Belfast

Planning and Working Together Toolkit

A resource for community groups

Department for
Social
Development
www.dsdni.gov.uk

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Foreword

As Chairperson of the Development Committee, I welcome the timely publication of the Planning and Working Together Toolkit, a valuable resource for community groups across the city.

Following Local Government Reform, from April 2015 the council will have new powers and transferred functions from some government departments including; Community Planning, Urban Regeneration, Community Development, Planning, Local Economic Development and Tourism. This reform will see some changes in how we fund and support the community sector and work within neighbourhoods.

We want to ensure that we all work effectively in responding to the challenges and opportunities presented by Local Government Reform, especially in relation to community planning, urban regeneration and community development.

Across the city and within local neighbourhoods we continue to tackle complex problems, which require a range of dedicated people planning and working together. This new toolkit is a practical resource which will help local groups to work better together and to plan projects for the wider community. It's designed to benefit groups who want to increase their collaboration and joint work with similar groups and addresses:

- identifying common issues, problems and hopes
- focusing on neighbourhood assets - people, networks and facilities
- sharing ideas and benefits of tackling these issues together
- learning from experiences and good practice of working in collaboration
- practical actions to develop and strengthen joint working and planning; and
- focusing on influencing and shaping how statutory services are provided.

The council values the contribution that community organisations make to improving the lives of people within local communities and across the city and I'm confident that this toolkit will help us to improve how we plan and work together to make our communities stronger, more confident and more sustainable.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the design and preparation of this publication; Community Places, Community Services staff, and the participants who attended the pilot workshops delivered across the city.

I hope you will find it useful and look forward to receiving your feedback.

Councillor Deirdre Hargey,
Chair, Development Committee
Belfast City Council

Who is the Planning and Working Together Toolkit for?

This Toolkit will help local groups to plan and work better together for the whole community. It's designed to benefit smaller local groups who want to increase their collaboration and joint work with similar groups.

Why plan and work together?

When local community groups and representatives actively work together to shape projects and services in their communities the outcomes are positive for all.

Tackling persistent, what are often described as 'wicked' and complex issues requires greater co-operation and collaborative working between a range of partners at the local and council wide level. This Toolkit will support communities, local organisations and council staff to explore and identify opportunities for greater joint working at a time of great change.

About the Toolkit

The Toolkit focuses on practical skills and learning and will help local groups to build on their experience and develop the knowledge and techniques to strengthen joint working and planning in local neighbourhoods. The materials contained in the toolkit were tested during a series of community development training workshops held across Belfast in Spring 2014. Feedback on the materials from participants and discussions at the workshops have refined and enriched the content of the toolkit.

How to use the Toolkit

The Toolkit is intended to be used as a flexible resource. You can dip in and out of it time and time again, as your project or working together moves forward; as the context changes; or as new opportunities to plan and work together with others arise.
The toolkit can be downloaded at **www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community**

The Toolkit is presented in four key sections: A, B, C, D

A

Approaching:
Is planning and working together right for you?

This section of the toolkit explores the motivations and reasons why you might plan and work together with others. It asks you to fully consider if it's right for you; to think about what makes a good partner and what qualities you can bring to effective working together at the various stages of the process.

B

Benefits:
What are the benefits of planning and working together?

This section explores the range of benefits which planning and working together with others can offer. It also sets out the essential ingredients for effective working together and potential pitfalls to be aware of.

C

Clear process:
How will you agree on the approach to working together?

The third section centres on agreeing how you will work and plan together with others. It highlights the importance of setting a clear vision and clear roles and responsibilities. It asks you to think about the shared skills and expertise which you're bringing together and how best to apply these.

D

Doing:
Worksheets and resources

The last section of the toolkit contains practical resources and worksheets for you to work through. The worksheets cover a range of important issues which you can use: before you choose to plan and work together; to develop planning and working together; to manage conflict when planning and working together; and to improve and refine planning and working together.

Approaching:

Is planning and working together right for you?

Approaching:

Is planning and working together right for you?

There are often three main motivations for planning and working together:

- **Compliance:** because you're being asked or told to work together;
- **Self interest:** because it's in your group's best interests to work together; or
- **Value:** because it's a valued principle and the way you choose to work.

In many situations deciding to plan and work together will be grounded in one or more of these motivations. Take a moment to consider these questions and jot down your responses below.

> **Think about what motivates you to plan and work together with others.**

There may also be a number of practical reasons why you might choose to plan and work together:

- in response to an identified community need;
- responding to a call for funding;
- organisational crisis;
- to further existing relationships;
- to lobby for change; and
- to provide, enhance or expand a service.

Often a combination of one or more of these reasons will lead groups to consider working together.

Is it right for you or your group?

In order to develop successful working together at a local level, first consider why you want to work and plan together with other organisations, individuals or partners.

Think through the following points to decide if working collaboratively is right for you and if so, how you can initiate the process.

1. Clarify what you're trying to achieve through planning and working together and how you'll explain this to others.
2. Identify the groups and organisations that can help or hinder the project idea and put yourself in their shoes. Who holds the power for what?
3. Consider who you really need to work with and who you would really want to be a partner - there's a difference!
4. Make sure you have support and agreement within your own organisation about planning and working collaboratively with others.
5. Make informal contact with possible partners to find out about their values, ways of working, and interests and views on the project idea and working together.

What makes a good partner?

Planning and working together effectively requires ongoing effort and flexibility if you're to achieve meaningful gains and improved outcomes.

Take time to consider what makes a good partner. What will you look for in others? And what will you bring to the table? Good practice guidance from Fife in Scotland, describes how groups and individuals can contribute to successful working together.

Leads their colleagues in support of collaboration

Is open and clear about their own goals

Can be flexible but retains focus

Wants the partnership to succeed

Is prepared to Trust

Understands how partnerships depend on one and other

A good partner

Carries out tasks effectively

Seeks win-win solutions

Listens well and responds to others

Is not prepared to sweep difficulties under the carpet

Respects others' contributions

Has integrity and acts consistently

A

List the qualities and skills you can bring to a successful partnership

"Working together generates new ideas and thinking"

"You can have greater influence and impact"

*"It helps you to share expertise, information, resources and skills"*

"Promotes networking"

"There is less duplication and more added value"

"Go for collaboration instead of competition"

Cycle of Working Together

Working together and the development of partnerships often follows a four stage cycle. The diagram below highlights the four stages of working together: Forming; Frustration; Functioning; and Flying; or Failing.

