Consulting and Coordinating:
Funding Your Work through Fee-for-Service Projects

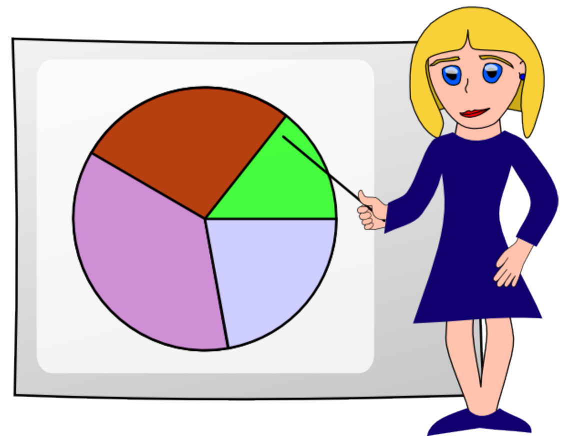
With government grant funding for self-advocacy becoming less and less available, it is important for self-advocacy groups to find other sources of money for their groups. Self-advocates do this in many ways, like hosting fundraisers, writing non-governmental grants, asking for donations, giving trainings, and more. You can find out more by watching ASAN's How to Ask for Money webinars.

Most often, disability projects and programs are run by people without disabilities. Governmental agencies and private businesses have a lot of things that they need that they usually pay consultants to do for them. The Self-Advocacy Movement created the motto "Nothing About Us, Without Us" to say that people with disabilities should be a part of conversations that affect them. People with disabilities are experts on disability, so why not get paid for our expertise?

Often times, organizations earn money by running businesses. This is called "fee-for-service" because the organization is paid a fee for a service. Running a fee-for-service project can be a great way for self advocacy groups to earn money.

Coordinating fee-for-service projects can also be a great way to build a reputation as an organization. If you do a good job, people will come to you for more projects. Many self-advocacy groups want to become formal non-profits (see: ASAN's guide Starting a Non-Profit is Like Having a Baby: 8 Questions Your Group Should Ask Before Starting a NonProfit for more information.) Coordinating a project can be a good first step to build skills needed to run an organization.

Fee-for-Service



One of the best things about fee-for-service work is that the organization can use the profits they make on almost anything they want. They do not have to write reports on how they spend the money — the money belongs to them! There are many organizations who want to do advocacy that the government cannot fund. These organization often use profits from their fee-for-service projects to pay for their advocacy projects.

There are many services self-advocacy groups can provide.

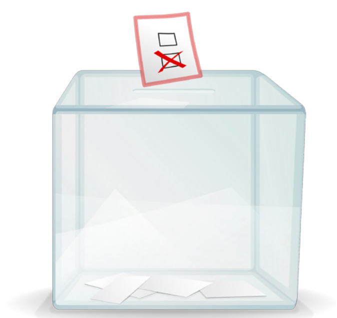
Some common services include:

- facilitate trainings
- participating in research projects and hosting focus groups
- marketing and promoting a service
- conducting evaluations
- consulting on disability-related efforts (e.g. recommendations for how to be inclusive)
- running programs and awareness campaigns

Case Example:

In 2006, youth advocates in North Carolina wanted to host a three-day training for youth with disabilities to learn about disability history. To host a training like that would cost them $30,000. The youth advocates talked to the state agencies that they knew. Some agencies had “discretionary funds”, a pot of money the agencies could spend freely. Various agencies agreed to jointly commit $25,000 of discretionary funds for the training. Still the youth faced two problems:

1.) they needed $5,000 more and
2.) all of the money they had gotten committed from agencies had “strings” on it. None of the committed funding could be spent on food for participants.



One agency, who did not have discretionary funds, but wanted to support the youth, had a project that they needed to hire outside consultants to do. The project was to evaluate the accessibility of polling places across the state on Election Day. It made sense for the youth advocates to do it because their members lived all across the state. The advocates negotiated with the agency and agreed to do the work for $125 per site evaluation, plus gas reimbursement.

The group leaders found an ally who taught them how to evaluate accessibility for free. The group leaders also found members willing to do evaluations for free. Members doing the work for free meant the organization could keep all of the revenue, which is money made from providing a service before calculating the costs.

