Participatory Techniques for Community Development Work

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By

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Acknowledgements

Dysg

Dysg is the national operation in Wales of the Learning Skills Development Agency (LSDA).

We operate as a strategic national resource, supporting the development of policy and assisting in its implementation, across all post-16 education, learning, and training in Wales and are pleased to be in partnership with the National Museums and Galleries of Wales to produce this resource, supporting participative working in communities.

National Museums and Galleries of Wales

NMGW's visitor research has shown that young people aged between 16 and 24 rarely visit our museums. In an attempt to address this NMGW has secured additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Museums and Galleries Access Fund, J P Morgan Fleming Educational Trust and Lloyds TSB Foundation to run a pilot project with young people in communities across Wales. The project will give young people access to heritage, identify reasons why they seem reluctant to visit and develop a model for future use in attracting them to our museums.

Alain Thomas Consultancy

Jessica Mills is an associate of Alain Thomas Consultancy which specialises in participatory approaches to project and programme planning and evaluation. Alain Thomas Consultancy is based in Swansea and undertakes work in Wales, the rest of Europe and in the developing world.

Dynamix

Some of the techniques in this booklet are adapted from techniques used by Dynamix, a organisation specialising in participatory work with children and young people based in Swansea. These are credited to Dynamix in the text. Dynamix, in conjunction with Save the Children have produced a book containing an even wider range of participatory techniques. This may be of interest to people who wish to extend their knowledge of participatory methods.

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1.0. Introduction:

1.1. Why is Participation Important?

This booklet includes a number of different participatory techniques for use in community development work. Before exploring the techniques it is useful to firstly consider what participation means and why it is important. We will do this by briefly contemplating the advantages and disadvantages of participation.

Participation means including a wide range of people affected by a project in all stages of the project cycle, from identification, planning and design, through implementation to evaluation. This cross section of people will include local people and professionals who work as a multidisciplinary team, and all of whom are involved in decision-making regarding the project. The ultimate aim of many participatory projects is to empower local people so that they can eventually take over the running of the project, thereby ensuring project sustainability even after the supporting organisation pulls out. A number of the advantages of using participatory techniques are mentioned below.

Firstly, participatory techniques are inclusive, involving local people and professionals in the project cycle. Good participatory projects will aim to try and involve a wide range of local people who will be affected by the project. An advantage of involving a wide range of local people in a project is that they will bring with them a vast amount of local knowledge, as they know their local environment better and in more detail than an outside "expert". It is advantageous to involve local people in the identification stage of a project as they will have knowledge of important local issues and problems.

Another advantage of using participatory techniques is that they are empowering. Local people's voices are often not heard or are ignored. If local people feel their views, opinions and ideas are valued, useful and of importance to the project they will gain in confidence and feel empowered to contribute and participate more not only in the project, but in their every day lives as well. This process will be expanded if local people are involved in decision-making and the running of the project. Also, if local people are involved in identifying, planning and implementing the project they will feel a sense of ownership over the project and it is more likely that they will remain more motivated and interested in the project. Feelings of ownership and empowerment are connected to sustainability. If local people are involved right from the beginning of a project, including choosing what it is about, they are more likely to be interested and stay interested. They may also feel able to take on the managing and running of the project thereby ensuring sustainability in the long run.

There are also disadvantages to participation. The process may take longer and could therefore be more costly because there are many people to involve in the identifying, planning and implementing of the project. It may also be difficult to persuade people to become involved, especially if they are very busy. Also, many people have experienced projects in the past when their views and ideas have not been listened to, it may be difficult to persuade them that this time they will be listened to.

PRA techniques are explored in this booklet and it is therefore necessary to define PRA. PRA stands for participatory rural appraisal or participatory rapid appraisal. PRA has been developed through development work in the developing world. One of its main proponents is Robert Chambers, who defines it as follows:

> "PRA is a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, monitor and evaluate." (Chambers, R. *Whose Reality Counts?* IT Publications 1997).

1.2. Some examples of Participatory Community Development Work in Wales

Participatory techniques have been used in community development work in Wales, and this section will briefly describe some projects which have used participatory techniques. Charter Housing Association in Newport, have used participatory techniques in the planning and review of their Community Investment Strategy (facilitated by Alain Thomas Consultancy). During a quick participative review of their strategy a SWOT analysis was used; and during a lengthier participative strategic planning process (two and a half days) brain storming, bean voting, matrices and diamond ranking were used. They also used a prioritising grid to prioritise potential project activities according to achievability and importance.

Awel Amman Tawe is another organisation that has used participatory techniques. In conjunction with the Centre for Development Studies at the University of Wales Swansea, they used participatory techniques in awareness raising and consultation work in preparation for a referendum on a community windfarm. They used timelines, future timelines, bean voting, matrices, and many other techniques. Lastly, the Rhiwgarn People in Communities Partnership Board have used participatory techniques in a team building exercise facilitated by Alain Thomas Consultancy. They used a value continuum to discover how much people knew about the organisation, and they used time lines and 'informing the alien' to raise awareness about the organisation; and a daily round to discover all the different skills participants had. They also did an activity to list the qualities of a good partnership and then voted on a value continuum according to how close they felt their partnership was to achieving these qualities. All these techniques can be found in this booklet. It is important to remember that participatory techniques are flexible and you can change them to suit the situation that you are working in.