The Partnership Life Cycle
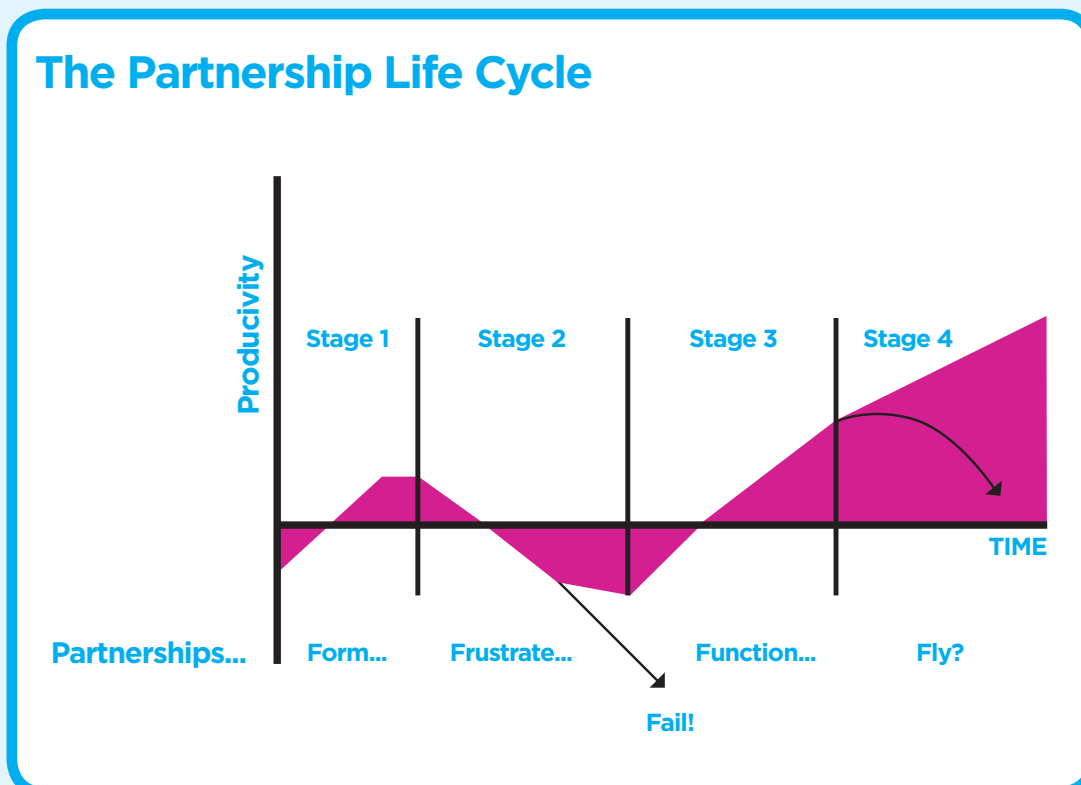
A number of characteristics have been identified to describe each of these four stages and the challenges which you may face:

Forming: Start-up phase, early enthusiasm.
Frustration: Uncertainty or doubts.
Functioning: Mature phase. Clear vision, roles and responsibilities.
Flying: Successful achievement of partnership goals. Trust and Respect;
Or ...Failing: Disengagement, breakdown in relations.

The toolkit worksheets in Section D offer support to guide you through each of these stages. From the initial stages of deciding to work with others, to dealing and managing potential tension and conflict when working with others.

B

Benefits:

Is planning and working together right for you?

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Is planning and working together right for you?

B

**Choosing to plan and work together with others at a local level brings a range of benefits and opportunities.
It will help you to:**

- develop a clear understanding of local issues, needs and priorities;
- develop and share skills and expertise;
- be more active in taking decisions about local services, assets and facilities;
- frame and agree what's really happening;
- pool available resources, time and skills;
- make improvements to service delivery;
- increase awareness of an issue or project;
- widen networks and zones of influence;
- achieve a greater impact of desired outcomes;
- spread risk;
- build new and improved ways of working together;
- build trust;
- respond positively to local problems and develop shared solutions;
- better position local groups, communities and other stakeholders to participate in forthcoming community planning processes; and
- widen and deepen community participation and leadership in developing solutions to improve quality of life in neighbourhoods.

**Think of the reasons why you've worked with others in the past or why you're considering working with others now?
What benefits might working together offer?**

"Working together can be fragmented"

"You have to look out for power struggles and gate keeping"

"You can be faced with secrecy and competitiveness especially in relation to funding"

"You need to make space and time to work together"

"Co-ordinating working together can be a challenge"

"It's really important to get buy in from the whole group and not just one or two people"

*"Working together needs clear leadership"*

What you need to Work Together successfully	Successful Working Together and potential pitfalls to look out for
Agreement that planning and working together is necessary.	Lack of clear purpose.
A shared vision of what might be achieved, including a shared mission and agenda.	Unrealistic goals.
Respect and trust between different interests and partners.	Difference of philosophy and ways of planning and working.
The leadership of a respected individual or individuals.	Lack of communication.
Commitment of key people developed through a clear and open process.	Unequal and unacceptable balance of power and control.
Time to build good working relations.	Key interests missing from the partnership.
Compatible ways of planning, working and flexibility.	Hidden agendas.
Good communication (perhaps aided by a facilitator).	Financial and time commitments outweighing the potential benefits.
Collaborative decision making with a commitment to achieving consensus.	A history of conflict and mistrust among key interests.
Effective organisational management.	One or more partner(s) manipulating or dominating.

✏ Which three of the success factors are your strongest?	✏ Which of the pitfalls are you most concerned about?

Clear process

How will you agree on the approach to working together?

Clear process:
How will you agree on the approach to working together?

C
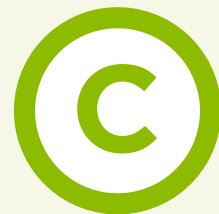
If you've decided that planning and working together with others is the best way forward, the next step is to agree how you'll work together. You'll need to: set a clear vision, roles and responsibilities; think about the shared skills and expertise which you're bringing together; and consider how best you can apply to your idea or project.

1. Setting a vision and agreeing common goals

Agree a vision and aims for planning and working together.

Consider a written agreement on how you're going to work together.

Is the vision supported by the local community/communities?

Is the vision understood and supported by each partner, including committees, volunteers and staff?

Think about how you're going to communicate your vision and aims.

2. Set clear roles and responsibilities

Define and agree clear roles and responsibilities for all partners.

Consider nominating a lead partner(s) and clearly define their role.

3. Clarify the process of planning and working together

Agree how decisions will be made.

Agree who will administer day-to-day activities.

Who contracts with delivery bodies?

Will you need to employ staff?

Will you need shared premises?

Agree who will be responsible for financial control and auditing.

4. Capacity for planning and working

Consider the range of skills, expertise and capacity which you've pooled together and think about how these can be best applied.

Think about the various tasks to be undertaken and match partners' skills and expertise to these.

Do partners share a good understanding of the issues being tackled?

Consider the training needs of partners – are there particular technical skills which partners will need to participate fully?

Core Skills for Partnership Working

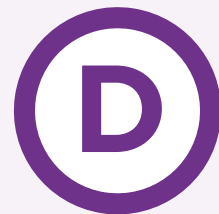**Effective partnership working requires a number of practical core skills.**

Respect and Trust

Leadership

Accountability

Openness

Ownership

Negotiation

Partnership Working

Facilitation

Commitment and resilience

Communication

Effective organisation and flexible working

Wordle:

Advice on what works from Workshop Participants

accept preferably Common focus aims honest part ideas face help goal negotiation skills respect change individual evaluate honest part ideas face Cooperation good Highlight sometimes agendas responsibility reciprocated Communicate Don't be afraid of conflict persistence shared bite your lip others share generally actively research learn approachable step zone open Listen shared follow aims purpose examples situation Trust work time Facilitation meetings comfort

D

Doing:

Worksheets and Resources

Doing: Worksheets and resources

This section of the Toolkit presents worksheets and resources for you to work through. The worksheets cover a range of key issues which you should consider before and as you plan and work together with others. These include potential challenges which you're likely to encounter and opportunities to enhance and improve planning and working together.

