

**Free Schools - Proposal Form**

The Proposal Form asks you for details on the educational aims and objectives, parental demand and premises of the proposed Free School. It also asks questions about the suitability of the provider(s) involved. All new Free Schools will be opened with the same legal status as Academies, in a binding agreement with the Secretary of State.

Please note, all information provided in this form will be published on the Department for Education website.

**INITIAL DETAILS**

**Name** (Please specify if you are the nominated representative of an organisation that wishes to set up a Free School)

██████████

**Name of your organisation**

We Need A School Ltd

**Address** (of organisation or individual)

██████████, Knebworth, Herts, ██████████

**Email Contact** ██████████

**Telephone Number**

██████████

**Are you an existing independent school wanting to convert to a Free School?**

**No**

**If yes, please provide your 6-digit school unique reference number (URN)**

**If no, please confirm the nature of your organisation** (educational group / charity / business / parent group etc)

Parent group

**Please confirm whether your organisation is incorporated** i.e. set up as a Company which is registered at Companies House. If so, please provide the Company Registration Number, Company Address and details of the Directors and Secretary. If not, please indicate the approximate date by which it will be incorporated.

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes, our organisation is incorporated</b>
Company Registration Number:
Company Address:
Details of Directors and Secretary:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No, our organisation is not yet incorporated</b>
Approximate date by which it will be incorporated:

**In which Local Authority area will the school be based?** If you are near to a LA boundary, please include name of neighbouring LA(s)

Local Authority Hertfordshire Cc(Welwyn Hatfield District Council)
Neighbouring LAs

**Is your Local Authority aware of your intention to set up a Free School?**

**Yes**

(If Y please give details of your discussions with them so far)

The council is aware of our campaign. We met with [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) and [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]), and [REDACTED] in September 2009. We discussed our proposal and they recognised that the children from the villages often do not get one of their choices of school, and are often split up from their friends. In September 2009, the government policy was not there to help us realise a local school to meet our needs. We submitted an application in August 2010 and sought to have a meeting with the Director of Children's Services. We have recently had a very positive meeting with both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) to discuss our school. During the meeting we outlined our proposal, school ethos and vision, curriculum, travel plan, potential sites and demand for the school. We handed over a document outlining in detail our proposed school; they were very interested and asked to be kept informed of all our developments. The council are in favour of choice and diversity and they are very positive about schools

gaining independence. They would welcome a new school joining their family of schools and will respond (when asked) on the quality of the proposed provision and local demand and implications. They have given us some advice on the planning application process and areas to strengthen our application.

The council are happy to assist and answer questions and have appointed [REDACTED] as the main contact to liaise on matters such as admissions, standards and demand.

**SUITABILITY OF PROVIDER**

*The Secretary of State will consider each proposal on its merits, and take into account all matters relevant to that proposal. Generally, the Secretary of State would expect that all proposals will comply with all aspects of the rigorous suitability and vetting tests throughout the application process, including due diligence and CRB checks. The Secretary of State would generally expect to reject any proposers who advocate violence, intolerance, hatred or whose ideology runs counter to the UK's democratic values.*

Do any of the following apply to the organisation (or any consortium member), or to (any of) its director(s)/partners/proprietor(s) or individual applicants (select Y/N):	
Is in a state of bankruptcy, insolvency, compulsory winding up, receivership, composition with creditors (including any Individual Voluntary Arrangement), or subject to an Administration Order or any legal proceedings concerning their solvency?	No
Has been convicted of a criminal offence?	No
Is involved in any illegal activities?	No
Has not fulfilled obligations related to payment of taxes?	No
Is guilty of serious misrepresentation in supplying information?	No
Is not in possession of relevant licences or membership of an appropriate organisation where required by law?	No
Is barred from certain work with children as a result of being:	
[a] included in the list of those barred from Regulated Activity with children, kept by the Independent Safeguarding Authority? Or	No
[b] included in the list kept under section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1999(4) (list of those considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children)? Or	No
[c] subject to a direction of the Secretary of State under section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (5) (or any other disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction)? Or	No

<p>[d] disqualified from working with children under sections 28, 29 or 29A of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000(6)?</p> <p>For further information on [a], [b], [c] and [d], please contact the CRB <a href="http://www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk">www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk</a>.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Is disqualified from registration under Part 10A of the Children Act 1989(7) for child minding or providing day care?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Is disqualified from registration under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006(8)?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Is a member, or has been a member in the past, of a proscribed organisation?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>If the answer to any of these questions is “Yes” please give details below:</p>	

**EDUCATIONAL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Briefly outline your reasons for wanting to set up a Free School. Max 200 words.**

The new school is for 5 villages who each have their own primary school but not a single secondary between them.

