

Are there alternatives?

Starting a new NPO is not always the solution. Instead, you could collaborate with an existing NPO. You could also volunteer your services to an existing NPO. Join a network to identify services which you can provide in collaboration with others. Don't limit your focus to local networks. Network globally and connect with others with similar goals.

The best practice models

Connect with an experienced and fully functional NPO and find out how they are conducting their business as a best practice model. You could ask the following:

- What processes were involved with the initial start-up?
- How were challenges overcome?
- Which critical resources were required?

Understand your sector

Find out as much information about your chosen sector as possible.

- Check for research that provides a good overview.
- Check for existing laws and policies governing your sector.
- What are the norms and standards?
- What is the government's plan for this sector?
- Who are the current role players in the field?

Funding

Donor funding is usually critical to NPOs. Find out who the funders are in the sector. Besides government, consider approaching structures or individuals in your community. Search for companies with Corporate Social Investment (CSI) units or any foundations which fund your specific type of work. Obtain a database of funders specific to your work for application.

Business Plan

A Business Plan is a good point of reference for all organisation information, take some time to construct this document correctly. It is possible to assess your viability as an organisation and in turn this will inform your plan of action. Below are items to include in your Business Plan:

- History of the organisation
- Current scenario, background, context etc.
- Organogram
- Marketing plan

- Financial plan
- Service Delivery Plan

Programme on offer

Your selected service should be as detailed as possible. This provides a clear understanding of the work on offer to all stakeholders and is always required for funding information.

- Outline your programme/s
- Who are your clients?
- What is the duration of the programme?
- What is the methodology of the programme?
- Describe the staff and their skills.
- Which resources are required?
- Identify the physical area of delivery of the service.
- What is the budget for this programme?
- Which monitoring and evaluation tools are in place?

Final thoughts

- Ongoing learning is essential for NPOs to stay current and they should be willing to adapt if necessary.
- If you are struggling with funding, try to think outside the box, for example you could consult with the board and establish whether they can operate without funding for a period.
- Lastly but most importantly, access to technological resources and technological skills are no longer luxuries, but necessities!