1.4. Advice on Recording Information

For the majority of techniques in this booklet, it is a good idea to take notes or record in some way what people say while they are performing the activities. There are a number of ways of doing this. The most important thing to remember is that you should always seek the consent of participants before recording what is said. You can take notes, or record on a tape cassette or video. Taping or making a video of the activity may seem like the easier solution if you have access to the equipment, however, it is important to keep in mind that some people may feel nervous being recorded and may contribute less. Also, someone will have to transcribe everything that is recorded and this is a very time-consuming activity.

If you decide to take notes it is a good idea to make sure people can see what you are writing, so that do not worry that you are twisting what they are saying. If there is a group of people, you could use a flip chart so that everyone can see what is being written. A problem with taking notes is that if you don't write down everything said some people might think their contributions are not valued. It is therefore important to make it clear at the beginning that you will be making brief notes of the main points raised. If you are doing an activity which involves you asking questions it is often a good idea to have one facilitator asking the questions and another making notes. This means that the questioner can give the participant their full attention and maintain eye contact (which is very information for reassuring the participant that what they are saying is valued and important).

2.0. Community Mapping Techniques

2.1. Transects

Transects are a method of mapping an area. They involve groups of people or individuals walking around an area and drawing the places they pass on the way. There are a number of different techniques for transects. Firstly, people can go with a blank sheet of paper and draw on the roads, buildings and other places of interest. If a number of people draw transects they can be compared to ensure reliability. It is also interesting to analyse the size of different places drawn, as some people may draw places that are important to them out of proportion to the rest of the map. Another method is to photocopy a map of the area and ask people to walk along routes marking places that are important to them or of interest to them. Colour coding can be used.

To make the activity more interesting disposable cameras can be used. Give disposable cameras to local people and ask them to walk around the area and take photos of places that are important or of interest to them. These can then be displayed on a map. You can also ask local people to make a video transect. For this local people take a video camera with them when they walk around the area and film places that are important or of interest to them. They can treat it like making a TV programme and someone can stand in front of the place being filmed and explain why it is important or interesting to them.

Transects drawn or made by local people will allow you to discover which places in the area are important to them and the areas where you are most likely to be able to make contact with local people. They will also allow you to find out about important local issues and can be used as the starting point to a discussion about local community development issues.

2.2. Mapping

Individual Maps

This activity involves people drawing maps of their local area and marking on places that are important or of interest to them. It is often easier to first of all engage the person you want to draw the map in conversation and then ask them to draw a map once they have relaxed a little and are mentioning local places. Many people will say they cannot draw a map if you ask them straight out. Instead you could ask them where they work, shop, live etc and then ask them to draw that in relation to where you are now. Then continue to talk to them about other issues and continue getting them to mark places they mention onto their map. The word 'map' may not be appropriate as most people associate it with detailed road maps or atlases, therefore it may be better to ask people to draw a diagram of the local area or something similar.

The map itself will provide information about the area and the location of different places of local importance. It is very important also to listen to what people are saying and perhaps make notes, as this information may be very important with regards to issues to do with the local area and certain places. This activity can be used almost anyway, as long as you take a clipboard with you! However, if asking people in the street to draw maps be aware of the fact they may be in a rush. You could take a photocopied map with you if you are asking people who don't have a lot of time and ask them to mark on places that are important or of interest to them. However, it is often more interesting to get people to draw it because the scale and proportion of what they draw can give clues as to important places and issues.

As with transects, this method will highlight places that are important to local people and places you can make contact with them, as well as important local issues.

Group Maps

In order to make a group map stick a number of pieces of flip chart paper together and lay out on a large table, in a room/building which a wide variety of different people visit. In order to start off the activity it is often a good idea to have a local contact who has good knowledge of the local area. Ask them to start drawing the rough outlines of a big map of the local area (i.e. main roads, parks and other well-known places in the local area). Then as people visit the room/building encourage them to come and look at the big map and get them to add to it. As with the individual maps, encourage people to add things by talking to them about their daily lives, and remember that it is very important not only to get them to draw on the map, but also to listen to what they are saying and record this. The advantage of this method is that you get automatic checks on the validity of the information provided as if someone draws something which others feel is incorrect they will probably speak out. This is a very visual method and the larger the better, as it is likely to invoke interest and encourage people to come over and have a look.

This method again allows you to identify places you can make contact with local people, and the places which are important to local people, along with important local issues. It is a good idea to encourage a wide range of local people of all ages and backgrounds to draw on the map because you will then be able to discover the opinions of different groups of people.

NB: it is important that there is space on all sides of the table for people to stand so that all areas of the map are easily accessible for people to draw and add things. Also, use thick marker or felt tip pens so that what is drawn is easy to see.

