Planning, for a Change

A citizen's guide to creative planning and program development

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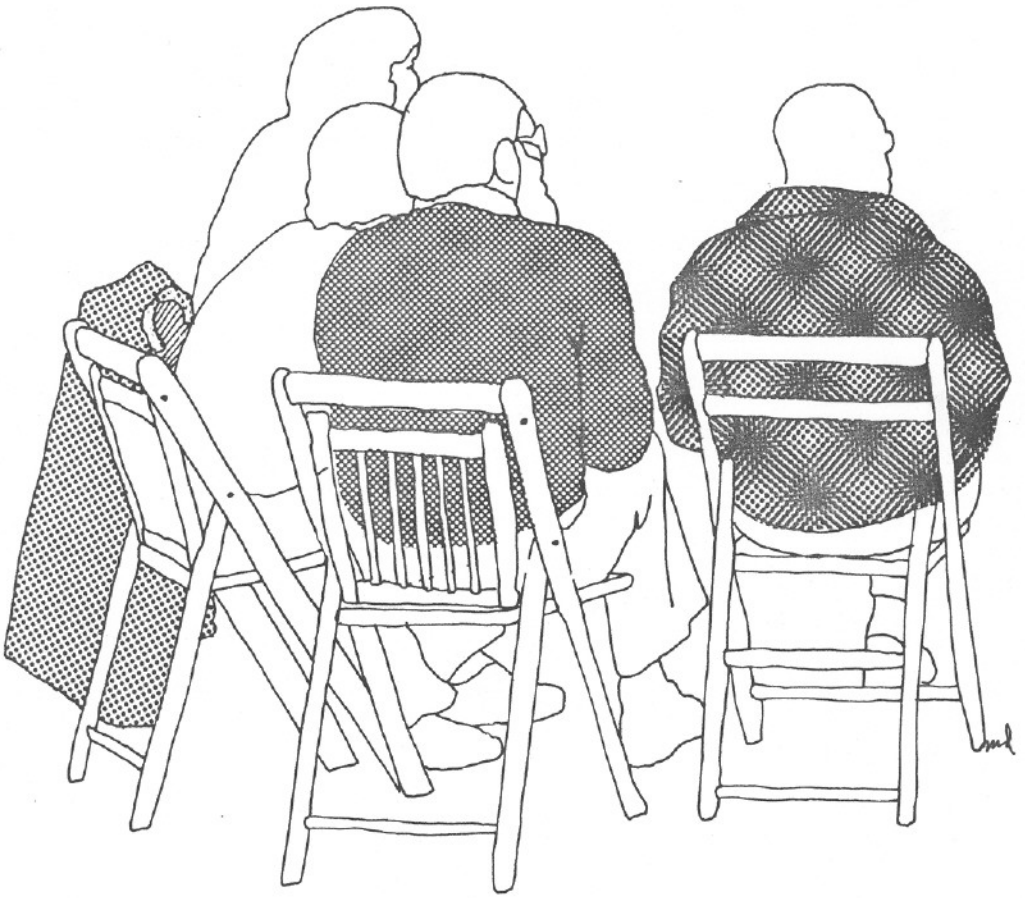
Project (CITP)



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FOR: PLANNING PROCESS
SELECTIONS FROM PLANNING, FOR A CHANGE,
BY DUANE DALE & NANCY MITIGUY, 1978, [redacted]CTIP,
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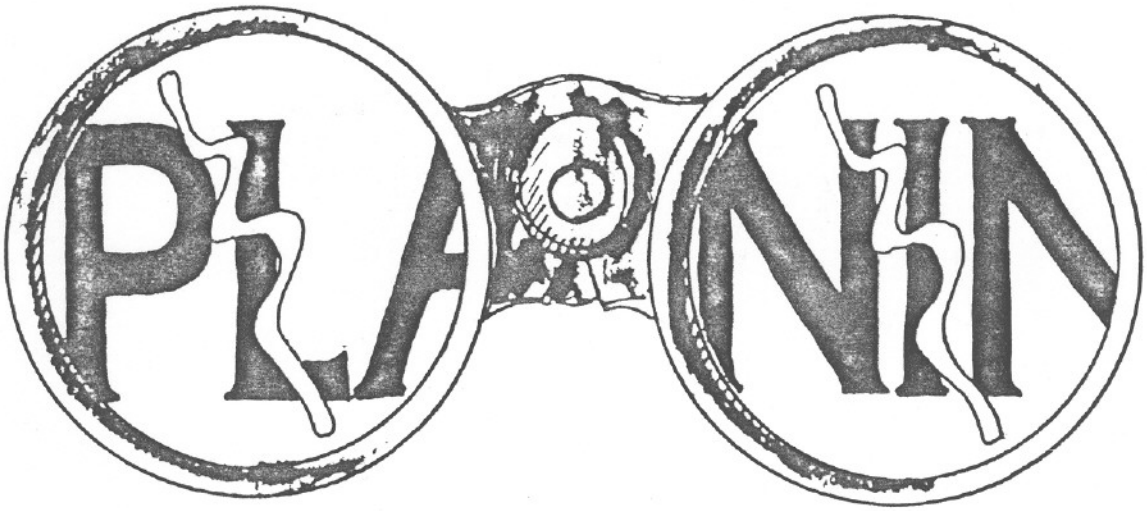

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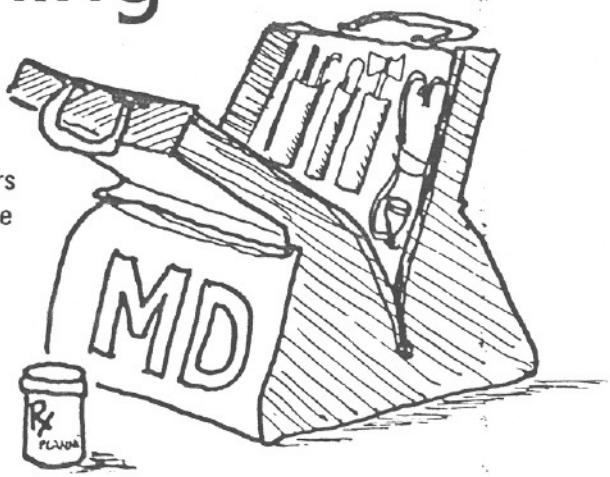
Overview of Planning



The purpose of this manual is to give you a "bag of tricks" for planning. Remember the black leather bags that doctors used to take on house calls? (Do you remember when doctors used to make house calls?) Imagine the tangle of tools if those big bags had no compartments. In this section, we'll give you some "compartments" to help you sort out the planning tools coming up.

What is Planning?

Planning is a sequence of steps, a method of getting to your goal, a "recipe" for group action, an image of the future as you hope it will unfold.

"All we ever do is talk. I want to see some action."

Every group has spokespeople for that position, and rightly so. But good planning is more than "just talk." Here are some of the things you can hope to accomplish with a careful plan:

Clarify choices: You'll know what paths you *didn't* choose from the start and can avoid having one-third of the group split ranks mid-way through a project and decide that "we'd rather hold a bazaar." Put it another way: If you consider several different program ideas and check member interest in each, you'll know how committed people are from the beginning.

Let everyone know what happens next: This keeps individuals "plugging away" and provides a basis for teamwork.

Avoid or anticipate difficulties: Shortages of money, uncooperative local officials, and bad weather are a few of the problems that can plague good programs. Planning can help you anticipate, avoid, or work around them.

Provide inspiration: Everyone knows that the sequence of activities (no matter how complicated or difficult) is leading toward a goal that is important to the group. The plan becomes a source of inspiration, by providing the assurance that "it's all going someplace."

Product and Process

When architects plan buildings, they are designing (planning) a *product* (the structure we will see) and also planning the construction *process*. If the process is a conventional one, we don't think much about it; we assume that the building can be built because we have seen so many other steel and glass skyscrapers or brick homes or whatever. But if the architect's sketch shows a roof of rippling, free-form concrete – like nothing we ever saw before – we want to know whether it can be built. "How will you do that?"

Perhaps we listen with skepticism as the architect explains: "I will mound earth with bulldozers, then lay down steel reinforcing rods, and pour the concrete over them. Then I will dig the earth out from under the roof." The architect has specified a sequence of steps – a *process* – which she thinks (or hopes) will lead to the desired *product*.

Social action projects often choose unconventional goals. One of the things we accomplish by planning is to make sure there's a *workable* process for achieving those goals.

"Models" of the Planning Process

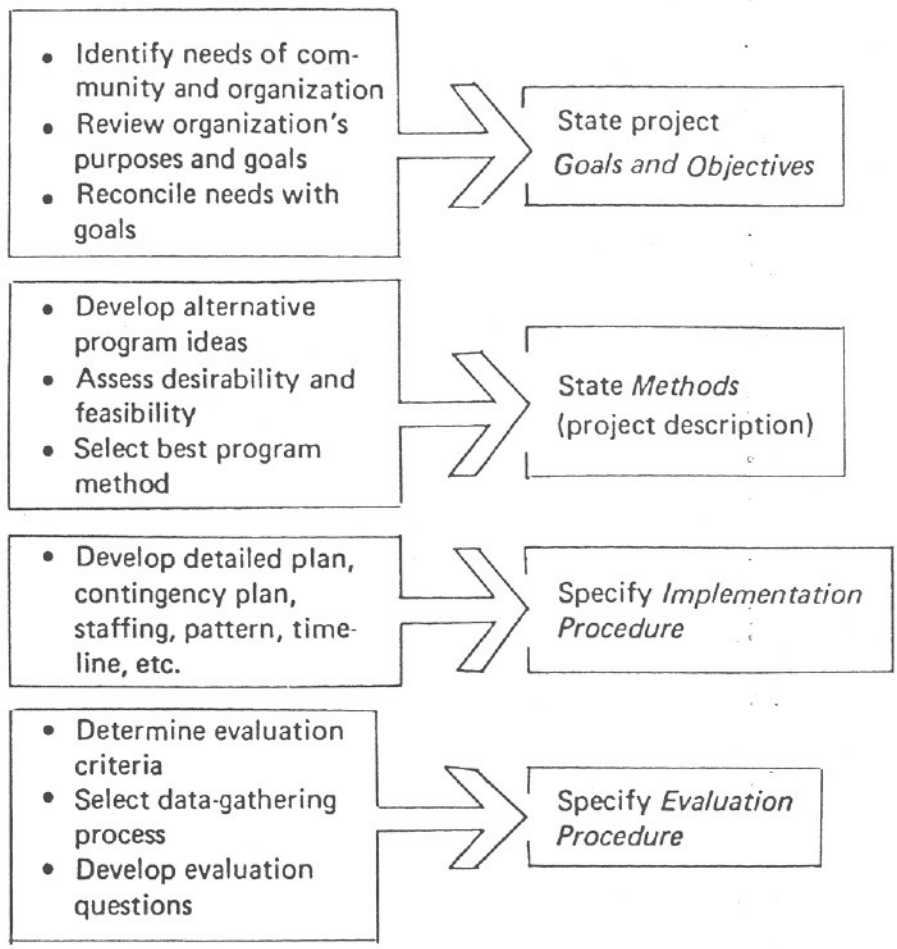
The "Model" is where we provide the mental "storage compartments" for the planning tools that will follow. We're using "model" in the sense of an *example* - an outline to follow, an image of how the planning process might proceed. There are any number of possible procedures and combinations of procedures, though many of them have similarities. We'll present three, and you can decide which version you like best.

MODEL NUMBER 1: A BASIC PROGRAM-PLANNING MODEL

This approach is based on the outline that foundation and government funding proposals often recommend or require, namely:

- State project *Goals and Objectives*
- State *Methods* (project description)
- Specify *Implementation Procedure*
- Specify *Evaluation Procedure*

That's fine for a proposal outline, but since we need to be more concerned about how the program is developed, we would expand the outline to one more like the model on the right.



MODEL NUMBER 2: A PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH

This model is typical of the approach followed by organizations that train people in problem-solving and creative thinking. It can be applied to program design and also to troubleshooting when you have a program in operation that isn't up to par.

There are several bits of wisdom — problem-solving principles — which provide the cornerstones of this approach:

- Problems aren't always what they seem to be at first glance. The way you state the problem directs your attention to one type of solution or another, so it's important to play with different wordings of the problem and discover which seem most fruitful.

- No *one* method can be guaranteed to lead to a solution. Sometimes it helps to clarify the ideal (goal); sometimes it helps to state what the present situation is; sometimes it helps to explore different interpretations of "What causes this problem?"

- There is probably no such thing as a *totally* new idea. For instance, the pocket calulator is an invention that puts together several earlier inventions, such as the integrated circuit chip and the light-emitting-diode display. So: once you have refined your problem statement, it's useful to inventory the existing methods or inventions that may contribute to a solution. You will still be faced with the creative challenge of combining ideas into a new product or program — perhaps unlike anything that has ever been tried before.

- The first solution is rarely the best. Generate lots of possible solutions, then choose several for refinement.

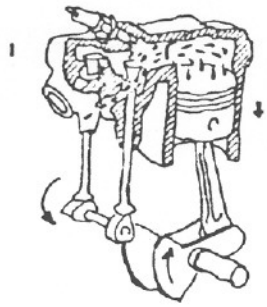
With these principles as background, consider this version of the problem-solving process to the right.*

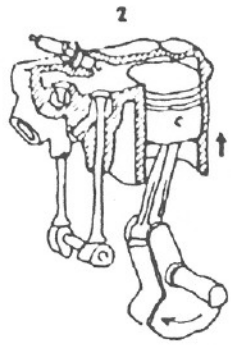
In this manual, we draw on the problem-solving approach as a way of generating program ideas. In other words, we build parts of model number 2 into model number 1.

