

## Planning for Community Legal Education

CLCs plan on a number of levels:

- Organisational strategic planning – three or more years;
- Annual work planning – for programs, areas of work, and individual staff within the centre; and
- Planning for the specific services or activities that the centre intends to deliver.

The *Strategic Planning Resource Manual for Community Legal Centres* (RPR Organisational Consultants, 1996, p12) suggests that good planning can have significant benefits for CLCs, including:

- focus resources on agreed goals and objectives;
- unity of purpose and approach;
- strategic thinking;
- achievement – orientation;
- makes concrete ideas and dreams; and
- accountability – internal and external.

While this section will focus on planning for specific community legal education (CLE) activities, it is important to remember that this takes place within the context of broader organisational planning. The formal incorporation of CLE related goals, objectives, strategies and targets into the centre's strategic and shorter term work plans helps to ensure that CLE is recognised as a core component of the centre's work, not an optional extra. It also helps to ensure that human, financial and other resources are allocated to the design and delivery of CLE activities.

### CLE Activity or Project Plan

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The type and extent of planning which is undertaken for CLE activities will vary depending on a range of factors, such as size, funding source and level and who is involved (for example, multiple partners with multiple roles).

Most CLE activities should be supported by a written plan that addresses the following matters:

- Activity/Project name
- Goal/Aim
- Objectives
- Responsibilities – activity management, activity delivery
- Target group/community
- Other stakeholders/project partners
- Strategies for the delivery of the CLE activity
- Promotional strategies
- Performance indicators, evaluation criteria and tools
- Resources – financial (budget), physical, human

- Timelines
- Occupational health and safety and other risk management considerations
- Reporting and accountability.

The plan may also provide background to the project/activity and describe how need has been assessed and how it links into broader centre/program objectives.

### Tips!

Consider preparing a centre specific pro forma CLE activity plan outline. Even a simple list of headings, such as those listed above, will ensure that relevant matters are addressed, provide consistency in planning and avoid 'reinvention of the wheel' each time the centre plans for a new activity or initiative.

The planning might be 'quick and dirty' for a small project or extensive for a bigger project. But whatever the size, it should follow these basic steps.

## Establishing Aim and Objectives

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The setting of a clear aim and associated objectives is an essential starting point in the development of specific CLE activities. These will:

- guide the design of the CLE activity – including content and delivery strategies; and
- provide a basis for monitoring the progress and evaluating the outcomes of the activity.

Through needs assessment and strategic planning processes the centre will have determined the broad areas of 'legal need' to be addressed and the target group. Answering questions such as:

- What are we hoping to achieve through the CLE?
- What is the desired result?
- What knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes are we hoping to develop or change?

will help to clarify the purpose of the activity and frame the aim and objectives.

## Allocating Responsibility

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Identifying the key tasks involved in the CLE activity and allocating responsibility for each task to a particular person/role will greatly assist the smooth running of the activity. Ensuring that people are aware of their responsibilities and that they have the skill, knowledge, time and resources to properly undertake the allocated tasks is a very important aspect of the planning process. So to, is establishing clear lines of communication and accountability where more than one person is involved in a CLE activity.

## Budget

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Preparing a budget for the CLE activity is an important aspect of the planning process. Regardless of whether funding for the activity is from the centre's general funding or from a special grant from an external body, it is essential that all expenses associated with the CLE project or activity are factored into the budget, and that all possible sources of income and in-kind contributions are considered.

While failing to consider one component of overall activity cost may not spell doom for the activity, it will probably have implications for the activity, the centre and, possibly, beyond. Over or under estimating activity/project costs with the view to achieving some kind of advantage is not recommended.

## Case Study

The Federation's Access to Interpreters Working Group has raised concerns about the failure of some centres to factor interpreting and translating costs into project budgets. This has led to unexpected demands on the limited central interpreting and translating funding pool and has, at times, meant that individual centres have not been able to make the activity or product as accessible as intended.

Funding bodies from which CLE project funding is often sourced, have a good understanding of what is involved in delivering projects and of how much various aspects cost. While these bodies are often reluctant to fund capital and ongoing operational expenditure, most are keen to ensure that the projects they fund have been properly scoped and costed so as to achieve quality outcomes. An example of this is a suggestion being made to a CLC that professional proof reading be incorporated into a project designed to produce a new publication.

If it is the first time that you have prepared a CLE project budget, consider asking an experienced CLE worker to have a look over it.

## Strategies

The stated aims and objectives of the CLE activity will provide direction to the content of and the methods of delivering the CLE activity. The characteristics of the target group and the availability of financial and other resources will also influence strategy selection. A range of strategies for the delivery of CLE are outlined in *CLE Made Easy Information Sheet 8: Community Legal Education Methods & Strategies*.