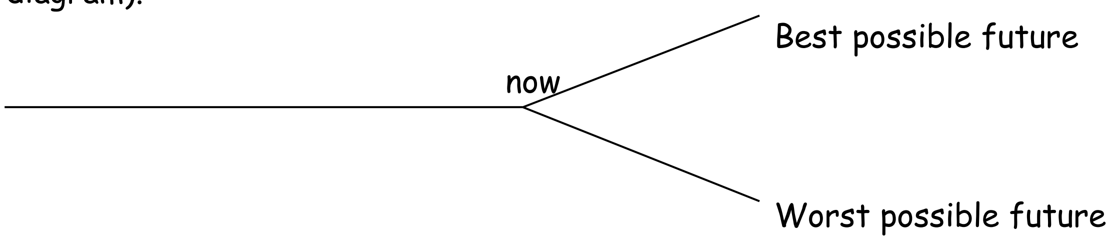
3.0. PRA Techniques

3.1. Timelines

Timelines allow you to identify important events that have happened in the past in a community. Stick a number of pieces of flip chart paper together and draw a long horizontal line along the paper. At the far right end of the line, put the current date or "Now". Then ask people to mark on significant events that have happened in the past in their local community (including the date) in correct place on the timeline. It may help if you mark on some significant world or national events to give people a guide as to the dates on the line (e.g. the World Wars etc.). Timelines are best done in groups so that people talk to each other about things that have happened and when they happened. Some people will remember things that others don't. You can group people according to age or have a mix of ages. You can also compare the timelines of different age groups and this may reveal information about the importance of different events to different age groups.

It is extremely important to listen to and take notes about what people are saying about events as they mark them on the timeline as this may reveal a lot about what happened, how and why it happened, and how it affected people at the time and afterwards.

You can change the activity slightly by putting "Now" in the centre of the line and then get people to mark on events that have happened in the past and things they would like to happen in the future. You can also split the future line into best possible future and worst possible future (see diagram).



This could be used in project planning to help identify what local people would like to see happen as a result of the project.

3.2. Lifelines/Personal histories

These are similar to timelines but are done individually. Draw a horizontal line and mark "now" at the far right hand end. Then ask the person to mark important events in their life on the line. These events can include personal events such as first day at school, but also events in the local community, at national and world level, if the person feels these were important in their lives.

As with the other techniques it is extremely important to listen to and keep a record of what the person says while they are drawing their lifeline, as this will give you a much fuller record of the events they mark down.

This technique gives a more personal touch than a timeline and offers opportunities to discover in more detail how events affected individual people at the time. It is useful as some people may not feel confident to speak out about how certain events affected them in the more public, group situation of the timeline technique.

If a person is reluctant to draw a lifeline, for whatever reason, a slightly different technique can be used called personal histories. This involves getting the person, or group of people, to talk about their lives and important events during their lifetime, while taking notes or keeping a record of what is said. The facilitator could mark events onto a group lifeline or timeline on a flip chart, during the personal history discussion.

3.3. Hot Seating

In this technique everyone sits in a circle, and one chair is left empty, this is the 'hot seat'. Something is then put on the 'hot seat' and people ask questions about it. It can be or represent a person (such as 'a teacher), or it can be an object, or something that represents an organisation (e.g. an organisation's flyer). People ask questions and anyone who has knowledge can answer the question. For example, if you have put a school textbook on the 'hot seat' to represent a teacher, any teacher in the room can answer the questions. This means that, as it is not a specific person who is on the 'hot seat' no one person is in the spotlight.

This means that people are not under pressure to answer questions they don't want to or don't have the answers to. It means that the atmosphere is more relaxed and more conducive to open discussion. You could use this method as an icebreaker activity and put your own organisation on the 'hot seat' so that participants can ask questions and get to know what you are about and what your aims are. (A Dynamix technique)

3.4. Discussions

There are many different techniques you can use for facilitating discussions. It may be useful to have discussions with community members to find out their ideas about the project, or to discuss in more detail important events or places of historical interest, that have been identified through other techniques such as timelines. You may also wish to do the other PRA activities in smaller groups and then come together to discuss what you have found out.

Talking Stick

With this method everyone sits in a circle and you have a 'talking stick' this can be a stick or any object large enough that it is easily held in the hand, but that everyone can see. Only the person who is holding the 'talking stick' can speak. When they have finished talking they pass it on to someone else who wants to speak. You should never pass the 'talking stick' around the circle as this can be very scary for people who are shy or nervous. This is a good way to make sure that everyone else stays quiet and listens while someone talks.

Bean Discussion

Everyone sits in a circle and is given a certain number of beans (or another similar small object). Every time someone speaks they have to give up one of their beans to the facilitator who collects them in a container. Even if someone whispers something to the person next to them, or makes a noise of agreement or disagreement and so on they have to give up a bean. If someone is speaking for a long time it may be decided that they have to give up more than one bean, however it is important to ensure fairness when deciding this. It is a good idea to write up the main points of the discussion on a flip chart as it progresses.