Problem-Solving Process	*Example*
1. State problem situation in broad terms.	*Organization has no money in treasury.*
2. Analyze the nature and causes of the problem situation.	*No dues; no fund-raising events; inflation caused cost overrun on last project.*
3. Describe ideal situation	*Ideal: $2,000 in bank; adequate money for next project,*
. . . and present situation.	*Present: No money; projects not being developed because they don't seem affordable.*
4. State alternative versions of the problem.	*No money; projects aren't being developed; morale is low; opportunities are being missed.*
5. Choose one version of the problem (or a combination) to pursue.	*Opportunities are being missed because morale is low, and therefore new projects are not being developed.*
6. Inventory existing solutions.	*Hold fund-raising events; develop low-budget or zero-budget projects, identify opportunities and decide how to pursue them (should also build morale); ask the group, "What would we be doing if we had $2,000 in the bank?"*
7. Generate new solutions (probably a synthesis of existing solutions).	*Hold an organizational meeting to explore opportunities, low-budget project ideas, etc. (mixture of strategies from step number 6).*
8. State guidelines for choosing ("decision criteria") and select best solution.	*We want activities which will bring in money and encourage people to get acquainted, so we'll hold a benefit dinner-dance.*
9. Implement and document.	*Do it! Keep a log, journal or up-dated time-line to keep track of the process and its progress.*

*For more information on this problem-solving approach, see the book, Universal Traveler, by Don Koberg and Jim Bagnall (Resource Section, page 85)

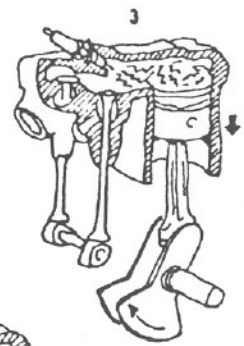
MODEL NUMBER 3: THE 4-STROKE INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE APPROACH





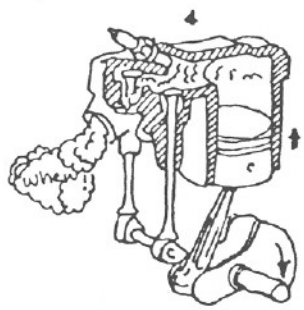
Finally, just to demonstrate that any sort of "model" can shed some light on the planning process, consider the ways that planning processes are like the four strokes of a gasoline engine:

Intake: Information is taken in about the problems, needs, goals, objectives, resources, and existing strategies. Just as the combustion chamber is expanding, so also are the ideas under consideration in this planning stage.



Compression: The combustible materials are compressed, or perhaps "digested," into usable form. There is an attempt to *narrow* the amount of information into useful summaries, eliminating that which is extraneous.

Ignition: Something new is generated from the ingredients: energy from the engine, program ideas from the planning process (again, the ideas are expanding).



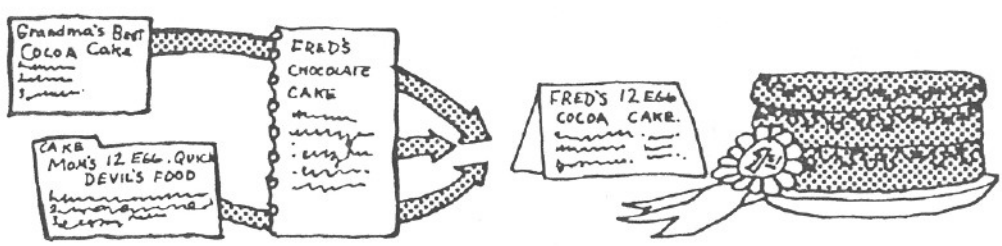
Exhaust: This is a narrowing stage. The piston is moving in the engine, driving out the exhaust gases. And at this point in the planning process, the group is choosing from among its options, narrowing things down to the best program option, and perhaps preparing to repeat the four-step cycle on the level of detailed implementation steps.

In short, the process of inventing and choosing program options can be seen as one of alternately expanding and narrowing the group's thinking.

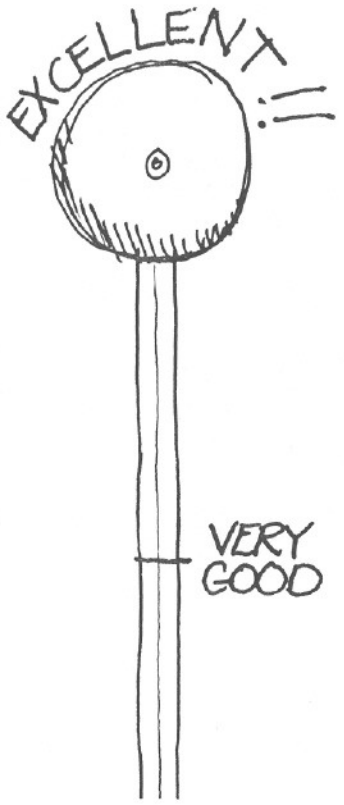
The next section presents some ways to assess your group's present planning process. After you do so, you may want to return to the three models just described and consider the following questions:

- *Which of the three models is closest to the way we plan now?*
- *Which of these describes the way I would like us to plan?*

You may find that what you're after is a mixture of ingredients—something from each of the three models.



- What is your group's planning process now?
- How well does your group plan?
- Who should be involved in planning?
- What are your group's present commitments and activites?



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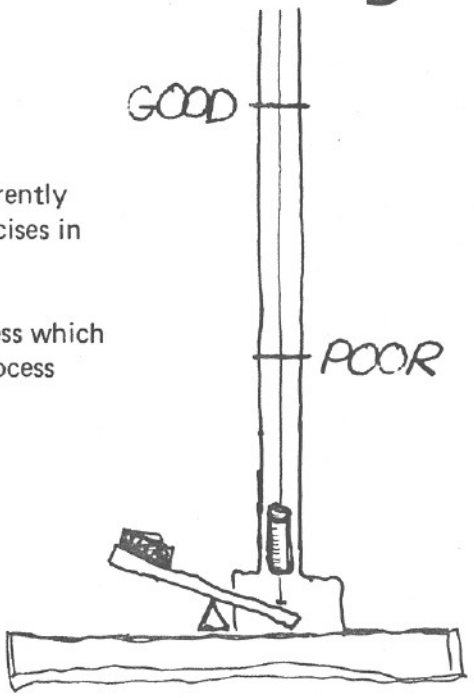
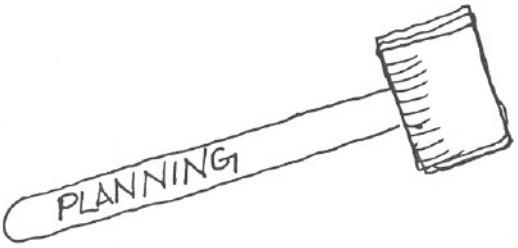
Rate Your Group's Planning Process



At this point it's helpful to take stock of how your group currently plans now and how effective the process is for you. The exercises in this section correspond to the four basic questions above.

The final activity of the section is a stimulated planning process which will give you a chance to think about your own role in the process and will provide a basis for discussions about good planning.



What is Your Group's Planning Process Now?

no. people: one to several
minimum time: 40 minutes
Materials: copies of questionaires below

Now that you've seen some examples of different planning processes, you may want to compare then with how your organization plans. That may not be an easy task, since planning doesn't occur in neat, distinct steps. It's helpful, however, to try to make some generalizations about how your group plans so you can then determine how well you plan.

This exercise can be either an individual or a group activity. It may be useful to include other members of your organization if there appears to be some confusion or resentment about the role of planning in the organization.

1. Each person who is participating in the activity should receive a copy of the chart below and spend ten minutes or so filling it out.

2. This information can then be shared with other group members, either by passing out copies of each person's chart, by making brief verbal statements, or by summarizing the comments on newsprint.

3. The group may want to spend 20-30 minutes discussing why it plans the way it does and/or making comparisons to the planning models in this booklet.

Who does the planning in your organization? (Circle your choice)	*When is the planning done in your organization? (Circle your choices, or add some of your own)*	*What's the step-by-step process you use to plan programs? (Put a number beside each item, indicating which step is usually done first, second, third, etc.)*
Program participants	Once a year	Conduct a needs survey
Volunteers	Every week	Ask people for ideas about possible programs
Board of directors	Monthly	Make a time-line
Advisory board	Never	Determine the organization's goals
Committees	At annual weekend retreats	Choose specific program activities
Staff	At community-wide meetings	Evaluate present activities
Funding source(s)	Covertly (i.e., no one knows)	Figure out what your resources are
Other:	Other:	Enlist support from the community

4. Now use a different color pen (or boxes instead of circles) to indicate how you think the group *should* plan.

5. The statements below describe different aspects of the planning process. There are four possible answers to each: agree, disagree, neutral or don't know. Circle the answer which fits *your opinion* of how the group operates.

1. The group spends too much time planning.	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know
2. An appropriate number of people are involved in planning.	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know
3. The group has a clear, workable plan for major activities.	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know
4. The group's activities relate to stated goals and purposes.	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know
5. The group knows what it will be doing two years from now.	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know
6. The group is good at coming up with creative program possibilities.	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know
7. The group is able to choose one course of action and stick to it.	agree	disagree	neutral	don't know

6. You might want to circulate copies of this list to others in your group and ask them to answer the questions. Major discrepancies in responses could mean that the function of planning is not understood by everyone in your group or that there are some holes in the planning process your group uses now.

7. A quick way to compare responses once you're back in a large group, is to ask how many people disagreed with each item. A show of hands will tell you which aspects of the planning process need further discussion and improvement.

Discussion Questions

- *If you disagreed with one of the seven statements, why?*
- *What needs to be done to improve the group's planning process?*
- *What parts of the planning process are we doing right?*

Who Should Be Involved in Planning?

no. people: one to several
minimum time: 25 minutes
materials: paper and pen

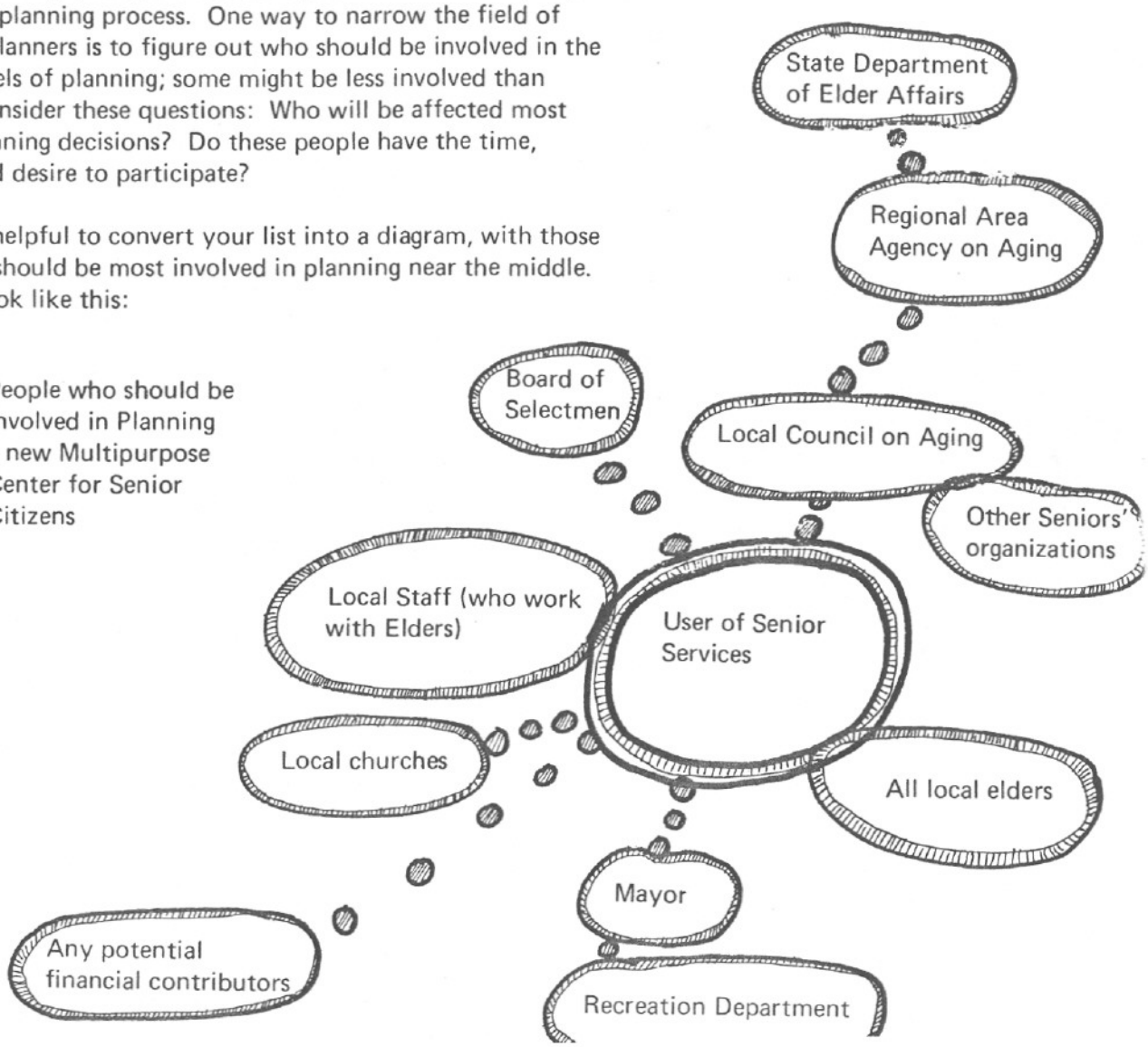
A first step is to determine who could potentially be involved in planning, both from within and outside the organization. Here are some general groupings:

Steering Committee
Publicity Committee
Volunteers
Advisory Board
Planning Committee
Board of Directors
Members
Government agencies
Local community
Potential program participants
Business
Politicians
Churches
Foundations
Membership Committee
Staff
Personnel Committee
Program participants
Media
Other citizen groups

1. Take five minutes and develop your own list, identifying *specific* groups (or individuals) in your community who should be involved. In the spirit of citizen participation, your list should include everyone who is directly or indirectly affected by your decisions. If the list is long, you don't necessarily have to eliminate people from your planning process. One way to narrow the field of potential planners is to figure out who should be involved in the various levels of planning; some might be less involved than others. Consider these questions: Who will be affected most by the planning decisions? Do these people have the time, energy, and desire to participate?