The only cost the group had in doing the project was what they spent on measuring tapes and tools (about $100). They conducted evaluations at over 50 polling places and earned over $6,000 in profit, which how much money was left after costs. The agency that hired them to do the evaluations liked their work so much that they recommended other agencies to hire the youth advocates for services. The youth used the money to host their training.

Understanding Language:
Program Management vs Project Coordination

Often times, people use the words “program management” and “project coordination” interchangeably, but the words mean different things. Program Management is usually when a person is running a program over a long period of time. In the non-profit world, it is common for a Program Manager to have a few program teams they manage. Project Coordination is usually when a person is carrying out a short-term project. They do not supervise staff and have to report to Manager. The project guidelines are decided by the Coordinator’s supervisor or the grant requirements. Usually, self-advocacy groups start with project coordination. If they grow to have multiple projects, that’s when they need to start thinking about program management.

Characteristics of Program Management and Project Coordination:

Project Management	Project Coordination
• Often on-going • A part of a long-term “big picture” strategic plan, objectives may be overarching • Budget may change • Financially, it is can be more focused on generating revenue. • Leadership may change • Program manager typically has a “portfolio” of programs”	• Has a clear start and stop date. • Specific, single objectives. • Clear budget that is not likely to change very much. • Leadership shouldn’t change since project window is shorter. • Typically, the project coordinator is only working on that project.

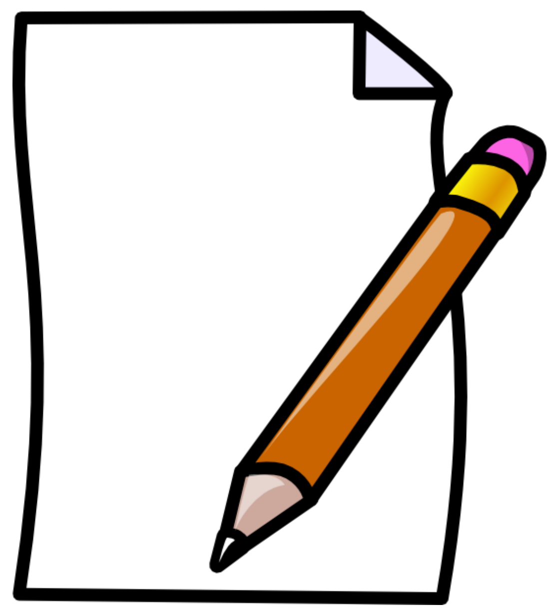
Tips for Self-Advocacy Groups Who Want to Get into Project Coordination:

1.) Write a Clear Scope of Work

Scope of Work is a description of what work will be done. Both parties, the buyer of the service and the provider of the service, need to agree to the Scope of Work before the work is done. It is usually attached to a contract.

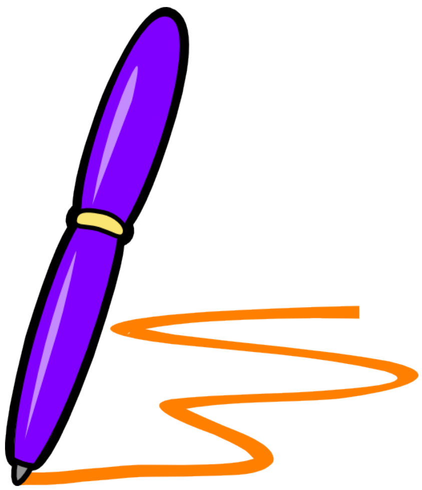
The Scope of Work Should Include:

- who is going to do the work
- what work will be done and how (usually broken down into tasks)
- when the work will be completed
- how much the provider will be paid to do the work and other important details needed for the provider to do the work
- how the buyer and provider will communicate about the work



A common mistake people make is not taking the time to make sure expectations and the scope of work is clear. Both parties often assume that they understand each other, and later run into problems, like the provider doing more work than the buyer agreed to pay for, not doing the work the buyer wanted, or other kinds of issues. A one-page scope of work can prevent this. Samples of Scopes of Work can be found on the internet.

2.) Do Not Start the Project Until the Contract Is Signed



It is often very tempting to start a project before the contract is signed or to do work without anything in writing. Nothing is final until the contract is signed so always make sure you have the contract signed. Only accept emails as proof of a purchase of service if the funder says that they agree to that. It is good practice to include the Scope of Work in the contract.