This technique means that everyone gets the same chance to speak and confident people don't dominate the discussion. Be careful that less confident people do not feel pressurised into speaking, as if they do they may be so worried that they are not able to concentrate and listen properly to what others are saying. It is perfectly alright for shyer people to give their beans to someone they trust to make their point for them. (A Dynamix technique)

Discussion Carousel

Everyone sits in two concentric circles, so that the inner circle faces the outer circle. You need to have the same number of people in each circle. You then set a topic for discussion (e.g. what we found out from our timelines, or important local community issues). After a minute of consideration, everyone in the inner circle gets exactly one minute to tell the facing person in the outer circle their opinions and ideas on the topic. The outer circle person listens. Then they reverse roles. After the outer person has spoken, everyone in the outer circle moves round one place. The inner circle then has to explain their previous partner's opinions and ideas in 30 seconds and vice versa. They can then express their own opinions. You can extend this activity and get the two groups (inner and outer circles) to write up everything they remember from what their partners said on a flip chart. This means you have a record of what was said. In this method everyone gets to express their opinions but they don't have to speak out in a group situation which is intimidating for some. Also because they have to remember what their partner has said, people are encouraged to listen well. (A Dynamix technique)

3.5. Informing the Alien

This activity is used when some members of a group feel they are not as well informed as others about a particular issue. For example, this activity was used in a team building workshop for Rhiwgarn People in Communities Partnership Board as some board members felt they were not as well informed as others about the organisation. The group is spilt into two groups (you can use a value continuum to do this), one comprising people who feel they know about the issue to be discussed, and the other comprising people who feel they need/want to know more. The group who feel they know about the issue prepare a short presentation. In the case of the Rhiwgarn workshop a timeline of the organisation's history was prepared along with a diagram of the organisational structure. The group who feel they want to know more discuss what they want to know and prepare questions, while the other group prepares its presentation. The presentation is then given and questions asked.

This can be a useful activity when setting up a new team, board, or partnership. However, you must be careful when asking people to get into the groups, because it is important that the people who want to know more do not feel intimidated or reluctant to say so.

3.6. Daily Round

Either individually, or in pairs or small groups get people to draw a table, with three columns headed time, weekday and weekend. Down the left-hand column get them to write times of the day. Then ask them to write down what they do at these times of the day on a typical weekday and weekend in the corresponding columns (see diagram).

Example

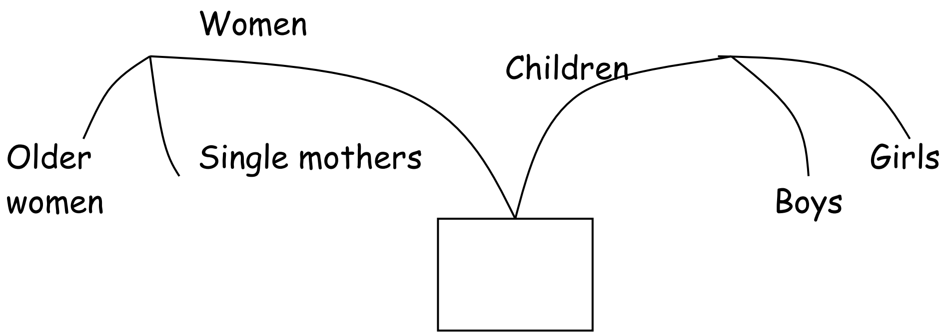
Time	**Weekday**	**Weekend**
7:30am	Get up	Still asleep
8:30am	Go to work	Get up
12:30pm	Have lunch	Have lunch
5pm	Come home from work	Go shopping
6:30pm	Have dinner	Have dinner
7pm	Watch television	Go out
11pm	Go to bed	Come home & go to bed

The activity will work better if the times and activities are more detailed than those shown in the above table. Also, you may find it necessary to do separate tables for weekday and weekend as the times may not correspond. This is a useful activity because it can reveal a lot of information about the people doing it. It can be used to compare how much work people do, and to reveal what is sometimes referred to as 'invisible work', for example, housework and looking after children. It can also show if there is a need for something in the community. For example if young people did this exercise and said they spent their weekends hanging around with nothing to do, this may suggest that activities for young people are needed in the community. This activity can be used as a starting point for discussions about what local people think the community needs. Lastly, the daily round can reveal a lot about the amount of skills people have and is useful as an icebreaker in a group situation. You can get people to do a daily round and then report back on how many different 'jobs' or 'skills' they have. For example, someone maybe a teacher, but also a parent, a dog walker, a children's entertainer, a taxi driver (for their children), a community board member, and so on. It is surprising how many 'jobs' people have and can be a real confidence booster.

Another technique similar to the daily round is a seasonal calendar. This technique was developed through PRA work in developing countries to help discover the amount of work different community members did during different seasons. It can also be used in community development work in this country. Following the same principals as the daily round ask people to make a table and write down things they do at different times throughout the year. This again may reveal things that are needed in the community. Taking the example of young people again, they may hang out in the park during the summer, but in the winter months when the weather is bad there may be no where for them to hang out. A seasonal calendar would reveal this.

3.7 Spider Plant Diagram

This technique allows the identification of all the potential stakeholders in a specific project. Start by drawing a plant pot on a piece of flip chart paper. Ask people to shout out the different groups in the local community that may be affected by the project. Start with fairly broad categories. For each suggestion draw a line coming out of the plant pot (see diagram below). If someone suggests, for example, 'children' you draw a line for 'children', but then ask what are the different categories of children; for example boys and girls. You then draw two more lines coming from the original line and write 'girls' and 'boys' on these lines (see diagram). You can continue splitting the categories in this way. The resulting diagram looks very much like a spider plant, hence the name! It may be useful to have a spider plant with you to show the group so it is easier to understand the concept.