2. It may be helpful to convert your list into a diagram, with those you think should be most involved in planning near the middle. It might look like this:

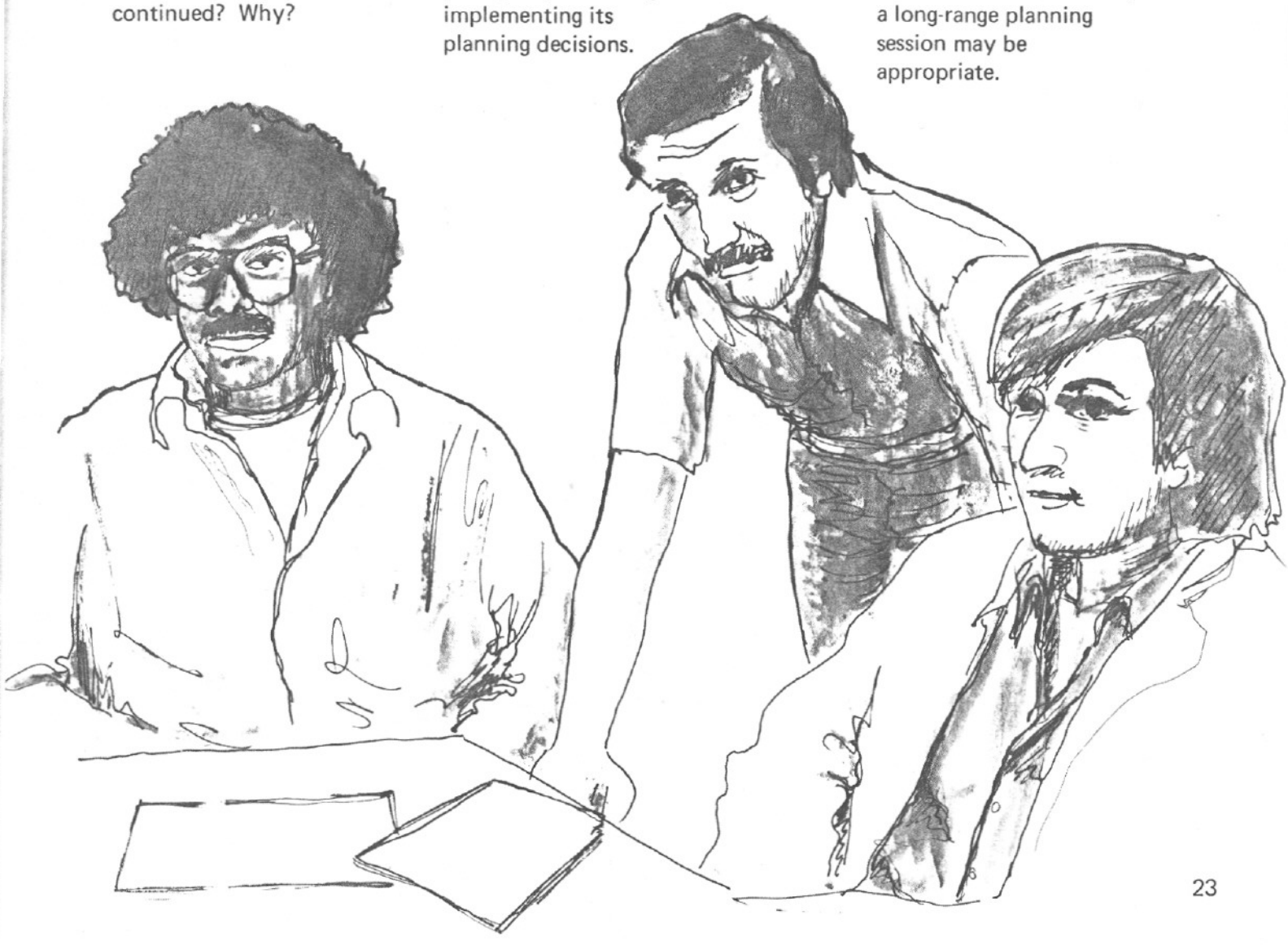
People who should be involved in Planning a new Multipurpose Center for Senior Citizens



How Well Does Your Group Plan?

There are many ways of determining the effectiveness of your group's planning process. Here are some activities that you could do on your own or with other members of your group.

- Find out how satisfied members/participants are with the program (personal interview, group discussions, surveys).
- Make a list of all the programs conducted by your group during the past year. Which were successful? Which could have been improved and how? Which were discontinued? Why?
- Videotape the group's planning sessions. Replay it to the members, and ask for general comments about how well the process worked and suggestions for improvement.
- Keep a personal diary of planning decisions. Review the diary at the end of each month, and assess the progress your group is making in implementing its planning decisions.
- Compare the *results* of past programs to the organization's stated purpose and goals. Did each program relate directly to the goals and objectives? How much closer are you to achieving the group's goals as a result of each program?
- List the things your group will be doing in three years. If you can't, a long-range planning session may be appropriate.



What are Your Present Commitments and Activities?

no. people: one - 15 people
minimum time: 15 minutes
materials: newsprint, felt-tipped markers

One of the purposes of planning is to make decisions about programs and activities. Let's explore the planning decisions you as a group have already made during the last year.

1. Spend about 15 minutes filling in the chart below. Ask each member of the group to do the same.

2. Share the information by incorporating everyone's comments into one listing.

Projects/activities the group is committed to	Date project will end	Project ideas discussed but not discarded	Major policy decisions

Discussion Questions

1. Are there projects which should be scaled down or eliminated because they no longer reflect the group's priorities?

2. How much time and energy are available for new projects?

3. Is your group able to sustain several projects at once or is it more effective when the entire group focuses its energies on one thing.

4. What policies or ideas are not being fully implemented that should be?

A Small Dose of Planning

no. people: 6 to many
minimum time: 20 minutes
materials: newsprint, felt pens

What is the "ideal" planning process? You could begin to answer that question by reading what other people have to say about the various steps involved in planning programs. Or you can extract from your own experience the process that has worked best for you.

Another method that generates creative thinking and discussion is to begin with a simple "planning exercise" like the one below. This will provide all members of the group with a common frame of reference for a discussion and critique of the many ways of planning.

1. Divide into groups of 6 people. Read the planning exercise below.

2. Select one person from each group to keep the discussion moving and another person to record *how* the group plans (i.e., a chronological sequence of decisions). The recorder will later share your group's planning process with other workshop participants.

3. With your group, come up with a plan for one of the situations below:

SITUATION #1:

You are a member of the local Conservation Commisison. The primary purpose of the commission is to preserve and protect the natural resources and environment of the town. At last evening's commission meeting, there was considerable discussion about the lack of communication between the commission and the community. You and a few other commission members agreed to come up with a strategy to increase communication. It won't be an easy task because there is no money in the budget for this effort and you have only 20 minutes to plan a strategy. *Why, what, how* and *when* questions might be appropriate for your committee to think about.

SITUATION #2:

You and some energetic members of your group have volunteered to plan the annual fund-raising event. During the next 20 minutes, you and they will plan all the details. You might want to think about such things as specific activities, logistics, purpose. Keep it simple because you have only 20 minutes.

4. Now compare what you've just done in this planning exercise with the four steps in an "ideal" planning process

5. Compare what you've done in this planning exercise with Planning Model 1

Discussion Questions

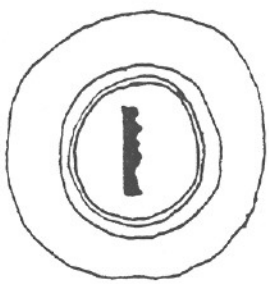
You might want to use the following as the basis for a post-exercise discussion:

- *Which steps did your group spend the most time on?*
- *Would it have been better to spend more time on earlier steps? later steps?*
- *How did you go about generating methods for dealing with the situations?*
- *How many different program ideas (methods, strategies) did you generate? Would you have done better to generate more options—or to move on to the details of implementing your plan?*
- *Would you say that there is agreement or disagreement within your group about the underlying problem you were trying to deal with in this situation? Did you spend any time exploring the nature of the problem?*
- *How do you know when to stop generating ideas?*

- Does your group have a shared understanding of the nature of the problems you're trying to deal with?

- What can you personally do to raise the level of awareness about root causes?

- How can you identify root causes?



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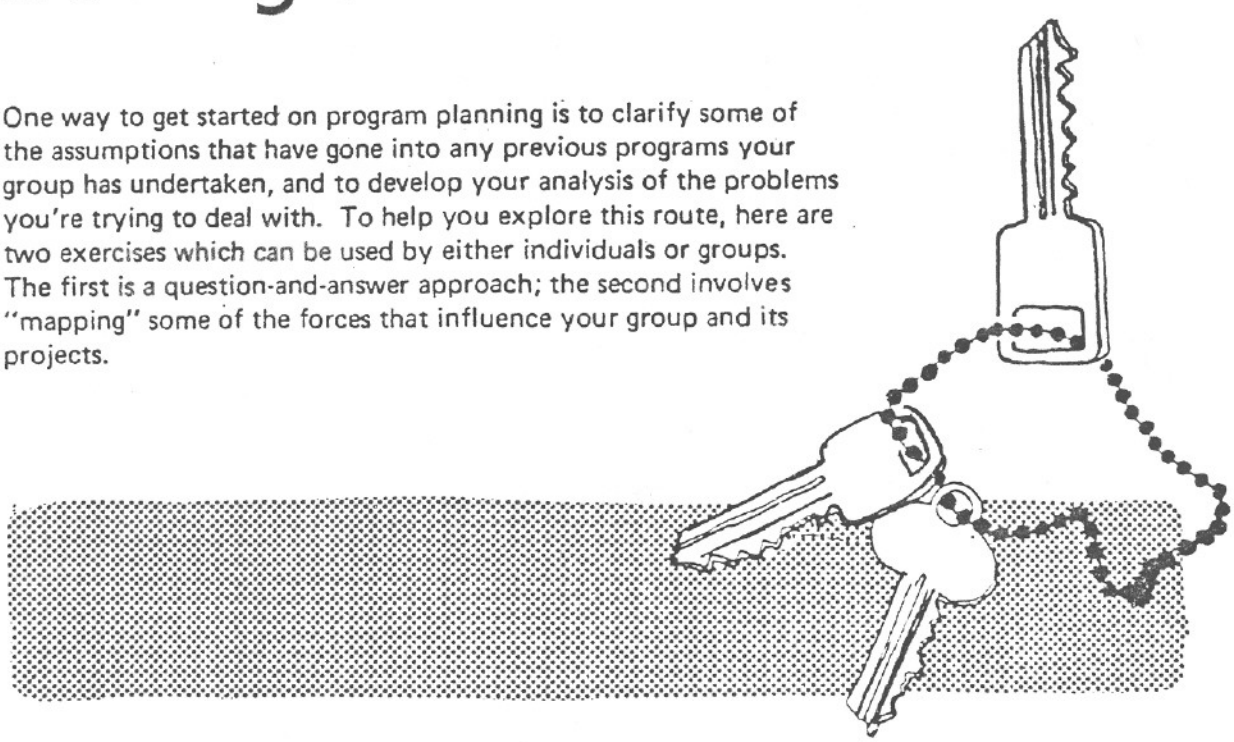
Getting Started

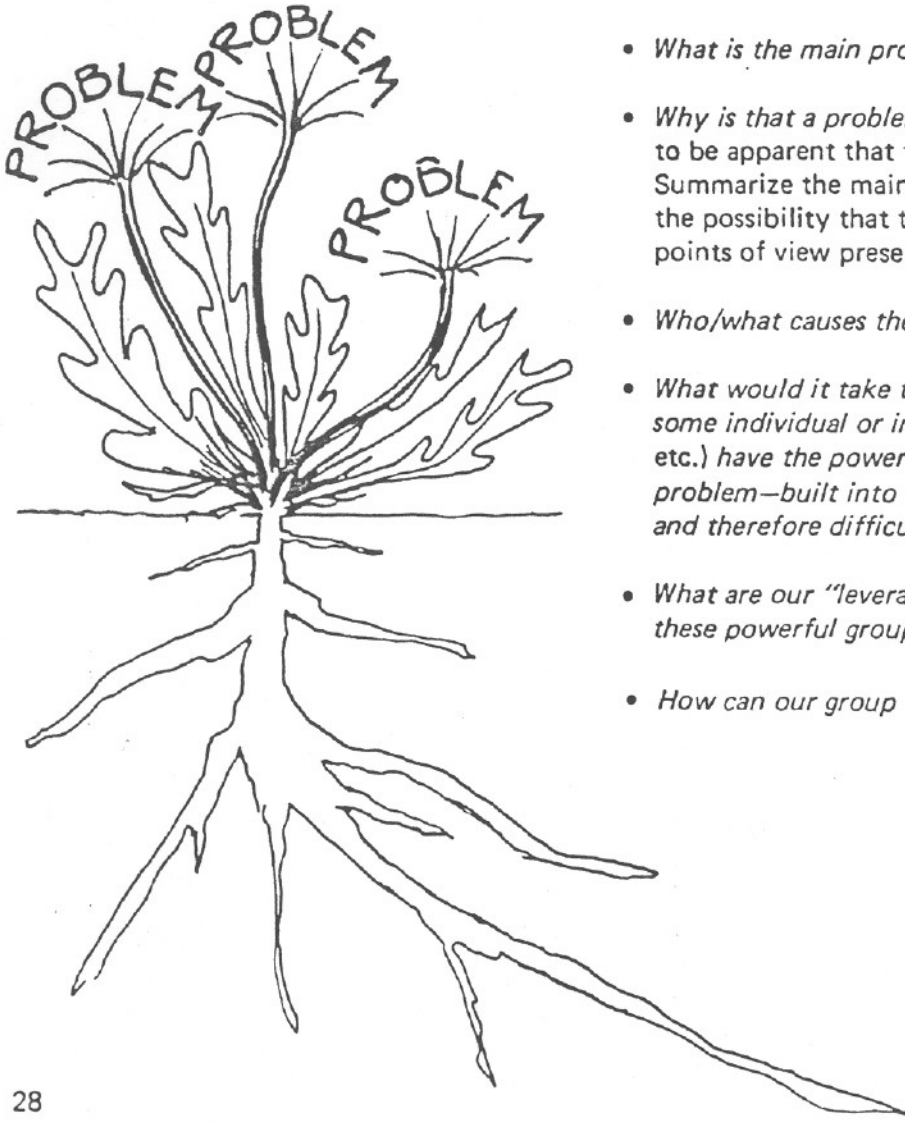
One way to get started on program planning is to clarify some of the assumptions that have gone into any previous programs your group has undertaken, and to develop your analysis of the problems you're trying to deal with. To help you explore this route, here are two exercises which can be used by either individuals or groups. The first is a question-and-answer approach; the second involves "mapping" some of the forces that influence your group and its projects.



Developing Your Analysis

Rare is the group which has articulated—much less written down—its own view of the problems it's grappling with. Such theorizing strikes many people as a luxury or a waste of time; "thoughtful analysis" may conjure images of an Arnold Toynbee or some other history professor, sitting by a fireplace, contemplating the course of human events. Imagine instead an animated, informal discussion about the causes of community problems. Your community. Its problems. And your citizen group. What would it take to get that sort of process going? Perhaps the following questions would be useful for openers:

Questions for Determining Root Causes of Problems that Concern Your Group:



- *What is the main problem that concerns our group?*
- *Why is that a problem?* (Repeat this question until it begins to be apparent that the group is getting down to root causes. Summarize the main points of the discussion, allowing for the possibility that there are different and perhaps conflicting points of view presented.)
- *Who/what causes the problems? How?*
- *What would it take to really eliminate the problem? Does some individual or institution* (legislature, court, corporation, etc.) *have the power to eliminate it? Or, is it a "system" problem—built into the established way of doing things and therefore difficult to eliminate?*
- *What are our "leverage points" of potential influence over these powerful groups/institutions?*
- *How can our group tie into this situation in a powerful way?*

The case example below will provide a chance to try out these questions (or you may want to deal directly with your own group's program).

