

A guide to organising participatory events

The power of participation



• EDINBURGH •
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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1 Introduction

This pack is designed to help people who are organising a seminar, conference, public meeting or other event, to make it as participatory and accessible as possible.

Why be participatory?

'Sharing information should not be confused with participation. A mass meeting where information is passed on, is not the same as the participation of people. It is a more personal form of mass communication than radio or television, but not participation.' (Hope & Timmel 1984)

Basically, meetings and conferences are about communication. Whether that communication flows in one direction only or is a genuine dialogue depends a lot upon how a meeting is designed. Even if the purpose is mainly to put over information, it will be received better if people are relaxed and feel able to ask questions. The aim of participatory meetings is to make the best use of the knowledge, ideas and experience held by all participants, not just the invited speakers.

At meetings and events there are always people who feel confident enough to speak up, but what about the majority who don't? Most people have valid and relevant points to make and issues to raise, but if they aren't given the opportunity to be heard, their input will be lost – maybe along with their future involvement. Meeting organisers can be left with a false and unrepresentative impression of the event if only a few articulate people speak up. They may then wonder why so few come back, or commit themselves to whatever is being proposed.

Just as it is a missed opportunity if you don't make use of the available expertise at a meeting, there is also great potential lost when people can't get to a meeting. Maybe they have toddlers and there's no crèche, or they are wheelchair users and there's no lift. Then again, maybe they can get to the meeting, but can't hear what is being said because there's no hearing loop. Perhaps they can't take part because they speak another language and there are no interpreters. Tackling barriers to access is a direct way to get more people actively involved.

However, participatory events don't just happen by chance – it's up to the organisers to make them as accessible as possible. Events can be structured in specific ways to make people feel comfortable and relaxed enough to make their contribution. They take more preparation and planning than a conventional meeting, but the outcomes make the extra effort worthwhile.

Edinburgh's Active Citizenship Group is well placed to produce this guide to putting together participatory meetings. It regularly holds public seminars on topical issues related to citizenship, and has a commitment to developing participatory methods and models. Group members come from a wide range of organisations, including the Adult Learning Project and SEAD (Scottish Education and Action for Development), both of which have been developing models of participatory public meetings since the 1970s, as well as more recent players like the Scottish Civic Forum.

We hope that this pack will help you to make your own participatory event a success for all involved.

Edinburgh's Active Citizenship Group
July 2005

2 Structure

A basic structure can be used in many settings, from a two-hour meeting organised by a local group, to a weekend seminar for 300 or more people. Essentials to remember are:

- 1 Setting
- 2 Programme/Agenda
- 3 Methods of participation
- 4 Next stages

Setting

How a room is set out for a meeting can either help or hinder participation. For instance, setting out chairs in straight rows facing a 'top table' can make it difficult for discussion to take place because it looks formal and can be intimidating. People in the 'audience' will probably be surrounded by strangers, whose faces they can't see. Those at the top table, on the other hand, will at least have been introduced to those beside them, and will be able to see all the faces in the audience. This can lead to a separation of speakers and participants into 'them and us', which can encourage oppositional, confrontational exchanges. Most questions and comments will be directed to those facing the audience, giving the impression that they hold all the answers and that people in the audience have nothing to offer.

There are alternative seating plans which can actually help build an atmosphere of participation. Circular, horseshoe or scalloped arrangements enable everybody to see each other; this can encourage discussion and involvement, as well as a feeling of equality amongst everyone.

Programme

'Participation means dialogue. Dialogue is based on people sharing their own perceptions of a problem, offering their opinions and ideas, and having the opportunity to make decisions or recommendations.' (Hope & Timmel 1984)

How meetings are programmed can either help or hinder active participation. Ideally, your event should be structured to ensure that at least two-thirds of the time is reserved for discussion in small groups or in plenary.

It is essential that participants be given a chance to speak at an early stage. The longer people sit listening in silence, the more difficult it is for them to speak when they are finally given the opportunity – especially if they aren't used to speaking in public. If people are given the impression that their role is to listen, they will settle into that role or even leave before the end of the meeting. However, if people are able to put their views forward within the first hour, they will be much more likely to feel included and able to take part in further discussions. Sometimes the quietest people have the best ideas, but aren't given the chance to speak.

Another important part of a successful participatory meeting is to have a clear idea about what your speaker or speakers will contribute to the debate and how they will make that contribution. Each speaker's initial input should be time limited – 20 minutes is the maximum amount of time you should allow if there is only one speaker. This gives them enough time to present their main arguments or themes. If you have more than one speaker, you should limit individual contributions so that participants are not listening for longer than 30 minutes at the most. There will of course be opportunities later in the meeting for debate and discussion that will allow speakers to expand and develop ideas in dialogue with participants. A good chairperson is vital, who can be firm with the speakers!