This is a good activity as it allows the identification of specific groups of stakeholders and helps to avoid broad categories which may be too broad to be useful. It is a good idea to do this in a group as it is then less likely that stakeholder groups will be missed out.

3.8 Problem Tree

This technique allows the identification of the root causes of local problems and their effects. It is best done in mixed groups so that as many different perspectives as possible are offered on a local problem. Get the group to think of a problem that the local community is facing and write this in the middle of a piece of flip chart paper, this forms the trunk of your 'tree'. Then get the group to think about the causes of the problem, and write these underneath the 'trunk'. Once you have identified several "principal causes" look at each in turn and ask "what caused these causes" and write these underneath each principal cause. You can carry on splitting the causes until you feel you have achieved a sufficient level of detail. These form the 'roots' of your 'tree'. Next get the group to think about the effects that the problem has on the local community, and write these above the 'trunk', continue to split these effects as for the causes to form the branches of the 'tree'. You can draw the shape of a tree around the problem, causes and effects if you wish, to make it more interesting.

This technique allows you to analyse a local problem in depth, and makes it easier to think of applicable and effective solutions to the problem, because the causes and effects have been analysed in detail. A big problem like "unemployment" will probably feel insurmountable, but when it is broken down in this way it becomes clear that there are things that can be done to tackle its different causes and effects. Solutions are also more likely to be effective because all the causes and effects have been taken into account. A possible disadvantage with this technique is that quieter people may not have the confidence to speck in a group situation. A solution would be to get people to discuss the issues in small groups and have a volunteer from each group to report back to the main group.

3.9 Venn Diagrams

This technique allows the identification of key institutions, organisations, groups and individuals in a community, their relationships, and levels of power. Again it is best done in a group so that many different perspectives are put forward.

Get a group of local people to identify the key institutions, organisations, groups and individuals in the community; you could use a spider plant diagram to do this. Next, get the local people to cut out circles of paper to represent the different institutions, organisations, groups and individuals. The size of the circle can represent the power that institution, organisation, group or individual has or is perceived to have. Next, get the people to lay out the circles on the floor, in a way which shows the relationships between the institutions, organisations, groups and individuals. When the circles are separate there is no contact between the institutions, organisations, groups or individuals. When they touch this represents that information passes between them. When they overlap a little there is some co-operation in decision-making and when they overlap a lot there is considerable co-operation in decision-making. You can also use different coloured circles to represent different sectors, for example, statutory and voluntary.

This technique is useful because it provides a very visual representation of the stakeholders within a community, their levels of power and the relationships between them. This is useful when planning and implementing a project as it ensures that you know who has the power in the local community, and which groups are isolated. Also participants do not have to speak out in front of a group if they don't want to, they can just cut out their circle and place in on the floor in relation to the other circles. It is very important to listen to the discussions that take place about what size the circles should be and how they should be positioned in relation to one another as this can reveal important issues.

4.0. Prioritising Techniques

Within PRA there are specific techniques to help in prioritising issues or options. They can help in prioritising which are the most important issues in the local community that need attention, or in prioritising potential project activities.

4.1. Bean Voting

On a piece of flip chart paper make a list of the issues/options you want to prioritise. Place this on a table or on the floor. Give everyone the same number of beans (or similar sized tokens or sticky dots) and ask them to use the beans to vote for the issues/options they feel are most important by placing the beans next to them. More than one bean can be used per issue/option if the person feels very strongly about that issue/option. This gives you an immediate and visual prioritisation of the issues/options. The method of prioritising is anonymous to an extent, but it is possible for people to watch where others place their beans. Some people may feel pressurised into placing their beans on issues/options that are popular with others. You can use different types of beans (or different coloured dots) for different groups of people (e.g. age groups, sexes etc.) to see if they vote differently.

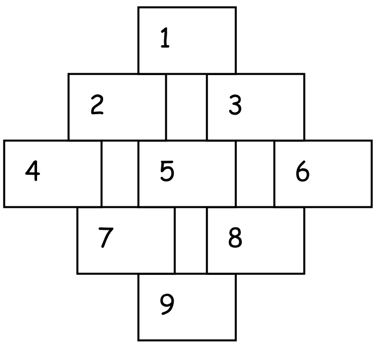
This technique can be used, for example, to involve local people in prioritising potential project activities. It allows people to vote according to what they feel would is most important. However, it is a fairly simple way of prioritising and doesn't really go into detail about why people vote for certain issues/options.

4.2. Value Continuum

Using masking tape, mark a long straight line across the floor. Explain that this line is a continuum and the two ends represent opposite extremes of opinion. It is useful if the facilitator walks slowly along the line explaining the points of view for the two ends and the middle. For example if the topic of the continuum is feelings about television, one end would be “I love watching television, I think its great, I watch it all day every day”; the middle would be “Television is okay, I watch it a lot, but I could survive without it”; and the other end would be “I hate watching the television, I think its rubbish and a waste of time, I never, ever watch it”. Then ask people to stand on the line according to their opinion on the topic. You can then ask people to explain why they have stood in a certain place. This method is good for finding out how interested people are in a potential project. It is quick and easy. However, it is not anonymous and people may feel pressurised to stand with others, it can be very difficult to stand by yourself in a different place to everyone else. You could give people beans (or other tokens) and ask them to place them on the line, giving the activity a degree of anonymity.