Worksheet	Before you choose to plan and work together	Developing planning and working together	Managing conflict when planning and working together	Improving Planning and Working together
Social capital: does your group have it?	✓	✓		
Social capital and stakeholder mapping	✓	✓		✓
Knowing your power	✓	✓	✓	✓
Making your case: Some tips on influencing		✓		✓
Getting the right balance in your process		✓	✓	✓
Working with different organisational cultures	✓		✓	
Why plan?		✓		✓
Understanding the roots of an issue and how to respond			✓	✓
Constructive conflict			✓	✓
Conflict: Spotting the signs			✓	✓
Going for a win-win	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evaluating conflict		✓	✓	✓
Facilitation: when to engage external facilitation		✓	✓	✓
Tips for effective communication	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Six Thinking Hats		✓		✓
Five scenarios worksheet	✓	✓	✓	✓

Social capital – does your group have it?

Social capital is the idea that social networks have value for people. These encourage trust, collaboration and active networking. Each organisation and neighbourhood builds up a different stock of relationships or social capital. For example, some organisations know the community they work in very well and have strong relationships with a range of people who live there; some organisations have stronger relationships with other similar organisations; and others may have developed strong links with decision makers and others in power.

Social capital operates at three levels:

Bonding: occurs most often in more alike groups. Bonding social capital can provide important emotional, personal and health related benefits to its members through close ties and support (for getting by in life). It might also arise within a group with a shared identity, or with a shared interest such as Manchester United supporters, or a shared living place such as a village or housing estate. Bonding social capital isn't necessarily negative or exclusive of groups who are outside. However sometimes it excludes others from the "club" and from mutual support.

Bridging: social capital connects different types of people and groups (e.g. ethnic, social, gender or regional) and can be particularly effective in building good relations and open outward looking communities seeking social or economic progress beyond their immediate society (for getting on in life). Bridging social capital arises when connections are made across social, geographical or identity lines.

Linking: connects groups and individuals to others with more influence (e.g. more powerful or socially advantaged). For example links between local groups and statutory agencies or politicians.

Too much bonding and too little bridging can stifle and restrict working together. Too much bridging and too little bonding can leave groups vulnerable. On the other hand, insufficient linking social capital can leave social groups isolated from the centres of power and influence which they need to get their rights or interests met or represented. So a mix of bonding, bridging and linking social capital is what we need for effective partnership working.

Think about relationships which your group or community has. How much bonding, bridging and linking social capital do you have?

	Very Little	Some	A lot	Give an example
Bonding				
Bridging				
Linking				

Social Capital and Stakeholder Mapping

It's essential to identify the right people or groups who you need to work with. Think about your issue or project and map out the people and organisations who you're already working well with **(red: warm relations);** people or groups who you don't currently work with or where relationships haven't always been good **(blue: cool relations);** and new people or groups who you could work with **(green: new relations).**

Your group
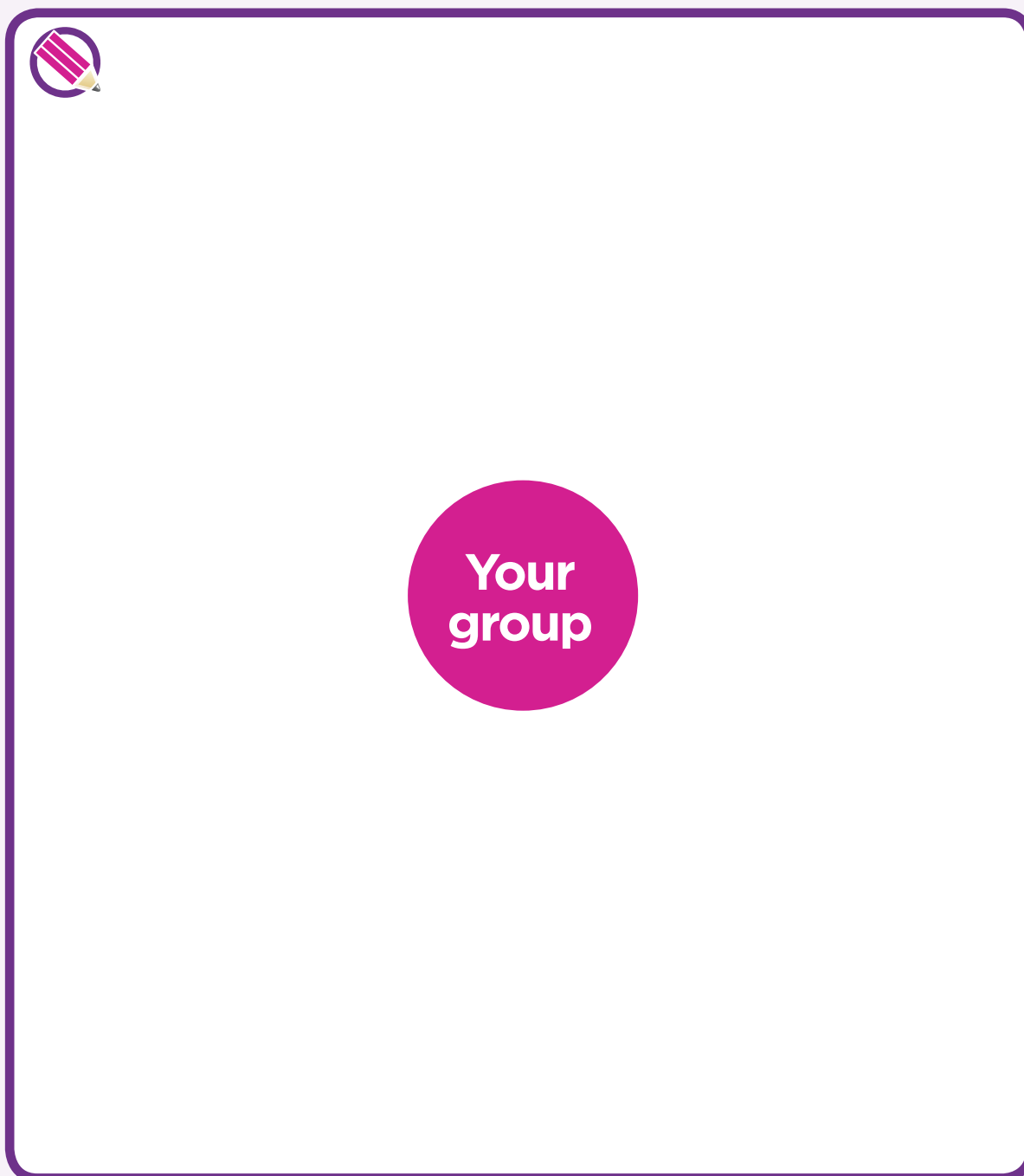
When you've this mapping done it will show:

- **the relationships you need to maintain (red)**
- **the relationships you need to strengthen (blue)**
- **the relationships you need to form and nurture (green).**

Knowing your power

Every person and group or organisation in a partnership has some power. How much power and how they use it is different for each person and group.

We can get our power from different things: our status, money, energy, education, commitment etc.

Thinking about your experience of planning and working together with others, how were the following types of power used?

1. Confidence, charisma and charm.
2. Access to funding.
3. Knowledge of the community.
4. History and track record of work.
5. Energy and persistence.
6. Negativity.
7. Commitment.
8. Positivity.
9. Enabling relationships – building connections between people and groups.
10. Undermining relationships between people and groups – gatekeeping.
11. Position in an organisation.
12. Mandate from voters.