Methods of Participation

'Research has shown that the level of satisfaction after meetings is directly related to how much people feel that their ideas have been responded to and how much of a chance they have had to participate.' (Hope & Timmel 1984)

People attending meetings can make their views and feelings known in many ways, eg by speaking in a small group, writing on Post-it notes, or using stickers to 'vote' for ideas or courses of action. During plenary discussions, radio microphones can be used to let people speak from their seat, and so avoid the fear of facing a crowded room. Most people are familiar with this style of discussion because of the number of TV shows which use it.

Next Stages

Remember to let people know what is going to happen next – the date of the next meeting, or what will happen to the ideas or views they've put forward. This will demonstrate that you value the effort people have made in the meeting, and that you want them to stay involved.

A good first move is to produce a short report of the meeting, and send a copy to all those who took part. If your meeting has been about a specific issue, you could also send copies to any relevant authorities or organisations who may be interested.

The Participatory Meeting (one of many possible structures)

- 1 Welcome people as they arrive. Ask people to register so that you can contact them again (see Appendix 1). Hand out any papers or agenda, or put them on seats beforehand.
- 2 Chair *briefly* explains the background to the meeting and the agenda.
- 3 The invited speaker/s give a very brief talk; no more than ten minutes each, or less if there are more than three of them.
- 4 Split into groups of 6–10 to discuss the meeting's topic and the speakers' inputs, using open but focussed questions which are agreed beforehand. Each group should have a facilitator, and ideally someone to take notes. Main points are written on flipchart sheets so that everyone can see them.
- 5 Reassemble. Someone from each group feeds back briefly to the meeting. The most useful way is to take one main point from each group to enable the chair to gauge if there is consensus or a range of views.
- 6 The invited speaker/s address the points raised and everyone is invited to join in the discussion using radio microphones.
- 7 The chair should use open questions to encourage discussion and a deeper understanding of the issues.
- 8 Depending on time and numbers, take another point from each group, or split into small groups again to discuss speakers' responses, or use radio microphones to encourage discussion in the large group.
- 9 Chair summarises discussion, reminds people of the next stage and what will happen to the recordings of the meeting. Sometimes another invited speaker will summarise the discussion, taking some pressure from the chair.
- 10 Give people the opportunity to say what they thought of the meeting. A 'comments' board could be set up; this could be some flipchart sheets with Post-its and pens available, or you could give out detailed forms asking for comments on the speeches, discussion, venue, etc (see Appendix 3).
- 11 Check that you have participants' contact details so that they can be sent any report and/or be informed about future events.

NB Don't let your meeting run over. People often begin to 'turn off' and feel tired at the expected finishing time, or have to leave to catch buses, lifts, etc.

3 Funding

Putting on events costs money. Some of the first tasks in planning a participatory event are to determine what funding you have, calculate how much more you think you need, and to draw up a budget accordingly. It is essential to plan all factors into your budget before you begin – interpreters, crèche, catering, etc. Things like these can cause a nasty financial shock if not planned in at the start. If you are applying for funding from an outside source, it is very unlikely that you will be able to go back later and ask for more because something substantial was left out. Most funders will want to see a budget showing how you have costed each expense in the whole process before they agree to give you any money.

If you find yourself looking for outside help in funding an event, there are various avenues you can go down. Here are a few suggestions:

Edinburgh City Council: Local Development Committee Community Grants Fund

Open to constituted voluntary groups with ideas for local one-off projects serving their Local Development Committee (LDC) area. Grants are for up to £5000 but city-wide or national organisations are not eligible. Contact: council.secretary@edinburgh.gov.uk
Tel: 0131 529 1091
Website: www.edinburgh.gov.uk/ldc

Capital City Partnership: Social Justice Change Fund

Funded through Communities Scotland. Small voluntary organisations or public sector bodies serving people in Edinburgh may be eligible.
Website: www.capitalcitypartnership.org

Lottery: Awards for All

Special lottery grants programme for small community groups looking for small sums. Can apply at any time and a decision will be made within 3 months.
Contact: scotland@awardsforall.org.uk
Tel: 0141 242 1200

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO): Direct Grants

Provides funding for new activities for small constituted community and voluntary groups in northeast, central and southern Scotland.
Contact: directgrants@scvo.org.uk
Tel: 0141 221 0030
Website: www.scvo.org.uk/direct_grants (Can download application form)

SCVO also have packages: 'Funderfinder' and 'Grantfinder'. You can book a time to go through these packages to find other sources of funding. Call information department: 0131 556 3882

Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIP)

This is another possible avenue of funding if your group is in one of the SIP areas.

