

New Schools Network Business Case 2010/11

Summary. NSN cannot meet the demand from new groups needing help with new schools. We will fall further behind as the level of interest continues to grow over the next two months. We are implementing now a major sponsoring and partnership programme - in the future we wish to be independent of taxpayer funding. However, this will take time.

In the meantime, there is urgent work required to get groups ready to open schools in September 2011 and get the next (larger) wave ready for 2012. If the DfE regards this as a priority then we suggest a grant of at least half a million pounds (**redaction**). This will enable us to hire the core people for a larger team that can be scaled up if necessary. Although it is possible that NSN may be a much larger organisation in 18 months time we do not want taxpayers money now to fund an enormous expansion; we want to build a larger but still lean team that can be scaled up only if necessary. We are deeply mindful of the overall financial position of the country and the need to respect every pound of taxpayers' money.

We are not aware of any other organisation that has developed close links with parent groups and the expertise to help them start new schools.

Introduction – our first year

In our first year we **ran a highly successful campaign** for the introduction of new schools – mobilising parents, teachers, high profile politicians and education experts.

We conducted **detailed research** into ‘what works’. We published both policy papers and models for a new system including a model application form for new schools which hundreds of groups are using to prepare.

Most importantly we **helped hundreds** of groups who contacted the Network to start planning for a new school – with practical guides and bespoke support.

In our first year we have grown to four paid members of staff. Our work was made possible by frequent pro bono advice across and beyond the education sector.

The next phase.

We cannot know how many groups will come forward to set up schools in the next 12 months, or exactly how much support they will require. However we do know that 450 groups had contacted the Network in between October 2009 and May 2010 government, and that since that time there has been a significant surge in registrations to over 750 potential groups in just 3 weeks. Clearly not every single one of those groups will, or should, set up a school. But the majority will need some support from the Network.

The current team cannot handle all these new applications and feedback suggests that we should expect that the interest will surge again after imminent announcements on a) the application process and b) planning permission changes that will make it practically possible to get new schools opening as early as September 2011. This timescale is obviously much shorter than the recent standard timetable for opening new schools in Britain and imposes further requirements on us.

Our strategy

We will provide a four-pronged support service to groups setting up schools, and also argue the case on their behalf.

1. Advice and Guidance

The hundreds of groups we have been contacted by are not lacking in energy, enthusiasm and drive – but they are lacking in knowledge and experience. In particular the *operational* side of setting up a school – finding a site, writing a rigorous business plan, projecting demand – is a challenge.

We will combine a lean in-house team with outside specialists to provide a personalised package of support to each group who is serious about setting up a school.

Our advice will be:

- Online in the form of detailed standardised guidance.
- Tailored advice from our team of advisers
- Detailed workshops and seminars on specific issues including law and regulation, operations and governance.

2. Providing a Network

The best way to find out how to set up a school is to do it. The second best way is to talk to others who have – parents and teachers, companies and large charities who have been running school for years. A core part of our strategy is to link potential providers together and with other organisations.

In many cases they will ‘partner’ – parents will work with teachers or charities or school companies with the expertise to deliver. We have already brokered a number of those partnerships.

An initial model for this is the New Schools Network conference in February 2010.

3. Start up Funding

There are some cases in which exceptional potential providers need some seed funding, especially in the poorest parts of Britain. In the case of teachers, this would give them enough leeway to leave their jobs and do the final stages of planning. It can also contribute to market research on parent demand and feasibility studies on school sites. The Network will act as a small grant-giving organisation to help exceptional potential providers **in the poorest areas**.

4. Communications and advocacy

New schools require support from parents, teachers and local employers. We'll give communications and marketing advice to groups looking to get support.

We will also act as an advocate to Government, unions, local authorities, the media and others on the importance of new schools and the work potential providers are doing. (This advocacy is *not* something that we want or expect specific taxpayer funding for.)

