

The project checklist:

Turning ideas into projects

Once you have scoped ideas for projects, it is important you agree which will be taken forward.

As a community, you may need time to do this and you are encouraged to seek wider community inputs to discuss ideas further.

Once there is a local team ready to take forward a project, you should contact the EMERGE team for online support. We will help you to use this project checklist.

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The project checklist

Step 1: Establishing our project

Step 2: Securing funding

Step 3: Delivering the project

Each of these three steps contain a series of questions.

Given the potential diversity of projects you may want to take forward, this toolkit does not attempt to provide “one size fits all” answers to these questions.

Instead, it provides guidance for how you might go about making the right choice as a community and for your project.

Step 1:

Establishing our project

1. How do we agree a mechanism to take decisions collectively?

Firstly, are all key stakeholders in your community supportive of the broad aims and design of the project?

Yes No Not sure

If not, the project idea itself should be refined and further consultation undertaken.

Once consensus has been achieved, a decision-making structure should be agreed for managing your project. The simplest approach would be to nominate project officers with defined roles. These could include:

Funding manager: _____

Community liaison: _____

Project management and delivery: _____

Significant decisions should always be taken with community consultation.

Step 1: Establishing our project

2. How do we establish or utilise a legal entity which can secure and manage funding?

There are 5 key steps for establishing a legal entity:

1. Research and identify the need to form a legal entity
2. Talk to others in your community and form a project team
3. State your aims and objectives
4. Decide on your legal form and create a constitution
5. Create your organisational policies

3. How do we manage changes to our idea over time?

It is likely that your project will need to manage change – for instance to accommodate the requirements of funders. One way to do this is through a change log – this documents when changes to the project take place, explains their rationale and confirms who was involved in the decision-making process.

4. How do we manage the project once it is up and running?

It is necessary to consider the lifetime of the project – how long will it need to be managed?

Will it create an asset that will need to be maintained, or disposed of at the end of its life?

What role could there be for other organisations to support management of the project, such as the county council?

Step 2:

Securing funding

1. How much money do we need?

Whilst the total figure may change as the project is developed, it is helpful before approaching funders to have a clear ask – how much will this cost?

It is important for you to consider both the initial outlay and any ongoing operations or maintenance costs.

These costs can be established by seeking quotes from suppliers and experts, or by comparison with similar projects undertaken elsewhere.

It is also advisable to include a contingency within the budget – given current rates of inflation this could be as high as 30%.

2. Where can we access funding (including match funding)?

The EU Just Transition Fund in Ireland will provide up to €168m to support projects in the Midlands which create employment, enhance skills, promote sustainability and enhance the region.

Other funding streams will continue to be available, such as the LEADER 2023-2027 programme worth €180m across Ireland.

Some are subject specific – for instance the grants periodically made available by Failte Ireland for tourism projects, or the community grants available for energy and electric vehicle projects by SEAI.

These are examples – the EMERGE team can discuss specific funding opportunities appropriate for your project as part of the online support.

Step 2: Securing funding

3. How do we align our project with funders' requirements, without losing our own identity?

As a project team, you should review the full range of potentially relevant funding sources, and compare objectives set out at the very start of the project's development (as discussed earlier today) with the funder's objectives. This will make it easier for you to draft a clear and compelling funding application.

It may help you to set targets for the project in order to demonstrate how it will meet a funder's objectives – for instance the number of jobs it is expected to create or the number of businesses it will support. It is important that these are realistic.

4. How do we ensure that we have covered initial costs and ongoing, operational costs?

It is often easier for you as a community to secure funding for the initial outlay to establish a project than to secure funding for ongoing costs – such as salaries for staff or maintenance.

It is however vitally important that these costs can be met, otherwise the project is liable to fail. Funders may also seek assurance that ongoing costs can be met.

There are broadly three ways to tackle this problem:

- Negotiate some ongoing funding alongside the initial funding
- Secure commitments from local businesses or other interested parties to meet ongoing costs
- Generate revenue within the project – for instance by selling goods or services

Step 2: Securing funding

5. How do we manage any income from the project?

If the project is going to generate income, the project team should put in place a plan for how this will be managed. This will depend to an extent on the legal form established for the project.

This income could be used to cover ongoing costs or reinvested in new community initiatives.

It is important that this is transparent and consented to by you as a community.

6. Building a funding plan

Start with your strategic objectives – beware of your mission drift.

What income categories make most sense to you? Diversification is important.

Make a plan for each category you decide is relevant.

What is the minimum you need to get by? What are the options for scale up? (Think bronze, silver and gold options).

Prioritise, pace yourself, and think about this in terms of 2 years, 5 years and 10 years periods.



Step 3:

Procuring and delivering

1. Do we need to do any procurement?

Yes

No

Not sure

Once funding is secured, the project team will need to spend it to deliver on the project's objectives.

Funders are very likely to have rules which will need to be followed as to how this is done – which may involve running an open tender or at least securing 3 quotes for the goods or services being bought.

We can advise you on how to prepare for this in the ongoing support provided after this session.

2. How do we ensure effective delivery?

Everyone involved in the project has an incentive to achieve good value for money – it will maximise the impact of your project.

In order to ensure this, the project team can ensure that any procurement due to take place is competitive – actively seeking out companies to participate and submit quotes for the goods or services needed.

As a project team, you should ensure that you understand the social and environmental implications of the project.

Online support over Summer 2023

The EMERGE team will support your community to answer a range of questions and overcome obstacles in developing your project.

The checklist provides a structure for this – enabling community teams to link your query to a specific question.

Nevertheless, we are happy to speak about any issues you may face.

Thematic case studies and other resources are available at:
<https://www.caro.ie/projects-research/collaborations/emerge>

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