Purposeful activity design

Using a Program Logic Model to determine the issue that you want to tackle in your community, and your program's aim, goals, and outcomes? Now it is time to plan what activities you will deliver to reach those outcomes.

Purposeful activity design goes beyond simply organising activities; it requires a thoughtful approach to aligning each activity with the program's overarching goals and objectives.

> **Young people do not just absorb positive behaviours through osmosis; meaningful outcomes are the result of intentional planning and purposeful engagement.**

Intentional design for impact

Simply running an activity does not guarantee change or specific outcomes. To make a real impact, you need to plan and execute your program with clear objectives in mind. This intentional approach guides participants towards the desired changes and growth, making sure every activity has a clear purpose.

Foundations in best practice → Understanding motivators → Cultural and accessibility considerations → Sustainable resource management → Risk management and continuous improvement

These are the key layers to consider in your program design process, ensuring a solid foundation for success. By addressing each of these areas thoughtfully, you can create a program that not only achieves its goals but also resonates with your audience and has a lasting impact.

Foundation of purposeful activity design

Evidence-based practice	Intentional alignment	Targeted impact
• Program design informed by evidence-based practices ensures that activities are grounded in research and proven strategies for promoting positive youth development. • Drawing on existing research and evaluation findings enables designers to select interventions and approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes, increasing the likelihood of success.	• Every activity within a program should serve a specific purpose and contribute to the attainment of desired outcomes. • By aligning activities with program goals, designers ensure that participants are actively engaged in experiences that promote learning, growth, and positive behaviour change.	• Designing activities with clear objectives allows program facilitators to target specific skills, knowledge, or behaviours that they aim to develop or reinforce among participants. • Whether it is promoting teamwork, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, or resilience, purposeful activity design ensures that interventions are focused and impactful.

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Engagement and motivation

Extrinsic vs intrinsic motivators

Extrinsic
• Extrinsic motivators involve external rewards, such as praise or incentives, which can boost engagement in the short term.

In a program focused on community service, a group of young people might be incentivised to participate by offering certificates of achievement or small prizes for completing a certain number of service hours. While these external rewards can motivate participants initially, their engagement may wane once the incentives are removed.

Intrinsic
• Intrinsic change occurs when participants are motivated by internal desires and interests, such as curiosity or personal satisfaction. • Designing activities that promote intrinsic change helps cultivate genuine engagement and leads to more sustainable outcomes.

A program that allows young people to choose a community service project, based on their personal interests and values, fosters intrinsic motivation. For instance, a participant who is passionate about environmental issues may choose to organise a community clean-up event. Their personal interest in the cause drives their engagement and commitment to the activity. This deeper connection often leads to sustained involvement, even in the absence of external rewards.

Extrinsic motivators can be useful, but intrinsic motivation often results in deeper engagement and longer-lasting behavioural changes.

Active engagement

Active engagement
• Meaningful outcomes require active engagement from participants, which can only be achieved through activities that capture their interest, stimulate their curiosity, and provide opportunities for hands-on learning and exploration. • Designing interactive and engaging activities fosters a sense of ownership and investment among participants, leading to greater enthusiasm and commitment to the program.

Cultural and accessibility considerations

Cultural appropriateness	Accessibility
• Choose activities that align with the cultural identities and practices of the target group. This ensures respect for cultural values and traditions, which promotes a safe and inclusive environment for participants.	• Ensure activities are accessible to all participants, regardless of ability or background. • This includes offering activities in multiple formats, providing necessary accommodations, and considering language or literacy barriers.

Resource management

Human resources

- Identify the staff and volunteers you have available and assess their expertise and experience in relation to the program's needs.
- Provide training and support to staff and volunteers to ensure they are equipped to deliver activities effectively and engage participants meaningfully.
- Consider partnerships with other organisations or community groups to supplement your team with expertise or capacity you may lack.

Material resources

- Assess the availability and condition of physical resources such as facilities, equipment, and supplies needed for the program's activities.
- Maintain an inventory of materials and manage them efficiently to ensure they are used effectively and remain in good condition.
- Plan for procurement strategies to acquire additional resources if needed, while being mindful of cost and sustainability.

Financial resources

- Ensure the program has a clear budget and funding plan to cover all necessary expenses, including staffing, materials, and other operational costs.
- Consider diverse funding sources such as grants, donations, and community partnerships to support the program's financial sustainability.
- Allocate resources efficiently and prioritise spending based on program goals and the anticipated impact of different activities.

Risk management and continuous improvement

Risk management

- Integrate risk management as part of activity design from the outset, rather than as an afterthought.
- Proper planning helps identify potential risks and implement strategies to mitigate them, prioritising participant safety.

Continuous improvement

- By regularly evaluating the effectiveness of program activities in relation to desired outcomes, designers can identify areas for improvement and refine their approach over time.
- This iterative process of assessment and adjustment ensures that programs remain responsive to the evolving needs and preferences of participants, ultimately enhancing their impact and relevance.

By prioritising purposeful activity design, programs can maximise their effectiveness in supporting the growth, development, and well-being of young people.