4.3. Diamond Ranking

This is another technique for prioritising ideas or issues. To start you need nine ideas or issues (if you have more than nine you could use bean voting to get nine). Write each one on a post it note. Then draw nine rectangles in a diamond shape (see below) on a sheet of flip chart paper.



Ask people (in small groups) to arrange the post it notes according to importance in their view. They should stick their top priority in the top rectangle and so on. This technique requires the group to come to consensus regarding the order of priority and therefore could go on for a long time. For this reason it is often useful to set a time limit for the activity. The advantage of using post it notes is that they can be moved around as the groups discuss the ideas or issues.

It is very important to listen to the discussions taking place in the groups concerning the reasoning for the order they choose, or get the groups to report back their reasoning. If you decide to ask each group to report back it is useful to ask each group for a volunteer to be a reporter at the start of the activity and suggest they may want to take a few notes as the activity progresses. It is important to ask for volunteers as reporting back may be intimidating for some people.

This technique is useful because it encourages participants to justify the order of priority they choose and can reveal a lot about different groups' interests. As with so many participatory techniques the discussion is as important as the final output (the diamond) as this allows you to understand why the groups have chosen specific orders of priority. A potential problem with this technique is that quieter people may not talk much in a group situation, and the group could be dominated by more confident people.

4.4. Matrices

This technique allows participants to prioritise potential projects against certain criteria they have set. Draw a matrix on a piece of flip chart paper (see example below). Down the left-hand column write your potential projects, and along the top row write issues which the local community have identified as being important to improve.

Example

	Give young people something to do to reduce boredom	Reduce crime	Reduce unemployment
Start a neighbourhood watch scheme			
Start a youth club	*		
Provide training course for the unemployed			

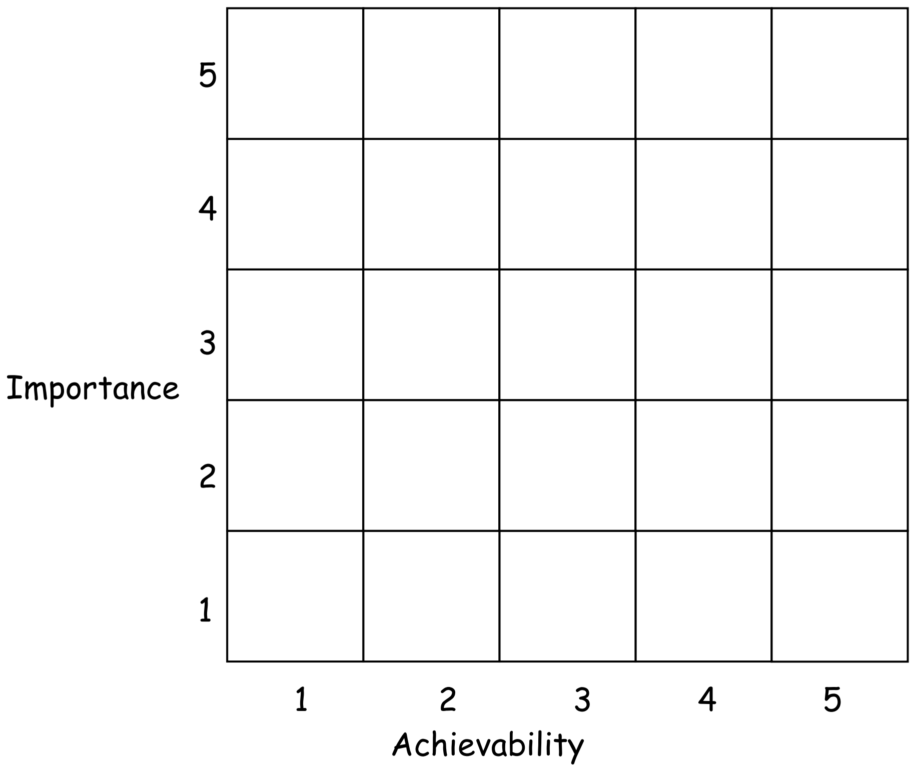
Ask people to vote with beans (or other tokens) about how likely each project is to achieve the desired outcomes (along the top of the matrix). For example people might think that starting a youth club is the best way of giving young people something to do, and they would therefore place a bean in the corresponding square (marked *). You can then total the number of votes for each potential project and see which is the most popular.

Again it is important to listen to and make a record of the reasons people give for voting for certain projects. In order to make this activity truly participative, it is essential that local people are involved in the drawing up of lists of potential projects and local issues.

As with the some of the other voting techniques, it is possible that people will feel pressurised to vote for projects that already have a lot of votes. The good thing about this technique is that people don't have to speak if they don't want to, they can use put their beans on the matrix.

4.5. Prioritising Grid

A prioritising gird can be used to prioritise potential projects according to achievability and importance. Draw a grid, and write achievability along the bottom, numbering the squares 1 to 5 and importance up the left hand column again numbering the squares (see diagram).