South Edinburgh Partnership

13 Newtoft Street
EDINBURGH EH17 8RG
0131 664 5000
communicate@southedinburghpartnership.co.uk

Craigmillar

32 Niddrie Mains Road
 EDINBURGH EH16 4BG
 0131 661 5117
 admin@craigmillarpartnership.com

Edinburgh Strategic Programme

Probably won't fund but they have the 'Funderfinder' pack to help groups source other avenues of funding or they could give advice.

North Edinburgh Partnership

8 West Pilton Gardens
 EDINBURGH EH4 4EP

Investigating the various avenues of funding is probably one of the first things you should look into as the application process may take a few months and funding is not usually allocated retrospectively.

Sponsorship

You could also approach local businesses or organisations to gain sponsorship for your event. This is good publicity for them, particularly if the theme of your seminar has some connection or relevance to them.

Targeting key organisations that are in line with the theme of your seminar can also help gather support for your work. For example, if you are discussing themes to do with racism, you could approach groups like the Commission on Racial Equality. Even if they can't help with funding, they may have information packs, venues or other resources available which could help you. You may be able to convince another organisation to work in partnership with you to run the seminar; this would reduce your costs and workload, and widen the potential audience.

4 Venues and Access

The main consideration when looking for a venue for your event should be accessibility. Ideally you will want to find somewhere that will meet the needs of your audience and your event. However, there are many practical measures you can take to ensure that different people and groups will be able to attend and join in with what you are doing.

There are many different access issues, ranging from location to atmosphere. The right venue can make a huge difference to the success of an event – the trick is to find one that best matches your needs and your budget. Some venues are ideal for local community discussions, whilst others are better for grand civic receptions. If people feel out-of-place, they will be less likely to relax and join in. Size can play a part – a small group discussion in a huge empty hall may make people feel awkward or vulnerable. Of course, cramming hundreds into a small space brings problems too.

A suitable venue may be a school classroom, or an international conference centre; it just depends what your needs are. A two-hour discussion between ten people may only need one small room, whereas a daylong event with 100+ delegates may need a large hall, several small rooms for workshops, a crèche room, a registration area and a dining area.

Finding a Venue

If you are holding a local community event, you probably already know what local facilities there are – if not, you probably know someone who does. If local libraries, community centres, schools, hotels or churches can't provide meeting space, they can probably point you towards somewhere else nearby. If your event is larger or appealing to a wider audience, look in the Yellow Pages under Conference Facilities or Banqueting Rooms. You can also ask the local authority if they have spaces or can recommend people who do, or colleagues in other organisations who may have run similar events.

VisitScotland Business Tourism Unit has a very large database of meeting spaces right across the country. Every year they publish a full guide to facilities for Scotland, plus specific ones for Edinburgh and Glasgow. They are available free of charge from:

VisitScotland Business Tourism Unit
 Ocean Point One
 94 Ocean Drive
 EDINBURGH
 EH6 6JH
 Tel: 0131 472 2355
 www.conventionscotland.com

**There are many elements which can help or hinder access to an event.
 Here are some to consider:**

Timing

The time you hold your event will determine who will be able to attend. Daytime or evening, weekday or weekend, each choice will leave some people unable to make it – you can't please everyone! Make a guess at what time will suit most of the people you want to target. If you are running a series of events, you might consider alternating between evenings and daytime.

The other time consideration is to find out if your event will clash with anything else. If there is another big event on the same day, aimed at the same people, you both could lose out. Similarly, a major religious festival may mean you will lose all potential attendees from one community, whereas school holidays quite often mean parents won't be free because of childcare commitments.

It is usually a good idea to make it as easy and convenient for people to come as possible, and that means finding a time that suits them rather than you. It can be hard work getting people to come to events, and you don't want to put anyone off if you can help it.

Location

Can your intended audience reach the venue easily? A neighbourhood event should probably be held in a local venue, but a city-wide or nation-wide event might be better attended if placed in the middle of town, near key transport links. City centre venues (eg hotels) can be very expensive, but, if you look around, there are usually cheaper alternatives.

Disability Access

Ideally you want to hold an event that everybody who wants to can attend and get the most out of. Check if there is a ramp for wheelchair access to the building from the street. Once inside, will a wheelchair-user be able to move around the building, and use facilities like toilets? There should also be an 'induction loop', which will aid those with hearing difficulties.

You can help by also booking a Public Address system if there are more than 20 or so people coming; if your speakers don't use microphones, you will find that many people have difficulties hearing what is going on. If you are holding a big group discussion, for example with a panel taking questions from the floor, a radio or 'roving' microphone is very useful. This is a microphone without a lead which can be handed round the audience, so people speaking can be heard by everyone.

Interpreters

It is good practice to provide translators for anyone who does not have English as a first language. Deaf people communicate primarily through British Sign Language, and you can hire approved sign language interpreters (who usually work in pairs) to translate. This is not a cheap service, and in Scotland there is a drastic shortage of qualified signers, but it is very important to provide such services if at all possible. Your local authority may have an interpreting service – it's worth checking.

Providing interpreters for other languages is no less important. To find out if your event needs such services, you could include statements in different languages in your publicity material, asking for people to notify you of their requirements. A recent study of the demand for different language translations in Scotland suggested that Bengali is the highest, followed by Chinese, Urdu, Arabic and Punjabi. If demand is high enough, you could consider holding a separate event with an interpreter, aimed directly at a group who speak Bengali for example. Your local authority should be able to give contact details for all interpretation services in your area.

Crèche

Many people will have other commitments which will restrict their ability to attend your event, especially for longer events. Providing childcare facilities not only helps parents attend; it also shows you are serious about enabling participation. Booking a crèche is not too expensive (about £100 + VAT), but you have to do this well in advance. You will also have to gather details of the age and gender of all children who will be using the facilities in advance, which can be done through the event registration form.

Some venues have purpose-built facilities, but, if not, the crèche team will visit the venue in advance and approve a separate room for use. This will probably mean extra costs for the hire of an extra room. The crèche will set itself up; all you will need to do is point people towards the room they are in. Crèches usually ask that children are collected during the lunch hour, so make sure parents are aware of this.

Facilities

Check your chosen venue has the equipment you will need, and do so well in advance. If you are bringing your own gear, are there places to plug in computers, TVs or projectors? Are there flipcharts, paper and pens? Will you have on-site use of office equipment (photocopiers, phones, etc)?

Once you know what presentations the speakers are making, find out what IT each speaker wants to use, and make sure you know how it is going to work. A good idea is to visit the venue before the event to hold an IT dress rehearsal. It is also important to find out what support the venue will provide on the day; check to see what staff will be there to work electrical equipment, or provide support. Problems with technology at events are not rare, so don't assume these things will look after themselves!

Catering

Catering is one of the most expensive parts of running an event, often costing more than the hire of the venue. For a shorter meeting, offering tea and coffee on arrival can be enough to welcome people in, and it can give people a chance to relax into the event. A daylong event filled with workshops and other demanding activities needs a bit more. On top of the introductory cuppa, you may consider providing a buffet lunch and a mid-morning or mid-afternoon tea break. As well as a chance to relax, breaks are a great opportunity for informal chatting and networking, which is one of the main reasons people like to attend events.

A free lunch can be a great crowd-puller if you can afford it, but people tend to accept paying a certain amount to attend day events. If you are providing food, it is a good idea to ask people in advance if they have any dietary requirements. This way you can arrange for things like vegetarian alternatives to be provided. If you cannot afford food at a day event, allow at least one hour for people to go and get their own lunch. You might want to check what catering is available at the venue, or in the surrounding areas.

Don't forget to supply water on the table for the speakers and chair of the event; even the most confident of speakers can get a dry throat. The venue may be able to provide this for you.

5 Getting Publicity

When thinking about publicity for your event, allow plenty of time to design fliers and posters. This will give you time for proof reading, error correction, printer delays, etc. Give 1 or 2 people overall responsibility but allow for input from others. Think about the following aspects:

- ✿ Is the text neat and easy to read?
- ✿ Are the illustrations appropriate?
- ✿ Is your logo included and those of funders/sponsors?
- ✿ Is the poster too sparse or crowded?
- ✿ Will it attract your target audience?

Refer to publicity material from other organisations to adapt their ideas. Avoid using too much text. Breaking up the text using bullet points, boxing and subheadings makes it easier to read.

If you want to include pictures, most big bookshops sell books of copyright-free designs, eg images and cartoons, that you can reproduce using a photocopier or computer scanner. You can also buy computer 'clip art' discs that come in a range of themes. If you are using desktop publishing (DTP) or other computer software, keep it simple; stick to one font (Arial is very good for people with reading difficulties), and make it a reasonable size (12 point and above). Remember, readability is more important than design.

If you want to use fliers that require people to reply, a tear-off slip is useful. Make sure you include the return address on the tear-off bit and don't put essential information on the back of it (see Appendix 2).