There will be some work you have to do for free. That is a part of business and is often needed to get the contract for your group. Ideally, you do not work that should be a part of your contract…only work needed to set the contract up.

Common Examples of Free Work:

- Attending a meeting to represent yourself
- Marketing Your Services
- Talking with potential funders about what you can do
- Negotiating Scope of Work

3.) Only Do What You Can!

The reputation of your group is very important. People will not ask you to do projects if they do not think you will complete it, represent them well, or be responsible with the funding. You have to prove that you can do good work. The best way is to prove your abilities is by providing a high quality of work.

A common mistake people new to business do is signing up to do more than they can and failing. Failure can be important — it is a great way to learn —but unfortunately, failure will hurt your reputation and make it so that people do not want to hire your group. There are already a lot of barriers in place for people with disabilities, so often times, self advocates cannot afford to fail, at least not in front of a funder.

Have your group think a lot about their capacity, the ability to do something.

When considering whether your group can take on a project, ask:

- What are our skills?
- What do we know a lot about?
- What is our availability?
- What are our limitations?
- How much time do we have?

Case Example: A group was paid $500 to create and conduct a survey of their members on issues important to people with disabilities. They agreed to survey 200 people. Unfortunately, the group did not think about an important limitation they had: most of their members did not have internet access. They had to spend a lot of money on postage, and by the time they finished the project, what profit they made was not worth the time they put into it. If they had realized their limitation earlier, they would have requested an additional $200 for postage.

4.) Figure out the Amount You Need to Make It Worth Your Time

In the for-profit world, business people do what they call a “break-even analysis”. A break-even analysis looks at how much product the business would need to sell before they begin making profit. For example, if it costs $2.50 for a group to create a tool-kit and $1.00 to advertise it, selling the tool-kit for $3.50 means the group will not make any profit. If the group wants to earn a profit from the pamphlets, they need to think about how much they want to earn and price it from there. If they want to earn $10 per tool-kit, they would charge $13.50.

Ask:

- How much do we need to earn for this project to be worth our time?
- How many hours is this going to actually take me?
- What are the hidden costs?

Add up all of your costs and how much you would like to make. Divide it by how many hours or services you need to sell. That should be how much you charge.

Case Example: A group gets paid $35 per hour for consulting work they do. They pay a member $15/a hour to do the work, $50 a month for that member’s cell phone bill, and $25 a month for printing costs. They do about 30 hours a month of consulting. This means they bring in $1,050 in revenue ($35 x 30 hours) and spend $450 in staff time and $75 in other costs. The group gets to keep $525 and uses it to host a party that recruits new members.

5.) Remember Your Time is Valuable

Every project you take on means you are choosing not to do something else. Your group has limited time and capacity. Often times, groups take on projects that are outside of their mission because they need the funds. That is okay and is a decision the group can make. However, just be aware of it so you can think about whether the project is helping or hurting your group.

6.) Plan It Out

Figure out what are all of the tasks that need to be done for the project and decide who will do it.

Common Roles Include:

- Project Coordinator, person who carries out project or coordinates people who carry out parts of project
- Liaison with funder
- People who carry out parts of project

Project coordination is often a big task. It is fair practice to pay an individual for this work. If your group decides not to pay a person for this work and asks volunteers to carry it out, make sure you are clear about how you will spend the money later so the volunteers can decide if they agree with that purpose. Otherwise, you can lose volunteers.

Figure out the timeline for the project. You can do this by creating a list of the tasks and figuring out how much time each one will take. Create deadlines and share them. Write deadlines as a list or on a calendar to see if you are doing the project on time. It can also be helpful to include times you will communicate your progress with the funder/ buyer so you don't forget to keep them in the loop.

If you have any questions about the Consulting & Coordinating Guide, please contact ASAN by email at info@autisticadvocacy.org.

This Resource Guide was developed for ASAN's Pacific Alliance on Disability Self-Advocacy project.

***Pacific Alliance** is an effort funded by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to support self advocacy groups with technical assistance.*

*For more information about the **ASAN** or the **Pacific Alliance**, visit us at www.autisticadvocacy.org.*