What kinds of power do you or your group have at your disposal?

How could you use it to have more influence?
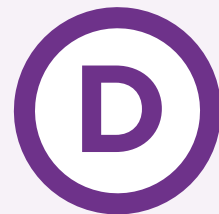
Making your case - some tips on influencing

Planning and working together often requires you to make and present your case, for example:

- making a case to your committee or staff team for initiating a partnership approach
- making a case to a service provider about the needs in your community.

The following tips will help you make your case:

1. Talk to other people concerned about the issue – explain it, gather information, understand more about the issue and its impact.

2. Understand which agency is responsible for which issue or area; how they take decisions and who is involved. Making initial connections is invaluable in beginning to get access to power.

3. Identify realistic goals. What do you want, what needs to change and what difference will it make. Set short term goals for each meeting and longer term goals for change.

4. Research and prepare your case.

5. Be pleasant and positive – listening and learning - but not getting sucked in by Mr or Mrs Nice Guy! Ask her/him how they can help you with the issue.

6. Negotiate and create win - win situations in meetings.

7. Teamwork in meetings – use the skills of your members, select the right person for the job and share ideas and tasks.

8. Check what happened as a result of the meeting and follow up.

Think about the last issue that you worked on:

Which of the areas above did you pay most attention to, and the least?

Which one made the most difference to the outcome?

Getting the right balance in your process

Working and planning together involves managing a process which consists of completing tasks and taking action, keeping everyone involved and working in a fair and accountable way. In other words we need to pay attention to **tasks, relationships and processes.**[4]

We want to get the job done, to keep good relationships with each other and to have fair and open ways of working.

Take the example of a meeting:

Too much focus on task: The chairperson might get through the agenda quickly and efficiently. But if there is no discussion, people mightn't feel involved in decision making or comfortable in asking questions and voicing their opinions.

Too much focus on process: There might be lots of discussion about the constitution and policies and procedures, but you don't get through the agenda so important decisions don't get made and people get bored.

Too much focus on relationships: There might be lots of chat and getting to know each other so the business gets rushed through and nobody is clear what decisions have been taken.

Any one of these scenarios might occur now and again. The important thing is to pay attention to the balance between task, relationships and process throughout.

Think about the last meeting you attended. Assess the focus on task, process and relationships.

Pay attention to people's needs

Getting the best out of people sometimes involves paying attention to the basic things. None of us function well if we're dehydrated, hungry or too warm or cold. None of us has unlimited powers of concentration. Most of us feel more comfortable if we know a bit about the other people in the room with us – at least their names and the group or organisation they're representing.

All of us perform better and more positively if we're shown respect and given some time and attention. Many people find meetings hard work and need a break. Thinking about these basic needs can transform a meeting.

[4]Interaction Associates (1997)

Working with different organisational cultures[5]

Groups working together in communities often have different cultures and ways of working. Some might be service providers with structured roles; others might work very flexibly responding to issues as they arise in a community. Some might be accountable to their line manager; others might be answerable to a number of people, a management committee and people in their community.

It's useful to recognise and take account of the fact that individual partners come from and work in different cultures and accountability systems. Accepting that groups work in different ways enhances relationships between them and avoids the frustration of unrealistic expectations or assumptions.

Think about the range of groups you've worked with and identify how they broadly fit with the four organisational cultures described below.

Power culture: a personal culture often dominated by a charismatic figure or founder whose personality is more important than formal structure, role or procedures in advancing the organisation. The key to success relies in employing 'the right sort of people' and ensuring that new recruits 'fit in'. It often has the feel and ethos of a large extended family, a web with ever wideaning circles of intimates and influence. The group exists to enable the decisions of those few at the centre to be carried out.

Role culture: impersonality is a central feature. The organisation is seen as a set of interrelated roles. Individuals are role occupants. Communications tend to be formalised into systems, hierarchies and procedures. The organisation is likely to be managed rather than led. Certainty, predictability and stability are seen as important virtues. Independence and initiative are probably less highly valued than professionalism and reliability.

Task culture: the notion of work as problem solving will be a major feature, with people relying on their own concerted abilities to deal with new situations rather than applying tried and tested formulae. Co-ordination and team leaders rather than managers are central figures. There's an air of self confidence as distinct from the security of agreed procedures.

Person culture: focused on members as individuals and their interests first, rather than seeing the organisation's purposes as primary. Members see the organisation as a sort of resource on which they can draw to enhance their own talents, abilities or concerns e.g. artists' co-operative or self-help or personal development groups.

[5]Handy, C (1988) 4 Styles of Culture

Why plan?

Taking time out to plan your working together is invaluable and will lead to a much more productive partnership. Often you'll have to make the case for this. Think through the following benefits and use them as a checklist to evaluate your own planning.

**As Benjamin Franklin famously said:
"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail."**

Why Plan?

- Respect and Trust
- Generates agreement on purposes and priorities
- Ensures compatability around different activities
- Test feasibility of projects
- Coordinate: ensure others know what to expect
- Promotes realism: matches resources and commitments
- Improves performance and effectiveness
- Anticipates and avoids problems
- Reduces stress and conflict
- Avoids waste

Working together is often a good experience and a challenge at the same time. There's always some conflict when people with different experience and interests work together, but that's what generates new ideas and different ways of doing things!

Sometimes we can act too quickly to address conflict – as if it can be fixed, when in fact it's natural and healthy. 'Fix it' strategies carried out regardless of the context can make things worse. They waste money and time, damage morale, blur priorities and lead to cynicism. Often, it's not that the intervention itself was wrong; it's just that it didn't fit the reality of the situation to which it was applied. Doing nothing can be a good option until you've identified and understood the issue.

A management expert called Dr Robert Terry developed an action wheel with six features, which helps us to understand the context within which problems arise.

Resources
People, money, time, space, facilities, knowledge, training, skills, equipment, information, tools

Power
Engagement, energy and commitment, cooperation

Mission
Goals, purpose, focus

Structure
Organisation, systems, processes or procedures, communications

Existence
History or identity, viability

Meaning
Rationale values, principles

90% of the time the solutions to problems or issues in groups or organisations will lie in Meaning, Mission and Power. Yet people in groups and organisations typically spend 90% of their time in Resources, Structure and Existence.

[6] Terry, R. www.action-wheel.com/bob-terry.html

Identify one or two examples where an issue has arisen in your organisation or group - or a process you've been involved in and identify:

at what level the issue arose?

at what level it was addressed?

and at what level the issue was rooted?

D

Constructive conflict - some benefits of conflict

Conflict is actually a natural and healthy aspect of working together, however it's often viewed as a negative aspect of working with others. How you identify, manage and react to conflict is the key to effective and constructive working together.

Conflict can have the following positive outcomes:

Better interpersonal relationships

- People need room to release strong feelings – probably healthier than harbouring anger or resentment.

- We often don't realise how strongly someone feels about certain issues – a sudden confrontation may reveal why a relationship isn't working well and help to improve it in the future.

Improved group dynamics

- Conflict can help to improve the functioning of a group by revealing personal agendas and laying the foundation for appropriate group goals and norms.

- If some group members are able to disagree in an open way, this can encourage less confident or assertive members to contribute their ideas more actively.

Improved ideas or practice

- Being forced to justify ideas may help a person to think them through more clearly.

- Hearing alternative ideas may enable a group to arrive at a better solution to the issue.