Write all the potential projects or project activities on post it notes (these potential projects or activities should have been generated by local people to make the process truly participative). In small groups, get people to give the potential projects or activities scores out of 5 for importance and achievability (5 being very important, one being not very important at all and so on). Then stick the post it notes on the corresponding squares on the grid. The ones that are stuck in the top right hand corner (or nearest to it) are the most important and most achievable projects.

This is a quick way of prioritising projects and is very visual. It allows you to see at a glance, not only which projects are the most important and achievable, but also which are very important but less achievable and so on. However, to make this activity work, it is important to make sure that the tendency to score every thing at 3 (the middle) is avoided! It may be useful to first of all agree within the group what each number stands for (for example, 5 means so important we cannot afford not to do this, and 1 means not important at all and so on) and then write these up on a flip chart where everyone can see them and refer back to them while scoring.

5.0. Workshop Skills

5.1. Making it Work

This is a good activity to start a workshop with. Get everyone to sit in a semi circle and put a flip chart at the front. Ask people to shout out things that they think the group should do in order to "make sure the workshop goes well". This is similar to setting ground rules, but using the word rules makes it sound strict and perhaps like school. It is fine for the facilitator to add things if s/he thinks they are appropriate and haven't been suggested by the group. Useful "rules" might include:

- Listen when someone else is talking
- Respect other people's opinions
- Don't pressure people to do things they don't want to do
- Don't be afraid to say what you think
- Don't be rude or offensive to others
- Have fun

Once the list is complete stick it up on the wall where everyone can see it. If necessary you can bring attention back to the list during the workshop if required, for example if people are not sticking to the "rules". You can ask if people want to change the list in any way or add anything to the list.

5.2. Ice Breakers

It is a good idea to do a few icebreakers at the beginning of a workshop especially if participants don't know each other. Not only does it help participants to get to know each other but it also relaxes people and perhaps wakes them up a bit, especially if its early in the morning! Although some of the activities may seem like games, as long as you don't call them this, people of all ages will be willing to join in.

Alphabetical Islands

Everyone sits in a circle, the facilitator then asks everyone to sit in alphabetical order according to their first name. Once they are in order you can get them to do a Mexican wave by calling out the letters of the alphabet and getting people to raise their arms when their letter is called. You can repeat this with month of birth (be careful with using date of birth as this can offend some people), amount of time living in the area and so on. This is a great way of mixing people up, as people often sit next to their friends at the start of a workshop. You can also find out information about the group using this icebreaker. (A Dynamix technique)

Wind Blows

This is another way of mixing people up. Everyone sits in a circle. Explain that they are all leaves and there is a strong wind blowing, but it only blows certain groups of "leaves". The facilitator then shouts "the wind blows everyone who (had toast for breakfast)" and all the people this applies to have to cross the circle to another seat. You can get the wind to blow all sorts of different groups, for example, everyone who has a pet, everyone who has lived in the area for more than ten years, and so on. It is best to start with something you can see will get people moving, for example, everyone wearing trousers. Again you can use this activity to find out things about the group. (A Dynamix technique)

Introductions

This is best done once you have completed one of the two above icebreakers to mix people up. Get people into pairs and get them to find out their partner's name, and some other information about them, for example the organisation they work for, one of their hopes for the day and so on. It is a good idea to have one less serious thing to find out to keep the activity fun, such as what they had for breakfast, what their favourite food is, and so on. Everyone then introduces their partner to the group. This allows everyone to be introduced and it allows you to find out some basic information about the group.

5.3. Planning Activities

Collecting Ideas

There are a number of different techniques for getting ideas from a group. The first technique is for people to shout out ideas and the facilitator to write these up on a flip chart. It is very important that every idea that is shouted out is written up so that people feel their suggestions are valued. The only exception is if the suggestion is offensive to some people. Then you need to explain why you don't feel it is appropriate. The disadvantage with this technique is that quiet people may not want to shout out their suggestions in front of a group.

Another technique is to get people into small groups and give them some post it notes and pens and ask them to write their ideas on the post it notes. A volunteer from each group, or the facilitator, then reads out the ideas. The facilitator can then group the ideas together. The advantage of this technique is that quieter people's ideas are also 'heard' without them having to speak out. There is also less chance of a loud and confident person dominating the activity.

SWOT

SWOT stands for strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. Draw four adjoining squares on a piece of flip chart paper and write strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the squares (see below).

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Set a topic which starts with "the chances of…". For example the chances of the project being successful, the chances of local people participating, and so on. Get people to write on post it notes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for a potential project. Strengths and weaknesses are internal to the project (for example motivated local people is a strength), whereas opportunities and threats are external to the project (for example unreliable funding source is a threat). This technique allows you to break down an issue and consider the likeliness that it will succeed. It allows you to see where potential problems may occur and which areas are very strong.

5.4. Evaluation

It is often a good idea to evaluate a workshop at the end in order to gain an idea of how the participants felt it went and how you might improve it next time.

