

Introduction

This guidance document gives an overview of what a steering group is, the benefits of having input from a steering group, and how to form one. There is no single correct way in which to form a steering group as the expertise required, timings, format of the meetings etc. will vary depending on the scope of the project to be delivered.

What is a steering group?

A steering group is a committee which monitors the activities of an organisation and gives guidance on the general direction that should be taken. They provide input often based on their experience and can provide support during key decision-making periods.

Benefits

- **Access to a wider range of expertise and knowledge**
- **Active support, guidance and mentoring**
- **New project possibilities identified and developed**
- **New sources of funding and resources identified**
- **Potential new partnerships identified and developed**
- **Increase in ambitions of a project**
- **General strengthening of delivery of activities**

Forming and utilising a steering group

Initially, it can be beneficial to identify if areas of your project can be grouped under different themes, for example infrastructure, training and support, governance etc. Once you have identified the themes relevant to your project it is useful to identify what skills and experience you have available currently, and what gaps exist.

Common steering group members can include:

- **Senior managers**
- **Employee representatives**
- **End users (those will utilise or benefit from the project)**
- **Representatives with practical experience, from the industry or wider network**

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- **Local businesses**
- **Local authority staff**
- **Community representatives**

Size

The size of the steering group should also be considered – smaller groups can potentially make decisions quicker but may not allow for a wide enough breadth of experiences, whereas larger groups may allow for this experience but find reaching a decision more time consuming or could have difficulties arranging for everyone to meet.

Governance

Having decided on the size and make up of your steering group, some basic governance rules should be followed to best utilise this new resource. The steering group should be clear on the purpose of the group, their responsibilities and the likely time commitments – at this stage the frequency of steering group meetings should be decided (around 3 months may be appropriate to ensure attendance which keeping pace with the project but this will be project specific).

Dates and times of meetings should be arranged collaboratively, with agendas and minutes of previous meetings provided prior to next meeting. Once all required governance is in place, clear communication should be set up between the steering group and the project group to convey information and provide support produced by the steering group.