A business case for community empowerment
Self-completion tool

Introduction

Providing a business case for community empowerment is complex, because community empowerment brings social value, which is hard to evidence and cost.

The Social Science Policy and Research Centre, University of Brighton, have produced guidance, resources and worked examples to support you in developing your own business case for empowerment.

The University of Brighton have also developed standard questions to help you frame your business case. The IDeA has adapted these questions and developed this pro-forma, so that you can create your own business case report.

When completing this pro forma, you should refer to:

- Business Case Tool for Community Empowerment: Background information and guidance
- Tools, resources and sources of information
- Worked examples of developing a business case for empowerment

This business case may be completed by one person, but would benefit from input from a wider range of stakeholders to enrich the content. This tool has seven stages to help you develop your business case. In each stage we pose a series of questions to help you. You do not need to answer every single question – they are there as pointers. You might also find other questions and answers to put into your business case that are not listed.

Before you proceed, read the guidance on how to complete the seven stages of the business case process.

STAGE 1: SCOPING
Defining your business case and pulling together all the issues that impact on it

QUESTION	ANSWER
• What is your business case about? Is it about your strategic approach to community empowerment; about integrating community empowerment approaches within a service; or about a specific community empowerment initiative?	
• Who is the audience for your business case and what should the emphasis be?	
• What are the timescales for your business case? When do actions need to happen, when does the business case need to be completed, and when will key decisions affecting the actions be made?	
• What do strategic plans and documents commit to in relation to community empowerment? (For example corporate plans, service area strategy documents, equalities standards and community strategies).	
• Have stakeholders agreed on key objectives for empowerment work? Can these be linked to strategic goals?	
• Are there current key priority issues (such as recession or community cohesion) that a business case could usefully refer to?	
• What argument is your business case making? For example, it might be along the lines of proving the cost benefit of empowerment work or demonstrating its role in relation to certain indicators – or quite likely a bit of both.	
• Which of your area's selected National Indicators within your local area agreement does (or could) community empowerment impact on?	

• Which lead organisations have been designated in relation to achievement of these indicators?	
• To what extent is there coordination of activity between various parties mentioned above?	
• Does assessment/measurement for separate indicators allow for capturing evidence against other NIs (added value)?	
• What is known about local demography and local contexts that should influence decisions related to developing a business case for community empowerment?	
• What type of data will be required? How will sources of data be identified and collated? What are the resource implications for gathering and analysing these data sources? Which individuals within organisations could usefully be involved in the business case process? View a short discussion on available data	
• Where gaps in information are identified, what mechanisms will be used to address these?	
• What do you know about previous initiatives? What have you learnt from them? How does this inform the case you are making here?	
• Which local empowerment initiatives could provide robust evidence of impact? What is the nature of the impact? Do different stakeholders have different interests in different outcomes? (This is not necessarily a bad thing.)	
• What is the relationship between empowerment initiatives and the role and duties of councillors? Is your empowerment work member-led and supported? Are there tensions between representative and participatory styles of governance at a local level?	
• Does your Overview and Scrutiny Committee utilise empowerment practices?	
• Who are the key people within a local authority (councillors, officers) and partner organisations who have a remit for and take responsibility for the community empowerment agenda?	

• How can people be supported to engage in the development of a business case?	
• In the case of a two-tier authority, where will responsibility for development of a business case lie and what tier of decision makers will it be attempting to influence?	

STAGE 2: <u>IDENTIFICATION OF OUTCOMES</u>
What are the key outcomes your authority and partners are looking for from the community empowerment work you are planning/undertaking?

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
• Explain, in as much detail as possible, what long-term outcomes the community empowerment initiative should achieve?	
• What assumptions underlie the anticipated outcomes? Have different stakeholders made different assumptions? How will you enable stakeholders to be aware of these differences? How will you work with the differences?	
• How will you be able to measure/assess whether you have achieved your outcomes? What is the baseline that you are starting from?	
• What is the monetary value of these outcomes?	
• What is the social value of these outcomes?	

STAGE 3: IDENTIFICATION OF INPUTS
What inputs, both financial and non-financial, are needed to implement the empowerment approach/initiative?

QUESTIONS	DESCRIPTION	FINANCIAL VALUE (ACTUAL OR PROXY MEASURE, WHERE APPLICABLE)
Finance		
Staff Time		
Volunteer Time		
Skills		
Training		
Materials		
Travel costs		
Meetings/hospitality costs		
Other		

STAGE 4: PROCESSES AND OUTPUTS
What processes and actions are associated with the community empowerment work, why have you decided on these and what outputs do you expect them to produce?

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
What activities and actions will take place?	
What processes are needed?	
What outputs do you expect to deliver?	
How do these outputs contribute to the expected outcomes?	
Why were these activities chosen? Has this approach been used before and been demonstrated to be successful? How have the activities been adapted to suit local need?	
Do the actions build on existing activities?	
What alternative actions could deliver the same outputs and outcomes? What were these activities not chosen?	

STAGE 5: <u>IDENTIFICATION OF BENEFITS</u>
What benefits have been, or could be achieved as a result of the inputs and processes?
When completing this section, remember to consider who or what the business case is trying to influence.

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
What benefits, changes or differences is your community empowerment work aiming to deliver?	
Are different stakeholders expecting different benefits?	
What processes exist for evaluating benefits and impact from empowerment practice?	
Are the processes sufficient for capturing information on a range of outcomes for a range of stakeholders in a range of contexts?	
How are the benefits and impact of your empowerment work documented/described – benefits and impact *for whom* (organisations/staff/participants)?	
Is the evidence 'fit for purpose'? What might have to done to ensure evidence is more robust?	

STAGE 6: <u>IDENTIFICATION OF RISKS</u>
Identifying the potential risks community empowerment work can generate as well as benefits

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
How have risks, from a range of perspectives, be identified?	
What risks does your council/LSP face from your community empowerment project/work	
What risks do you face from <u>not</u> doing this work?	
What are the risks for the community from this work?	
What are the risks for the community from not doing this work?	
How will the risks be managed and mitigated?	
Present an evidence based comparison between these risks and those involved in alternative practice and 'do nothing'?	

STAGE 7: ANALYSIS
Pulling together evidence from previous sections to make a persuasive case

This community empowerment work should/should not be supported for the following reasons: