



MEETING NOTES



TOPICS

- ✓ How to plan a successful Chess Project
Jesper Hall (Sweden)

Jesper Hall:

So, what exactly constitutes a project?

A project, in essence, is a defined endeavor set within a specific timeframe, aimed at achieving clear, predefined goals with allocated resources. It's not merely a continuation of routine tasks but rather an additional layer designed to address specific needs or opportunities.

Why do we opt for a project-based approach?

It's becoming increasingly dominant in our societies but more importantly, it's an effective working method. In my experience working with chess federations and organizations, I've observed a tendency to focus solely on maintaining daily operations, often neglecting development opportunities.

Projects provide a structured framework to tackle problems, utilizing defined resources to achieve set objectives. They offer a platform for innovation and experimentation.

They allow organizations to test new ideas and enhance existing practices. In today's landscape, where external funding plays a pivotal role, projects offer avenues to secure financial support from various sources, thereby facilitating growth and expansion.

Project-based initiatives offer great potential to broaden the reach and impact of chess

The rationale behind this presentation stems from the realization that external funding is increasingly crucial, particularly as chess gains popularity, it's vital to adapt and explore new avenues to engage diverse audiences whether it's integrating chess into educational curricula, leveraging its potential in societal contexts such as prisons, and refugee camps, or promoting integration among minorities.

Embracing a project-based approach not only facilitates innovation but also opens doors to new possibilities and avenues for growth in the realm of chess.



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Chess is a game that can be played by anyone, anywhere. These two components make it possible to arrange concepts and project ideas that can fit in different areas.

When it comes to getting money for chess projects, like teaching chess in schools or chess in communities, there are a lot of chances to make it happen.

We need to get better at planning and effectively communicating the value of chess

People who give money for projects usually like new and exciting ideas. Since lots of kids play chess in schools all over the world, there's a good chance to get money for projects that involve chess as a transformative force in education and society.

We can come up with lots of different ideas for projects, but to get money for it, we need to plan them carefully and make sure they match what the people giving out money are looking for.

Compared to other sports or activities, chess has a big advantage when it comes to getting money for projects because of its intellectual nature and broad reach. But we need to get better at planning and effectively communicating the value of chess and our project to make the most of this opportunity.

From my experience with projects, I've learned that when it comes to asking for money, the worst thing isn't just not getting any. It's actually getting money and then doing a bad project with it. If that happens, it's like burning a bridge - the people who gave you money won't trust you again. So, it's crucial to understand our strengths, especially if we involve chess clubs and the traditional chess community.

Chess organizers, referees, and players are really good at running tournaments. This is something we excel at. But when it comes to finding money and running projects outside of tournaments, we lack knowledge and expertise. And these are the kinds of projects that could benefit society. That's why we need project managers who can come up with a strategy and share their knowledge on how to professionally finance and run projects and activities.

"Outside and in" perspective

Whenever I give presentations, to federations, chess clubs, and organizations, I stress the importance of having an "outside and in" perspective. This means looking at ourselves and our projects from the perspective of others. It's vital when applying for funding or creating projects because it helps us see what we can offer and how it fits into the bigger picture.



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Currently, I'm overseeing several projects, one of which focuses on bringing children and their grandparents together through chess. We call it "Let's Play." It's a significant undertaking, funded with €250,000 over three years.

When I spoke with the people providing the funding, it became clear that they weren't particularly interested in chess itself. What caught their attention was the potential for chess to bridge the generation gap. In their eyes, chess served as a means to facilitate meaningful interactions between different age groups. They saw it as a tool for fostering connections between generations, much like playing musical instruments or participating in a choir together. Chess happened to be a particularly effective vehicle for achieving this goal. Understanding their perspective was crucial in tailoring our project proposal to their desires.

Always consider the perspective of those you're seeking support from

This experience taught me a valuable lesson: always consider the perspective of those you're seeking support from. Whether it's funders, sponsors, government bodies, schools, children, or parents, understanding their needs and interests is key.

By aligning our projects with what matters to them, we increase our chances of securing support and making a real impact. It's about finding common ground and addressing their priorities, rather than solely focusing on our own objectives. This approach applies not only to securing funding but also to building partnerships and engaging with various stakeholders effectively.

Two types of organizations

One of the most eye-opening experiences I had was back in 2007 when I began working on project-based initiatives for the Swedish Chess Federation. I decided to reach out to the Swedish authorities to understand how we could secure project funding and what steps we should take. Their response was fascinating. They explained that there were essentially two types of organizations. The old ones followed a traditional approach, completing their activities first and then seeking funding afterward. On the other hand, the newer organizations were proactive. They reached out to the authorities early on to understand how they should structure themselves to attract funding. These newer organizations remained flexible, aligning themselves perfectly with the expectations of funders or sponsors.



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The authorities assured me that while they recognized the good work done by the established organizations, adapting to the changing landscape was essential. They emphasized that it was crucial for these organizations to learn and adapt to the systems put in place if they wanted to remain competitive.

Identifying sources of funding

Before diving into any specific projects, whether it's implementing chess in schools or other initiatives, I always prioritize identifying sources of funding. It's vital for the long-term sustainability and quality of our programs. Funding can come from various sources, such as state subsidies, funds, sponsors, or even parental contributions. Understanding where the money can come from and what we need to do to access it is paramount.

From my experiences, I've learned that adopting an "outside and in" perspective is crucial for project success. Whether we're approaching a fund, bank, sponsor, or school, we must understand what's important to them and tailor our approach accordingly. By aligning our strategies with their priorities, we increase our chances of securing funding and ultimately delivering impactful projects.

