



Module Two: Branch planning

2023

Training
resources

Why is it important?

Branch planning is a central feature of well managed Comhaltas branches. A Branch Development Plan is an output of a branch planning process.

Branches undertake a branch planning process to develop a three year Branch Development Plan which:

- Establishes the current position for the branch –what it is good at and what it could do better at-
- What is the collective and shared vision, aims and objectives of its members and volunteers?
- Establishes the core themes to its work –e.g. engaging people in music, dance and language, providing training to develop skills to play–speak, compete; delivering events; resourcing instruments; developing tutors; good governance; financial sustainability-
- Is linked to the National and Provincial development plans
- Establishes how the branch will review progress against its Branch Development Plan



What is the Branch Development Plan?

The Branch Development Plan is a medium to long term –three – five year– road map for the branch.

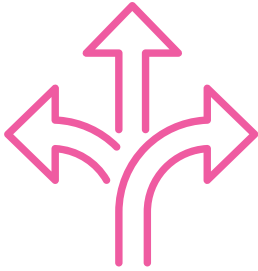
Key reasons for doing it are as follows:

- It allows all members of the branch to have a say in the direction the branch will travel over the next three years –not just the loudest voices or those who attend the AGM, or appointed to Committees–
- It provides an opportunity to pull together all of the work of the branch; recognising and valuing work –focusing on core work in relation to music, dance and language but also the work required to allow this to happen including governance; resourcing instruments; volunteer–tutor development and support; marketing PR; fundraising–
- It brings the branch membership and wider community together generating a sense of unity, loyalty and commitment to the branch
- It identifies roles and opportunities for new volunteers to become involved
- It is the right thing to do and best practice in line with Good Branch–Craobh Maith principles
- It is required by funders; especially the local authorities–County Councils, Arts Council NI and BIG Lottery as examples to attract external grants to support branch development activities

What will it achieve?

A three year Branch Development Plan will:

Create a sense of direction



Help bring members & volunteers together



Establish clear roles and responsibilities



Identify new activities for the branch



Confirm any capital & revenue requirements and how the branch might go about securing them



What is the key to effective branch planning?

Key to any effective branch planning is as follows:

That there is a strong and real commitment from the Branch Committee to undertake a branch planning process in a meaningful manner. It is not just a tokenistic approach or just to attract financial assistance.

There is a strong leadership team, working group, sub-committee in the branch, leading the branch planning process

That a wide range of consultation approaches are used in order to engage as many opinions inside and external to the branch as possible – see Unit five on engaging people – consultations.

That the eventual Branch Development Plan is promoted, communicated and reviewed annually

Applying it to Your Comhaltas Branch

For a branch with an aspiration to be recognised at Good Branch Craobh Maith standards there are a number of practical approaches which can be taken to applying branch planning principles to your Comhaltas branch and as an output developing a meaningful, robust and quality Branch Development Plan.

They are:

- That there is a robust discussion within the Branch Committee confirming what a Branch Development Plan is, why it is useful for the Comhaltas branch to embrace branch planning and to secure full commitment to the process
- Identify a core group –an existing sub-committee or a working group specifically for the purposes of leading the Branch Development Plan– of motivated branch volunteers to lead the process; typically this group would have communication skills, consultation skills, presentation skills and a knowledge of the wider operating environment of the branch including Local Authorities, funders for arts,culture,language,events and the Ulster Council

That the appointed team to lead the branch planning understand branch planning –that they review Module Two and associated resources and if possible, undertake Comhaltas Officer–Branch training–development days–

- That they review existing examples of Comhaltas branch plans –see Comhaltas Website–

- That they develop a Project Plan to deliver the branch planning process

- That they develop a Consultation Plan –Module Five agreeing who they want to consult, what they want to find out and how they will go about it–

- That the final Comhaltas Branch Development Plan is a public document; it is formally presented to the branch membership –often as an input to branch celebration events or an AGM– and made available –sometimes in summary form– on the Branch Website