Knebworth has the biggest allocation problem with 33% not getting ANY of their 3 choices.

Our closest secondaries are at least 20 mins drive / 3+ miles. Our ethos and values will permeate every aspect of the school's work, activities and influence. We believe all young people are entitled to a high quality education which not only meets statutory obligations, but also provides a range of additional experiences to develop the whole child. Our young people will have the highest aspirations and develop wider horizons and greater expectations as a result.

Our vision is to create a calm, safe and vibrant learning climate where all activities are focussed upon on the learner. We will create a learning environment where all students want to learn, intrinsically valuing learning.

We believe that creating a strong community in and around the school with teachers and parents sharing a passion for education will make a lasting impression on our young people and create a happy and high achieving school.

**Please set out the Free School's aims and objectives.** You should also describe:

- the teaching methods that will be used and whether the Free School will follow a particular philosophy (eg Montessori);
- the outline of the Free School's proposed curriculum, including any religious ethos;
- how the Free School will improve pupil learning and ensure strong discipline;

Max 2000 words.

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Our school will:

- promote an enjoyment of learning, the highest possible achievement in all its forms and a sense of success for all learners;
- offer depth and breadth in curriculum and extra-curricular activities to ensure that every child's talents and needs are met;
- develop confident and responsible young people;
- be a source of pride and resource for the local community.

Priorities

Our vision is for the school to be the natural first choice for local children. Our school will be one where a 'can do' culture is promoted producing confident, competent, successful, creative and independent learners, able to respond effectively to an un-chartered future.

Our school will be a place where:

- our ethos and values are embedded
- activity will be focused on the needs and aspirations of the learner
- IT will be used creatively to enhance learning outcomes
- social and educational inclusion are pervasive
- students and staff will be equally valued
- communities will be developed
- relationships can thrive and develop, playing a crucial role in learning

- innovation and risk taking will be encouraged
- achievement will be rewarded
- there will be an innovative and personalised curriculum that is engaging, exciting, relevant
- there will be collaborative ways of working for students and teachers
- leadership will be encouraged throughout the school both in staff and students
- strong independence of thought will be balanced with empathy
- the capability to work independently and collaboratively is encouraged
- the pedagogy promotes a culture of learning, develops critical thinking skills and nurtures creativity
- learning will be stage related
- parents/carers and the wider community will be encouraged to play a full part in the life and development of the school and participate in learning themselves
- partnerships will be forged to broaden choice and share expertise
- individuals will be encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and others
- coaching and mentoring relationships (staff-staff, staff-student, student-student) will be promoted
- facilities use by the whole community is maximised outside of 'traditional' hours

Students at our school will be highly motivated young people, and proud ambassadors of the school.

Our students will develop:

- resilience
- self confidence
- self-motivation, drive and ambition
- self, social and ethical awareness
- emotional intelligence
- decision-making skills
- critical thinking skills
- a creative and innovative approach to problem solving
- independent learning skills
- effective risk management skills
- team working and leadership skills
- entrepreneurial skills
- financial responsibility
- the ability to be self-critical and take corrective action

#### Curriculum Provision

Our curriculum will be characterised by an enjoyment and passion for learning and will engage students actively in the learning process. It will provide all learners with practical learning opportunities, opportunities for enterprise and opportunities to develop languages, arts, physical health and well-being. It will place a strong focus on English, Maths, languages, humanities and the core sciences supported by the creative and performing arts. We are committed to facilitating cross and co-curricular, integrated learning which enables learners to genuinely understand how all aspects of their learning link together.