Using Designers and Printers

If you want to use an outside company, make sure you research before choosing one. Ideally go on previous experience or recommendation. You can also ask to see examples of designers' work. Give clear guidelines and make it clear to the designer how much freedom they have to make decisions. Include the following aspects in your brief to them:

- ✿ function and target audience
- ✿ colour – more than 2 colours can often be confusing and increase the expense
- ✿ copy – how much text and where
- ✿ visuals
- ✿ typeface

Printers

Some designers may also offer a quote to deal with the printer but check out the extra cost involved. As with designers, go on recommendation and previous experience. Otherwise, get quotes from more than one company. Like designers they also need a brief. Think about:

- ✿ numbers – it's cheaper to do extra copies in the first run rather than order more when you run out. If you are doing fewer than 400, it may be cheaper to photocopy
- ✿ colours
- ✿ paper – type, weight, size and colour
- ✿ size – take into account method of distribution

Getting the Word Out

Put up posters to advertise your seminar in areas where you hope to find your target audience. Good places are:

- ✿ libraries and community centres
- ✿ church notice boards
- ✿ charity shops, health food and book shops (anywhere with a notice-board!)
- ✿ universities and colleges

Encourage your members to put up posters in their areas. Use your own networks, eg include fliers in mailings to related groups. You may want to seek out similar events happening beforehand where you could advertise, or even put up a publicity table (if you are prepared to make space at your event for other people's advertising in return, it could cost you very little).

If you have the money, you could use a distribution company to deliver or display your publicity in public spaces like pubs, hotels, museums, shopping centres, etc.

Advertise or submit an article to relevant magazines or newsletters. The Community Volunteer Service (CVS), Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and local volunteer centres all have periodical newsletters. These are distributed to numerous voluntary groups in each area. Advertise on your own website and any other website which may have a notice board facility. E-mail networks are also extremely effective.

Local Media

Send a media release to your local newspaper or radio station. Local newspapers often have minimal staff and they rely on media releases for much of their coverage. Relevant black and white photos, which have suitable captions, may also be used. There is a convention to setting out press releases:

- ✿ Use double spacing and wide margins.
- ✿ Use single sided, headed (if you have any) A4 paper.
- ✿ Don't format, eg use underline, capitalise, etc.
- ✿ Be short and to the point and don't use jargon.
- ✿ Give adequate details (who, what, when and where) in the first paragraph. (This may be all that is used.)
- ✿ Include a relevant quote from a named person, eg someone from your organisation, or one of the speakers.
- ✿ Give a day and evening contact for further information, plus background info about your organisation.

6 Roles and Briefing

Roles

Depending on the size of your event, you may need the following people:

Chairperson:

This person chairs the sessions when all the participants are together. It is important that the chairperson understands the importance of enabling participation and the different nature of this style of meeting. It is also useful if the chairperson has some background knowledge about the issue or theme of the event. They should be someone who is able to control proceedings with ease, such as introducing speakers, explaining the order of events and encouraging participants to join in. The chairperson should be supplied with brief notes about each of the speakers; their title, post or role, some relevant background information on their achievements or career, and a note of what they are going to talk about. This can be gathered from the speakers themselves in advance of the event.

Ideally the chair should participate in the event, so they can give a good summing up of what has been achieved. However, it is important that the chair show no personal bias towards any of the speakers or towards any point of view in a debate.

Speakers:

These should be people who are experts in the topics under discussion. They are a source of information, advice and inspiration in their chosen area. Ideally they should be invited to participate fully in the day's proceedings. It's very important to impress on your speakers the need to keep to time, in order to allow maximum time for discussion and participation in the group forums. A good way is to give them a shorter allocated time than is available, to allow for them running over.

Facilitators:

Workshops and group discussions need facilitation. Facilitators are people who can enable discussion and encourage the quieter members to participate. They are there to enable the exchange of information, and to coax out people's opinions and ideas (rather than giving their own). They need to create a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere, yet keep enough structure to ensure ideas can develop. They should have a good understanding of the aims of the session and be able to bring out the main points of discussion, making sure people stick to the topics being discussed.

When all participants come back together after smaller discussion groups, it is usual to have some form of feedback from each group. The facilitators will need to be briefed and ready to make sure this happens. Rather than a lengthy detailed account of each conversation, the facilitator (or group member) should feed back a brief summary or a few bullet points from the discussion.

Receptionists:

Depending on the size of your event, you may need more than one person to do this. They are there to greet people and help them to register. They can also deal with enquiries, directions and ensure the speakers and workshop leaders are looked after.

