

**THE MARSH FARM CAPACITY BUILDING
PROGRAMME FOR THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH
PROJECT**

FINAL REPORT

MAY 2005

INTRODUCTION

Strategic Urban Futures (StUF) were commissioned by Luton Borough Council to provide the organisational development training part of the capacity building programme for the Marsh Farm Community Outreach Project. The other elements, SPSS training and the Organisational Workshop Method, of the programme were not provided by StUF.

The trainer was Damian Tissier. He is StUF's Managing Director, and experienced trainer with twenty years senior management experience in the voluntary, public and private sectors. As the Managing Director of StUF, he manages a small company, with a turnover of £540,00 per annum¹ and employing thirteen staff (and a pool of five associates).

A needs assessment was carried out with the Marsh Farm Community Outreach Team on the 20th December to agree the principles and the content of the StUF training programme. The needs assessment was attended by the following members of the Community Outreach Project: Rickie Bell, Caroline McBride, Glenn Jenkins, Glenn Lawson, Jackie Jenkins, Mathew Chance, Jon Sheppard. Luton Borough Council was represented by the responsible client officer, Marek Lubelski.

The following training programme was agreed:

TOPIC		DATE
Understanding the social enterprise		17 Jan
Project planning and performance management		24 Jan
Project planning and performance management		31 Jan
Feasibility studies and procurement policies		7 Feb
Financial management		14 Feb
Book-keeping		21 Feb
Information management		28 Feb
Personnel management		7 Mar

It was based upon action learning techniques. In addition, arrangements are being made to provide the Community Outreach Project with practical contracting experience with another company. Microfish Communications Ltd have agreed to partner the Community Outreach Project in organising a London conference on the Organisational Workshop method.

The purpose of the capacity building programme was to develop the Community Outreach Project as an effective and efficient social enterprise, capable of winning

¹ StUF has been trading for six years, starting off with one member of staff and two associates. First year turnover was £70,000 and it has now reached £540,000. This is an annualised growth rate of around 40%.

and delivering contracts to a high standard of work from many different clients, including of course the Marsh Farm Community Development.

FORMAT

Essentially action learning is an externally facilitated, collaborative practice, bringing a group of people to work together on shared problems. There was a strong practical focus in the training programme.

A half-day training session was held weekly. This consisted of:

- a) Project meeting to provide an update on the achievement of tasks allocated previous week assignment
- b) Seminar/workshop on key aspects of organisational theory and practice
- c) Scoping and agreement of weekly assignment

The design of the training programme is described in more detail in Appendix One.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

The training programme started on the 17 January 2005 and was completed on the 18th April 2005. A breakdown of the attendance at the various units is provided in the table below.

Date	Unit	Elements	Attendance
17 Jan	Understanding the Social Enterprise	The organisation as system; Purpose, function and form; Values and responsibilities; Main aspects of management.	Jacki Jenkins, Emma Jenkins, Glenn Jenkins, Jon Sheppard, Glenn Lawson, Rikki Bell, Caroline McBride
24 Jan	Project Planning and Performance Management (A)	Defining aims and objectives; Setting goals; Distinguishing between outputs and outcomes.	Caroline McBride, Glenn Jenkins, Jon Sheppard, Jacki Jenkins, Emma Jenkins, Glenn Lawson, Rikki Bell
31 Jan	Project planning and Performance Management (B)	Estimating and scheduling work; The project planner; Time recording systems.	Caroline McBride, Glenn Jenkins, Jon Sheppard, Jacki Jenkins, Emma Jenkins, Glenn Lawson, Rikki Bell