Post It Evaluation

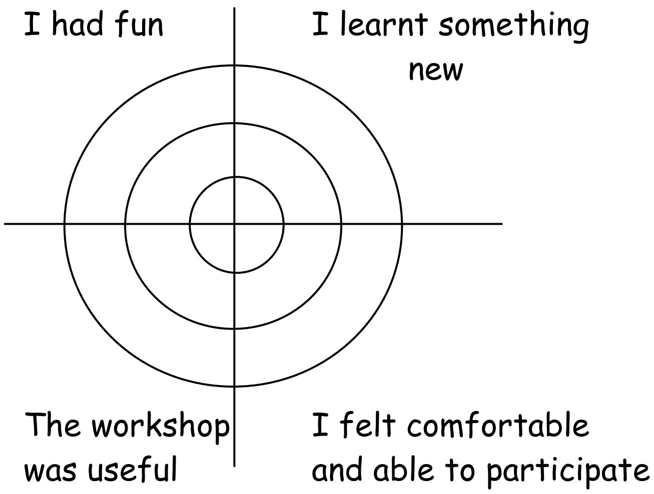
Give everyone some post it notes and ask them to write their opinions about what was good, what was bad and what could be improved about the workshop. Make it clear that they don't have to do the same number of post its for each category, if they thought nothing could be improved they don't need to write anything for that. The facilitator then goes round and collects all the post it notes and groups them together on a flip chart, under the headings, good, bad and to be improved. Then total up the number of times each issue is written. This technique is anonymous and means that people will feel more free to write what they feel.

Bean Evaluation

Ask people to shout out things that were good, bad and could be improved about the workshop. Write these on a flip chart under those headings. Then give everyone the same number of beans and ask them to vote by placing the beans next to the issues they feel most strongly about. The actual voting is anonymous in this technique, but the shouting out section could be dominated by confident or loud people. Also people may be less likely to shout out criticisms in front of the facilitator(s).

Evaluation Targets

Draw a target, made up of three or four concentric circles on a piece of flip chart paper, put a cross through the middle and write something you want to evaluate in each section (see below).



Then give participants a certain number of sticky dots and ask them to stick them in each section according how they would rate the workshop with regards to that issue. The centre of the target being excellent and the far outer ring of the target being very poor.   You can put any issues you want to evaluate on the target. It is a good idea that the facilitator turns away or leaves the room while participants are sticking their dots onto the target so that people feel more free to be open about what they feel. (This is adapted from a technique used by Dynamix)

6.0. Generating Indicators-Vision Meeting

A 'vision meeting' is a participative technique used for generating qualitative indicators and for identifying useful sources of quantitative information that can be used in project evaluation. The technique has been developed by Alain Thomas, Russell Gibbon and Alan Twelvetrees (*Evaluating Community Projects, new options with the percentage meter, Russell Gibbon, Alain Thomas and Alan Twelvetrees, Community Development Foundation 2000*).

The meeting involves participants in creating a "vision of success" for an activity, project or programme. Participants are asked to envisage a future in which the project is achieving 100% success. They are asked to think about success in different ways using different perspectives:

- **Perspective One – Counting Things:** if the project were achieving 100% success, what would you be able to count that would tell you that success was being achieved.
- **Perspective Two – Organisations, Structures and Relationships:** if the project were achieving 100% success, what organisations or structures would be in existence, what work would they be doing, what relationships would they have with each other, that would tell you that success was being achieved.
- **Perspective Three – Senses and Feelings:** if the project were achieving 100% success, what would you see, what would people be doing, what would you hear, what would people be saying, what would you feel, and what would other people be feeling, that would tell you that success was being achieved.

Either individually or in small groups participants are asked to generate statements (under the three perspectives) about their project assuming that it is achieving 100% success. There are some guidelines for generating statements and they are as follows.

- The statements should be positive statements and not questions
- The statements should be written in the present tense
- The cause of the positive effect should be attributed (unless this is obvious). For example, "The youth club is…" or "Because of the youth club…"
- The beneficiaries should be made clear
- Jargon should be avoided so that everybody can understand the statements easily

- Statements should be short with only one point of focus. If the statement contains the word *'and'* it is probably trying to do too much.
- Statements should be qualitative not quantitative: "Because of the windfarm community groups are receiving *a lot* more money", it should not include an amount.

With regards to quantitative indicators, statements from perspective one 'Counting Things' will give an idea of what quantitative data might be available. Statements from the other two perspectives will generate qualitative indicators.

It is likely that large numbers of indicators will be generated by the groups in the vision meeting. Alain Thomas recommends trying to produce about 100 possible indicators from the vision meeting and then reducing them to a maximum of 50. This allows you to select those which are most relevant or useful. A technique for reducing the number of statements is to ask participants to score each indicator according to how useful they think it is as an indicator. You can use a scale to do this. Draw a line next to each statement and mark one end as useless, the middle as useful and the other end as very useful (see below). Ask people to make a mark on the line according to how useful they think the statement is. You can do this on flip chart paper and use sticky dots.

Useless Useful Very Useful

Alternatively you can ask participants to vote for the statements they feel are most useful. Make a list of the statements on flip chart paper and give everyone the same number of beans or sticky dots (or other tokens) and ask them to vote for the statements they feel will be most useful as indicators.

If the list of indicators is produced at the beginning of a project it can also be used to carry out baseline research.