Note Takers/Scribes:

Note takers are there to make sure a record is kept of what is said and expressed at the event. If you have enough volunteers, a note taker should accompany a facilitator to each group discussion. If stretched, a facilitator can also take notes, but volunteers can be found in most small groups. One or two people should have responsibility for recording questions and comments in the plenary sessions too. The data produced here will be central to any report coming out of the event, so it must be clear and legible.

Workshop Leaders/Speakers:

Longer events can include workshops on specific topics related to the main subject. As well as facilitators you may wish to have workshop leaders who are expert on the topics. Ideally they should use a range of methods of presentation, be flexible and prepared to answer questions and encourage discussion. They should be able to adapt to the needs of each group and their level of understanding.

Briefing

It is important to give a written brief to the key people involved in your event. This should cover:

- ✿ the aims and what you hope to achieve
- ✿ what is expected of them
- ✿ the names of the chairperson, speakers and other key players
- ✿ who they will be directly working with (eg facilitator and scribe)
- ✿ who the target audience is
- ✿ publicity flier, and timetable of events
- ✿ who they are to report to
- ✿ practical information such as parking
- ✿ background information about your organisation

7 Contingency Plans

Always try to have back-up plans for potential problems that may arise:

- ✿ Arrange to have more facilitators available than are needed, or people who are willing to act as facilitators should someone not turn up.
- ✿ Make sure that more than one person knows how to operate the PA system, or any other equipment, and can deal with glitches if they arise.
- ✿ In the event that a speaker doesn't turn up, don't panic too much – use the extra time for more group discussion and participation.

You can prevent the majority of problems arising by:

- ✿ planning well in advance
- ✿ ensuring you have your funding in place or guaranteed alternatives
- ✿ allocating jobs carefully
- ✿ ensuring all arrangements have been confirmed shortly before the event, eg signers booked, speakers and chair confirmed, etc
- ✿ checking that all publicity material is accurate, and making sure that more than one person checks all details before print and distribution.

8 Next Steps

Once the event itself is over gather your co-organisers together, go to a café or pub and have a drink. You will have earned it. As well as a reward, this also gives you the chance to ask others informally how they felt things went. After the dust has settled you can begin working through the returned evaluation forms and notes from workshops.

Thanks

A round of drinks is a good way to thank any volunteers who have helped, but a formal letter of thanks should be sent to any chairperson, speakers or other presenters who helped run the event.

Event Evaluation

If you have asked participants to fill in forms on how they felt the event went, producing an evaluation report should be fairly straightforward. Collate the data to produce statistics which can be easily digested. For instance, it is handy to be able to say things like 'over 80% of those attending were either happy or very happy with the workshops'. As well as producing proof of success, evaluation should also point out any problems people experienced with participation. No matter how well the event appeared to go, the evaluation forms usually contain some criticisms or complaints. People will gladly tell you if they were not happy with something, but don't take it personally. At worst, you will know how to do things better next time.

If your event was coordinated by a steering group, it is best to bring them back together within the following two weeks. With things still fresh in people's minds you will be well placed to review how things went from the organisers' points of view. It is useful to have the above event evaluation report ready for this meeting.

Report

Using any data gathered at the event (including the evaluation), you can put together a report on what happened, and what is going to happen next. (If you have a steering group, you may wish to discuss this with them.) A report can also be used to promote your work to others.

Reports can be as short or detailed as you like. Elements to include could be: what you set out to achieve, how you set out to achieve it, what was said or resolved at the event, what implications these results may have, and what future action you are planning as a result. Your report can also include a list of people who attended (giving name and organisation, not personal contact details), plus names of those who organised and acknowledgements to any sponsors, etc.

In the first instance, the report should be circulated to all those who participated and those who sent apologies. You may want to get extra copies produced to send out to people who may have an interest in what you are doing, like local MPs/MSPs, organisations working on similar themes, etc – people will be interested! If your report is a large, detailed affair, you may consider producing a one or two-page summary report for wider distribution.

Future Action

Hopefully your event will have ended with some sort of agreement on a way forward. You should also have contact details for all those who have promised to help make this happen. It is a good idea to call these people together for a meeting as soon as possible, in order to capitalise on all the enthusiasm and promises of help you will have received. Of course your event may have been an end in itself, but if there is further work to do, it is important to keep the momentum going.

9 Checklist

What to do in Advance of the Seminar – Planning Ahead

Organisation

- ✿ Agree who will take on the organisation of the event – set up a Planning Group if necessary, and allocate tasks and areas of responsibility between members.
- ✿ Decide whether or not you require funding, sponsorship etc, then identify and apply to potential funders. Familiarise yourself with any conditions around the funding.
- ✿ Identify other resources needed (eg IT equipment, literature, stationery) and who will provide them.

