: Easier access to herd information, better work organisation, more predictable livestock management activities and a lower risk of overlooking important information.

Exercise 12 - A vegetable farm

Problem: During the season, information about harvesting, orders and produce preparation is passed on in an unstructured way, making work organisation difficult and increasing the risk of errors.

Project objective: Improve harvest planning, order preparation and farm work organisation.

Possible solution: Introduce a simple system for seasonal work planning, order records and delivery preparation.

Actions: analyse current harvest and order organisation, identify common problems, select a simple planning and record-keeping tool, implement the solution, organise record-keeping and train the user.

Result: Better seasonal work organisation, easier harvest and delivery planning, fewer errors and more timely order fulfilment.

CHAPTER 10

Five principles of a good project

Project work involves many methodologies, tools and frameworks. In practice, however, most good projects rest on a few simple principles.

1. A project begins with a problem

The most common project mistake is to start with a tool, technology or funding. In practice, a project should always begin by asking: what problem do we want to solve?

2. The project objective must be clear

A project should lead to a specific change. A good objective can be expressed simply: for example, shorter customer service times, better production organisation, easier access to information or fewer process errors.

3. The solution should be as simple as possible

Projects often create a temptation to design elaborate solutions. In practice, the best projects are often simpler than they first appear.

4. The project must be feasible

A good project is not just an idea, but a plan that can be delivered in real life. Ask: does the business have the resources to carry it out, can staff implement the change, and can the project be completed within a reasonable time?

5. Funding is a tool, not an objective

Grants and other financial support can help deliver a project, but should not be the starting point for designing it. A worthwhile project should come first. Only then should you check whether external funding can support its delivery.

CHAPTER 11

Is your business ready for a project and a grant?

Not every idea needs a project, and not every project needs external funding. Before looking for grants, answer a few simple questions.

1. Can you describe the problem clearly?

Is there a specific problem or constraint in your business that you can describe clearly? For example: excessive customer service times, a lack of order control, difficulties in planning production or a lack of access to data or documentation.

2. Do you know what outcome you want to achieve?

Can you answer the question: what should change once the project is complete?

3. Do you have an idea for a solution?

A project involves more than describing a problem. It also needs a workable solution.

4. Is the project realistic?

Does the business have time to deliver the project? Can staff implement the changes? Is the project achievable in practice?

5. Can you estimate the budget?

Grants fund specific actions and costs. It is therefore important to have at least an approximate picture of the project's costs.

How to interpret your answers

If you answered "yes" to most questions, your business is likely to be ready to prepare a project.

If you answered "no" to many questions, that does not mean there is a problem. Usually, it simply means the idea needs further organisation.

In that case, return to the basic project logic: situation → problem → objective → solution → actions → result.

Signs that the project needs further development

- the problem is described very generally;
- a specific project outcome is difficult to identify;
- the solution is disproportionately elaborate;
- the budget does not clearly follow from the actions;
- the business currently lacks the resources to implement the change.

Summary

This publication presents a simple way of thinking about projects. It is straightforward and does not require specialist language. It rests on a few basic questions that apply to almost any activity:

- what is the current situation;
- what problem do we want to solve;
- what outcome do we want to achieve;
- what actions are needed?

Clear, organised answers produce a project that is easy to understand and describe. Preparing project documentation or a grant application then becomes simply the next step.

Projects are not reserved for large organisations. They arise in the day-to-day activities of many businesses and farms: in services, retail, manufacturing and agriculture. Understanding the problem is the most important part of project work.

If, after reading this publication, you can see selected difficulties in your business as development projects that can be structured and planned, the book has achieved its main purpose.

Disclaimer

This publication is educational and introductory. It is neither an interpretation of regulations nor an official guide to specific funding programmes.

Call conditions, assessment criteria, funding levels and eligible cost categories may vary by programme and funding body. Always review the current call documentation before preparing an application.

About the author

The author is an industrial engineer working on process analysis and the optimisation of work organisation in businesses. His work focuses on practical approaches to solving operational problems and designing business improvements.

A simple principle lies at the heart of this approach: before looking for funding or new technologies, first understand the problem and how the organisation operates.

This publication was developed as a practical introduction to project thinking and the preparation of simple development projects.

About INGENS Consulting

INGENS Consulting analyses organisational problems and designs solutions that support business development. Its approach combines structured engineering thinking with practical process analysis.

Project work always starts with understanding the situation and the problem. The choice of tools, technologies and possible funding sources comes later. This approach produces projects that are logical, realistic and implementable.

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