Academic and vocational pathways will enable all students to fulfil their aspirations and benefit from a broad range of qualifications. The curriculum will also deliver



plentiful opportunities for students to remain fit and healthy, recognising that physical activity enhances academic learning outcomes.

We intend to differentiate the curriculum so that students progress at a rate appropriate to them. Individual learning needs will be met through personalised and flexible learning programmes with challenging targets, supported by IT systems and negotiated with students and parents.

A focus on thinking, research skills and collaborative, creative problem solving will be at the core of the curriculum approach. It will ensure that students are able to “manage self, manage relationships with others, and manage their own learning, performance and work” (QCA framework, 2007).

An annual programme of exhibitions, competitions, theatre and concerts will support and underpin breadth in the curriculum, showcase the talent and achievement of our students and further support links with other schools and colleges in the area.

In summary, our curriculum delivery model will:

- have relentless focus on achievement and high standards for all
- teach learners how to learn
- focus on core skills and competencies and opportunities to develop individual talents and interests
- provide each student with an Individual Learning Plan with challenging, personal targets and clearly described personal learning pathways for success
- provide individually paced learning with tailored support for those with Special Education Needs (SEN), English as a Additional Language (EAL) and Gifted & Talented students; allow for acceleration and progression where appropriate
- provide support and catch-up learning so no student falls behind
- provide a range of additional learning opportunities to develop individual talents, interests and pursuits which contribute to a rounded, full life experience
- promotes cross and co-curricular skills to enable students to become better learners, develop better learning habits and embrace life-long learning
- enable learners to be healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being (ECM Agenda)
- develop an understanding of the world of work across all academic and vocational areas
- develop world-class leadership and work ethics
- encourage students to contribute to the process of learning and teaching through the Student Voice
- encourage parental support through access and assessment procedures
- enable mentoring and coaching
- provide careers guidance which informs, motivates and supports decision-making

Learning will be organised to ensure that the following outcomes are met:

- Learners acquire skills and competencies, relevant to their strengths, interests, experiences, needs and aspirations that exceed their perceived limitations
- Students are committed to learning, want to learn and take responsibility for their learning
- Students and staff are encouraged to show initiative, take risks and be creative, innovative and enterprising
- Students master functional skills in Maths, English and IT and have the

aptitude to apply effectively their learning in a range of contexts in the world beyond school

- Students are confident and skilled users of IT
- Students' capacities for independent enquiry, problem-solving and reflective thinking are promoted and developed.
- Students are able to work in teams, make decisions, communicate effectively and lead their peers.
- Students have and sound social, ethical and moral values.
- Students will have a deep respect for the environment through an understanding of and commitment to sustainability. Students will exercise wisdom, integrity and responsibility in the use of the world's resources.

### Teaching and Learning

We will create a learning culture that is highly personalised in an environment where students learn to work effectively both independently and in teams. We will encourage new pedagogical approaches, placing an emphasis on enabling students to maintain and harness their innate creativity. We will promote emotional intelligence, social and communication skills and core competencies to enable students to make positive decisions that lead to happy, healthy and productive lifestyles. Leadership will be promoted through co-curricular responsibility, learning activities and peer mentoring.

We will employ teachers and a range of professionals to ensure that the curriculum is challenging, relevant and forward-looking. We will capture the energies of staff and foster collaborative, innovative and inspirational practices. Teaching will focus on 'facilitating learning' not 'chalk and talk'. A combination of flexible learning settings and spaces will allow teachers to target smaller, more focused groups in a more relevant way; to deploy support effectively; to intervene proactively. Tutorial periods will include time for individual mentoring and self assessment.

Often, learners will be grouped according to 'stage not age'. Assessment will inform the setting and process of learning experiences. Tailored units of work will identify the personal, learning and thinking skills we aim to nurture within our learners.

IT capability will be crucial in delivering highly personalised resources, remote access, and parent/carer involvement, 24/7. A coherent IT model will enable flexible learning, individually and in groups, will enable catch-up and extension learning and will enable students to measure and take greater responsibility for their progress.

