

Linking positive outcomes for young people with sustainable development

Case Study 4, March 2010

Envision

'Pitch 4 Change' Programme

Young people bid for delivery funding for community projects
they have designed



The organisation

- Envision is a national education charity founded in 2000 by four young people, delivering hands-on support for young people on issues relating to citizenship, sustainable development and the local and global community working to empower them to become young leaders in their community.

Programme setting, partners in development

Pitch 4 Change (P4C) is a programme first run in London in December 2008 in schools where Envision was delivering its Envision Schools Programme.

The delivery partners in P4C are the secondary schools attended by the young people and a group of private sector organisations some of whose staff are involved as mentors and judges or 'dragons' (see below), working with the groups of young people who are making bids for funding.

During 2009 the project was run in 200 schools in London, Birmingham and Leeds, and 20 P4C projects were supported at a 'finals' event in December 2009.

Funding, duration

Envision is funded through the Big Lottery Fund and other sources, including from trading income. Schools are offered the Envision Schools Programme at no cost for the first year and at an agreed fee for following years. P4C runs in schools already taking part in the Envision Schools Programme, so there is no extra funding cost to take part.

Funding of up to £500 for each successful P4C team of young people, has been provided by the Tellus Mater Foundation, Santander, 'A Gift from the Gods', and v.

as long as it takes

Purpose and objectives

P4C offers teams of young people aged 16 – 18 the opportunity to pitch their project ideas to a panel of local business and community leaders for the chance of winning up to £500 to help fund the development of their project.

The programme is an opportunity for private and public sector organisations to take a role in inspiring young people to aim high, to foster a culture of enterprise and sustainable living, and to gain skills transferable to the jobs market.

The teams that take part in P4C are selected for their innovative ideas for sustainable living and for the positive impact that their projects will have on their schools or local communities.

Who is the programme for?

The programme is open to all young people on the Envision Schools Programme – a programme where Envision supports young people to create and deliver projects that tackle social or environmental issues in their community.

Envision believes that the programme has the most to offer those who would not traditionally get involved in this type of extra-curricular activity. They focus their programme in boroughs with higher levels of deprivation. For example, in 2008-09 45% of the students Envision worked with from Tower Hamlets in London were in receipt of free school meals and 75% received Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

Structure, flow and activities

To help young people prepare for their pitch, the teams are paired with mentors. The mentors are individuals from within businesses or government departments who provide the young people with advice on how to develop their project and who support them in preparing their presentation.

Organisations who have provided voluntary members of their teams to be judges, be involved in the projects, or mentor P4C groups of young people, include: DEFRA, Burberry, Yorkshire Bank, Shared Earth, Packt Publishing, Preston UK, Cooperative, Ozone Bus, Severn Trent Water, TD Waterhouse, Business in the Community, Leeds Financial Solutions Centre, EDF Energy, and LEON.

Young people start developing their project ideas in October when they sign up to the Envision Schools Programme. Currently there are around 150 individual projects being carried out by students. The strongest projects are shortlisted to take part in Pitch 4 Change finals. The young people work with either a business mentor or their Envision Coordinator to prepare their presentation and finance plan ready for the finals in December – in 2009-10 there were 15 shortlisted projects. The teams then continue working on their projects using any funds awarded and making possibly improvements based on the feedback they received from the judges. All projects are completed by the June (end of the academic year).

All team projects carry on till the end of the academic year regardless as to whether they received extra funding at the Pitch for Change final.

Evolution of the programme

Due to its success it has been extended to Envision offices in Birmingham and Leeds (and to Bristol during 2010), and has now become an important element of Envision's broader programme delivery. Envision intent to trial Pitch 4 Change with groups outside the school environment, including developing a programme with young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Outcomes and impact achieved

Future skills

Teams learn hard skills: making a video or slideshow presentation, drawing up a budget and time plan to present to others. They also learn soft skills to improve their employability: organising themselves as a team, presenting to a professional audience, researching an issue and developing their ideas as a result.