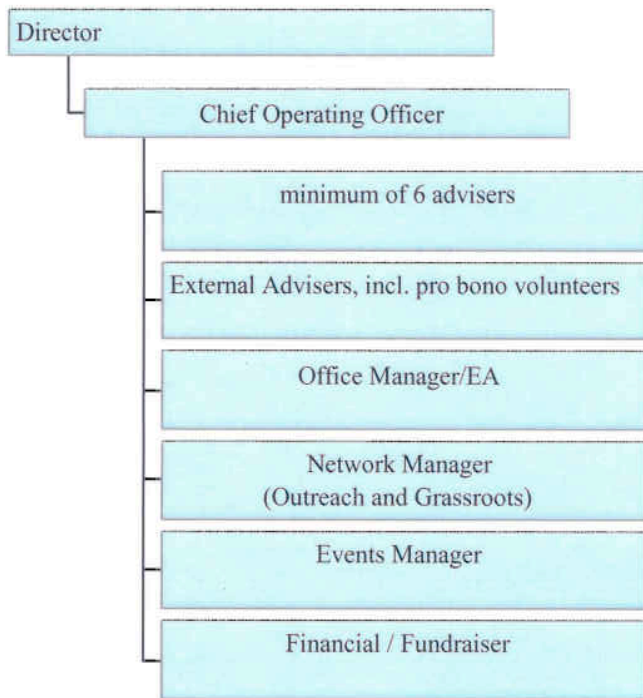
Delivering the strategy

To deliver our strategy we will grow from a team of 4 people to one of 12-15 people. Not all of those people need to be recruited in the next 3 months – and we will re-evaluate our structure in light of the levels and type of demand from potential providers as the next few months unfold.

The key immediate posts to be filled are:

1. An increased team of advisers who will directly deal with potential providers and their issues. Given current demand projections we need at least 6 full time school setup advisers.
2. A Network manager who will find and coordinate teams of volunteers across the country, including specialist advisors to work as part-time consultants or *pro bono* for new school teams.
3. An office manager.
4. A chief operating officer who will manage the team on a day to day basis, provide support to the Director in handling the large and growing amount of media requests, and oversee the country-wide network.
5. A web manager to design and programme web tools and guidance to deal with all standardised enquiries – for example tools to find available sites, build school budgets, and project demand. The more that can be standardised and put on the web using free tools, the simpler and cheaper the process will be. (It is unclear whether the most cost effective solution is to hire a full time person or to outsource it; we are researching this.)

By Christmas 2010 we envisage the following structure to be in place.



Financing

Budget line	Outline Cost
Staffing and advisers	
Permanent staff (redaction)	(redaction)
Project based advisers	(redaction)
Office costs including rent and IT	(redaction)
Training, events, communication	(redaction)
Other costs including Web development, legal and accountancy services, and stationery	(redaction)
Grant giving (e.g. (redaction))	(redaction)
Total	(redaction)

Annex 1 – Breakdown of first tranche of funding from the Department

The first tranche of support from the Department for Education will allow NSN to quickly and sustainably expand to a position where we can provide support to a large number of groups.

That would consist of:

- Funding for expanded premises.
- An increased staff of a Chief Operating Officer, general advisers, an office manager, a web manager and an events manager.
- External experts who would:
 - Provide some of the generalised guidance listed below quickly.
 - Run some of the events for potential providers (see below).
- Two events – one small event in July and a large conference in September.

Budget line	Outline Cost
Staffing and advisers	
4 additional general advisers (costs include all employer contributions and expenses)	(redaction)
Chief Operating Officer	(redaction)
Web manager (including programming, design and social media)	(redaction)
Office Manager	(redaction)
Events Manager	(redaction)
Total staffing	(redaction)
External advisers	(redaction)
Premises (including services and furnishings) – 6 month basis	(redaction)
Conferences and events	(redaction)
Total	(redaction)

This leads to a month by month cost breakdown as follows

	Advisers	COO	Office Manager	Web Manager	Events Manager	Workshop	Networking events	Rent	External Advisers
July	(redaction)					(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
Aug	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
Sept	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
Oct	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
Nov	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
Dec	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
Jan	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
Feb	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
Mar	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
Apr	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
May	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
June	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
July	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)
Total	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)	(redaction)

Note1: Networking event for 500-600 people in September.

Note2: ((redaction))

The Department would not be funding:

- Existing staff salaries.
- Any grants from the New Schools Network to teacher groups.
- Local communication (as opposed to networking and volunteering) efforts. (Building a group of volunteers who can help find out if local parents are interested and provide educational expertise would be networking and volunteering. Helping provide a communications and media strategy should the local authority or other interested parties attempt to oppose the new school would be local communications.)
- Trips to the United States for exceptional potential groups to closely observe charter school management.
- Advocacy work for the policy.
- Core costs of legal, insurance, accountancy or IT and telecommunications.

Annex 2 - Breakdown of second tranche of funding from the Department

(redaction)

Our events would run in 3 cycles of 8 types and would cover the following subjects. Many would require external experts on a day or morning fee basis. Some of these events would run outside of London.