- The conflict may reveal a deeper structural issue or difference in aim, which needs to be addressed.

During conflict each group may get a better understanding of the other's goals. It may become clear that there is no real conflict at all. Or the conflict might have been based on a misunderstanding. Or the conflict might lead to a new solution, with better outcomes for everyone.

Look at the conflicts you've observed in the last year. Did any of them have benefits?

Conflict: spotting signs of conflict

Working together effectively means better understanding the motivations, objectives, aspirations, restrictions and tactics of those we want to work with. It isn't uncommon for conflict or tensions to develop and indeed in many ways conflict is healthy if it's managed and dealt with in the right manner. Planning and working together can be challenging. Some groups and individuals may have little incentive or motivation to work in shared or co-operative ways. Power imbalances can create tension and conflict and can lead to poor performance or even the breakdown of partnership working.

Obvious signs of conflict:

- arguments
- sniping
- rows
- raised tempers and emotions; and
- formal disputes and grievances.

Signs of potential hidden conflict:

- a coolness or rigid formality in relations between individuals or groups
- difficult or uncomfortable silences at meetings
- issues which keep coming back on the agenda of meetings but don't get resolved
- unwillingness to communicate between individuals or groups
- one individual or group putting down another
- withdrawal of parties from discussions and the avoidance of certain issues; and
- constant referral to formal rules and procedures.

Under the surface there might be:

- the open secret – talked about in private but doesn't surface in its true form
- desire of a group not to wash its dirty linen in public; and
- rivalry which shows as rigid correctness in relationships.

Identify one conflict you've been involved in or observed. What were the signs of conflict? Did you notice any others?

Conflict	
Signs	

Going for a win-win

Just as distrust can breed distrust, so experience of resolving conflicts in an open way can reinforce trust and increase the likelihood that future conflicts will be constructive. Over time, good feedback loops can create very different patterns of conflict and conflict resolution.

One of the most useful concepts for understanding and managing conflicts is based on two types of outcome – win-win, where both parties gain from the conflict, or win-lose where the party that wins does so at the expense of the loser.

Looking for, and creating, win-win situations is an effective approach to transforming and managing conflict. Whilst win-lose approaches are more imbedded in the Western world (e.g. elections, court cases), it's always worth considering if your issue can be transformed into a win-win. Can difference be seen in a different way, rather than right or wrong, good or bad?

Think about how groups work together in your area. Identify an example of a win-lose situation.

Example:

Write down the outcome:

Now look at the situation again. Think about how it could have been handled differently to produce a win-win.

Reaching a win-win scenario:

Write down the outcome:

Evaluating conflict

Think about the last conflict in your group. Describe it:

Now evaluate it using the criteria below:

Is it:

- serious?
- win-lose or win-win?
- relatively trivial?
- healthy disagreement?
- is it better to let it run its course without involvement or is it likely to escalate and become destructive?
- does it need to be resolved quickly?
- what power do you have in the situation, your personal preferences and strengths and weaknesses in dealing with conflict?

Now think about how it was handled. Describe it:

Now think about which of the approaches overleaf might have worked better:

Five main approaches

- Ignoring.

- Allowing – let it run its course and maybe give individuals concerned a bit of support, encouraging them to explain their feelings and encouraging them to put the conflict in perspective.

- Reducing or containing:

- short term: persuasion, coercion, arbitration and buying off; or

- medium term: separating the parties, mediation, appeals.

- Resolving – establishing common goals, restructuring, improving communication and bargaining or working for a win-win outcome.

- Preventing – encourage a climate in which people seek win-win rather than win-lose solutions.

Think of your group. What action could you take to prevent destructive conflicts arising?

Facilitation and when to engage external facilitators

Facilitation can:

1. Increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. Facilitation helps a group to reach its goal. It provides a structure to keep people on track and focused.

2. Enable participation from each person. Facilitation creates a forum and a level playing field in which everyone participates and all input is welcome.

3. Make the most of people's valuable time. Facilitation ensures completion of the meeting and achievement of your desired outcomes in a timely manner.

4. Help creative thinking. Facilitation enables group members to push their thinking when they get stuck and ask challenging questions.

5. Raise issues. Facilitation creates a space where issues can be raised outside normal agendas.

6. Create a safe place. Facilitation helps create a safer and non-threatening environment for open discussion.

7. Generate solutions. Facilitation can air and resolve disagreements and channel differences into solutions.

8. Keep the energy. Thinking and processing is hard work. It's tiring and energy levels can sag. Facilitation monitors the pace and productivity of each part of the session, picking things up and slowing things down to keep the energy in the group.

Deciding whether to use internal or external facilitation

When your group is going to meet to develop a plan, a new project or initiative or address difficult issues, an important early decision is what type of facilitator (internal or external) will help your group make its best progress. Think about the value of each person in the room. A day of their time costs the organisation money. When you've managed to get key people in a room it's important that their time is used effectively. The type of facilitator should match the needs of your group's task.

Internal and external facilitation

Facilitators design and support sound processes for planning and decision making. They pay particular attention to the 'how' of a meeting. Groups should carefully consider who's in charge of the 'how' of the meeting.

An internal facilitator carries the dual role of guiding, while also being a member of the group. This is a common role for managers and supervisors. An external facilitator is someone who is not a member of the group. When deciding whether a meeting should use an internal or external facilitator, consider the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Internal facilitation taps into people who are part of the organization, project, or community as process managers. In organizations, these are often middle or upper-level staff members with skills in guiding group discussions, processes and decision-making. In communities, they may be committee officials or staff members. Internal facilitators may or may not have knowledge or expertise in the technical or content issues that are being discussed.

Advantages:
- Internal facilitators often have detailed knowledge about the issue being discussed.
- They have knowledge of the history and context of the situation.
- They have knowledge of, or relationships with, many of the participants and stakeholders.
- They may cost less than hiring an external facilitator.

Disadvantages:
- Internal facilitators may have untested assumptions and biases about the issue, as well as the history of the situation.
- Group members may perceive an internal facilitator as biased for or against certain participants, stakeholders or decisions.
- Internal facilitators may not want to risk their position within a group or community by asking difficult or controversial questions.
- They may be reluctant to challenge people in positions of power for fear of retribution or be challenged themselves.

External facilitation taps into people from outside the organisation, activity or community as process managers. An external facilitator's primary interest is to guide a process that assists the group in discussing and taking action on issues. An external facilitator should have no vested interest in supporting a specific decision.

Advantages:
- External facilitators typically create an open and inclusive atmosphere.
- They bring fresh perspectives and new questions to the discussion.
- They are willing to ask difficult or 'stupid' questions and confront assumptions.
- They can move the group forward when dealing with difficult or controversial issues.
- An external facilitator may have knowledge and skills in group dynamics and processes.
- They can hold participants to the meeting rules agreed.

Disadvantages:
- External facilitation requires time for the facilitator to become familiar with the issue, context, participants and stakeholders involved.
- External facilitators may be viewed as outsiders and not respected or trusted.
- They typically require a fee for their services.
- They may only be present for a portion of a longer term process.

Think about a planning or decision making event which was important to your group.

What thought was given to how it was facilitated?		
What difference did the facilitation, or lack of it, make to the outcome?		
When do you think a group should use an external facilitator?		
What role can Belfast City Council staff play as external facilitators?		

Tips for effective communication when working with others: It's not what you say but the way that you say it!