There will be an appropriate and fair behaviour policy. Home-school agreements will ensure that Parents are engaged in their children's learning and in regular contact with tutors. We believe that excellent teaching and leadership are essential to creating and sustaining a happy, engaging environment which obviates poor behaviour.

Our priorities:

- raise standards, achievement and aspirations for all staff and students
- raise aspirations in our local community
- a broad, relevant curriculum which meets the needs and aspirations of learners and serves the community and local economy

- high quality teaching for all based on best and innovative practice, and innovative learning environments
- sustainable partnerships with businesses and other organisations to provide appropriate extension and progression opportunities
- personalised learning and high quality facilities to enhance 11-16 engagement, and post-16 participation
- IT and other technology effectively supporting learning, teaching, administration and management

#### Admissions.

We would have the 5 village primaries as feeder schools, then places would be offered to children living in the villages not attending a village primary.

We would then allocate if any surplus on a distance to school ruling.

This would ensure that the school prioritised the rural community.

#### Inclusion & SEN (including Every Child Matters & Community Engagement)

We would like to co-locate with a local special school for autistic children. We feel that integrating their expertise within a mainstream school would benefit diagnosis and enable early intervention. We also believe that a key purpose of education is to enable young people to understand their social responsibilities, towards creating and sustaining a fairer, more equitable world. Co-location would promote tolerance and understanding of individuals with special needs. SEN staff expertise would also support an alternative to fixed term exclusion, enabling us to work with 'at risk' students whilst learning continues.

Our vision is for the school to forge links with the local community and provide extended school facilities through a wide range of opportunities. The school will be a 'lifelong learning hub' for the entire community and local business.

#### Staffing

The school should be a centre for teaching excellence. We will seek to recruit teachers of the highest calibre who are enthusiastic, motivated and resourceful; who are able to inspire students to enjoy learning, achieve high standards and become lifelong learners. Teachers will be committed professionals; each, valued and respected. There will be a focus on Continuous Professional Development with all teachers and support staff supported through performance management as part of our ambition to develop a 'total staff team'. The school will be at the forefront of learning and teaching innovation and will therefore provide an ideal environment for supporting Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Sharing good practice will be second nature, as will collaboration within and across learning areas and between schools. We will seek to develop strong links with local HE organisations so that new teachers are supported and experienced teachers are developed with a range of CPD opportunities.

#### Summary

We aim to be the local school of choice and we aim to provide a place for every local child. As parents we want our children to go to a happy, safe and successful local school. Teachers, students and parents will work collaboratively to create a rich, deeply integrated educational environment that celebrates success, individuality and

creativity; a place where our community grows together in inspiring ways; where every voice is heard and valued

**What are your organisation's core areas of work / aims?** Max 500 words.

We are a group of local parents, with a mixture of skills and services to offer-our group includes a It consultant, Soliciter, Certified accountant, Copy writer, Teacher and many more.

We want to set up this school to provide a local choice in a rural community with a population of 10,000 but no local school.

**What capacity and capability do you have (or have access to) in order to deliver the educational vision set out above?** Please indicate the resources, experience and expertise (educational and legal) that you have or have access to. Max 500 words.

We would formulate the curriculum in collaboration with an experienced 3rd party education provider. We will appoint the most appropriate provider to deliver our educational vision. While we have no professional education expertise as a campaign team, we as parents are passionate about our childrens' education we will ensure that we consult with many providers who have proven expertise to get the right deal for our school and the best teachers who show a love for education that will enthuse children into wanting to learn. The New Schools Network provide access to additional expertise which we would like to take full advantage of. It would be wrong of us not to use such resources that have been set up for causes like ours.

We aim to appoint a head who is capable of delivering our vision in collaboration with the education provider. This will be a very special head teacher who can demonstrate their understanding of what we wish to achieve and of village life itself as we intend for the school to become a treasured cornerstone in our communities. The head will have the experience to transform our vision into practical acts and measures that will be enshrined into the curriculum, and into the minds of teachers that he/she hires.