CASE EXAMPLE:

A local church group has been running an assistance program for migrant farm laborers at nearby farms. Recycled clothing is dropped off early in the harvest season as a gift to the laborers and their families. Canned goods and staples, such as powered milk, are delivered weekly—donations from church members. Also, the church's movie projector is loaned to the migrant camp for their weekly recreation night. (Films borrowed through the regional library system are shown.) Occasionally, church members will go to the recreation nights and talk with the migrant families.

DISCUSSION:

The church has chosen a specific program based on their own analysis of the problem. What would you say their analysis of the problem is? What is your analysis of the problem? How much of the real problem does the church's program deal with? What would happen is the program ended?

What are the church's assumptions about the "needy"? What could be done to increase the effectiveness of the program? What would you do if you were a member of the church, to raise these questions?

CASE HISTORY: AN ANALYSIS THAT WORKED

It makes sense to ask whether a thorough analysis will really be worth the group's time, whether it will really make a difference in the quality or effectiveness of the program that results. The case described here is one in which analysis really paid off; it's from the experience of **Women in Agriculture**, a small study and action group based in Northampton, Massachusetts. **Pat Sackrey** was the spokesperson for the group:

Analysis of current facts and trends

We started working on the New England Small Farm Institute because we discovered that one of the huge gaps in the Massachusetts agriculture picture was the education of farmers. People who grow up on farms are tending not to stay on them as farmers; the average age of farmers in New England is 55 to 60 and there aren't any young farmers coming up to take their place.

Information-gathering

We were concerned about the loss of farmland; we were convinced that the best way to keep land in farming was to keep farmers farming, and there weren't any coming up. We investigated here at UMass and discovered that the University teaches people how corn grows but not how to grow corn. And it was no wonder then that people weren't coming into the field. If you didn't grow up on a farm there wasn't any place to learn it from scratch, you know—at any rate,, not as a person over college age. (There are some good high school programs.)

Taking the initiative

Identifying resources

So we decided that we wanted somebody to start educating farmers and, to make a long story short, after we investigated and found out that nobody wanted to, we decided, well heck, we'd do it ourselves. So through some very fortuitous contacts, we learned that it would be possible to perhaps do—to start a small farm school at the Belchertown State School for Retarded Citizens' old farmstead.

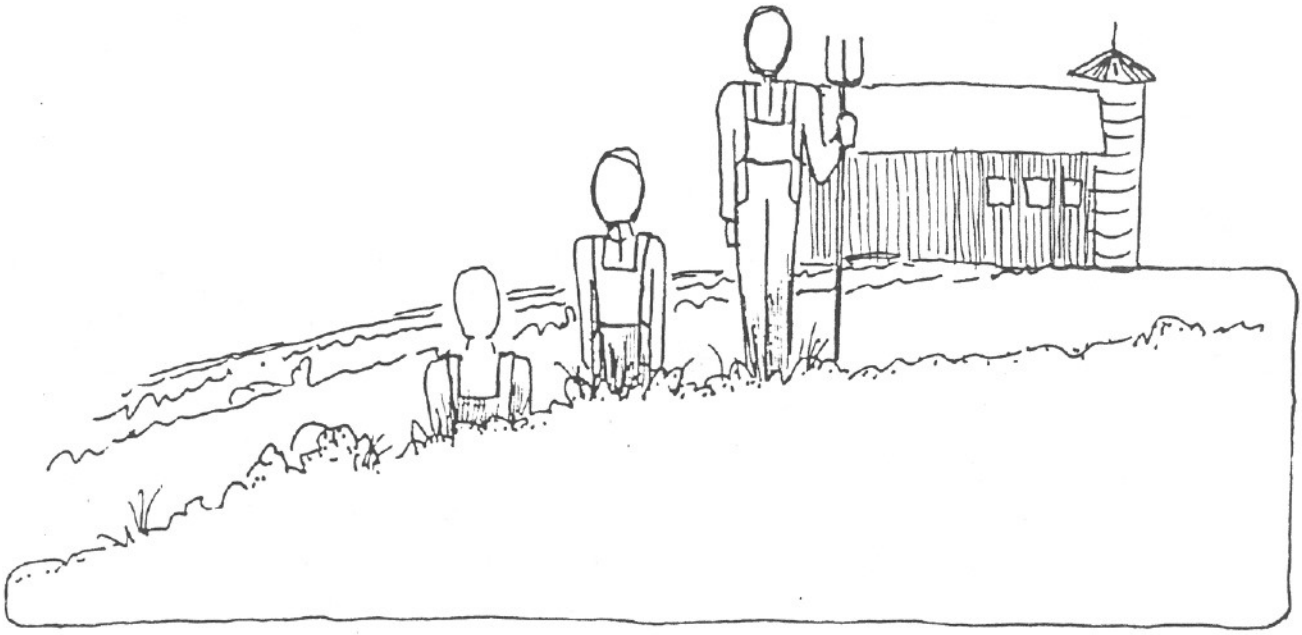
More analysis

. . . One of our big ideas was that state-owned land which is not now being farmed is very vulnerable to development, and that there should be a lot of good uses it could be put to and we would like to be the guinea pigs. There's no precedent for a private group using such a place as Belchertown [State School]. And that's been the *hardest part—working with various bureaucracies and trying to reach agreement.*

Lining up support

. . . We started right away, seeing what we would need at a small farm school, and we developed a pretty comprehensive program over about a year-and-a-half, by meeting with people from everywhere, learning what we could, getting consultants in on a free basis from various agencies, to look at the soil, to talk with us about the needs for farmers who want to farm in small ways (that is, appropriate to the New England landscape) and also in energy-conserving ways—petrochemically based fertilizers and pesticides used little or not at all—the idea being that we really do have to have more self-reliance, and that that's another way we're dependent on the outside regions in some fairly scarey dimensions, is through these petrochemical inputs.

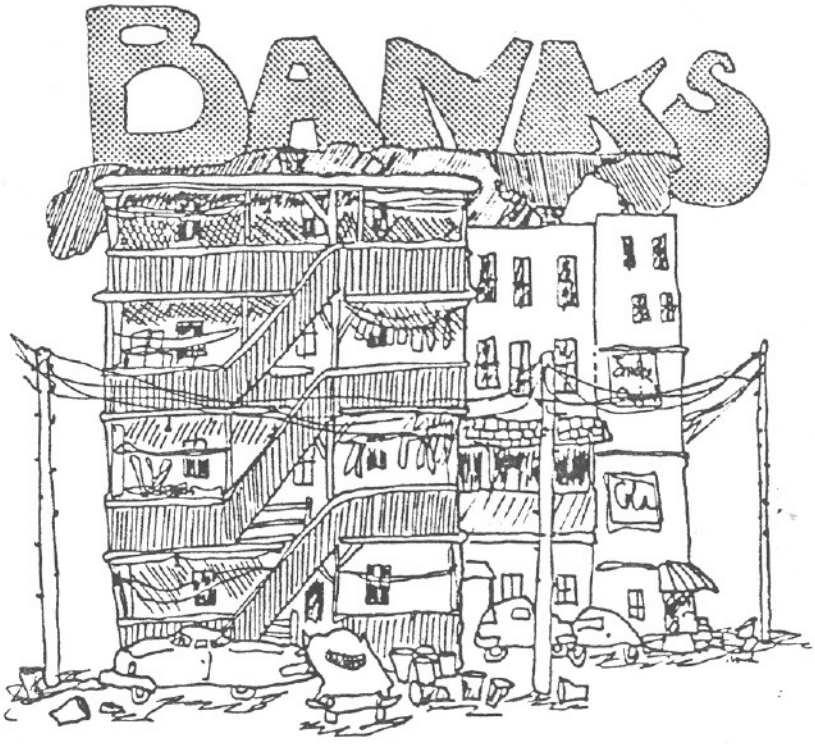
. . . We've had very good support for the project, but it's been slow; it's been two years, almost, that we've been working on it, and we are just now at the point of getting the land.



Developing Your Anaylsis: A Sample of Analytic Thinking

The problem:

Many people in our community live in sub-standard housing—perhaps as many as 15%.



Possible Causes:

1. These people are too poor to afford any better.

2. Housing officials turn their backs on code violations.

3. Landlords are going for immediate profits without concerning themselves with building maintenance.

4. Banks have "redlined" certain neighborhoods —written them off as bad risks—so that improvement loans are not available.

This list of possible causes focuses attention on the question of "Who to blame" or rather "Who should we go to, to get some leverage on the problem?" If you pick cause #4, you may decide to try to get bankers to change their policies; if you pick cause #2, you may try to put some pressure on local government for code enforcement.

But even after you've decided to focus on one of the causes from the list above, you may still have more analysis left to do. For example, suppose you're concerned about #1 above -- the low incomes of people living in substandard housing. What is the cause of <u>that</u>? Some people think that the poor are basically lazy and could be making more money if they would only try harder. Others point to the need for job training programs, still others point to the way unemployment and underemployment are built into our economic system (economic planners assume that a certain percent of the population has to be unemployed in order to hold down inflation).

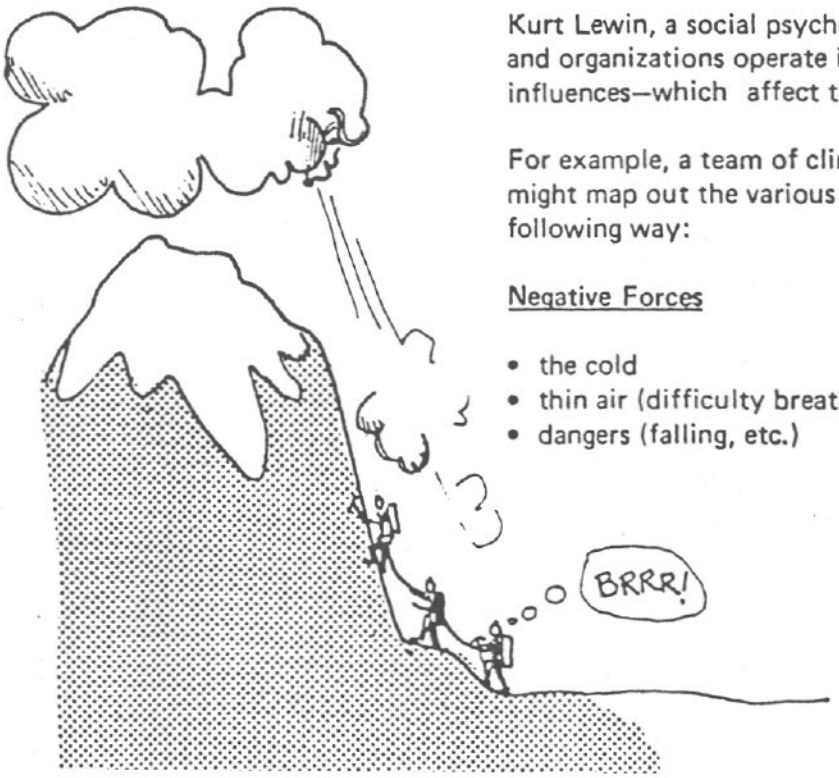
In other words, is the problem with the individual, with the lack of training programs, or with the economic system? Any citizen action group needs to make a choice before it can work effectively on this issue.

Even after you've reached consensus about causes, you may still have choices to make about strategy. If you've decided to work on cause #4, do you attempt to influence the bankers, or do you try to go around them by locating alternate sources of capital for improvements? There are ideas later in this manual about choosing a program approach approach; for now the question should be "What information about the banking system would we need to gather in order to be prepared to assess our chances?"

Discussion Questions

- *For the problem which concerns you, what are some possible explanations of the reasons for the problem?*
- *How do you choose among competing explanations?*
- *What factual information will be relevant?*
- *What can you do when members of your group disagree about explanations?*
- *How could you personally raise these analysis questions during the meetings and day-to-day functioning of your group?*

Force-Field Analysis



Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, developed the notion that people and organizations operate in a "field" of forces—positive and negative influences—which affect the likelihood of achieving one's goals.

For example, a team of climbers headed for the peak of Mt. Everest might map out the various forces they had to deal with in the following way:

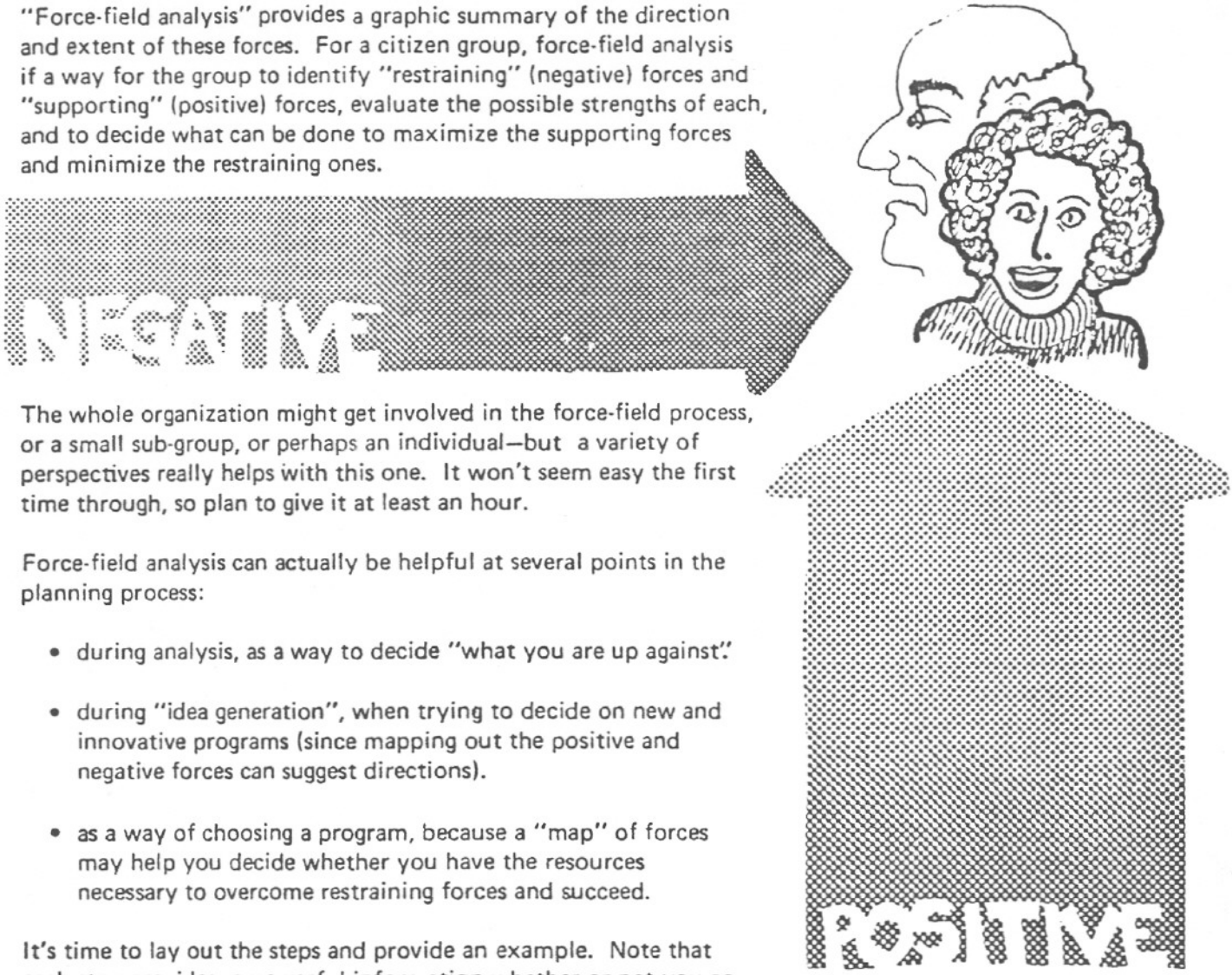
<u>Negative Forces</u>

- the cold
- thin air (difficulty breathing)
- dangers (falling, etc.)