Working with others requires communication which is thoughtful. Challenging situations may require more consideration of our approach to communication than normal.

1. Say something positive first – it has to be genuine.

2. Make sure that the time, place or circumstance is appropriate for giving ideas or feedback; it's usually better when invited rather than imposed.

3. **Timeliness** is critical. Waiting until weeks after the event will frustrate the person and lessen the impact of your input.

4. Pay attention to your **tone**. Your tone is probably more important than what you say. Choosing your tone carefully will ensure that what you want to say is received in the way you wish it to be.

5. If you're giving feedback, be descriptive, not judgemental. Give clear and unambiguous examples.

6. Use I statements to own what you are saying. For example, "I'm not clear about your meaning" rather than "you are not making yourself clear". The latter may make the other person defensive.

7. Don't label the behaviour you're describing by using words like "irresponsible", "immature".

8. Don't exaggerate: for example, "you're always late for meetings", as this will invoke a discussion on the exaggeration rather than the real issue.

9. Only give feedback about behaviour that can be changed.

10. Check that what you're saying has been understood by the other person.

11. If you're describing a previous discussion allow the giver and receiver of feedback to confirm that it's accurate.

12. It's good to put your views in **perspective**. Is there a really big problem or is just a minor adjustment required?

Example of constructive feedback:

"When you're late for meetings, I get annoyed because I think it's wasting everyone's time and we don't get everything done. I'd like you to see if you could organise things so that you get here on time. That way we can be more productive."

How to receive feedback

1. Listen carefully, without interrupting.
2. Ask questions for clarity and request specific examples.
3. Give the feedback serious thought and decide whether it is appropriate to change your behaviour.
4. Tell the individual or the group what they could do to help you change.
5. Remember: people pay far more attention to your tone and your body language than to your words.

Identify an example of behaviour that you'd like to address in your group e.g. lateness, someone offering to take on work and then not doing it or an agency sending a different person to each meeting. Practice addressing it positively and constructively.

Six Thinking Hats®[7]

The Six Thinking Hats, developed by Edward De Bono, is designed to help you separate thinking into six distinct functions and roles.

Mentally wearing and switching hats can help you understand where other people are coming from and how best to respond. Applying the technique to daily situations can help improve your leadership, productivity, communication, creative thinking and decision-making.

There are six imaginary hats that you can put on or take off. Each hat has a different colour and represents a different type or mode of thinking. When we change hats, we change our style of thinking.

White Hat thinking focuses on the information available. Look at the information you have, and see what you can learn from it. Look for gaps in your knowledge and try to fill them.

Wearing the **Red Hat**, you look at problems using intuition, gut reaction and emotion. And also think how other people will react emotionally and try to understand the reactions of people who do not fully know your reasoning.

The **Green Hat** stands for creativity. This enables the generation of ideas and creative solutions to an issue or problem. Its' function is to generate rather than evaluate new thinking or ideas.

Blue Hat thinking stands for process control. This is the hat worn by people chairing meetings.

Using **Black Hat** thinking looks at plans or decisions cautiously and defensively, trying to see why it mightn't work. This is useful for highlighting the weak points in a plan. It allows you to eliminate them, change them or plan for them.

The **Yellow Hat** helps you to think positively. It's the optimistic viewpoint that helps you to see all the benefits of a plan or decision and the value in it. It helps you keep going when everything looks gloomy and difficult.

The **White Hat** calls for information known or needed.

The **Red Hat** signifies feelings, hunches, and intuition.

The **Black Hat** is judgement- the devil's advocate or why something may not work.

The **Yellow Hat** symbolises brightness and optimism.

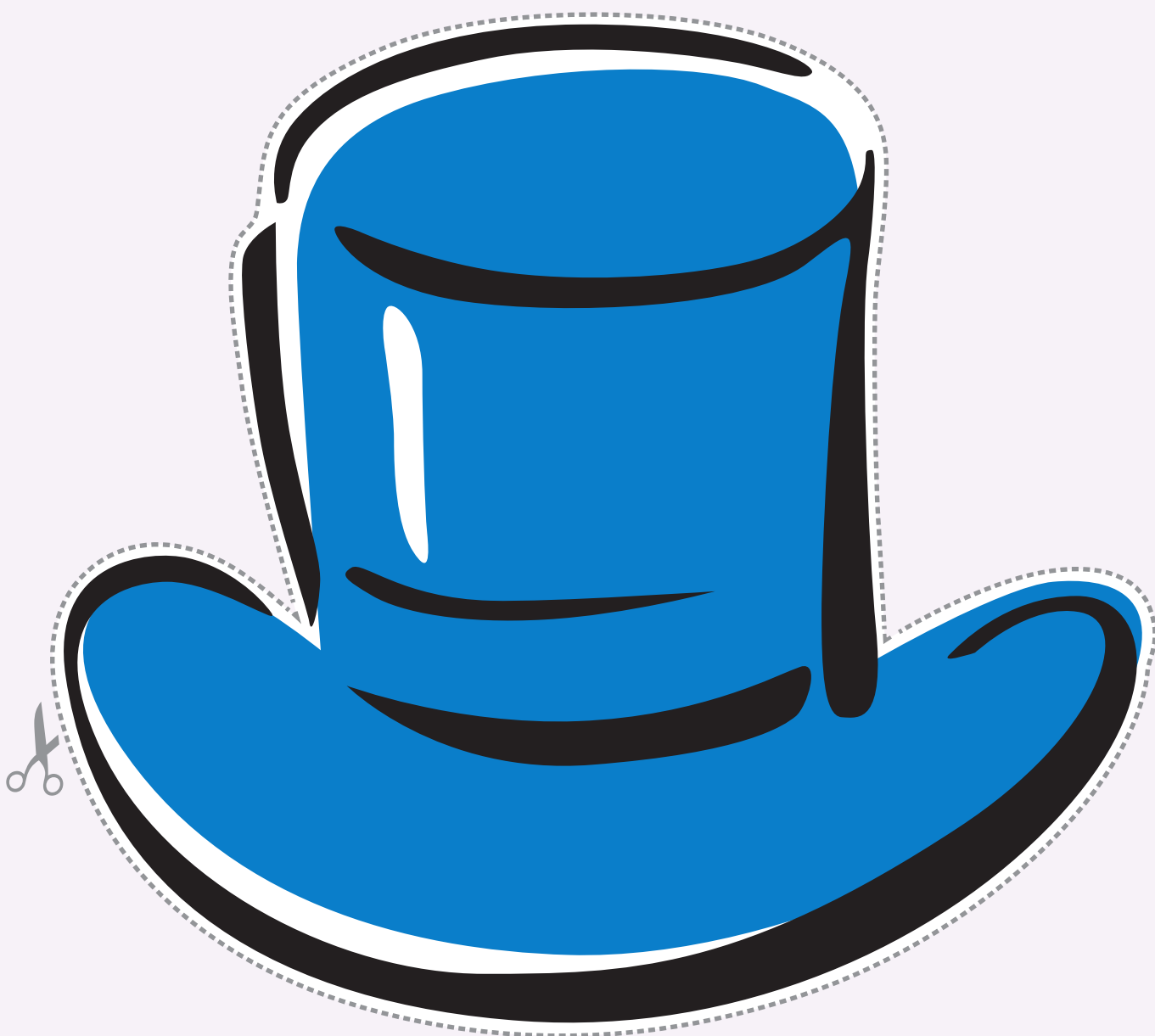The **Green Hat** focuses on creativity: the possibilities, alternatives, and new ideas.