Content and Structure

- ✿ Decide on the purpose and content of your event, and who it is aimed at.
- ✿ Decide what the format and structure will be.
- ✿ Decide the date and time.
- ✿ Decide if there will be pre-registration or not, and if so, how and when people will register.
- ✿ Arrange a Chair and speakers and make arrangements for contacting them. Ensure they are fully briefed.
- ✿ Arrange for facilitators, scribes, etc.
- ✿ If speakers are coming from a distance, arrange for transport and accommodation.

Venue and Access Support

- ✿ Check cost of venues and how this will be paid for.
- ✿ Make sure the venue is accessible.
- ✿ Include setting up and clearing up time when booking the venue.
- ✿ Check disabled access and if necessary, book an induction loop.
- ✿ Arrange for a crèche if appropriate.
- ✿ Provisionally book interpreters, including sign language.
- ✿ Book catering if required.
- ✿ Arrange for a public address system (static and roving microphones) and allocate responsibility for operating it.
- ✿ Book any audio visual equipment required, eg computer and screen for Powerpoint presentation, overhead projector.
- ✿ Arrange for flipcharts/pads/pens.

Publicity

- ✿ Agree how the event will be publicised.
- ✿ Put together a publicity leaflet.
- ✿ Liaise with designer/printer.
- ✿ Get together mailing lists.
- ✿ Distribute leaflets and posters.
- ✿ Contact press and local radio to publicise.

What needs to be done shortly before the event

- ✿ Confirm facilitators, scribes, etc, are still available.
- ✿ If people have pre-registered, send out any papers or other materials to all participants.
- ✿ Confirm bookings with pre-registered participants for any services they have requested (crèche places/sign language interpreters, etc).

- Decide on questions for workshop groups and have these written up and copied.
- Agree how the event will be recorded and evaluated and ensure everything is in place for this to happen.
- Make copies of agenda and any other papers required for participants.
- Arrange briefings for facilitators.
- Agree who will do what on the day.
- Make direction signs so people can find their way around inside the venue.
- Arrange any last-minute publicity, eg local press and radio.
- Arrange for any fees or expenses to be paid, and receipts signed on the day.