<u>Positive Forces</u>

- good equipment
- maps and charts
- past experiences climbing

"Force-field analysis" provides a graphic summary of the direction and extent of these forces. For a citizen group, force-field analysis if a way for the group to identify "restraining" (negative) forces and "supporting" (positive) forces, evaluate the possible strengths of each, and to decide what can be done to maximize the supporting forces and minimize the restraining ones.

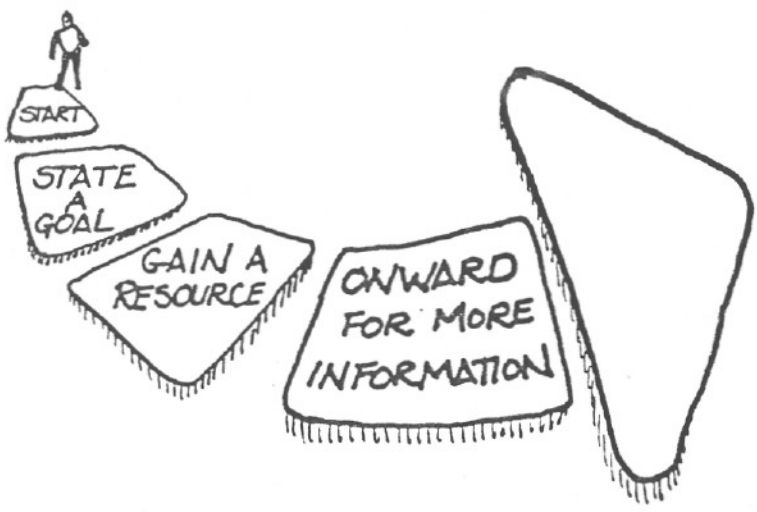


The whole organization might get involved in the force-field process, or a small sub-group, or perhaps an individual—but a variety of perspectives really helps with this one. It won't seem easy the first time through, so plan to give it at least an hour.

Force-field analysis can actually be helpful at several points in the planning process:

- during analysis, as a way to decide "what you are up against".
- during "idea generation", when trying to decide on new and innovative programs (since mapping out the positive and negative forces can suggest directions).
- as a way of choosing a program, because a "map" of forces may help you decide whether you have the resources necessary to overcome restraining forces and succeed.

It's time to lay out the steps and provide an example. Note that each step provides some useful information whether or not you go on to complete the rest of the process.



STEP 1: State the purpose, goal, or objective which you are working toward.

This may be the broadest purpose of your organization, or an objective on the way to a specific program, depending on how far your planning has progressed. Also identify the present situation. The group's problem is how to move from the present situation toward the goal.

■ STEP 2: Identify the forces which will both help and impede you in attaining the goal.

Line off your paper as shown in the example below and write in the labels "restraining forces" and "supporting forces" and begin to brainstorm items for each list. *Suggestion:* start with the restraining forces and ask yourselves the question, *"What blocks our progress?"* Then go on to the supporting forces, asking, *"What forces acting around us will help us succeed?"*

■ STEP 3: Identify the strength of each force.

Draw in arrows which indicate, by their length, how strong the forces are.

■ STEP 4: Brainstorm ways to eliminate the restraints and increase the supporting forces.

In this case you are looking for active measures which the group could take. *Suggestion:* it may help to focus your view by identifying forces which are easiest to change, hardest to change, and those which are outside your control.

The group might get energized by tackling the hard forces first (you might even find you can do something about the forces "outside your control").

The possible actions can be written on the "supporting forces" side, preferably in a color different from the one used before. If you have developed several program ideas already in your program planning, be sure to put them on your "map."

■ STEP 5 (optional): List available organizational resources which might help you in Step 4.

At the bottom of the "Supporting Forces" column, list your resources in terms of time (person-hours, days), funds, support from other groups, etc.

■ STEP 6 (optional): Distribute resources among the most promising active measures.

Suggestion: it's often essential to counteract the most serious restraining forces before you start to increase the supporting forces.

■ STEP 7: Decide whether you have enough resources to succeed.

Do "Supporting Forces" plus "Active Measures Chosen" outweigh the restraining forces? If not, you will need either to:
1. choose different action steps;
2. generate more resources; or
3. abandon the purpose.

Sample Force-Field Analysis

The issue used as an example in the previous section (**"Developing Your Analysis"**) is developed here, using the Force-Field technique.

Key:

Forces existing in the community

Active measures to counteract restraint or increase supporting forces

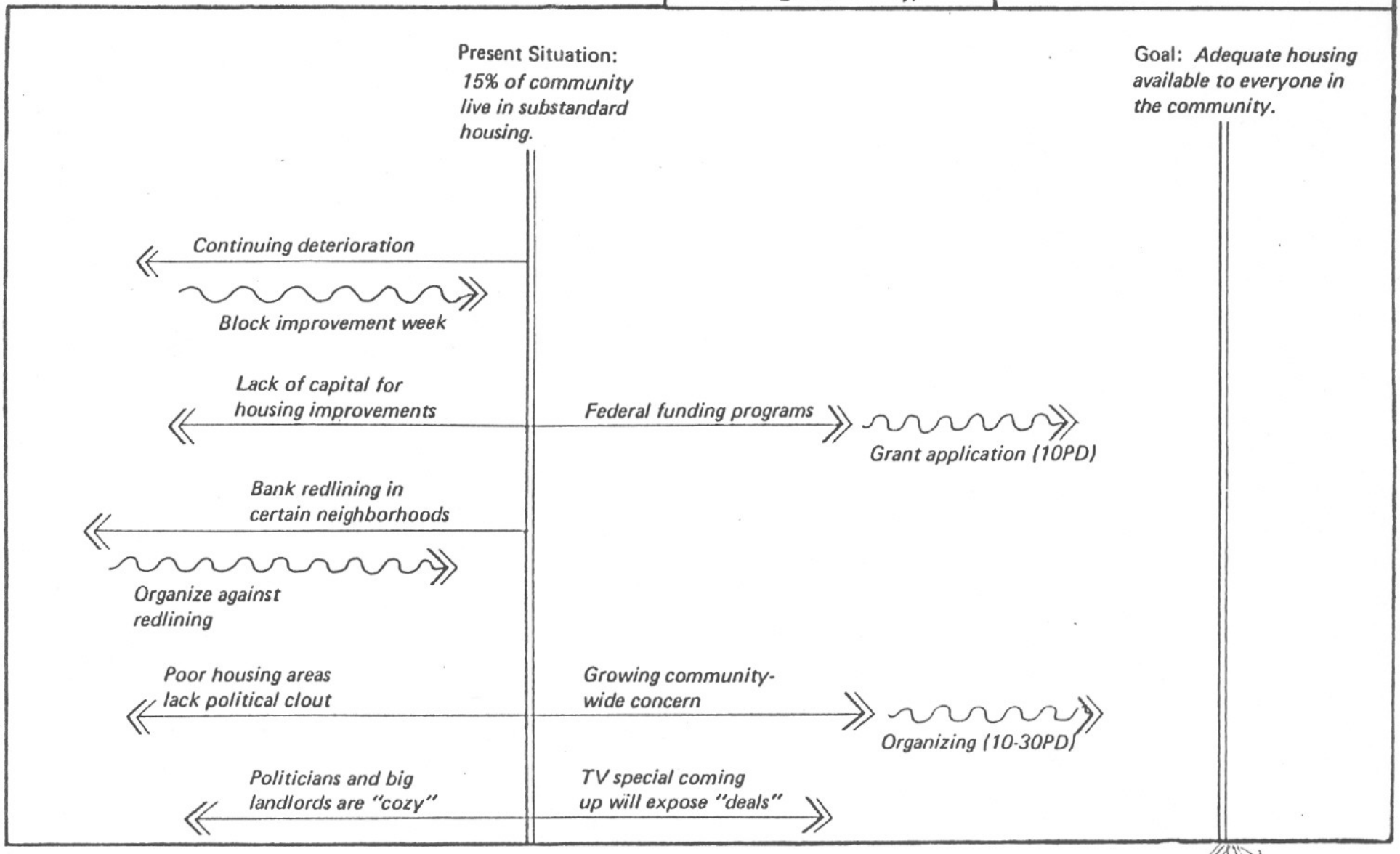
Resources Available:

Person days (PD) - about 50

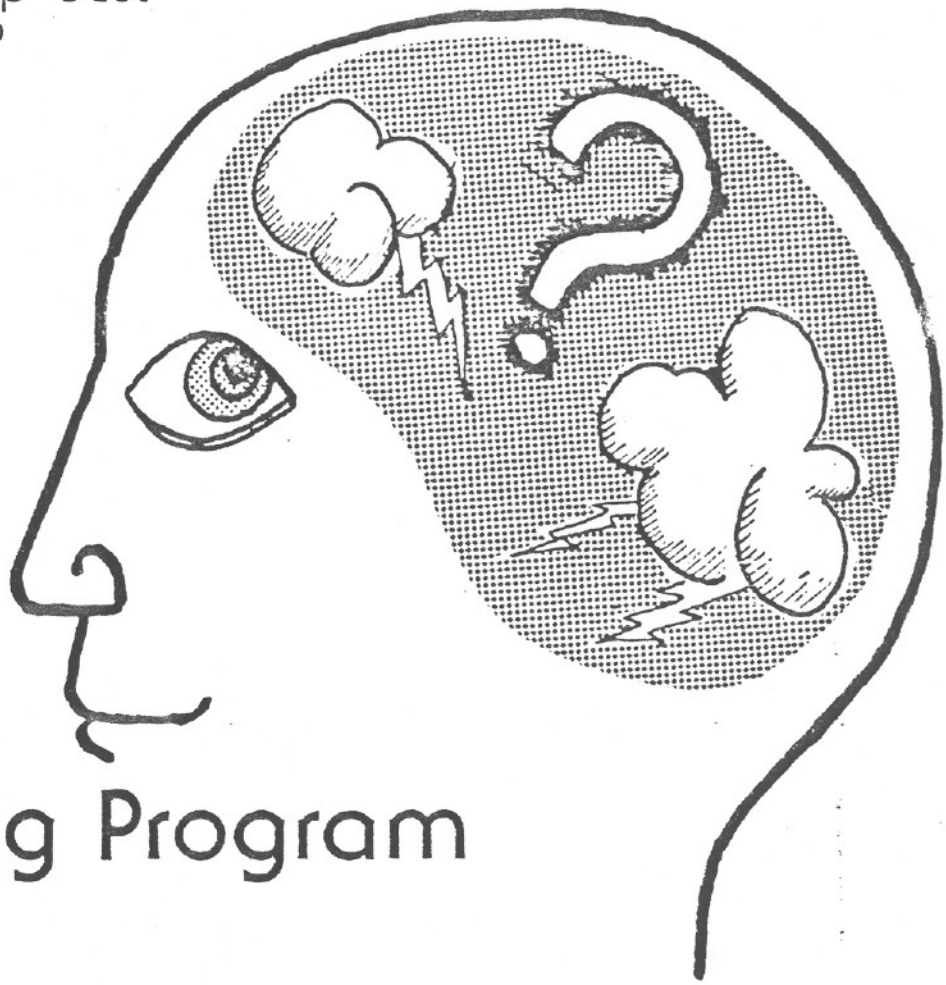
Funds ($) - about $200 (more possibly)

Other groups' support (OG) - WQQQ - TV
- Council of Churches

Other resources (R)



- How do you personally generate ideas? How does your group best generate ideas?



4

Generating Program Ideas

Some people believe that human beings would generally do nothing if they could—that they are basically lazy, needing strong incentives to get anything accomplished. Others are more optimistic about human nature: people, if adequately fed, sheltered and loved, are very creative, delighting in solving problems and coping with new situations.

Which camp are you closest to and how does that affect your idea of social problems and citizen goals?

Where Do Program Ideas Come From?

There is no sure fire way to generate good program ideas—there are many ways. This section presents several different approaches, each based on a different notion of where program ideas come from.

- Sometimes program ideas come after you have gotten clear on your purposes and then thought carefully about methods to meet a specific purpose.

  If you like that approach, try the activity that has to do with screening and revising possible goal statements, "**Do You Take This Statement to Be Your Lawfully Wedded Goal?**"

- Sometimes the most innovative ideas come from not taking the goal or problem at face value. Citizen groups are in a position to demonstrate innovative approaches to social problems if they can develop their own versions of what's wrong and what can be done about it.
  If this line of attack intrigues you, try the "**Problem Redefinition**" exercise.

- Sometimes they come from a free-form brainstorm in which participants are welcome to state any idea they have, whether it is a broad purpose or a specific project.
  If you like this approach, turn to the "**Wish List**" exercise.

- Sometimes program ideas come from focusing on an examination of the opportunities or resources that a group has available to it.
  There's also the chance that you will find that the problem you're trying to cope with has a "silver lining"—a possibility for the group to do even *better* than just "setting things right."
  And so there's an exercise on "**Problem/Possibility Areas: Opportunity Analysis.**"

- Sometimes they come from bad ideas or from some that just seem "not quite right."
  One way to turn bland ideas into better ones is found in the activity labeled "Exploring Options."