The **Blue Hat** is used to manage the thinking process.

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[7]Dr Edward De Bono Six Thinking Hats®

Six Thinking Hats®
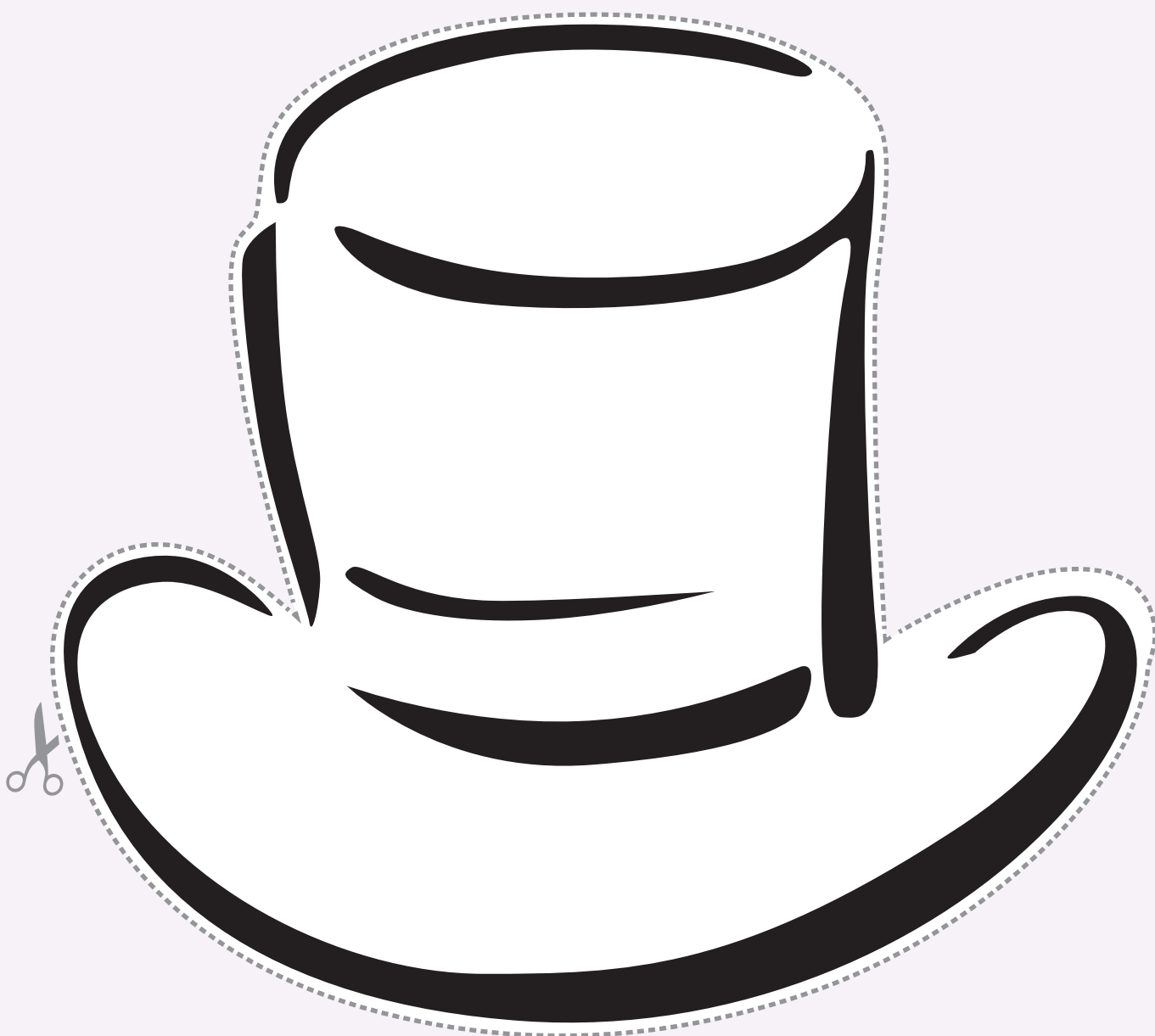
Blue Hat Thinking - Process

- thinking about thinking
- what thinking is needed?
- organizing the thinking
- planning for action

Six Thinking Hats®

White Hat Thinking - Facts

- information and data
- neutral and objective
- what do I know?
- what do I need to find out?
- how will I get the information I need?

Six Thinking Hats®

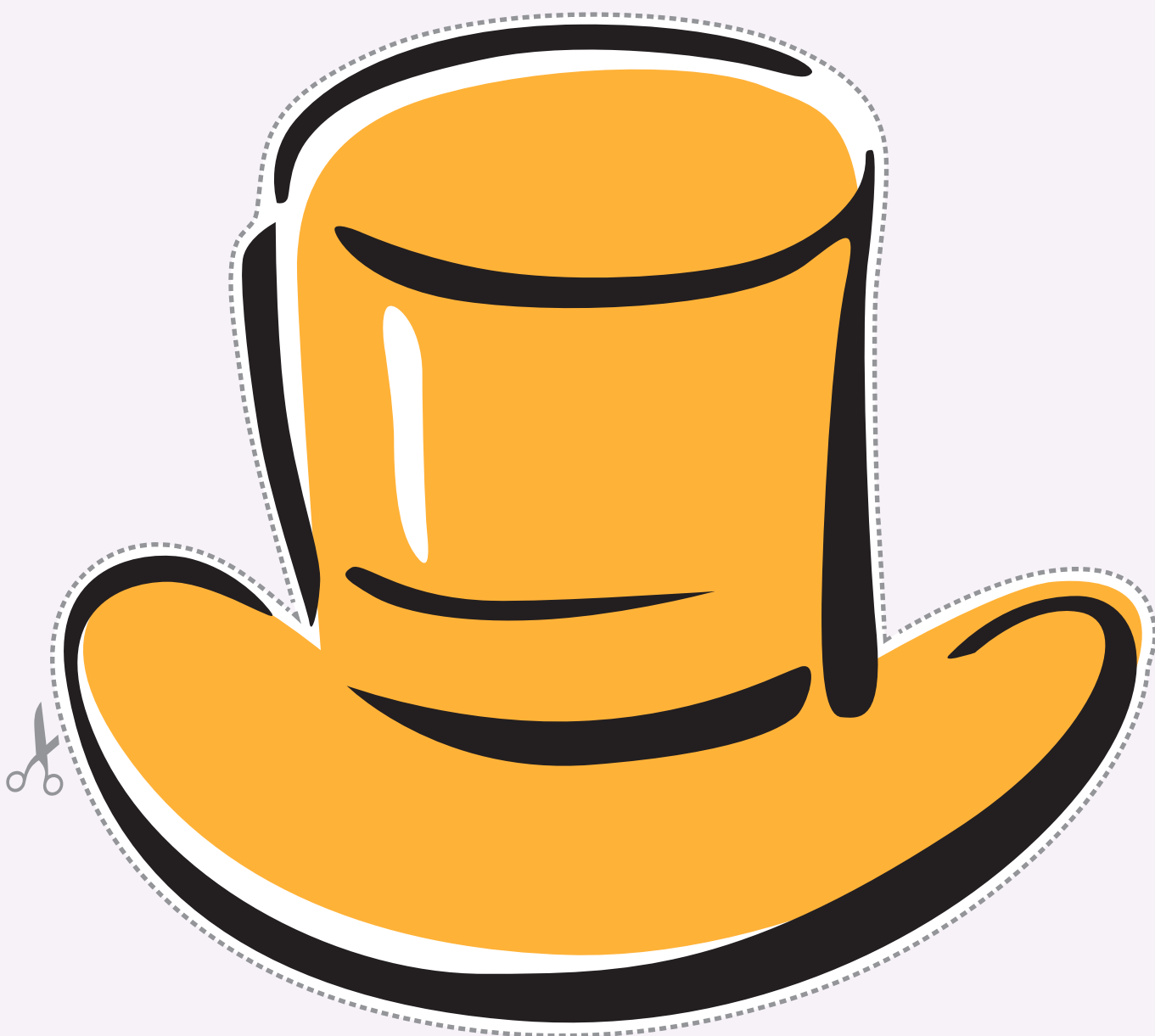### Green Hat Thinking - Creativity

- ideas, alternative, possibilities
- provocation
- solutions to black hat problems