7 Feb	Feasibility Studies	Purpose of a feasibility study What's fit for purpose (organisational types)? Turning ideas into reality; Action checklist.	Caroline McBride, Glenn Jenkins, Jon Sheppard, Jacki Jenkins, Emma Jenkins, Glenn Lawson, Rikki Bell
14 Feb	Principles of book-keeping	Purpose of keeping books and legal requirements; Types of financial records; Single entry versus double-entry systems; Employing a book-keeper.	Caroline McBride, Glenn Jenkins, Jon Sheppard, Jacki Jenkins, Emma Jenkins, Glenn Lawson, Rikki Bell
21 Feb	Financial Management	Why have a financial management system? Main components of a good system Financial planning and budget setting Understanding accounts and financial reports	Caroline McBride, Glenn Jenkins, Jon Sheppard, Jacki Jenkins, Emma Jenkins, Glenn Lawson, Rikki Bell
28 Feb	Contracts and Procurement	Understanding the procurement process; Types of tender; Pricing work; Winning bids; The contractual relationship.	Caroline McBride, Glenn Jenkins, Jon Sheppard, Jacki Jenkins, Emma Jenkins, Glenn Lawson, Rikki Bell
4 Apr	Information Management	Context Types of information Principles of effective information management Appropriate systems	Glenn Jenkins, Mathew Chance, Caroline McBride, Jacki Jenkins, Glenn Lawson, Neil Taylor
18 Apr	Human Resource Management	How does the management of people differ from the management of other resources? Legal framework Recruitment Performance appraisal Training assessments Staff handbook	Anne McCann, Rikki Bell, Neil Taylor, Glenn Lawson, Caroline McBride, Glenn Jenkins, Jon Sheppard

In total,, 10 members of the Community Outreach Project attended some or all of the training sessions. The total number of formal training hours undertaken was 217. In addition, a considerable amount of work was undertaken by the Community Outreach Project to complete the practical assignments.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the training programme, the Community Outreach Project has developed a comprehensive understanding of the key organisational requirements to establish and manage a successful community enterprise.

Over the course of the programme they have achieved the following:

- a) Established a new vision, aims and objectives, and management arrangements for the Community Outreach Project
- b) Reconstituted the Community Outreach Project as a social enterprise and incorporated it as a company limited by guarantee.
- c) Set up a bank account, and established appropriate financial management systems
- d) Appointed a book-keeper
- e) Established effective project planning, work scheduling, time recording and individual performance management systems
- f) Developed bid writing and contract management skills
- g) Established effective information management systems
- h) Developed appropriate personnel policies and procedures (including the production of a staff handbook)

In addition, the Community Outreach Project has organised a successful seminar for the Marsh Farm NDC on the Organisation Workshop method (flowed subsequently by a national conference with an attendance of over 70 participants). The Community Outreach Project has also prepared and submitted a tender for a project brief issued by the Marsh Farm NDC.

Damian Tissier
4 May 2005

APPENDIX A PROGRAMME

The work programme is designed to build the capacity of the Community Outreach Project to function more effectively as a social enterprise delivering community development and community consultation services on Marsh Farm and elsewhere.

The Community Outreach Project aims to carry out an agreed work programme for the Marsh Farm Community Development Trust over the forthcoming financial year. But given previous problems of poor service performance it will need to demonstrate that it has made significant organisational improvements before funding will be secured. The work programme the Community Outreach Project will be submitting to the Marsh Farm Community Trust is as follows:

- Survey of the local economy
- Organisation Workshop Programme for community enterprise.

The Marsh Farm Community Trust will be asked to contract the delivery of the two commissions to the Community Outreach Project. However, the Community Outreach Project will need to show that it has the organisational capacity to complete both commissions to a required standard.

ACTION LEARNING

The capacity building programme is based upon the principles of action learning. Action learning is an externally facilitated, collaborative practice, bringing a group of people together to work on shared problems. It reduces dependence upon the tutor by empowering the learner through the development of strong team-working skills. Whilst concepts and theory are important in action learning, the emphasis is on applying them practically.

An action learning programme has four basic elements:

- Clearly identified projects or problems on which to work
- A client or sponsor for the programme
- A set of participants, or in phrase used by Professor Revans, 'comrades in adversity'²
- A external facilitator or set adviser.

Action learning is a form of experiential learning. Other types of experiential learning include learning by doing and problem based learning. What distinguishes action learning is the importance attached to reflecting upon the learning experience.

‘...a continuous process of learning and reflection, supported by colleagues, with an intention of getting things done. Through action learning individuals

² Revans, R. (1982). *The Origins and Growth of Action Learning*, Chartwell Bratt

learn with and from each other by working on real problems and reflecting on their own experiences. The process helps us to take an active stance towards life and helps us to overcome the tendency to thin, feel and be passive towards the pressures of life.' Ian McGill, Liz Beaty (1995)³.

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES

Action learning is a powerful way of building the capacity of the Community Outreach Project.

Problem: defined as a history of poor performance, arising from deficiencies basic organisational structures and weaknesses

Client: Marsh Farm Community Development Trust/Luton Borough Council, Community Education and Development

Learning set: Community Outreach Team

Facilitator: Damian Tissier, Principal Consultant, StUF.