Do You Take This Statement to Be Your Lawfully Wedded Goal?

Screening Potential Goal Statements

no. people: 3 to many
minimum time: 20 minutes
materials: Copies of the worksheet on page on pages 42-3.
List of group goals

From time to time in the life of an organization, there develops a longing for the security and assurance of having a neat and tidy list of goals. Then, someone, or a committee, will set about to author a goal statement. It may emerge from a problem statement: "The goal of this group is to (remedy the problem)." It may emerge from your analysis of root causes or restraining forces. It may emerge from your group vision of the ideal situation.

This exercise assumes that you already have drafted a goal statement. The purpose of the activity is to help your group decide whether it will accept a particular statement as an official, now-and-ever-after goal of the group. It will also help participants to learn to distinguish a goal statement from a nongoal; acquire skills in refining goal statements so that they will be more useful to the group; experience a process for deciding whether the group will accept a goal.

(Any group that doesn't have a statement of possible goals could call a quick huddle and come up with one. Don't worry about the wording—this activity will help you perfect it.)

1. Form groups of three to five people each; if your organization is small or your time is abundant, the entire group could work together.

2. Distribute one or more "potential goals" to each small group.

3. Designate a facilitator and recorder for each group, who will guide the group through the following steps:

   - Write the potential goal statement in its initial form in section A of the Goal Revision Worksheet.

   - Discuss the six questions in section B and record the group's answers.

   - Draft a "Revised Version #1" of the goal; alternatively, use that space on the worksheet to record ideas for improvements, suggested rewording of phrases, etc.

   - Draft a "Revised Version #2" and discuss whether it is an acceptable statement of the goal. The group may wish to answer the six questions again with respect to the revised version.

Goal Revision worksheet

Initial Goal Statement

	Questions		Comments
1	*Is the statement a statement of future intention—an event or situation that would take place in the future?*	yes ☐ no ☐	If not, it's probably not a goal; try to rewrite so the answer will be "yes."
2	*Is the statement made in terms of the outside world, or in terms of what the group will do?*	yes ☐ no ☐	A statement in terms of what the group will do is probably a strategy for achieving some goal. Ask yourselves, "What do we want this group activity to accomplish?"
3	*Is that statement clear enough that you will be able to tell when you have reached the goal?*	yes ☐ no ☐	The most useful goal statements are those with criteria built into them: "All Senior Citizens in town will have access to hot lunches." The goal statement needs to describe an observable situation or event.
4	*Is the goal* feasible *for the group to achieve?*	yes ☐ no ☐	There's nothing wrong with ambitious ambitious goals, but at least some should be well enough within reach that the group can sense the prospect of success. Rewrite if you need to.
5	*Does the goal fall within the mandate or broad purpose which brought the group together in the first place?*	yes ☐ no ☐	A small group will have to bring this question to the organization as a whole to find out for sure, though it might offer the opinion that a particular goal is not within the organization's "ball park."
6	*Is the group really committed to the goal?*	yes ☐ no ☐	No use having a batch of goals that sit on the shelf gathering dust. Unless the organization is really willing to "get married to" a goal and work with it, you'd be better off to scratch it off the list. Better to have a short list of "live" goals which will really be used as a basis for selecting programs, as inspiration, as a reminder of what the organization is all about!

Revised Version #1

Revised Version #2

After you're satisfied with the wording of the goal, share your work with the other small groups. Here are some additional questions which you may want to consider:

Discussion Questions

- *Does the combined list of goals reflect the full range of concerns on which your group is based?*
- *Is the combined list short enough to be manageable? Keep in mind that the objectives of specific projects can be spelled out later.*
- *Do the goals generate excitement? Do they clarify the reason that the group has joined together?*
- *If any of the answers were "no," what do you need to reword or change?*

Once you're satisfied with your list of goals, you may want to take it with you to the next activity -- **"Wish List"** -- which suggests ways of generating specific project ideas.

Creating a Vision: Wish List

no. people: 3 to many!
minimum time: 15 minutes
materials: newsprint, felt pens

Now is the time to recruit as many people as possible for some creative thinking. The purpose of this activity is to generate as many as possible about programs/activities for your group.

1. Invite group members, staff and even the community at large to a "Where do we go from here?" meeting. Write one of the following questions on newsprint or on a large sheet of paper and hang it on the wall:

   - *What* should *our group be doing?*
   - *In the best of all worlds, with unlimited resources, what could our group do over the next few years?*
   - *What are some project ideas that might help us carry out our purposes?*

2. Start brainstorming ideas (see box for guidelines). Spend no more than fifteen minutes on this; the point is to get a lot of ideas out, fast.

3. It may help to refer to goal statements, analysis statements, force-field diagrams, old idea lists, etc.

Guidelines for Brainstorming

Brainstorming is one method which can help a group of people get involved together in the process of generating creative ideas. A facilitator writes the topic or question to be brainstormed at the top of a large sheet of paper, then asks the group to call out their ideas in short phrases which can be written down quickly. In order to set a creative, high-energy tone, the following guidelines should be stated to the group from the onset:

- No judgements. No idea or suggestion, no matter how wild, is to be shot down, or edited. (There'll be time to evaluate the ideas later.)
- Anything goes. Offbeat, unusual, humorous and bizarre ideas are encouraged.
- Go for *quantity.* The more ideas, the better the chance of coming up with a winner.
- Building on other people's ideas is fine.

The facilitator of the brainstorm can help to keep things moving, if necessary, by 1. Setting a time limit—commonly 3 to 10 minutes (depending on topic and size of group), so that people will know they can't afford to sit on an idea; 2. giving a few examples to start things off (a "hailstorm"); 3. praising, coaxing (gently); 4. asking for different *sorts* of examples if the group starts to develop a "one track mind."

The conventional approach is to have one person record the group's ideas on newsprint with a felt marker, so that all can see. Sometimes two recorders work as a team, writing alternate items, so that the group won't have to wait for the recorders to catch up.

Another variation that is especially useful if you have several topics to brainstorm is to write each topic on a separate

sheet of newsprint paper, and provide each participant with a marker so they can go up to the lists and record items "grafitti-style."

Recent research indicates that brainstorming is *not necessarily* the best technique to generate lots of creative ideas. The problem seems to be that a group of people can go off on one tangent without exploring the full range of possibilities. This suggests several **variations** of the brainstorming process:

Variation 1: Instruct each group member to brainstorm *individually* on the topic, writing down ideas on a small piece of paper. Then share the ideas by reading off the lists (or compiling the lists later).

Variation 2: Divide the group into two or more teams, each to brainstorm on the same topic. This "parallel groups" approach has some of the advantage of Variation 1, plus the sense of group cooperation which is an important side-effect of brainstorming.

Despite its limitations, brainstorming remains a popular technique. For many groups, it has provided a first clear picture of their potential to think creatively together and to move off in new directions. It also lets everyone know where the ideas have come from, thus setting the stage for consensus and action.

You may want to keep the list posted for several weeks or months to provide a chance for late additions. You will probably find that a number of your brainstormed ideas are actually programs that have been run by other organizations. This is probably the most common source of program ideas, and you may want to develop more ways to learn about other groups' projects. Common sources of information are newsletters (try for a subscription exchange), conferences, support groups, phone calls, and the mass media.

4. Toward the end of a brainstorm, the facilitator can provide a little prompting: "Have you heard of other groups doing projects that we might want to try?"

   For the long run, the question is whether your group wants to maintain closer touch with other groups tackling the same issues, and if so, *who will do it and how?*

5. Once you have a long and varied list of project possibilities, Section 5 of this manual, "Choosing a Program," will help you narrow your choices and select the best.

   First, however, there are some additional methods for generating project ideas and developing them.

CASE HISTORY: BRAINSTORMING UNDER PRESSURE

Brainstorming isn't always done in the quietude of a planning meeting. Sometimes it occurs in the crowded, chaotic situations which may emerge during a protest demonstration or some other type of citizen action. **Frances Crowe**, a dedicated social activist and trainer from Northampton, Massachusetts, explained to us how she wound up using brainstorming with a group of college women who were staging a demonstration at the University of Massachusetts to secure more and better coverage of women's issues in the student newspaper, the **Daily Collegian.**

I had heard that they had a demonstration going last Monday, and it didn't sound too good to me. They had taken the **Collegians** *and put them in a pile on the floor and then they started walking around them and chanting, and people were trying to break through the line and grab their* **Collegians.** *They were pinching the women; they were going up in the balcony and throwing stuff down on them, so it got to be quite an ugly scene.*

Tuesday morning early somebody called me and said "We think we need some help with this" And so I said I'd be right over.

We sat down and brainstormed how we might raise the issue of needing women's pages in the **Collegian** *without actually causing so much disruption. We came up with the idea that maybe there was no way we were going to be able to really stop people from taking the* **Collegians,** *that maybe what we should do is get a couple of boxes and magic markers and get people to take their* **Collegians** *and say "Would you, when you're finished with your* **Collegian,** *would you mark on the front of it 'I support four pages of women's news once a week in the* **Collegian.'** *And then when you're ready to throw it away, dispose of it in this box, and we'll deliver it to the* **Collegian."**

And things went much better. I think that the women who were running it felt very positive about that, and we got a lot of **Collegians** *Collected. We had to run around fast, you know, to make signs and be there, but it helped them feel that there was a whole other way, and that with a little bit of pre-planning, it could go better.*

Playing with a Full Deck: Exploring Options

no. people: one to 20
minimum time: 20 minutes
materials: newsprint and felt pens

Here's a way to start with a program idea that isn't quite right and develop a better one. Actually it's a good approach any time you seem to be moving too quickly to a choice without exploring other options. It can be done by an individual or by a group of as many as 20 or so.

Some experts say that programs should be planned by *starting* with goal statements, but not everyone thinks in such a neat, rational sequence. This activity is handy if you have started with a program idea or two and you sense a need to think about *why* you might want to do them and *what* some other options would be. The official sequence is *Goals—Program Ideas—Detailed Plans.* The *why* and *what* questions lead to this sequence: *Original Program Idea—Why?—Goals—What?—Other Program Ideas—Choice—Detailed Plans.*

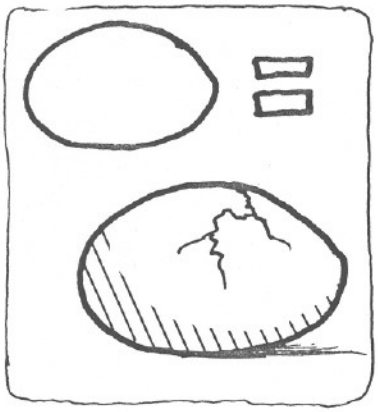
1. Write the program idea(s) on newsprint. Draw a line, and write the word "Why?"

2. Go around the group, asking participants *why* the group might undertake the proposed activity. Variations on this question could be asked instead: "If we did this, what would we get out of it? What purpose would it serve? What would we hope to achieve?" Sometimes it's useful to push the questioning even further: "Why would we want to do *that*?" could be asked of the replies. The objective is to get back to the real purpose of the activity.

3. Once enough people have had their say, it makes sense to summarize the purpose in a sentence or two. The assumption of this activity is that if the idea seemed interesting at all it was because its purpose had some appeal. And if we can state that purpose—make it explicit—then we're ready to ask the second question: "What else could we do that might serve that purpose?"
   You're in a position to use a brainstorm approach (see the Wish List exercise) to try to get some fresh answers.

Problem Redefinition

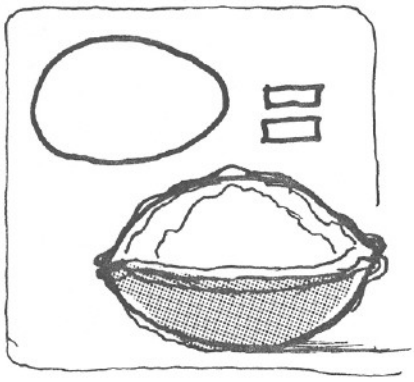
Too many people spend their lives trying to solve the *wrong* problem. For example: Long, long ago, as the story goes, a company that had been selling walnuts in the shell decided that it wanted to be the first company to offer shelled, whole walnuts. The company executives gathered a team of its best and its brightest, and they all thought very hard about how to break into a walnut shell without scrunching the walnut meat inside. One day, they were about to conclude that the problem had no solution at all, but as the team of inventive people stood in the company cafeteria line discussing the problem, the cook—who had overheard them—offered this clue:

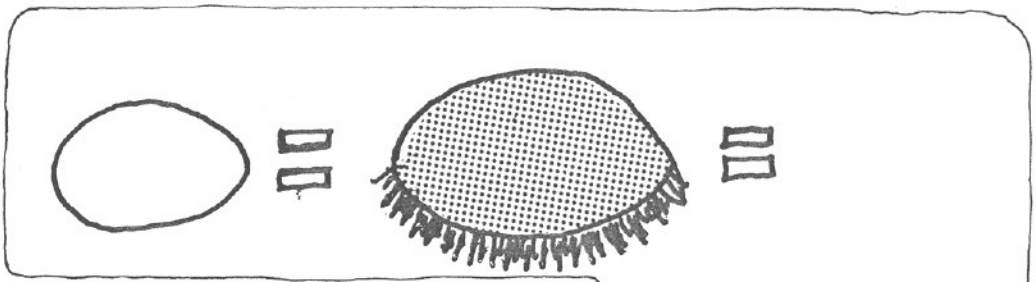


"Well, you know, there are lots of different ways to crack an egg: you can crack 'em with a knife, you can crack 'em on the edge of the bowl, you can even crack one egg with another egg. But the feller who does the neatest job cracking eggs is the chick who's trying to get out."

"Aha!" said one of the best and brightest, "All this time we've been trying to crack into the walnut from the outside. If only there was a way to crack a walnut from the *inside*!"