Six Thinking Hats®

Yellow Hat Thinking - Benefits

- positives, plus points
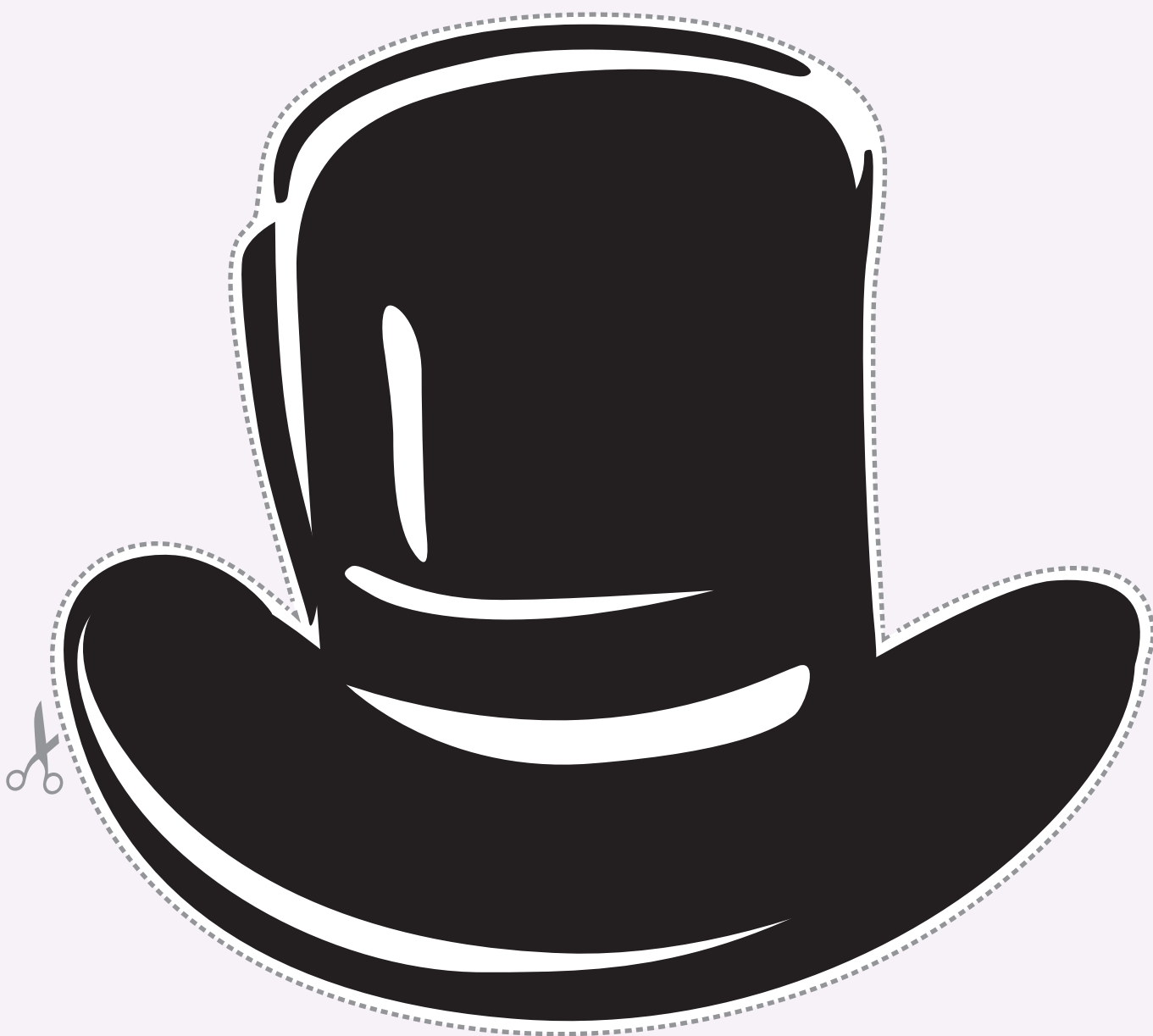- logical reasons are given
- why an idea is useful

Six Thinking Hats®

Black Hat Thinking - Cautions

- difficulties, weaknesses, dangers
- logical reasons are given
- spotting the risks

Six Thinking Hats®

Red Hat Thinking - Feelings

- intuition, hunches, gut instinct
- my feelings right now
- feelings can change
- no reasons are given

Which hat do you wear most of the time?

And the second?

Work in a group of three to plan a meeting. Practice using each of the six hats.

Five scenarios

Drawing from the Toolkit resources, choose one of the scenarios below and work your way through the worksheet on the following page.

Scenario 1

Two directors decide that their respective organisations are going to work together in response to a local issue. They are friends who have worked together for many years and have built a strong working relationship. Staff members from the two organisations hardly know each other, are unsure of what the other organisation does and consider they have different organisational cultures.

You are a member of staff – what will you do to try and encourage successful working together?

Scenario 2

A big voluntary organisation with a turnover of £1 million has secured a large amount of money to deliver a project in your area which your group has been lobbying for. The organisation wants to work with your local action group to deliver the project.

You are a member of the local action group – what do you think your group should do to explore working with the large voluntary organisation?

Scenario 3

Two groups within the same area have a very strained working relationship and a history of competitiveness rather than collaboration. A funder has been allocating resources to both groups for similar projects but due to reductions can now only fund one project and has asked both organisations to work together.

You are a member of one of the groups – what will you do to try and encourage successful working together with the other group?

Scenario 4

A new issue arises in your community which no one is addressing. Your group and another group have identified this and want to work together to respond to the issue.

You are a member of one of the groups - what will you do to try and encourage successful working together?

Scenario 5

A funder has set up a new programme with a limited number of large grants – you and a number of other groups have decided to come together to secure the resource and intend to work together to deliver a service across the area.

You are a member of one of the groups – what will you do to try and encourage successful working together?

D

Scenario number:

What parts of the Toolkit might be useful?

What are you going to do - steps in the process?

What challenges might you face?

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Further resources

This toolkit has been prepared for Belfast City Council by:

Community Places
2 Downshire Place
Great Victoria Street
Belfast
BT2 7JQ

T: 028 9023 9444
E: info@communityplaces.info
W: www.communityplaces.info

www.facebook.com/belfastcitycouncil

@belfastcc

This toolkit can be downloaded at **www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community**