The ultimate purpose of the capacity building programme is to establish the Community Outreach Project as a sustainable social enterprise. The resolution of immediate organisational problems will be the immediate outputs. The final outcome though will be observable changes in the organisational behaviour of the Community Outreach Project.

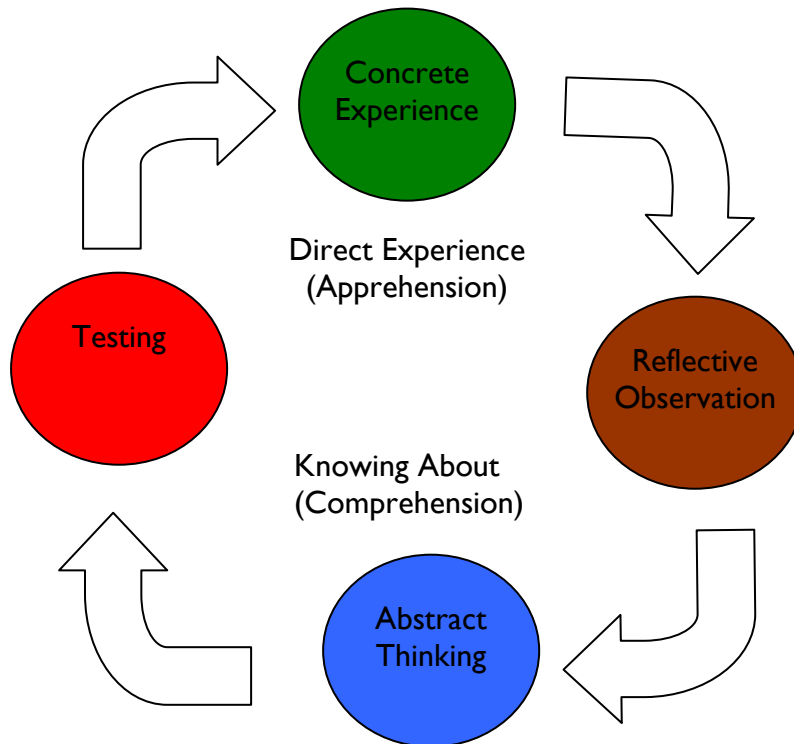
The capacity building programme will:

- Equip the Community Outreach Team with a broader mass of knowledge and skills
- Develop collective competences
- Introduce fresh perspectives and new ways of working
- Strengthen current organisational management practices and procedures
- Foster team working
- Change organisational behaviours to be more outward looking, open-minded, willing to negotiate, and able to enter into a wider range partnership and collaborative arrangements.

It will be delivered though a mixture of formal and informal learning opportunities. The programme of those learning opportunities will be dynamic, on ongoing process driven by the changing needs and aspirations of the participants. This dynamic process is based upon the Kolb model of the experiential learning cycle⁴. The Kolb model is shown overleaf.

³ McGill, I., Beaty, L. (1995). *Action Learning, A Guide for Professional Management & Educational Development* (2nd ed), Kogan Page, London

⁴ Kolb, D.A. (1984), *Experiential Learning*, Prentice Hall



The programme consists of the following stages:

- a) Needs assessment
- b) Programme design and delivery
- c) Evaluation.

The needs assessment includes an initial familiarisation and coming terms with the history of the project. In other words, it is about developing a sense of context for both the participants and the facilitator of the capacity building programme. The cornerstone of action learning is to take the time to assess what it is that the potential participants want and their expectations of the learning experience before designing the learning programme itself. The three stages of needs assessment, programme design and delivery, and evaluation run throughout the capacity building programme.

FORMAT

The capacity building programme consists of:

- a) Weekly project team meeting with an update of actions

- b) Weekly seminar/workshop to address key organisational performance issues
- c) Action learning projects/tasks.

The outline seminar/workshop programme is shown below.

TOPIC		DATE
Understanding the social enterprise		17 Jan
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The seminar/workshops will be supplemented by off-site training by external providers on a range of subjects. These will include:

- Roles and responsibilities of company directors
- Introduction to social research methods
- SPSS.

In addition, arrangements are being made to provide the Community Outreach Project with practical contracting experience with another company. Microfish Communications Ltd have agreed to partner the Community Outreach Project in organising a London conference on the Organisational Workshop method.

By the end of the capacity building programme, the Community Outreach Project will have developed its organisational competences to be able to win contracts from the Marsh Farm Community Trust and other potential clients.