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## Facilitating a foresight workshop in your voluntary organisation

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This guideline is to help volunteers, NGO staff members or educators facilitate a future workshop for their organisation using the FutVol foresight tool. The tool combines to expectations of different stakeholders, and by using this step-by-step guide, the facilitator will be able to motivate the participants and to lead the discussion.

The guideline offers first a step-by-step guide to organising a workshop and then tips for facilitating a group. You may want to do everything differently, and you should feel free to do so: these are only suggestions. Enjoy discovering the future through foresight!

### **BEFORE THE WORKSHOP**

#### **AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WORKSHOP**

- Start the workshop with a brainstorming activity: Imagine our organisation in 2years'/5years'/10years' time. What will it look like? What will we have achieved? Work in pairs and share some of your insights (max. 15 minutes)
- Next step: identify the stakeholders: who will be affected by our activity? Who are our stakeholders? Take some time (max. 10 minutes) to name your stakeholders. Categorise the

stakeholders within the framework (me, other volunteers/our organisation, clients, our community, society). Then go through the categories to analyse the current situation. Discuss the following questions:

1. How well do we know them?
2. How well do they know us? Do we keep them informed about our work?
3. What are their expectations?

## ORGANISE THE PROCESS

- There are three ways to organize the process:
  1. Individually at home: Give each participant a task to consider at home. You can collect their ideas afterwards either by email, or they can share their ideas by writing them on flipcharts when they visit your office. You might also organize a face-to-face workshop, which is described below.
  2. A group process:
    - first ask the volunteers to think about what they think might happen to them and the voluntary organisation (appearing in the model as 'us') in e.g. 10 years' time. Write down some ideas on the flipchart.
    - Then divide the group into four small groups: one group will find out what other volunteers or our organisation thinks might happen to us in the future, the second will consider what our clients think, the third what our local community thinks, and the fourth what society (e.g. media, politicians) think. Give the groups up to two hours and say that they can use any means available such as the Internet. Remind them that they need to relate the information they gather to our organisation.
    - You can as a facilitator participate in a group or visit all the groups to help them with the task at hand.
    - This activity should take max. 20 minutes
  3. By combining the two: collecting information beforehand and analysing it together in a workshop.

## ANALYSING THE RESULTS

- After the groups have discussed their questions, bring them back into the circle. Each group presents their results.
- First ask the group where they thought the views of the stakeholders were similar or where they differed.
- This part should take max. 10 minutes.

Then start to consider how we satisfy the expectation of our stakeholders.

### first step:

The stakeholders named under each type should be ranked in order of importance to the voluntary organisation (see the figure below). Ask with each stakeholder whether their interest in our issue is strong or weak and whether their influence on the issue is strong or weak. Try to build a consensus among the participants about the importance of each stakeholder. This will help you with the last part.

*For example, a local environmental NGO decides that local politicians are a very important stakeholder in a campaign to encourage recycling, which was considered an important achievement in 5 years' time. The problem is that they have little interest as it costs money. The organisation thinks it should be wise to listen to them and think of ways in which they could help to make this true.*

STAKEHOLDERS	WEAK INFLUENCE	STRONG INFLUENCE
STRONG INTEREST	Helpful if they become supporters of the organisation	Need to be accommodated
WEAK INTEREST	Little or no effect on the organisation	Dangerous or very helpful for the organisation if they become interested

Third step:

HOW IMPORTANT ARE OUR STAKEHOLDERS?

Following the ranking, we need to answer to the question:

What are the expectations of each specific stakeholder with regards to the relationship with the volunteer organisation?

This view may influence the initial ranking in step 2 and lead to modifications.

Fourth step:

HOW GOOD ARE WE AT MEETING OUR STAKEHOLDERS' EXPECTATIONS?

For the selected stakeholders we need to identify how to meet their expectations:

What do we do to meet stakeholders' expectations? Do we know how to satisfy ones in our work? What is good? What could be better? What we will do?

Finally make the participants go back to their groups to think about key issues with each stakeholder that could make the organisation's work a success. (Max. 15 minutes)

Then you start making an action plan.

### 1. Planning for action

Once you have analysed and discussed your information, you will have an idea of what lies ahead. In order to create a plan, you should then ask yourselves the following questions:

- What do we want to achieve? How do the things we see will happen help us or prevent us from achieving this?
- What skills do we need? Do we already have them or do we need something else?
- Who do we need to do this? have we got the right people and enough people?
- Who do we need to network with to achieve our goals, and what can we give to them?
- What resources do we need?

This discussion will lead you to the following result:

- ➔ **what will our organisation do?**
- ➔ **How are we going to do it?**

This part can take up to 90 minutes in whole.

## AFTER THE WORKSHOP

After you have finished your workshop, the board of your organisation or its general meeting may want to use the results for strategic planning. When the outcomes are used, it is a good idea to inform people who were involved in the workshop and to thank them for their input. Being heard is vital in encouraging volunteers to commit to your organisation!

## TIPS FOR FACILITATION

Facilitating a group sets off from the idea that the group itself has the keys to solving each problem. Effective group work requires a facilitator whose job is to ensure a fair process. The facilitator creates a safe environment for discussions and creativity by activities for energising the group and keeping up the work. The facilitator also manages times. The facilitator is responsible for reaching a result, but in most cases neutral to the content. If there are conflicts within the group, the facilitator's task is to help the group resolve them.

A good facilitator believes that the group has great ideas and can make decisions based on them. S/he should be able to respect the diversity of participants, ask questions and help the group draw conclusions. This is something that the facilitator should also encourage in the group. On the other hand, the facilitator needs to remain in the background and not steer the work to fit their own goals.

Some practical tips for working with the group:

- First of all, you need to think about the participants: Who is the workshop for? You might want to organise it at an AGM, or as a separate event. Make sure that the right people are invited. you should talk about this with the board, volunteers etc. A personal invitation usually works out best.
- Think about the workshop's goals beforehand, and plan activities accordingly. For example, if you have a workshop where you need to decide on a goal for the following year, you need to remember to allocate time for decision making. Also remember all the practical arrangements.
- Make sure the room is accessible to all your participants. Arrange the chairs in a circle or other ways to encourage interaction. Also make sure that when your group splits up into smaller groups, they have space to work in.
- At the beginning you should talk a bit about the goals and give clear instructions. Your output is needed to get the group working.
- There are many techniques to get people talking. You can use different brainstorming methods, small group work and participative techniques like the fish bowl. There are many instructions on the Internet for these.
- When asking questions, use open-ended ones and other that encourage people to talk.
- Encourage respect for others. This requires that participants listen and let other speak without interruption. Different ideas should be welcome. You can go through some ground rules at the beginning with the group. If someone is disruptive, you should deal with this by reminding the group of the common rules. If members end up in a conflict, you should give all those involved a say about how they would like to resolve it. You can also call for a time out and address a disruptive participant in private outside the group.
- There are ways to encourage an equal and productive discussion. Quiet people might find it hard to express themselves in front of a large group. you might encourage them by using pair discussions or small group work. Also remind the group that it is important that as many people as possible give their views, and when summarising, remember to ask the point of view from those participants who haven't yet spoken. Small group work is also often a good method if someone is

dominating the discussion. If someone is dominating the discussion, you can also say that everyone has the right to bring up their view. You should still thank this participant for bringing up their view. It is important that people get heard.

- If many people want to talk, keep a list of speakers to encourage fair participation.
- At the end, you could ask for feedback: What worked well and what could be improved? This is good for your learning!
- Facilitation skills build up with time. You could start with small groups and try different methods and build your confidence little by little.

#### References:

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