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Run the session

45 minutes · 4–6 people per group · one shared decision

Hand out the prepared brief. The group chooses three projects; you guide the session and feedback. Keep the example plans private.

Before you start

1. Print participant pages 1–3 per person, plus page 4 per group. Bring pens and blank paper.

2. Copy the observation sheet on page 2 for observers. Agree how feedback and sheets will be handled.

3. Ask about access needs. Agree extra time, an early brief, a scribe or other adjustments.

The 45-minute run sheet

5 min — **Welcome and brief**

Hand out pages 1–3 to everyone, plus one decision sheet per group. Read the task aloud and check the rules are clear. Explain this is practice, with feedback rather than a score.

5 min — **Read and think**

Allow five minutes of quiet reading. Ask each person to note a possible plan and one trade-off. Keep discussion for the next stage.

20 min — **Group decision**

Ask the group to agree three projects and complete its decision sheet. Observe how people listen, use facts and include others. Give a five-minute warning so they can prepare their recommendation.

5 min — **Recommendation**

Allow two minutes for the group to present. Use two minutes for observer questions about its choices. Use the final minute to capture feedback.

10 min — **Debrief and next step**

Ask what helped the group decide, and what made it harder. Invite observers to give one specific example and its effect. Ask each person to choose one behaviour to practise next time.

Opening words

Your task is to decide which three of these six projects the community centre should fund. You have £6,000 and 40 staff hours. Agree one plan and present your reasons in two minutes.

Online: share the participant pack and use breakout groups. Several groups: present in parallel, or add time. Clarify the printed rules equally; record missing facts as questions.

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Observation sheet

One copy per person being observed. No scores or ranking.

Participant label: _____ Group: _____ Observer: _____

Record a time, what the person said or did, and its effect. Missing evidence does not prove a missing skill.

Include and listen

Invites ideas, lets people finish and checks what others mean.

☐ Observed ☐ Not yet observed ☐ No opportunity

Use the facts

Checks the figures and rules, and separates evidence from assumptions.

☐ Observed ☐ Not yet observed ☐ No opportunity

Compare options

Explains a trade-off and challenges an idea with reasons.

☐ Observed ☐ Not yet observed ☐ No opportunity

Organise the work

Agrees a process, watches time and helps the group finish.

☐ Observed ☐ Not yet observed ☐ No opportunity

Explain and adapt

Makes the recommendation clear and responds constructively to questions.

☐ Observed ☐ Not yet observed ☐ No opportunity

One useful contribution and one practical next step

Consider spoken, written and organising contributions. Do not judge loudness, accent, eye contact or personality. Offer private feedback where appropriate.

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Example plans

Use after the group presents. Different trade-offs can be reasonable.

B + C + F | Link advice, applications and employers

£5,400 · 36 staff hours

Why: C offers evening advice, B helps with applications, and F brings employer contact.

Trade-off: Follow-through still needs daytime travel. The plan leaves £600 and four hours unused.

Response: Use the existing advice events to explain how to book the application lab.

Check: Can the application sessions run before the employer event?

Measure: The project lead records completed application drafts and voluntary follow-up reports at six weeks; note non-response.

C + D + E | Reduce barriers and offer repeat support

£5,600 · 34 staff hours

Why: C offers evening access, E provides devices and D offers repeated guidance.

Trade-off: The group gives up the application lab and employer event. Mentor meetings still require travel.

Response: Use existing mentor check-ins to review a next step; do not assume mentors can deliver specialist application editing.

Check: Can residents attend the proposed mentor meeting times?

Measure: The mentor records agreed steps completed, with consent, alongside attendance and reasons people stopped attending.

A + B + F | Reach neighbourhoods, then offer a next step

£6,000 · 40 staff hours

Why: A brings advice closer to residents; B and F provide application help and employer contact.

Trade-off: It uses all the budget and staff time, leaving no contingency. Follow-through still requires daytime travel.

Response: During existing advice visits, explain how to book the lab and employer event.

Check: Do the delivery dates allow people to prepare before meeting employers?

Measure: The project lead compares attendance with completed drafts and voluntary follow-up reports, without claiming employment impact.

A feasible plan meets the rules. A good recommendation explains who benefits, who may miss out and why the trade-off is worth making. Do not treat reach as guaranteed job outcomes.

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Discussion and reference

Use the final ten minutes to turn feedback into a next step.

1. Reflect first (2 minutes). Each person names one helpful contribution and one thing they would change.

2. Share observations (4 minutes). Observers describe an action and its effect, then offer one practical suggestion.

3. Compare decisions (3 minutes). Check the rules and discuss a rejected option. Ask what the chosen plan gives up.

4. Choose a next step (1 minute). Each person completes: “Next time I will…”

All nine workable combinations

Projects	Total cost	Staff hours
A + B + F	£6,000	40
A + D + F	£5,600	38
B + C + D	£4,800	38
B + C + E	£6,000	36
B + C + F	£5,400	36
B + D + E	£5,800	36
C + D + E	£5,600	34
C + D + F	£5,000	34
D + E + F	£6,000	32

Near misses

A + B + D: 42 hours. A + D + E: £6,200. A + C + D: equipment conflict. B + D + F: no Access project.

Method and sources

All facts and figures are fictional. All 20 three-project combinations were checked; nine meet the rules. This is practice, not a validated selection assessment. The sources informed the general approach; neither university endorses the kit.

Newcastle University Careers Service: Assessment Centres

University of Oxford: Assessment centres

Sources checked 10 November 2026. Print and share unchanged for free educational and careers workshops, with attribution to Practice Aptitude Tests.