- **Strand 1 – Introduction**

There are two events in this series – the first is for those who are considering whether to start a new school. The second is for those who wish to start a new school but are at the beginning of the process.

- Why start a new school?
- The basics – what are free schools, how do you start one, and what do you need to think about.

- **Strand 2 – Law and Regulation.**

The aim of these workshops is to familiarise potential providers with both the requirements they must meet in setting up a school and their duties as a school operator.

- Setting up a school – Government, local authorities and quangos. Who you need to deal with in setting up a school, how, and what their statutory duties and powers are.
- Admissions. The admissions code, admissions law, and what it means in practice.
- Special Education Needs. Setting an appropriate SEN strategy and meeting legal requirements.
- Building and sites – planning law, and the people you need to get involved.

- **Strand 3 – Operations and Management.**

Running a school is complex – as well as providing tailored advice we will run a series of workshops explaining the issues and how to structure a school efficiently and competently.

- Creating a good school budget: start up.
- Creating a good school budget: running a school.
- Outside funding – how to have a sustainable fundraising plan.
- Human Resources – recruiting and hiring.
- Human Resources - good practice.

- **Strand 4 – Governance.**

Governing bodies have enormous responsibility – to make sure the school’s finances are appropriate, that the head is doing a good job, that the school is sustainable, and many other things. This series is for those who wish to be the founding governors (and trustees) of the new school, or who are forming the governing body.

- Getting the right people – good skill-sets.
- How to be a good Chair of Governors.
- The transition from Founding a school to Governing a school.
- Monitoring a school’s progress.

- **Strand 5 – Education.**

These workshops will help groups think about their curriculum, how to monitor standards, and how to meet national requirements.

- Mission and vision.
- Planning the curriculum, and scheduling.
- Teachers and teaching.
- Standards, benchmarking and assessment.

- **Strand 6 – Writing a successful school application.**

The aim of these workshops is to help groups write an application which meets the requirements of the Department. It will assume thought and effort has already gone into planning the school and that groups are at the writing stage – and will therefore concentrate on the information required for the application, how to present it and how to ensure that issues have not been forgotten.

- Getting started – an overview of free schools, and the application process.
- Vision and ethos – how to present your strategy for a new school.
- Finances and operations.
- Curriculum and teaching.
- Governance and accountability.

- **Strand 7 – Occasional lectures on ‘what works’.**

Although the Network does not propose a particular education philosophy or approach, it does believe that groups (and parents) should be well informed. We will aim to have presentations from academics and practitioners on *evidence-based* methods throughout the year.

○ **Strand 8 – Communications and Advocacy**

Schools can't set up, survive or thrive without support – these sessions will explain how to seek involvement and engagement in the plans for a new school, and how to maintain it once the school opens.

- Getting support before you open.
- Maintaining support once you open.
- Translating your plans into a clear and compelling mission statement.
- Parental engagement.

Networking events.

In addition we would aim to hold each year two large networking events which would be designed to link potential providers with each other and with companies and charities looking for partnership. A large conference venue with a capacity of several hundred would be used, and material published which provided details and briefings on the participants.

Cost breakdown

Budget line	Outline Cost
Staffing and advisers	
Outreach, grassroots and Networking (2 additional advisers)	(redaction)
Total staffing	(redaction)
Events	(redaction)
Training events	(redaction)
Networking events	(redaction)
Total events	(redaction)
External advisers	(redaction)
Total	(redaction)

(NB. (redaction)).

Annex 3 – Suggested KPIs

Clearly there must be a balance between appropriate measures of performance and not causing unnecessary distortions in NSN's support and activity or pushing potential providers towards school set-up at an inappropriately early stage.

We suggest the following indicators in year 1:

- Initial contact from the New Schools Network within two weeks of registration.
- The production of standardised online guidance on:
 - Writing a successful application
 - Governance
 - Law and regulation
 - Finance
 - Operations and Management
 - Planning
- The provision of an online networking site which provides opportunities for groups to contact each other.
- At least 2 networking events per annum to provide opportunities for parents, teachers, charities and other organisations to partner to create better schools.

Annex 4 – Comparisons

The New Schools Network is heavily modelled on existing institutions within the US, particularly the New York City Charter School Center.

As a comparison the Center has received \$40 million for five years – of which \$5 million has gone in grants to schools. Their core budget is therefore in the region of \$7 million a year for a city with a population of about 8 million people.

We are requesting significantly less money to deal with schools for a population six times larger and a geographical area many times greater. Further, as we have said, there is no other organisation that has developed expertise to deal directly with local groups.