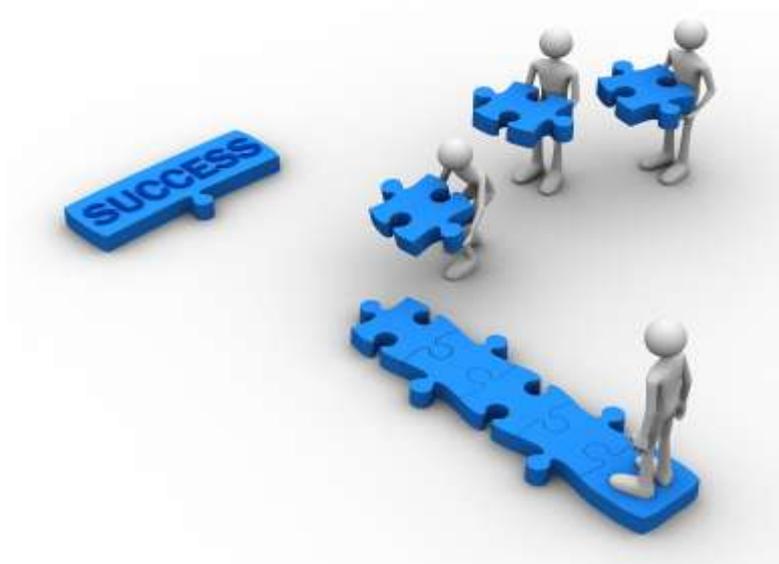


Association of Scottish Community Councils



Creating a Vision

Decision Making Tool Kit

Introduction

The process of developing a vision is a wonderful opportunity for people to come together, take a pragmatic look at their area, and work cooperatively to describe a direction they want to go. It takes good information and hard work to make a link between the present and the future. One thing we know is that the success of creating a vision and its subsequent acceptance by a community directly correlates to the diversity of the group who developed it. Broad interests yield broad support; limited interests bring limited support.

Definition

Articulating and describing a desired future.



Essentials

Creating a vision begins with a group of stakeholders, or those with invested interests in a project, resource, or community. They are asked to state what they value about their area and what they would like to see improved in the next five to ten years. The final vision can be any length – a single sentence or a few bullet points – as long as it is clear, focused, and easily understandable.

Visions are based on reality; they are not wishful thinking. The advantages of



using a group to do this work are to use their collective imaginations to create the most positive, practical, possible outcome for the project or resource; to enable shared authorship of the vision which will translate into a sense of ownership and commitment to seeing

the vision realized; and, assuming the group represents diverse interests, to broaden support among the community at large.

Once written, a vision statement helps to define the direction in which to proceed. For example, a vision statement can be used to work "backwards" to develop a plan of action. Ask: "If this was the future, and this vision has happened, what was done?" "How did we get this outcome?" This helps avoid focusing on negative reactions such as how difficult or impossible it will be to do something.

Vision statements can also aid in recruiting volunteers and keeping people motivated. The terms vision, mission, goals and objectives are often used interchangeably. They are related but distinct parts of the puzzle. Here's how:

Mission: answers why an organisation exists – or why a project is starting – and its purpose.

Vision: summarizes the ideal state of an organisation – or project or resource.

Goal: transforms a vision into a discrete statement of direction.

Objective: breaks down a goal into tasks that are measurable and time-oriented.

How it Works

1. Gather the players

Bring together key stakeholders, diverse interest groups, resource experts, and others who represent the community. This may be an advisory group or a working task force. Set the meeting up with a facilitator, a means to record and post all comments such as flip charts, and arrange chairs in a single circle to allow everyone to see each other. Explain the exercise, state the time limits, and stress the importance of participation and respect for one another's thoughts.

2. Get focused

Define and set a limit on what the vision will address. Possibilities include physical features such as watersheds or river valleys or boundaries such as township, county or school districts, or the vision may be for an entity like an organization or a park. Make sure everyone understands and is in agreement about the limits before proceeding.

3. Identify what's important

Have people identify and define those things that make their community, the resource, or their organization special. Consider how it might be described to a visitor. Capture all comments. Look for themes and commonalities among the attributes and have the participants cluster and label them accordingly. If there are several, it may be necessary to prioritize the attributes before continuing and rule some out.

4. Think future

Take those attributes and imagine how they might be described to a visitor five to ten years from now. Given these qualities, in this place, what is possible? What is the dream? If it is slightly out-of-reach, that is okay; if it is as unrealistic as a New Year's resolution, then scale back. Have fun thinking of scenarios.

5. Write it

Using the words captured during the brainstorm, begin to put together sentences to form a statement. Try beginning with "To become the... To be known as... To be... To offer... To maintain...." There may be a lot of focus on single words, or making subtle changes, but this is important to the process. Everyone should be comfortable with what is said and how it is said.

6. Agree on it

The final vision should be something that the participants feel addresses what is most important for their community, resource, or organization. With a vision in hand, tell others about it by issuing a press release, printing brochures or posters, creating buttons or shirts, or using most any other medium. Let everyone know about the vision so work can begin on implementing it.

When to Use

You see great potential in your area and know that others do as well.

You desire to get a group inspired and make them more cohesive.

You want a clear, agreed upon way to keep a project focused. A created vision statement allows you to check and challenge your actions by asking, "Will this help us reach our vision?"

Not Recommended If...

You need action. There's a clear, single issue that needs to be addressed and all of your energies are directed at doing just that.

You do not have broad-based representation from diverse interest groups to create a vision. Without this, it may be difficult to get support or help in any efforts; what you may get is loud, strong opposition.