



Starting Your Own Project

Making a difference on an issue that really matters to you is incredibly rewarding. If you've found a cause that you are passionate about, you can do something about it.

Turning your passion into action

If you're really passionate about something, there are lots of different ways to help your cause. You might want to:

- encourage more people to care about the cause (raise awareness)
- convince decision-makers to change a rule or policy (lobbying)
- directly help someone/something in need (provide services to help)
- collect money to help pay for these things, either for your own activities or an existing organisation (fundraising).

Making a plan

Step 1 — Set your goal

What do you want to achieve? Write down your mission and describe exactly what you want to get out of pursuing your cause. Be specific and identify practical, achievable goals.

Some examples of suitable goals are:

- fundraise for cancer research
- have your local skate park upgraded
- help people understand mental health issues better.

Step 2 — Get informed

Once you know what you're aiming for, you need to learn as much as you can about your cause. This will help you to choose the right actions to achieve your goal, and will also help you to understand what is achievable and what other people are already doing. You might change your goal after doing this, and that's perfectly okay.

It would be a good idea for you to:

- do some research, including searching online, checking your local newspaper for any relevant stories, and talking to people who have done similar things
- see what other people and organisations are doing for the cause
- look at what strategies other countries, states and towns are using that could work in your community
- identify the challenges you might face in addressing your issue
- check for guidelines that might affect your project, for example you may need a permit for fundraising from the Department of Commerce.

Being informed will help you make better decisions, approach your issue more responsibly, and execute it in the best way possible. You will learn something new, and be able to answer any question someone may ask.



Step 3 — Make a plan

Once you are informed and know what you want to do, it is time to make a plan that will set out your objectives, strategies and resources. When it's complete, you can refer back to your plan to keep you focused, tell you your next step, and remind you why you're doing all of this hard work.

Objectives: 'Goals' are broad and can sometimes be a little daunting. It will be easier to reach your goal if you have more specific objectives to help focus your efforts. Your 'objectives' should be things you can measure and are a key way of evaluating your success. For example, some objectives related to the goals in Step 1 are:

- raise \$500 to donate to Cancer Council WA
- convince your local council to do a survey about satisfaction with the skate park
- increase 100 people's knowledge of mental illness.

Strategies: These identify the actual activities you are going to do to meet your objectives. It is also a good idea to identify your stakeholders—anyone who will be affected by or interested in your project—so you know who you will have to talk to, or who you may need to keep informed, and create strategies for how you deal with them. Example strategies include:

- hold a fundraiser free-dress day and flash mob
- hold a meeting with a local councillor at the skate park
- host a mental health forum for parents, with guest speakers.

There are some tips for strategies in Resource 5.

Resources: These are the things you will need to achieve your goals. They will depend on the size of your project, the strategies you use and what you have access to. The resources you require may determine what you can actually afford to do. Consider what you might need for your project, whether you can get it, or if you need to ask for help (see Resource 7 for tips). Remember that people can be resources too—if you'll need other people to help you out, make sure you include them in your plan.

Example of a plan

Goal

- Help protect the environment and encourage recycling.

Objectives

- Raise awareness of environmental issues in the community.
- Increase the amount of recycling done in the community.

Strategies

- Write a letter to the local mayor asking for recycling bins to be put in local parks.
- Start a petition at school for action to be taken on cleaning up the environment and recycling:
 - design a petition and identify the action needed
 - find out who to send the petition to
 - collect signatures
 - send to the nominated person.
- Have an environmental awareness party for everyone at school.
 - seek support from administration
 - schedule a date
 - book a venue
 - send out invitations
 - announce the party at a school assembly or over the PA

- get food and drinks, cups, plates and serviettes
- organise compost bins and recycling bins for the day
- create posters about environmental issues to display at the party
- make thank you certificates to recognise sponsors.

- Evaluate the project and share feedback with stakeholders (See Resource 8):
 - local council
 - students and teachers at school
 - young people in the community
 - young sponsors
 - local residents.

Resources

- access to a computer and printer
- money to buy supplies
- paper for letters, petitions, invitations, certificates and posters
- access to a venue with tables for food
- food and drinks
- cups, plates, serviettes, rubbish bags, compost bins, blu-tack
- music to play at the party and a sound system to play it on.

Case Study: YACTivate! Conference 2015

YACTivate! was an initiative of the Mosman Park Youth Advisory Council (MPYAC) held in 2015 with the help of a Department of Local Government and Communities Youth Activities Grant. The conference brought together young people and coordinators of Youth Advisory Councils from around WA to network, learn from each other, share ideas, celebrate their work and develop leadership skills.

The MPYAC members came up with the idea, and then took charge of the organisation of all aspects of the event. They:

- applied for the grant to make the event possible
- contacted every local government in WA to create an invite list for the event
- developed the program for the day with a range of guest speakers who would inspire themselves and other young people
- promoted the event through social media.

They also created the first ever Youth Advisory Council directory for WA as part of the project. YACTivate! had a great turnout, with thirteen YACs attending and great feedback from attendees.

“While YACTivate! is just the beginning, I can already tell this new kind of collaboration between Youth Advisory Councils and leadership development will do wonders in developing switched-on young people with the potential to make positive changes within their local communities.”

Georgie Carey, MPYAC Chair



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