SUSTAINABLE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

All organisations strive to create meaningful, useful projects with wide impact. However, we know well that sometimes our efforts do not seem to work and we struggle to keep everybody involved and motivated. Applying sustainable principles in project management can help making our projects more successful.

Sustainable project management can be understood in **two ways**:

- Using sustainable, ecological practices in projects – so called "green project management" and trying to minimise the impact of the project on environment;
- Making projects and their results long-lasting, trying to make impact sustainable.

Ecological tips for projects can be found in the guide *"Sustainable principles"* so here we want to focus on the second understanding of the term. Below you can find some ideas on how to **manage your projects in order to support the creation of sustainable outcomes**. Sometimes it is enough to redesign and enrich a bit your project management practices. It is important to remember about sustainability in each phase of the project-cycle but especially while planning and evaluating.

PLANNING

Choose who will manage your project

It is really crucial to choose well the team who will coordinate the project. You should select people who have **various skills** to complement each other, who like to work together and are **motivated**. It is also important to establish clear structures of communication and responsibility – to define the roles of each member.

Choose people for your team who will be good in taking specific roles and responsibilities. How many people you will have in your team and which tasks they will have depends a lot on your project. But it is proved that teams are the most successful when they have members taking these concrete roles:

Manager
The main person responsible, the coordinator who takes responsibility and risks for the whole team; should be very reliable and committed.

Visionary
Someone who provides various ideas for the project, for improvements and problem-solving.

Researcher
Someone who will collect information needed for the project, who will research and gather useful information, check sources and later report it to the whole team.

Monitor
A person with analytical skills, who will check how the project is developing, who should collect news and information about progress of the project, who makes sure that everything is going to work.

Supporter
A person with empathy and with good communication skills. As this person is good at working with people, s/he can do networking, support and motivate others and also help to solve conflicts.

Plan stages of implementation

Develop a timeline for your project and identify the milestones. Create action plans with concrete steps and deadlines and divide roles.
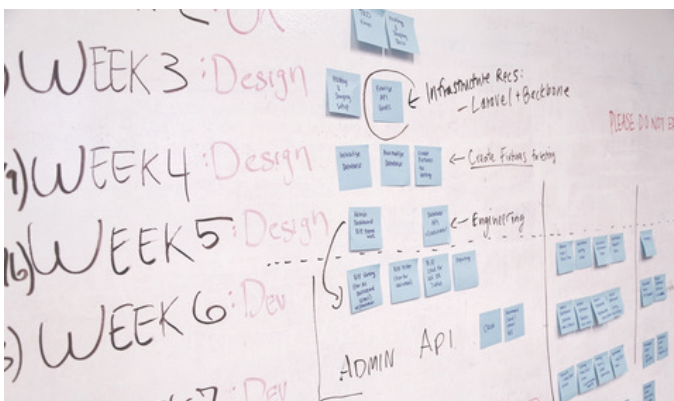
Think about needed resources

Not only budget planning is important for running the project smoothly. Keep in mind also other resources such as people, skills, materials, time, etc. Make sure that you have enough resources for each stage.

Establish project management process

To make the project successful it is important to create some kind of structure and planning. Decide within your team on the way you will work, take time to discuss your working style and expectations from the project. Plan which tools you will use, how often you will meet and report, how you will communicate. You can choose the most convenient tools for you, such as Google Drive – shared documents, Doodle – to plan meetings, Asana – task and project manager, Trello – project manager in form of post-it notes, Azendoo – a project management tool, etc.

Value partnerships

A partner is anyone who helps to make a project happen. It is important that every partner organisation has a clear role. Partnerships can help to give wider impact to the project, to support, to give bigger visibility.

Info box

To make your project more sustainable, remember about the rule of 4 E:

ENCOURAGE – motivate people that are involved in the project

ENABLE – provide necessary trainings, skills, documents to make results more sustainable

ENGAGE – find and connect with people who will support your project

EXEMPLIFY – celebrate successes, show a positive example

TARGET GROUPS

In our projects we usually plan to reach wide aims but we forget to analyse whom we should focus on in order to reach our goals. It is important for your project to identify target group(s), work with them and adapt your activities and messages to them and their needs.

To make the project specific, it is important to **focus on one main target group** and its needs but to remember about other target groups and also involve them in the project. To make wider impact, it is not enough to address only one group of people. Make a **list of all people and groups that want to see a change** or "get" something from your project, **groups that you need to influence** to reach your aims (such as young people from the community, other members of the community, politicians, youth workers, etc. or participants of the training, people who read about the results/booklets, who watch the video or take part in the follow-up campaign, etc.). Your project, activities and messages you send should be adapted to these specific target groups. It is more sustainable to know what these groups aim at, what are their needs, what do they do, what are their habits. This way you can plan how your project could link and connect with them so that they will make more use of the results and spread them further. Always try to **adapt the message** and choose the best tool, way or method for the specific target group.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

In order to make the project's results more sustainable you should make a proper needs analysis before you start your activities. This way you will **find out if there is a need for your project** and plan what kind of activities you should create to make a real change. Think about a problem you want to solve, the big change you want to make – it will be your **aim**. Then plan **objectives** – smaller goals that will help you reach the aim. Probably one project will not solve the whole problem or fully fulfil the aim. So during the evaluation you should discuss how much you managed to reach the goal and what other steps are needed to complete it.

Needs analysis will also help you to answer the crucial question – why.

Why is my project needed? Why is it important?

To get to know the needs that your project should address you can use various tools:

- research – on Internet and in various publications;
- questionnaires – online or printed that you can ask people to fill in;
- interviews and meetings – organise meetings with people and ask them about their opinion and experience;
- observation – go to the places crucial for your project or where people meet and them write down your observations;
- check for results of similar projects.

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Once you collect information and understand the needs, it is much easier to **identify the potential solutions**.

You can use such simple scheme to reflect on the needs with your project team.

Realities before the project
⌄
Possible activities
⌄
Realities after the project

EVALUATION

On the other end of the project-cycle there is an evaluation. We all know that evaluation is important to assess whether the planned activities took place, objectives were achieved and outcomes delivered. But what we do with the evaluation can help us to make our projects more sustainable and results more long-lasting.

Our **tips**:

- Make evaluation with various groups to get wide feedback – participants, target groups, project team, managing body of your organisation (board, presidium, etc.).

- Create an evaluation report – write results in the form of an useful report that will be used for future projects. Prepare sections such as challenging situations, used tools for planning, tips and recommendations, etc.
- Share and spread results of your projects so that other people and organisations could use it.
- Start every project with analysing results of previous projects. This will help you to improve your project management and avoid repeating the same problematic situations.

Try to think about your project not as one activity but an **ongoing bigger cycle**. Use experience from your project, make results a starting point for new activities, learn from your project and pass this experience further.

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