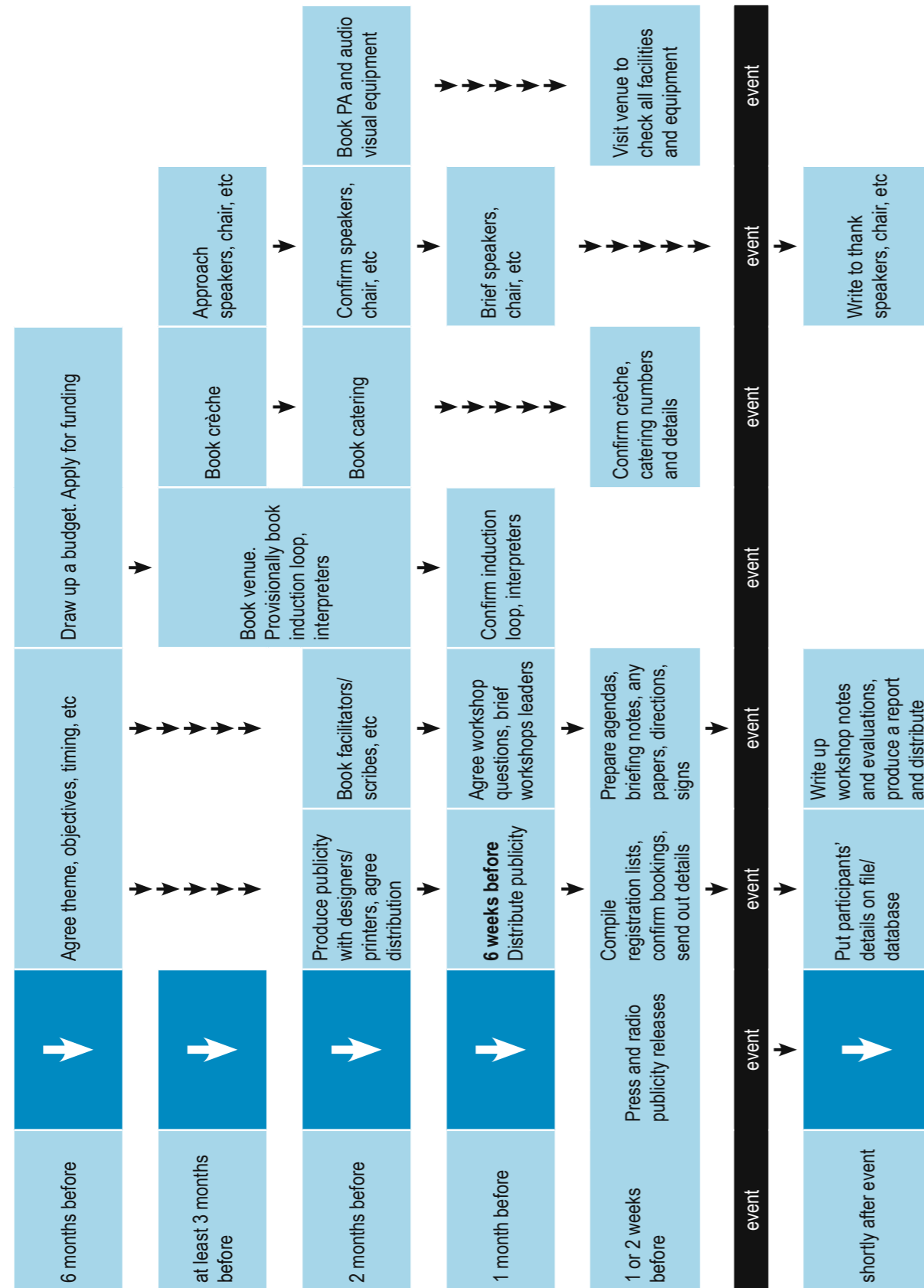
On the Day

- Ensure organisers are at the venue well in advance of the stated time.
- Set up the registration as early as possible, so participants are welcomed as they arrive.
- Make sure someone welcomes and looks after guest speakers, and speakers have water.
- Ensure notes from all workshop groups and any other presentations are gathered and kept.
- Distribute evaluation sheets, and encourage people to fill them in.
- Ensure participants know what will happen next.
- Allow for participants to leave contact details if they wish to be kept informed of further activity or be sent further information.
- If appropriate, pay fees or expenses and get signed receipts.

After the Event

- Send thank you letters to Chair/speakers.
- Write up workshop notes and evaluations.
- Bring together the planning group and facilitators to evaluate this event.
- Put together a report of the event, agree where this should go and send out.
- Report back to funders, and ensure you have met all contracted terms and conditions.
- Put all participants' details on file or database so that they can receive further information.

10 Time Line



Appendix 1

Registration Form

(if prior registration is necessary)

The form should be accompanied by full information about the event, and any costs, and should ask for the following information:

- * Name
 - * Address
 - * Telephone No
 - * Email address
- } of person registering
- * Organisation (if appropriate)
 - * Crèche places – number and ages of children; any special requirements
 - * Any special requirements to help access the event, eg wheelchair access; induction loop; sign language interpreter; large print
 - * Any dietary requirements (if appropriate)

The form should state where it is to be returned to and when to return it by.

Appendix 2

Publicity Leaflets

These should include the following:

- ✿ name of event
- ✿ day, date, start and finishing times
- ✿ venue and address (map if appropriate)
- ✿ event organisers, including logo
- ✿ event funders/sponsors, and their logos
- ✿ if there is disabled access
- ✿ if there is a crèche
- ✿ short statement in different languages offering further information
- ✿ cost – or indicate free if there is no cost
- ✿ names of chair and speakers
- ✿ brief description of the event and what it will cover
- ✿ who the event is for (eg the public)
- ✿ contact number for further information and to indicate any particular requirements for people to access the event
- ✿ if the registration form is part of the publicity leaflet, ensure the reverse of the form does not contain essential information about the event that people would want to keep
- ✿ for longer events, give details of catering arrangements and the programme outline

Appendix 3

An Example of an Evaluation Form

We are always keen to improve the events we run, and so would be very grateful if you could take 5 minutes to answer the following questions:

1 Why did you decide to come to this event?

2 What have you gained from attending today?

3 The most useful part of the event was ...

4 The least useful part of the event was ...

5 What improvements would you suggest for future similar events?

6 a) How satisfied were you with the event? (please tick):
Very satisfied Satisfied Quite Satisfied Not Satisfied

(please comment under No 8)

a) How satisfied were you with the venue? (please tick):
Very satisfied Satisfied Quite Satisfied Not Satisfied

7 Please give any other comments below:

Name: _____ Organisation: _____ (optional)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. Please hand this form in at the end, or send it to: (your contact details)

References

Introduction and Chapter 2

Hope, A and Timmel, S 1984, *Training for Transformation: Book 2*, Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press

Chapter 6

Shifting the Balance Handbook: SEAD

The DIY Guide to Public Relations: Moi Ali

Notes