Feedback from a young person:

"I really enjoyed the events and learnt computer skills."

Young person's attitudes to work

The panels of "dragons" that teams presented to were drawn from a wide variety of industries and were able to give examples from their working lives to help the teams improve their projects. In addition, the pitch events were held in venues such as the Clifford Chance building in Canary Wharf, London, offering students a view inside a law firm that they might never have had otherwise.

Feedback from a young person:

"I feel more able to do things which may seem daunting at first but are more actually manageable."

Feedback from a teacher:

"It was a tremendous experience to be part of that bidding scenario and to do it in front of professional people – they have gained immensely from it."

Feedback from a 'Dragon':

"The thing that struck me was that you can use this kind of project to help young people achieve their potential more broadly"

Community involvement and/or participation

At the heart of the Pitch 4 Change programme is the principle that young people are responsible for identifying the issues in their local area and coming up with new ways to tackle them. Part of the application form which teams used to register their interest in making a pitch was a request for evidence that there was a need for their project. Projects that teams developed as a result of this process included a sustainable development mural for a neglected wall, a hospital garden for use by patients, and local community events to campaign for crime reduction initiatives and better understanding of recycling.

Feedback from a pitch team:

"We are looking at water scarcity, developing a plan to provide clean water abroad where it is most needed whilst simultaneously raising awareness in Stoke Newington about water issues and informing people about how they can save water at home".

Businesses that have been involved in Pitch 4 Change have enjoyed their experience because it offers opportunities:

- to share their business knowledge and expertise
- for their employees to be part of a unique volunteering programme
- to be part of programme that will develop the talent of a future work force
- to be a role model for young up-and-coming entrepreneurs
- to make a positive impact on the communities where they operate and who they work with
- to develop the communication and leadership skills of their employees

Cohesion

Teams were encouraged to work in partnership with their local community and to include as many groups as possible, such as, by recruiting allotment holders to help develop a community garden, or deliver workshops to younger students at a local primary school. Teams were also matched by their

project – two teams from very different schools in Westminster, London were supported to work together in creating/delivering their drugs education project. In addition, there were several projects dealing with cohesion more directly by tackling a lack of communication between different groups of young people:

“Over 40 languages are spoken by students at Primrose High School in Leeds, where the team are holding a celebration of culture and religion which will promote greater community cohesion within the school and into the local community”.

Active citizenship

Pitch 4 Change required students to think about the needs of their community and how they can play their part. At the start of the programme teams were asked to think about what their ideal community would look like and the areas where improvements could be made. Through a series of interactive activities they were then challenged to look at the effect that their actions could have and decide on the difference they want to make. In this way students became accustomed to being active citizens and participating in their community – and realised that they can benefit personally from the experience. This way of thinking persisted after the programme had finished.

Feedback from young people:

“Envision raises awareness to those issues that are forgotten about - or suffer from the diffusion of responsibility”

“I now know that as an individual or as part of a very small group you can make a difference and you shouldn't be afraid to voice your ideas.”

Intergenerational issues/equity

The experience of mentoring and pitching brings professional adults into contact with young people, to the benefit of both. The young people involved learn valuable employability skills and how to work with someone in a professional, rather than family or teaching role. They also gain professional role models and have a chance to change negative stereotypes of young people that may persist. The professional mentors or ‘dragons’ have a chance to pass on the benefits of their experience and gain experience of working alongside young people. Teams often tackled intergenerational issues within their projects as well.

Feedback from a pitch team:

“We will be holding a ‘Trashion’ show, using our own designs. We hope to invite local residents along to the show as a way of improving relations between the younger and older members of their community. At the same time, we will be educating the audience about sustainable living.”

Feedback from a funder:

“The event brought together a lot of really high-level corporate leaders with some dynamic, intelligent and exciting young people.”

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