



Workshops

Workshops include a wide range of different group work methods. Workshop participants usually formulate, assess and resolve problems related to a predefined topic. Workshops enable discussion and exploration of issues at hand. They can be arranged as a one-off or repeated event to ensure effective participation. Alternatively, participants may be divided into smaller groups to increase the intensity of the group work. It is recommended that some background information is provided for attendees before the Workshop or that they have a presentation giving a clear overview of the issues. Several group-working methods can be used, for example brainstorming and **Nominal group technique**. At the end of the process, participants usually reflect on what they have achieved in the Workshop. Information Exchange Workshops are small groups which are usually targeted to representatives of different groups. SWOT Workshops explore strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to given issues. Initiatives Workshops further develop the ideas created in SWOT, consider details on factors and produce an outline work programme for a particular issue. Action Planning Workshops are arranged when there is a need to hold a session specifically for interested parties who will have a role in the implementation process.



A forest design planning Workshop (New Forest Forest District).



A community woodland Workshop (Ae Forest District).

Resources and requirements

Skills

- Facilitators need good communication skills and the ability to present the planning information clearly and understandably.
- Knowledge of other group-work methods is an advantage.

Level of engagement

INFORMING:

CONSULTING: ★★

INVOLVING: ★★★

PARTNERSHIP: ★★

Strengths

- Workshops are excellent for identifying criteria and analysing alternatives.
- They foster public ownership in solving problems.
- Workshops offer a direct form of participation and are likely to promote communication between participants in the future.
- They can raise the level of awareness of topics by attendees.
- Compared to public meetings or committees, Workshops are less formal.

Weaknesses

- Staff requirements are usually rather extensive.
- Several facilitators may be needed.
- Workshops have to be planned and structured carefully, although overplanning can lead to suspicions of manipulation by participants.

Equipment

- A large and suitable venue is needed to create interaction between participants and to display stands for charts.
- Pens, flip charts and coloured stickers may be needed.
- Standard writing and printing facilities are required.

Time

- It is essential to publicise the workshop early.
- Arranging a good venue and identifying experienced facilitators requires some time.

Useful sources of information

Books

- Creating involvement. Environment Trust Associates (1994). Local Government Management Board, London.
- Participatory approach to natural resource management: a guide book. T. Loikkanen (1999). Forest and Park Service, Finland.

Web

- The Guide to Effective Participation by David Wilcox: www.partnerships.org.uk
- The International Association for Public Participation: www.iap2.org

Training

- The Prince's Foundation: tel. 020 7613 8500 or www.princes-foundation.org

Case study

- Cross-plan integrated participatory planning as a tool for rural development. S. Bell and M. Komulainen (2001). University of Oulu, Finland.

This toolbox is designed to assist Forestry Commission staff when they are considering which tools they could use to involve the public in the forest and woodland planning process. For more information please visit the website at: www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox