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The key to any project is planning.

We can help you put together a plan so that you always feel in control.

Download the toolkit



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Write your action plan

An action plan spells out what needs to be done, how it will be done, who will do it, and when they will do it.

Here’s one way to write an action plan:

Step one: decide at what point your project ends

For example, it could be when:

- The building work is complete
- Everything is paid
- You’ve celebrated the launch

It’s up to you. You’ll be surprised how this helps you think ahead.

Step two: work backwards and add steps along the way

What tasks do you have to do to reach the end of your project?

Work backwards from one task to the next. You will end up with a long list in reverse order. Then, flip the list so that the earliest tasks come at the top.

You should go into more detail for the early stages of your project. Don’t worry if later ones are more general; you can add the details later as the project goes on.

Step three: organise the steps into groups

Some tasks naturally go together.

A few examples of groups could be:

- Write a business plan
- Fundraise and engage with donors
- Build
- Get your permissions

Step four: create a timetable and find the links between the groups

To build your timetable:

1. Draw a column for each group
2. Add a row for each month
3. Insert the start and end of each task into the right box

Some tips:

- Get help from someone who knows how long things take
- Build in some spare time (20% or more)
- Some tasks are connected. And you can’t start one before another finishes. Check your timetable very carefully for scheduling errors
- Update your timetable every time you have new information

You can also use a Gantt chart to create a timetable.

Step five: say who is responsible for what

Each task should have someone assigned to it.

Assign all the responsibilities at the beginning. It will help you see what skills your group needs. And when there might be a problem with people being too busy or unavailable.

Step six: turn your timetable into a detailed action plan

To create your action plan:

1. List the resources, external people and organisations you will need to finish each task
2. Agree the principle of how you will take on each task group
3. Work out exactly how you will do each individual task
4. Look for periods when individuals are going to be very busy and think of how you might handle this
5. Think about who you need to keep informed at each stage and how you will do this

Some tips:

- Go into more detail for the earlier tasks and repeat this process later on
- Use the action plan to estimate how much each task will cost

Step seven: use and update your plan regularly

This is your best guess now, but things will change.

So update your action plan every time you have new information.

And make sure the people responsible for different tasks tell the group of their progress and any problems.

Instructions and templates

- [ChurchBuild: Gantt chart template](#) (44 KB)
- [How to create a timetable](#) (161.21 KB)

“Time spent planning is rarely wasted.”

Crossing the Threshold

Manage the risks to your project’s success

Think about the risks to your project that might come up:

- How likely are they to happen? (low, medium, high)
- What impact would they have if they did? (low, medium, high)
- How can you reduce the risk of them happening?
- And what will you do if they do happen?

Ask someone in your group to put together a risk register.

Instructions and templates

- [ChurchBuild: Risk management](#) (301.79 KB)
- [Risk management template](#) (389.31 KB)

Now is the time to think about who will monitor the project on a day-today basis.

Case studies

- [Case study: St Mary Stanington](#) (318.09 KB)

Next steps

To make your vision become a reality you need to start thinking about:

- Keeping everyone informed
- Appointing an architect
- Writing your business plan
- Raising money

Want more help?

Create a Gantt chart using Microsoft Projects

[Get a special price from the Parish Buying website](#)

Source URL: *<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/making-changes-your-building-and-churchyard/plan-your-building-project>*