(The solution they came up with was to stick a hypodermic needle into each walnut and puff it up with air until the shell exploded away!) **The moral of the story is that you're not likely to get a new solution if you keep looking at the problem in the same old way.**



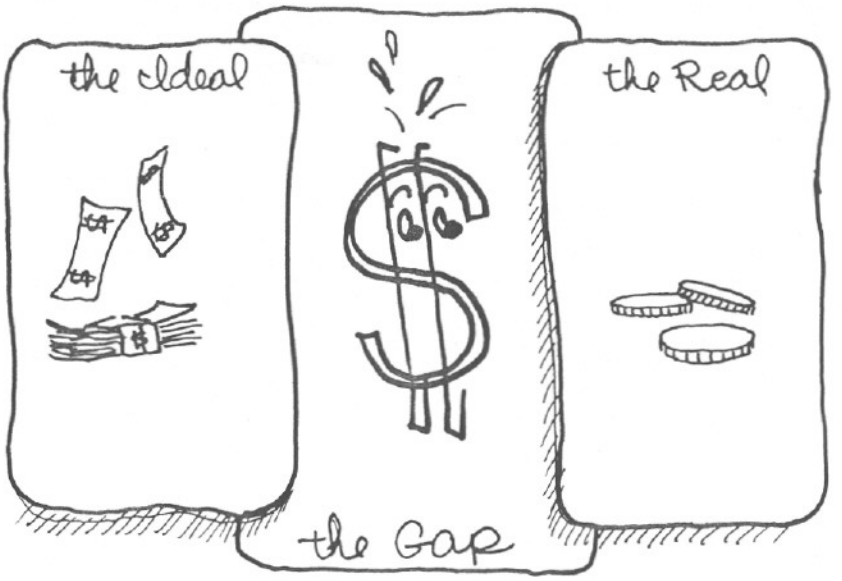


Does this apply to citizen groups? We think so. Often, there's an established way of doing things. A school assumes that a student who's doing poorly needs more time with the teacher or the textbooks; a job training program assumes that an unemployed person may need to acquire more job skills; a neighborhood group assumes that an apathetic group needs a block party to increase community-mindedness. Each of these groups may be treating the wrong problem, and if so, they're wasting time and money doing it.

Any citizen group that wants to make sure its program idea is worth the bother might think about probing for *alternative definitions* of the problem it's trying to solve. There's more than one way to redefine a problem; if the first doesn't work, try harder.

Method 1: The Gap

You'll need three sheets of newsprint, felt-tipped pens, and a general idea of the problem area or goal. Label one newsprint sheet, *"The Ideal";* the second, *"The Real";* and the third is *"The Gap."* The group should list aspects of the ideal (situations or events, as specifically as possible), and do the same for the real (the present situation). Then the two sheets should be compared and the differences recorded under the heading, *"The Gap."* According to one definition, a problem is "the difference between ideal and actual"—and so the *gap* should, by definition, be the problem. You should ask yourselves whether it really is—and you will probably want to summarize the *gap* items into a problem statement.



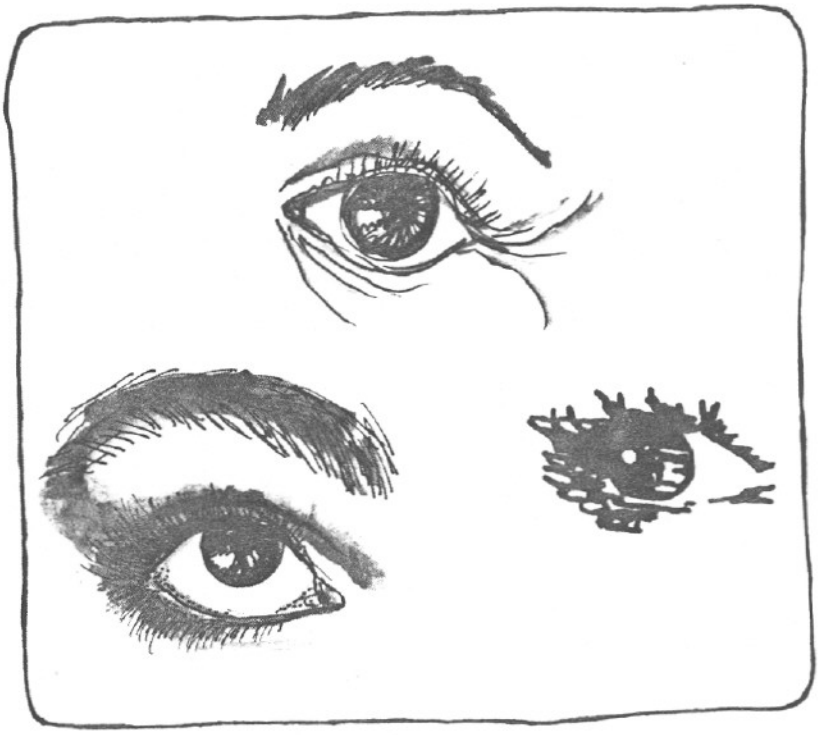
Method 2: Whose View?

The "secret" of this method is that a problem may look different to different people.

1. Ask yourself in whose view your problem is now stated.

2. Take on some other views, by imagining yourself as the person who has the problem, your grandmother, your granddaughter, the secretary general of the U.N., an undernourished person in a less developed country, and so on.

3. Imagine yourself to be each of these people or, if at all possible, go and ask them what they think the real problem is. Then summarize your findings.



Problem/Possibility Areas: Opportunity Analysis

no. people: one to many
minimum time: 20 minutes
materials: pen and paper or newsprint and felt pens.

There is a tendency in our society to create programs by starting with a *problem* statement. This is often useful, but it overlooks the possibility that we might want ot go further than just "ironing out the wrinkles" in the social fabric—we might want to make things much better, rather than just to "solve problems."

Futurist Robert Theobald takes this into account when he talks about "Problem/Possibility Areas." Every problem implies some possibilities or opportunities. Let's not settle for curing the patient—the objective should be to help the person become a vibrantly healthy human being. And sometimes, if we look only for "problems" to solve, we miss the golden opportunities that are right in front of us.

1. List all the group's opportunities that you can think of. The following categories may help suggest opportunities to you:
   - abilities and interests of group members
   - untapped community resources—for example, people with knowledge, contacts, money, or time
   - utopian visions and practical ideas for a better community.

2. Review any problem lists you have (from previous activities), or write a brief problem statement. Then look for the "other side of the coin"—the positive outcomes that might be achieved.

3. Push a little harder: imagine that your group is very successful; what positive changes could it bring about?

4. Your list at this point may be a hodgepodge of program ideas, people-resources, interests, and so on. See which can be turned into program ideas. Then take your list to the "Choosing a Program" section, with a stopover, if you like, at the following paragraphs on developing a program idea.

CASE HISTORY: SOMETHING BORROWED

Sometimes the best program ideas for a particular situation are ones which other groups have already tried and found effective. Here's an example from the Boston women's organization, **Nine to Five.**

Ellen Cassedy: *There was the* Petty Office Procedures Contest, *that we did last year, where we asked people to send in their entry for the most ridiculous thing they'd been asked to do in an office, and we awarded the prize to a boss who asked his secretary to sew up a rip in his pants while he was still wearing them.*

Duane Dale: *How did you ever come up with that?*

Cassedy: *Actually, we got the idea from another working women's organization, and I don't know how they thought it up.*

Dale: *Did one particular person hear about this idea from the other organization, or . . .*

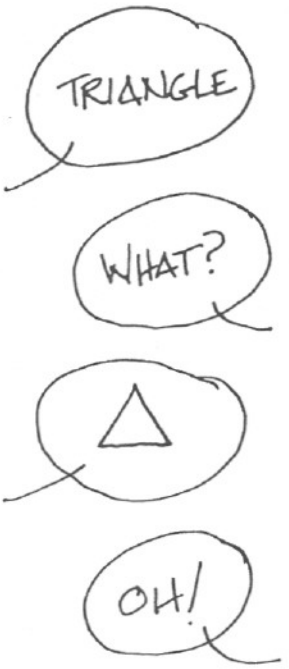
Cassedy: *I think they probably read about it in a newsletter from one of the other organizations, and the Executive Board* **[of Nine to Five]**, *which is about ten people, was fishing around for something to do toward the end of the summer that would be a good filler kind of thing to do, and decided that this would be good. A lot of what we do takes a year, and it's hard to follow if you're not involved in the organization, so what we wanted was something that would catch the imagination of people who were not involved day-to-day, that would reach out so that people could understand it instantly and just get a charge out of it right away.*

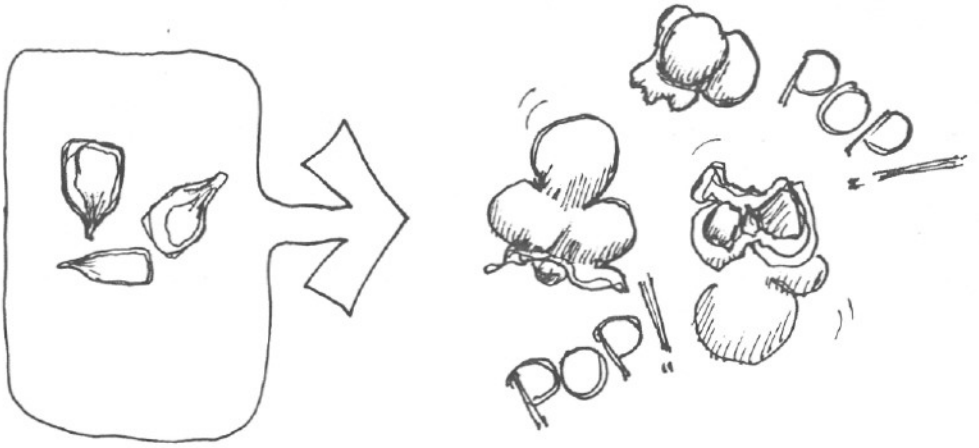
. . . It was an example of something that was successful—it was short, it didn't try to do a tremendous amount, and it didn't take very much energy. But it got a lot of press, and it got people involved.

Developing a Program Idea

Program ideas often appear as mere nuggets or kernels: "run a community health fair," or "start an oral history project." The next step is to develop the kernels into full-blown program ideas. This will serve two purposes:

1. everyone will have approximately the same notion of what is being considered, and
2. you will begin to anticipate problems or think of the little improvements which could assure success. The point is to take an abstract idea and *make it real* in people's minds—before it happens, even before the group has to choose one alternative future for itself over another.





Here are some ways you can do this, either as an individual, a planning committee, or in small teams within a planning workshop:

- Draw sketches or build a model.

Several years ago, the University of Massachusetts was planning its first "Toward Tomorrow Fair" —a festival of alternatives in energy, housing, social action, and lifestyle. A simple aerial sketch of the fairgrounds went a long way in explaining to interested parties (including funding sources) what was planned. The sketch also drew attention to the importance of colorful banners and pendants to add eye-appeal to the fairgrounds.

One doesn't need to be a polished artist to draw sketches that will serve the purpose. For certain sorts of projects a three-dimensional model, made from inexpensive or recycled materials, may be even more useful.

- Develop a rough schedule of events.

Whether you're talking about a one-night discussion program or a year-long petition drive and organizing campaign, a step-by-step list of events will flesh out the concept and identify possible snags and alternatives.

- Write a script.

This carries the previous idea a bit further. If your proposed program involves talking with someone—neighbors by telephone, officials at City Hall, or people who stop at a booth—write a script of the probable conversation. In some cases, this is exactly the sort of information that will make your idea "more real" to other group members and allow allow them to decide whether to "buy in."

- Develop a rough implementation plan.

Take a systematic approach: fill out the planning list below, giving your best guess about each item.

Number (and names) of people involved:
Starting and ending dates:
Average number of hours/person:
Types of tasks involved:
Costs:
Milestones:
How we'll know when we've succeeded:

Contingency Planning

no. people: 5 or more
minimum time: 15 minutes
materials: newsprint, felt pens

Contingency planning can be used to anticipate problems and plan for them *before* they happen. It can also be used to build flexibility into the plan by identifying choice points at which alternate plans can be introduced.

This activity can be used to develop a program idea you have been considering, or you may want to try out the contingency planning process using this hypothetical situation:

> Suppose that your group has decided to raise funds by throwing a spectacular party; you want to be sure that it comes off smoothly.

1. Form groups of at least five people each; larger groups will produce faster-moving brainstorms, but smaller groups will encourage more individual participation in discussion.

2. Identify a facilitator-recorder in each group, who will lead a brainstorm on events which could disrupt the plan. (See Brainstorm Guidelines, pages 44-5.)

3. Put the topic for the brainstorm at the top of a newsprint sheet, (such as): Events which could disrupt the *spectacular fund-raising party*. Spend five or ten minutes brainstorming possible disruptive events.

4. After you have a list of possible disruptions, choose a few of them and decide how you might respond to each. For example, if you wanted to prepare for hail during an outdoor party, you might want to be ready to move inside or build a geodesic dome over the party, or provide table-tennis paddles to bat the hailstones away.

5. If there is time, use a similar process to identify points where the flexibility of alternative plans would be desirable. Have the group review the program plan and identify the choice points; list these on newsprint. Then, beside each choice point, list possible alternative plans.

Discussion

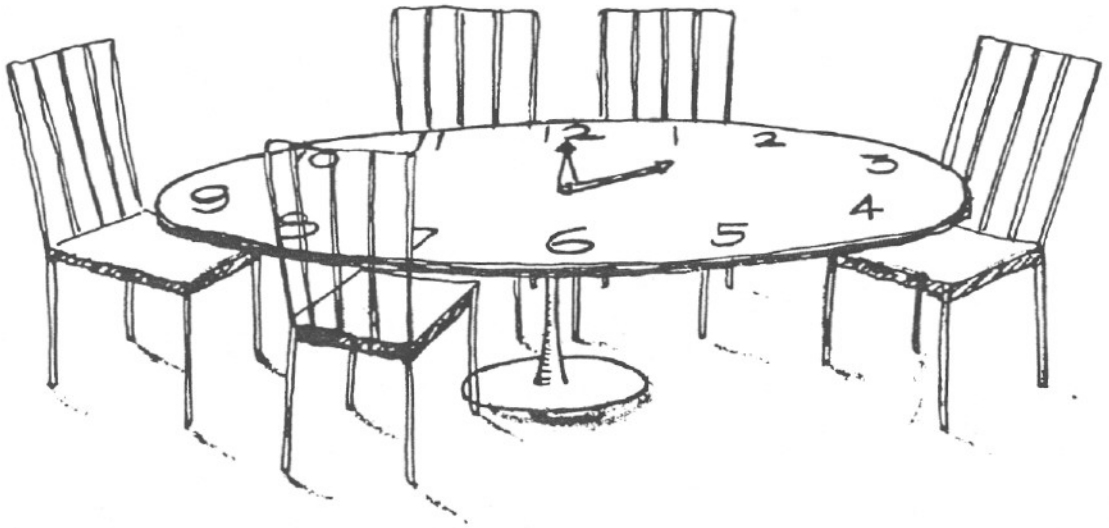
Using contingency planning requires decisions as to *which* fallback plans are worth developing, and this calls for the same sort of consensus building and decision-making as the main plan. The cost of preparing a backup plan will need to be weighed against the benefits that result and the likelihood that the fallback plan will actually be needed. In a real situation, it would be important to help the group decide which options it wanted to pursue. Workshop participants may want to share opinions about the usefulness of the process; they may come up with variations that would fit their particular situation.