Creating two lists when applying for funding

Another important aspect of our approach when applying for funding is to create two lists. The first list consists of our own project aspirations. We dream about what we'd like to achieve with the money we receive. Do we want to cultivate new leaders? Develop innovative instructional materials? We brainstorm ideas from our perspective.

The second list is about understanding what types of projects are likely to receive funding and aligning them with our goals. Before reaching out to funding sources, my team and I conduct an analysis of successful projects that have received funding from similar sources in the past. We inquire about the criteria and preferences of the funding entities to gain a clear understanding of what they prioritize. The key is to find a balance between our aspirations and the funding requirements. While it's essential to pursue our own goals, we must also adapt our approach to meet the expectations of potential funders. By understanding what has worked in the past and aligning our projects accordingly, we increase our chances of securing funding.



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Additionally, when seeking sponsorship, it's crucial to present ourselves professionally. This includes having a well-designed website, strong references, and a track record of success. We must also understand the sponsor's priorities and tailor our approach accordingly to increase our chances of success.

In more complex projects, such as those involving Erasmus Plus, it's imperative to enlist the help of professionals. These professionals can assist with the intricacies of the application process, increasing our chances of success. While it may require an investment upfront, the expertise they bring is invaluable in navigating the competitive landscape of project funding.

Effective project management is essential, particularly in volunteer-driven initiatives like ours. We must carefully strategize how to engage and support our volunteers to ensure the success and sustainability of our projects.

Lastly, collaboration is key. By partnering with organizations that can complement our strengths and bring valuable resources to the table, we can amplify our impact. Cooperation often leads to synergies that benefit everyone involved, making the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Group Discussion

Setting up community chess projects often requires partnering with established organizations to secure funding. These organizations, equipped with the necessary infrastructure and accountability measures, are better positioned to apply for funding from local businesses or other funding bodies.

As individual chess tutors, we found it challenging to navigate the complexities of funding applications and project management on our own. Having a backing organization with a treasurer, secretary, and other key roles streamlines the process and increases the chances of success in securing funding. The need for such backing bodies emphasizes the importance of established infrastructure when initiating community chess projects.

Navigating the funding landscape involves more than just ticking boxes. It requires a comprehensive approach, including project management, financial accountability, and organizational structure. The chess community often lacks skilled project managers and organizations adept at navigating funding applications, highlighting the need for support in these areas.



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Group Discussion

When embarking on a chess project, whether it's at the local, national, or international level, it's crucial to start by assessing the scope of the project you have in mind. This assessment is essential because the level of the project will determine the resources and network you'll need to gather to make it successful.

For instance, if you're planning a local chess event or project, you'll need to consider the resources available within your immediate network. This includes assessing the number of chess trainers within your association or community and determining how many hours of training they can collectively provide. By estimating the resources at your disposal, such as the number of hours available for training in classrooms, you can then calculate a realistic budget for your project.

Once you've outlined the resources and budget needed for your project, the next step is to establish a network of support. This network is crucial for securing funding and gaining endorsements from relevant stakeholders, such as school administrators or local government officials. By obtaining letters of support or commitment from these stakeholders, you demonstrate the feasibility and community impact of your project, which is essential for attracting funding.

Whether you're approaching government bodies, regional authorities, or private companies for funding, having a strong network of support behind you is key. These stakeholders want assurance that their investment will benefit the community, and your network helps provide that assurance.

It's essential to be realistic about the scale of your project and the resources you can realistically mobilize. For example, if you're unable to commit to a large-scale project like Erasmus+, it's better to focus on smaller, more manageable initiatives that align with your available resources and capabilities.

Building a strong network of support and being realistic about the scope of your project are crucial steps in securing funding and executing successful chess initiatives. By starting small and gradually expanding your efforts, you can increase your chances of success and make a meaningful impact in your community.

By following a strategic approach and building a strong network of support, you'll be well-positioned to successfully launch and implement your chess project. Remember, collaboration and engagement are key to driving positive change and making a lasting impact in the community.



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Group Discussion

Based on the discussion, it's clear that before proceeding with your project, you need to establish a solid network of support, starting from the top down. Here's a refined plan of action:

(1) Assess Available Resources:

Determine the number of schools and teachers willing to participate in your project. While you may have a few teachers or chess instructors already on board, it's essential to gauge the level of interest among school principals or head teachers.

(2) Approach Principals:

While you may not have any commitments from principals at this stage, it's crucial to start engaging with them. Principals are key decision-makers and can provide crucial support for your project. Reach out to them with a proposal outlining the benefits of introducing chess programs in their schools and seek their endorsement.

(3) Prepare a Comprehensive Proposal:

Before approaching principals, ensure you have a well-prepared project proposal that outlines the objectives, benefits, and logistics of implementing chess programs in schools. Include details on the curriculum, expected outcomes, and how the program aligns with educational goals.

(4) Seek Endorsement:

Once you've secured commitments from principals, request them to provide formal letters of endorsement for your project. These letters will lend credibility to your proposal and demonstrate support from the school leadership.

(5) Expand Your Network:

While engaging with principals, continue to build your network by reaching out to other stakeholders such as local community organizations, educational authorities, or government representatives who may be interested in supporting your initiative.

(6) Recruit Additional Support:

As you gain momentum and secure endorsements, consider recruiting additional teachers or chess instructors to support the implementation of the program across multiple schools. Having a dedicated team will ensure smooth execution and enhance the impact of your project.

(7) Continuous Engagement:

Maintain regular communication with all stakeholders, including principals, teachers, and community partners, to keep them informed about the progress of the project and address any concerns or challenges that may arise.