We will set up a school trust who will act as the last standing guardian of the school's vision and ethos. (The head will be the primary guardian.) The trust will ensure that heads and education providers over the years don't stray away from the original purpose and ambitions of the school. The trust will consist of parents, some from our campaign whose hearts and minds would have been truly tested by the time the school opens, and ideally local current or retired professionals and business people who have lived in the area for a number of years who demonstrate a genuine interest and passion for the education of our children. There are many respected individuals from all sorts of professions that we could approach. We have not got to the stage of agreeing who would be a trustee outside of our campaign group because it seems like a premature discussion to have until we get through to stage 3. We do know that we will ensure there are no conflicts of interest by asking candidates to declare that themselves as well as making our own evaluation based on known facts.

**Do you have plans to work with a 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisation?** If so, please include their details below and set out the intended nature of that relationship (for example, a contract, co-sponsorship arrangement, informal partnership).

We want to form links with all 5 villages and would like to share facilities with other secondary schools in the towns.  
We would also like to make available community facilities to enrich our area, encouraging all members of the locality to feel the benefit.  
We have positively discussed sharing facilities with other schools with Herts County Council.

**Please name the key individuals / trustees involved in setting up the Free School** (if available). Please also indicate whether trustees have been chosen and their roles confirmed. Please provide details of employment of these individuals and any conflicts of interest you believe might arise.

All trustees, nominated, elected and confirmed-

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Parents also who make up the team-

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

There are no conflicts of interest.

**EVIDENCE OF DEMAND**

**What evidence of local parental demand do you have?** For example, a petition or a declaration from interested parents or pupil number projections for the area. Max 200 words.

According to Hertfordshire County Council, they will need up to an extra 17 forms of entry locally to provide enough places by 2021. Our petition stating "We believe our children deserve a local secondary school within a priority catchment area of Knebworth, Woolmer Green, Datchworth, Oaklands and Codicote." has attracted over 1200 names in support of a new local secondary school.

There are over 1000 children currently in our 5 local primary schools but not a single secondary school in the area. We also have interest from parents in a 6<sup>th</sup> local village currently excluded from our initial catchment of 5 villages. Parents are moving out of the village before making a transfer due to not getting their choices

Meetings with groups and parents have reaffirmed support. We have hosted open evenings for parents to visit and ask questions, many have stories that reaffirm the reasons why we need a dedicated secondary school to serve a large hub of rural villages.

We ran an online survey over the summer where 201 families chose to take part (via a link on our website) to express their own views of the proposal. Only 4.5% said they would not consider the school as an option for their child. The participants collectively have 189 children aged 5-10, 134 children aged 0-4 and 37 children aged 11-16. If this is a moderately representative sample there will be a lot of demand for places at the new school.

With school transport under review and likely to be stopped completely in 2012, and no community feel we know this school is needed by our village children now.

**What is the proposed capacity (number of pupils)?** Max 200 words.

120 per year in years 7-11  
100 per year years 12 and 13.  
A total of 800 pupils  
11 to 18 years of age. We plan for 4 forms of entry over a period of 7 years. This would prevent a potential exodus of local children already attending secondary schools in other towns (some 3+ miles away). It also gives us the option of building the school in carefully managed phases.

However, this is not set in stone, we are always open to advice and revised facts or statistics.

**What is the proposed age range of the Free School?** Please include details of planned pupil numbers in each year group.

11 to 18 years of age.  
120 per year in years 7-11  
100 per year years 12 and 13.

**When do you hope the Free School will start operating** (for your first set of pupils)?

September 2012 if we are working on our OBC before the end of the year, if not we would open in 2013, in order to do this properly.



## **PREMISES**

**What steps have you taken to identify a potential site?** Please include details of the geographical area the school seeks to serve; a list of any sites you have considered; and any discussions you have had to identify a suitable site. If known, please include the proposed location, premises and postcode of the Free School.

Accommodating the school

### History & Search Area

The WNAS campaign has been running since June 2009. From the beginning, our key driver for the school has been to provide a local school for local children. Having established the need for a 4FE plus six form sized school, the search for suitable accommodation has been focussed within a circular geographical area measuring over 20 square miles, described at its limits, by the locations of the five campaign villages – Knebworth to the north, Codicote to the West, Oaklands to the south, and Datchworth to the east (with Woolmer Green lying towards the heart of the area).

