

Forward Planning: Top Tips

1. **Plan enough time** to write or review your plan; it's not something to tackle in a weekend. A few months is probably the minimum amount of time to review or develop a new plan, with 6 months being a more comfortable timescale.
2. Work out **who to involve**. You will need a coordinator and preferably at least one other person to share some of the workload and coordination with. Think about how you can involve other people - e.g. your volunteers- as part of the process of developing the plan.
3. Look at the Forward Plan requirements and work out **what information you already have**. This may exist in other documents or be specific pieces of work- e.g. audience consultation data. You won't necessarily have to start everything from scratch.
4. **Set targets** for progress. Many of the individual tasks - e.g. reviewing a previous plan, assessing the current operating environment are useful tasks in themselves. When you complete different elements you can gain satisfaction from the progress you are making on the way.
5. Ensure that **your plan fits** with wider organisational priorities as appropriate. Your plan should make it clear how your service contributes to the organisation as a whole if you are part of, for example, a local authority, university or bigger company or charity.
6. When you **review your previous plan** don't be afraid to show off about your achievements and be honest about what hasn't happened (no service exists in a perfect world and a degree of realism will enhance your plan).
7. Your **aims and objectives** for the first year of the plan should be detailed but if it isn't possible to plan in detail for subsequent years put in some headline objectives that can be developed when budgets etc are clearer.
8. Get someone who hasn't been involved in writing the plan to **read and review** it at the draft stage to ensure it makes sense to your wider stakeholders.
9. Create an **action plan** that you can use as a stand alone document to monitor progress on your objectives, e.g. in team meetings.
10. See Forward Planning as a potential **professional development exercise** for yourself and colleagues. This will make it even more satisfying when it is complete.