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OF CANADA
all for community.

FONDACTIONS COMMUNAUTAIRES
DU CANADA
ensemble pour tous.

Building Community Vitality

On the Brink of New Promise
Prototyping Community Solutions

April 2009

Prototyping Community Solutions

What is this tool?

This exercise will help you brainstorm creative and effective new solutions to pressing community needs. It allows you to explore in greater depth what it actually means to provide strategic leadership in your community.

The worksheet begins by identifying a community issue where action is needed. It then helps you and other community members “prototype” what type of action is necessary to address the issue, who can do what, and what it will take to get the job done. The exercise can be repeated for each community issue you are considering.

How to use this tool

We intend this tool to be part of a suite focused on **Identifying Opportunities**. Done in conjunction with the **Strategic Roles Assessment** tool, the suite gives you a way of framing conversations about future possibilities from the perspective of your organizational capacity and from the perspective of community needs and opportunities.

This tool is designed to engage stakeholders from many organizations in the discussion. Take the template on the following page to your local copy center and have them enlarge the template to fit on 24”, 30”, or 36” wide stock to use together with a group. It is best used in “brainstorming” mode—what matters, what might be done about it, what role can each of you play, who else needs to be at this table. The rapidity of the prototyping process is intentional—you are aiming for creativity and new ideas, not details and workplans.

Who should use this tool

One approach is to invite peers from other organizations (local government, other nonprofits, the local newspaper, colleges, or other foundations) and have a facilitator guide the discussion. It is important to ease people’s concerns about control and current responsibilities so that they are free to think of “what might be.” An external facilitator can help with this, and holding the meeting on neutral territory can also make a difference.

Related resources

The CFC web site has several places where you can find helpful information: the “*Building Community Vitality: A Leadership Toolkit*” area of the web site has many resources on this topic; the biweekly E-News and the *Vital Signs* and *Leading in Challenging Times* sections of the web site will also be helpful.

Making a Difference: A Community Impact Series, Council on Foundations Center for Community Foundation Excellence, <http://www.cof.org/Content/General/Display.cfm?contentID=2782>.

1 Name a key community issue _____

2 What strategic roles could you play on that issue? (using the list from the Strategic Roles Assessment tool)

3 Describe what you would actually do to play those roles for the selected issue

(e.g., if you are shaping community discourse about children's health, you might convene all local nonprofits working on the issue, bring in researchers or outside experts who can help shape local understanding, and/or develop a white paper about the issue)

4 Internal capacities required _____

(e.g., convening power, facilitation and brokering capacity, public education and communications capacity, community organizing capacity)

5 Internal capacities currently in place _____

6 Business model for supporting the activity _____

7 Stakeholders and potential partners _____

8 Challenges and barriers to success _____

9 How would you measure success? _____

10 Next steps to operationalize the vision _____