The WNAS team recognises that the Free School initiative was predicated upon the notion of the refurbishments and reuse of existing buildings to minimise costs and resources. For many months, members of the team have been searching for such premises, but to date, this search has been fruitless.

### Remodelling & Refurbishment vs. New Build

However, based upon advice given by pro bono professionals, it is the team's contention that a carefully planned and executed, cost-effective new build on a rented green-field site could be as affordable if not more affordable than the conversion of an existing building or series of buildings. A recent report for the BCSE found that low-end refurbishment rates weren't considerably below their rates for new buildings, whilst the high-end refurbishment rates exceeded the new build rates.

In considering the question of whether to establish temporary accommodation for an interim school, prior to opening a new school in September 2012, we have also developed our understanding of project costs and logistics to the point where it is felt that we would achieve better value for money by concentrating precious project resources upon the permanent school home.

### A preferred location

Having established that there are no suitable existing buildings that could offer a refurbishment solution and knowing as we do now that it should be possible to construct a new school at rates substantially below current Academy procurement rates, we have concentrated our efforts on approaching the land-owners of sites we feel would be suitable locations for the new school.

It is plain to state that the preferred location for the school would be at the heart of the search area as this would make the most sense in terms of access and catchment logistics. There are three major land owners in the search area, all with potentially interesting holdings. It is also important to recognise that although we have yet to enter negotiations with any party, the land-owners are all supportive of the campaign.

Of the sites we feel would be suitable for the new school, we have a preference and are keen to enter negotiations with the landowner once we

have been approved to move forward to the OBC application stage. This site is close to the heart of the 5 village area, has easy access to a main road, is relatively flat (the search area covers a valley) and is not situated at a location likely to cause tangible local resistance.

#### Potential Costs

Although we would provide an in-depth analysis at the OBC stage, we believe that it will be possible to construct the school building, complete with IT infrastructure and fixed furniture & fittings for around [REDACTED]. Using the formula  $6.3N + 1050$  (approximating to BB98 minus 15%), we derive a design GIFA of 6,090 m<sup>2</sup> and a construction cost of approximately [REDACTED] based upon 800 pupils. We believe that the project can therefore be delivered for circa [REDACTED] assuming land costs of around [REDACTED].

#### Rationale

Our Vision is based upon the simple and constant belief that we need and want to build a world-class community school and facilities, serving the five villages, which epitomises our enshrined values.

The school's buildings should be constructed to a budget, but not compromised by it. They should demonstrate that it is possible and desirable to build new with a limited budget whilst achieving new standards of embodied carbon reduction in construction materials and low energy consumption in operation, ensuring that the school will not only be affordable to construct, but also to maintain.

The school's interiors and fittings will be intelligently crafted using very modest budgets to create a wide array of truly inspiring spaces.

Our approach to IT will be driven by pedagogic dialogue and innovation that respond to needs and desired learning outcomes rather than by the blanket application of expensive technology.

The school will be a model for the intelligent use of modest capital investment to achieve all the elements essential for an environmentally friendly, sustainable, inclusive, world-class community school.

**Further information**

Please note, all information provided on this form will be published on the Department for Education website. Information that you supply on this form may be shared with (a) the New Schools Network and (b) the Local Authority in which you wish to set up the Free School. Information about the New Schools Network can be found at <http://www.newschoolsnetwork.org>.

Submission of this form will be treated as consent, from both you and anyone else whose personal data is contained on this form, to the sharing of this information as set out above.

In addition, information that you provide on this form, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Next Steps**

Please email completed Proposal Form to [freeschools.registration@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:freeschools.registration@education.gsi.gov.uk)

You will hear back from a named official at the Department for Education within two weeks, who will offer you advice on how best to progress your application. The Secretary of State will make a judgement on the potential of the project based on criteria relating to educational aims and objectives, evidence of demand, potential premises, suitability of provider and any other relevant considerations to decide whether the proposed Free School project should move into stage 3, namely that of drawing up a business case and plan.