- How do you decide whether there is enough support for a particular idea to choose it? Does the majority rule? Two-thirds vote? Consensus? Is there a way to incorporate the minority view?

- How do you decide when it's time to stop generating new program ideas and start choosing?

5
Choosing a Program

So far, we assume, you've been exploring several—maybe many—alternative program ideas, keeping an open mind, pausing to consider some paths that won't be taken. Eventually, the time comes to decide what your organization will and won't do.



There are several key aspects to this decision, and they can be summarized as questions:

- *Do we* want *to do it?*
- *How well does a program fulfill our goals?*
- *How important is the outcome in the eyes of the members? Does it have any negative impacts?*
- Can *we do it?*
- *Is it feasible, given the money, time, skills, and other resources that we have?*
- *Does it allow enough time for other important activities?*
- *Are there forces operating outside (or within) the group that will prevent its success?*

Once these two groups of questions are considered and facts, opinions, and forecasts are gathered, it becomes possible to ask:

- *Which of our program ideas do we* most want *to implement?*
- *Do we have a strong enough commitment as an organization and as individuals to make the project succeed?*

Activities in this section provide ways to deal with these questions.

How Closely Does Each Program Idea Relate to Your Goals?

no. people: 1
minimum time: 5 min.
materials: form below

This is an opportunity for you to dust off your goal statement(s) and put it to good use. One criterion for choosing a program from a pool of ideas is to determine how closely it "matches" your group's purpose and goals.

1. With your goal statement in hand, indicate in the space below how closely each program idea will help fulfill the organization's goals. Each idea should be rated on a scale of 1 to 10 (1=poor match; 10=excellent match). If more than one person participates in this activity, total the individual scores.

Program Idea	*Individual Ratings (1-10)*	*Group Totals*
Idea Number 1		
Idea Number 2		
Idea Number 3		
Idea Number 4		
Idea Number 5		

2. You may want to take the ideas with the highest scores and test the desirability and feasibility of each idea. (See the next exercise.)

CASE HISTORY: A COMMUNITY CANNING CENTER

Each exercise so far is one step in an overall planning process; in a real case the steps have to fit together and build into a program. One project which did particularly well at developing an analysis, exploring alternatives, and also testing desirability was the self-help Community Canning Center Project, started by **Women in Agriculture.** To learn about it, we interviewed **Pat Sackrey**, one of the original members of the group.

Sackrey:

In 1975 I was involved in developing the first self-help canning center in Massachusetts, which exists at 33 King Street in Northampton. It grew out of our study group [which was] involved in the politics of agriculture and land use and food policy. We wanted to know what on earth we could do as a little group to help revitalize agriculture in Massachusetts and New England generally, so we could become more self-reliant. You know, importing 85% of our food was, we thought, making us terribly vulnerable as a people, and it was a very poor use of our land and human, natural resources too. So we did a lot of thinking and studying and talking and reading and meeting together as a very small group of women and men to look primarily at where the gaps were.

Analysis: restraining forces

And there were a lot of them: The whole support structure for the agricultural endeavors of our state had declined enormously; for example, there were no processing plants for food that was grown here. We have a short growing season, but there was no warehousing for grains and root vegetables. There was also the problem of supplies. When you have a diminishing number of farmers the businesses that take care of agriculture can't support themselves. And it looked like in some areas we had reached the critical limit, and maybe gone below it.

Goal-setting

Alternative program ideas

One problem had to do with the gap between growers in Massachusetts and consumers in Massachusetts. It seemed to us that they weren't getting together very well. Growers were growing things in the fields; a lot of them were turning over surplus crops at the end of the year, not getting good sales for what they were growing. And the consumers were buying their food from the major grocery chains, who weren't buying local produce. So we looked into why that was and we understood some of the reasons, and we thought 'Well, maybe we could start just in a little way solving that problem by providing a way that people could preserve food." And there were a lot of choices we could have made—a small commercial cannery, a community freezer, working very hard only on the supermarkets, demanding that they buy local produce, working on legislation that would require certain kinds of businesses in Massachusetts to buy from local businesses—there were a lot of ways we could have gone.

Identifying resources

There were two reasons we went [the route of a] self-help canning center. One was that we learned about the technology which was available. Ball Canning Company had come out with a community canning system—small, easy to work, safe, didn't take too much room. And the second thing was there was money available through the Governor's office—a special CETA manpower grant for local initiative projects.

So we decided that we would go that way, because it was clear—the path was clear. We knew it was going to be a lot of work, but we thought we had the people that could write the proposals and do the politicking—it was a very political process, as all these things are.

And so we did it. And it went well, it's gone well since, it's grown, and this year there are five canning centers starting in Massachusetts, based on ours. That was our idea you know, to try in just a little way to solve a big problem at the local level in such a way that other people could copy it if they thought it was a good idea.

Duane Dale: *What strikes me is that you apparently entered into the thing not knowing what your program would do and yet you were prepared to spend some time together as a study group.*

Sackrey: *Yeah, well we just knew that we were all interested in this problem of agriculture and food, and we were called* **Women In Agriculture** *just because of my being on the* **Commission on the Status of Women,** *and my saying in the paper that I wanted to work on women in agriculture, and other people calling and saying "I want to work on that too."*

Dale: *How many people were in the study group?*

Sackrey: *Seven.*

Dale: *How long was it from when you first started to meet until you started to really consider the canning center project?*

Sackrey: *About seven months. It was about four or five months until we started saying, "We've got to do something about this gap between growers and consumers. That's something we can address."*

We agreed from the beginning that we wanted to be an action-oriented group, not just a study group. But we also agreed we had to know more than we did.

Dale: *So it was four or five months of just exploring the problem . . . .*

Sackrey: *Yes, and meeting together, in very loose ways, you know, we just really deliberately stayed small so we could just be informal and not have to "administer" ourselves. I for one was tired of being an administrator for a while.*

Dale: *How often did you meet?*

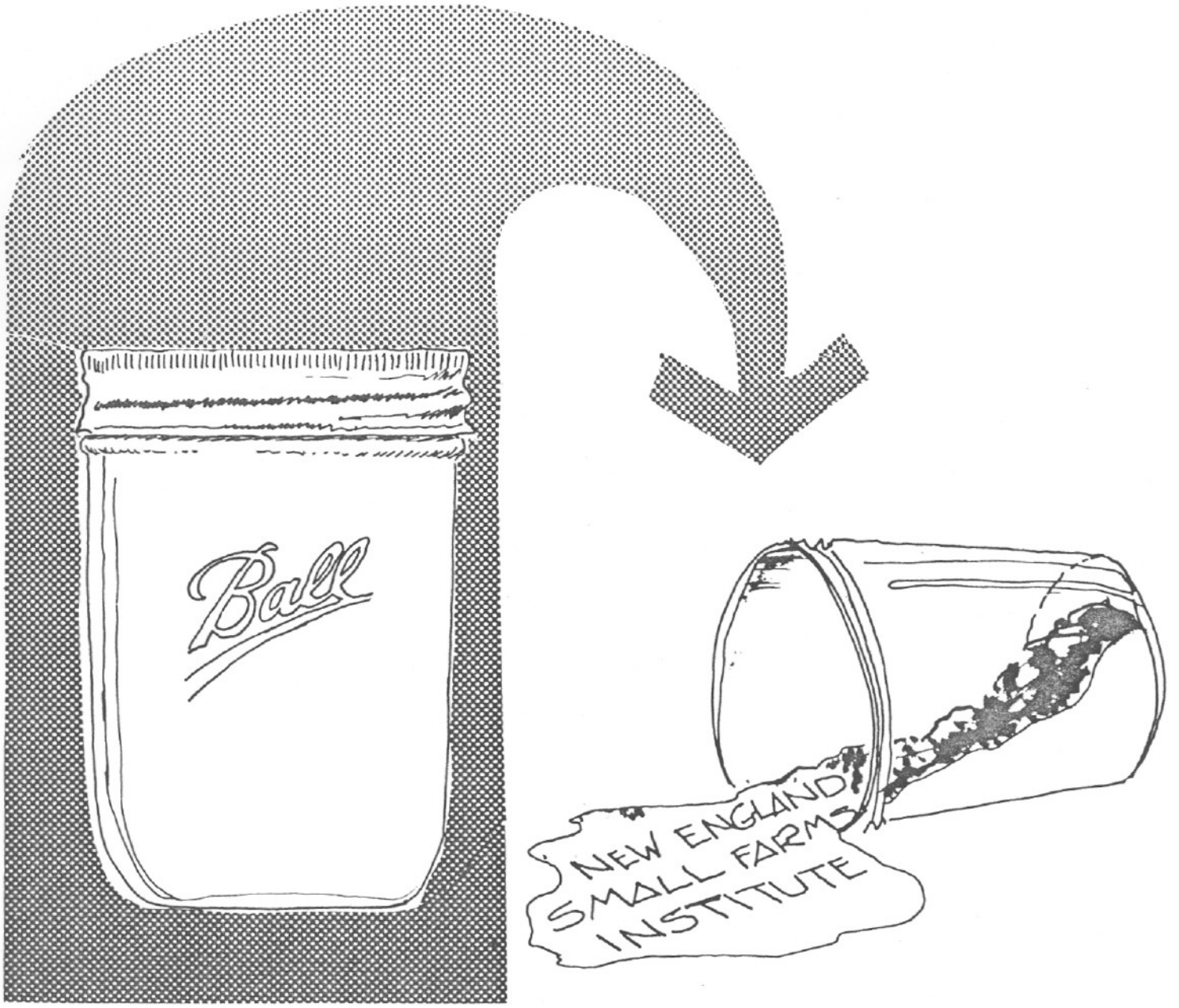
Sackrey: *We met every week.*

Dale: *A couple of hours?*

Sackrey: *More, usually.*

Dale: *And how long did you keep meeting?*

Sackrey: *Oh, we're still going. We're now working on a project—see, we got jobs for some of the members of the group at the canning center. Now we've got a job for one of our members coordinating the planning and implementation of our largest project to date, which is the New England Small Farm Institute.*



Desirability: Pros and Cons

no. people: 3 to many
minimum time: 15 minutes
materials: form below, newsprint and felt pen

If you're considering several program ideas, you'll need a way to compare their advantages and disadvantages. (If you have more than three or four ideas, you'll probably want to boil them down to three. You can do this in a workshop situation by giving every group member three votes and keeping the ideas that receive the most votes. You may need to allow some discussion and lobbying time before your vote.)

1. Using a felt-tipped pen and a large sheet of newsprint, lay-out the following grid:

Program Idea: write a brief name or description	*Plus*	*Minus*
• Idea Number 1		
• Idea Number 2		
• Idea Number 3		

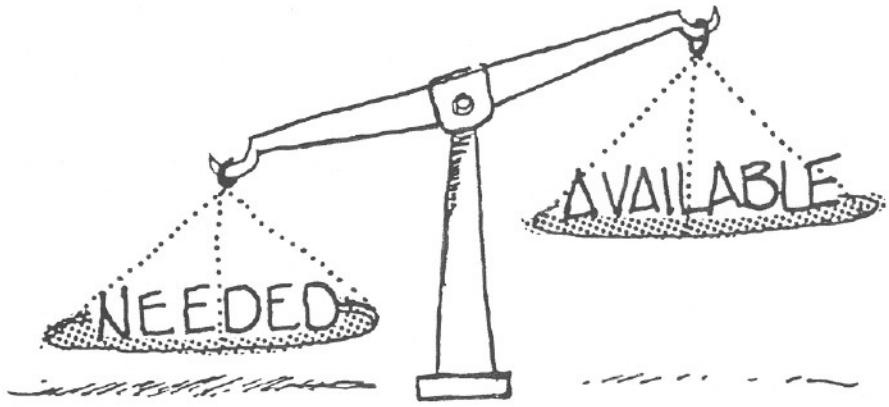
2. As a group, consider each idea and call out benefits and problems, which someone will record. For example, a member might say, "A *plus* is that it will take a short time to do the project," or " A *minus* is that it will cost us $300." It may be desirable to give some "clues" to the group as it lists items. You could write these phrases on the newsprint, perhaps in a different color: *plus*—fulfills goals, builds community support, and so on; *minus* —costs, time, "side effects," and so on.

3. Stand back and look at what you have. Decide whether there is enough information for comparison of the program ideas. If so, move on to your decision; if not, think about what additional information you need.

Is It Feasible?
Resources: Needed and Available

"You can't do everything you want to do."

It's as true in a citizen group as it is at the amusement park: riding the bumper cars all day is just too expensive. So the problem is to compare the resources that are needed for a particular project with the resources available and likely. This form could help you do that.



Program Idea:					
Resource	Amount Needed Real	Ideal		Amount Available On Hand	Likely
Time (overall, in person-hours)					
Time for particular key individuals: (name) (name) (name) (name)					
Dollar cost					
Cooperation of other organizations					
Community support					
Physical space					
Other					

Note: In order to complete the top three sections of the chart, you may want to make up a rough timeline (or task list) and a rough budget. The remaining items aren't as easy to measure; you will need to think about requirements and availability, and specify them as best you can. And of course it's important to think carefully about the additional (unique) resources that your program idea may require.

"Zap Analysis;" or, Don't Let It Rain on My Parade

no. people: one to several
minimum time: 10 minutes
materials: form below

"Zap Analysis" is our own phrase for analyzing the things that could pop up and upset your program—the "zaps". This is part of examining the feasibility of the project because you may not want to start a project that's very susceptible to zaps. It's also the first step in contingency planning (see page) but here the purpose is to consider whether a plan is so "zap-able" that a less risky plan should be chosen instead.

1. Identify the program idea that you are zap-analyzing. Write it down, so that everyone knows just what you're talking about.

2. List potential zaps in the left-hand column of the form below. Challenge yourselves to be very imaginative. Play the part of Mephistopheles himself, bent on throwing a monkey-wrench in the works.

3. Think harder. Would any of these affect your program: bad weather, the World Series, someone's death, the church Strawberry Supper, the president's death, a telephone company strike, a power failure, leap year? What if the grocery store is out of napkins, the plumber can't come 'til Monday, you forgot the extension cord? Also, think about each resource that's crucial for your success, and ask yourself what that depends on.

4. Now fill out the other columns for each item on the list, as a way of deciding how worrisome the potential zap is.

Discussion Questions

- *What assumptions about people does the potential program make?*
- *What are the implications of each "zap" and what can be done if the zap occurs no matter how well you plan?*

Program Idea:			
Potential Zap	*How Likely? (%)*	*How Disruptive?*	*Possible to Plan Around It?*
•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•