## Target Group

Understanding the characteristics and any special needs of the group(s) to which the CLE activity is targeted is essential at all stages of the CLE process, but particularly at the planning stage. Factors such as the age, gender, ethnic background, English language and literacy skills, where people live, if they have dependents, physical or intellectual disability, access to transport, access to the internet and computer literacy, current knowledge and skills, will all impact upon the design and delivery of CLE activities. If these factors can be considered during planning both the centre and the target group will benefit.

In addressing the needs of target groups the centre may need to consider responses such as:

- having interpreters in attendance;
- having written materials translated;
- the location of the CLE activity;
- the time when the activity is held;
- delivery strategies;
- how the information and educational materials can be accessed;
- who delivers the workshop or designs a publication;
- pre-testing or having content and materials checked prior to final print run, delivery or distribution;
- and
- offering childcare.

## Other Stakeholders/Project Partners

CLCs often work in consultation, collaboration or formal partnership with other CLCs, community

groups and organisations to design and deliver CLE activities. In the planning stage it is important to consider which relationships may enhance the activity/project and how these relationships could be best structured and resourced.

Should the budget include some form of reimbursement for participation in a project reference group or consultative committee? Is a formal memorandum of understanding between the CLC and other organisations required? See *CLE Made Easy Information Sheet 10: Partnerships & Collaboration*.

## Promotional Strategies

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How will the CLE activity or project be promoted and advertised? How will the centre ensure that the people to whom the activity or product is directed hear about it? Consideration of these and related questions during planning will place the centre in a better position to design innovative and relevant approaches and to allocate appropriate resources to these tasks. See *CLE Made Easy Information Sheet 15: Organising Community Legal Education Activities*.

## Evaluation

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Those designing the CLE activity will decide on the evaluation criteria and the methodology for collecting relevant information during the planning stage of the activity. This helps to ensure that the evaluation criteria or performance measures are relevant and that tools and processes are established to collect the required information.

“The importance of having an evaluation plan cannot be overstated. Many evaluations fail when, without a plan, they go off the track and fail to answer the most important questions.”

POPE & JOLLY, 2008, P5

Clarity around the purpose, objectives and intended results of the CLE activity at the planning stage will be of great assistance in planning and implementing the evaluation.

See *CLE Made Easy Information Sheet 6: Evaluating Community Legal Education*.

## Timelines

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Defining the steps involved in and the tasks necessary to complete the CLE activity or project, and then allocating timelines and responsibility for their completion, is a fundamental aspect of planning for CLE. Timelines are often developed by working backwards from the completion date to the starting date. Once the timelines are established, progress must be regularly monitored if they are to be of value.

### Case Study

Eastern Community Legal Centre uses Gantt Charts, horizontal bar charts used for project management, as a tool to plan and monitor CLE project tasks and timelines. An example of the Gantt Chart developed by Eastern Community Legal Centre for the centre's CALD Committee Project Plan is attached to this document as Appendix 2.

## Workplace Health and Safety - Risk Management

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Undertaking assessment to:

- identify potential health, safety and other risks associated with the CLE activity;
- assess the likelihood and severity of the risk ;
- determine actions to eliminate or minimise the risk; and to
- prioritise action,

forms an integral part of the planning process.

## Reporting and Accountability

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To whom and how the progress and outcomes of the CLE activity/project will be reported should be considered in the planning stage. This will help to ensure that relevant information is identified, produced and collected throughout the life of the activity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Access to Interpreters Working Group, (2003), *Access to Interpreters and Translations Kit*, Federation of Community Legal Centres, Victoria.
- Johnstone, A. (2009) Interview, Eastern Community Legal Centre, Victoria.
- Keating, C., (No Date) *Evaluation Resource for Projects funded by the Legal Services Board*, Effective Change Pty Ltd for the Legal Services Board, Victoria
- RPR Organisational Consultants, (1996), *Strategic Planning Resource Manual for Community Legal Centres, Legal Aid and Family Services*, Attorney-General's Department, Canberra.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

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- Australian Government Attorney-General's Department website, Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program, [www.ag.gov.au/cclsp](http://www.ag.gov.au/cclsp) (centres will require a user name and password to access this site) – contains information about CLSP Planning
- Combined Community Legal Centres Group NSW (2004) *Your Guide to Community Legal Education*, Second Edition, Surry Hills, NSW (Step By Step CLE: Setting Objectives pp 78-87)
- Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic) Inc., *Federation Toolkit – Managing The Organisation - Planning*, [www.communitylaw.org.au](http://www.communitylaw.org.au)
- Mindtools.com, information about Gantt Charts - [http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM\\_03.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_03.htm)
- Moreland Community Legal Centre (2008) *Community Legal Education Planning Form*, Coburg, Victoria
- Muddagouni, R., (2007) *Thinking & Planning Ahead – resource manual for community legal centre staff*, Victoria Law Foundation, Victoria (Chapter 1, Introduction To Planning, pp 5-52/ p18 & p 106 Pro forma for a Project Plan)