

# QUALIFICATION FOR HER ADULTS



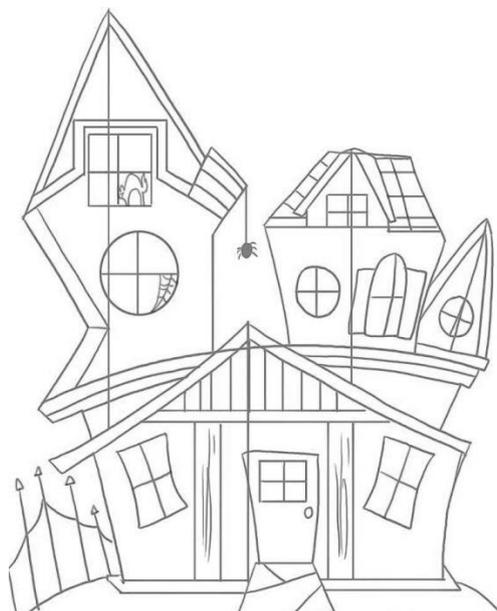
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## The House of Change

Capacity building for long-term unemployed

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Inspired by one of our partners this small paper wish to present a *very small and simple* example of a capacity building and taking action case - totally fictional, of course.

The point is not the content of small case, but the way the case is built up.

One might put all sorts of content and missions into this approach.

In the case we of course need to pretend that we know all the levels and steps, which is normally not the case.

A case like this could take from three months to more than a year, or more.



## STEP 1



### DESCRIPTION

A group of long-term unemployed met with their trainer to find out some useful ways.

One of the comments started a discussion: why are we meeting in a bar, why don't we have a place?

Long debates about no such places in the community. And more: if I have a good idea, where can I go? To the bar?

So, the idea came up: why not create such a place? Why not create a social center in the community, to be used by people for different things?

The trainer supported the idea, but many comments like: nice, but we are not at all able to do such a thing...

Trainer comment: yes, we are. Or, this is precisely what this project is about: doing things we are not able to. We must *become able*, right?

After some further debate a team of unemployed was formed with an interest in at least trying out how such a social center could be established.

The team was 3 unemployed and 1 trainer.

The other unemployed did not like the idea and tried to find other challenges.

### CAPACITY

Meeting with peers, reflecting on own needs and possible needs in the community, creating ideas, holding on the them, forming a team to try out to idea.

### WHAT NEXT?

It was agreed to meet next week and for each of the team members to think more about what such a center could be like - and, also talk to people we know to find out what they think.



## STEP 2



### DESCRIPTION

So the team met the following week.

Many new things on the table, because 2 of the unemployed had been talking to friends and neighbours along the week, and it came up that many people could use such a place for very different things, from computer help to child care to simply having a place to meet and talk about new things.

The trainer did not contribute this week, as she preferred to let the unemployed work on the idea and only step in when needed.

Long debates about this "place": what was it about, who should be there, what could it be used for?

At some point the 3<sup>rd</sup> unemployed stepped in and said: why are we talking about

a “social center”, like in the old days, for the poor and for people with problems. It sounds very much “public services”, and we cannot provide that anyway.

Why not make it a broader place where many things could happen at the same time, and with the overall idea to bring together citizens in an informal way and for very different things, also creative things...?

Why not try to make a *House of Change*, different from what we imagine when saying “social center”?

Long debate, because not everybody got the point right away. It was more difficult to imagine such a place than a social center. And most likely also more difficult to create it...

Finally it was agreed that the team should try to describe the House of Change, at least in a first way.

But not alone. The first description should also be influenced by people who might have some experience in such initiatives.

### CAPACITY

Discussing with people in the community about new initiatives, carrying through intensive team debates on an idea and elaborating on the idea, taking first concept steps and interacting with useful resources in the community and at European level.

### WHAT NEXT?

It was agreed that the unemployed would talk more seriously with people they knew in the community and that the trainer would communicate with the European project to get some support, some ideas and perhaps even some guidance...

This was a lot of work, so next meeting in 2 weeks, but they decided to stay in contact online, if interesting things appeared...



### DESCRIPTION

So, the first action was taken: the unemployed in the team arranged several meetings with people they knew in the community and with people they thought should comment on the idea (also people from the municipality, at least just to get some first comments...).

The trainer started a debate in the European project’s virtual forum and got quite a lot of good response - not solutions, of course, but quite a lot of inspiration, as it seemed like other communities across Europe had been trying out similar initiatives...

The team collected all this input along the two weeks and tried to summarize it for the next and very important meeting.

### CAPACITY

Arranging more focused dialogues with people in the community, receiving input and reactions, interacting with peers at European level, summarizing the input and presenting the results to the team.

## WHAT NEXT?

The challenge now was to bring together own ideas, other people's comments and guidance from project partners and create a first concept for the House of Change.



## STEP 4



## DESCRIPTION

This meeting was complicated and demanding. How to combine all the ideas and information and reactions. A lot of work, and difficult work.

The unemployed in the team said: but now we know. We know what the European people said and we know what the community thinks.

Here the trainer stepped in: no, we don't.

We simply collected some first reactions to a rather unstructured idea.

What we must do now is to create a first clear concept for the House of Change.

We must describe what the mission of the house is, what kind of activity we imagine, what kind of people should use it - and what kind of house we are talking about.

Of course, the first reaction was: we are not able.

Trainer: let's do it step by step, and try to answer some of the questions in the concept.

After some hard work, they actually managed:

The House of Change should be an open center for the community and many things should happen at the same time. It should be a forward-looking and dynamic center, not a place where people simply shared all their problems. The focus should be on "change".

So, the concept included the following things:

Mission with 3 major elements:

### NEW INITIATIVES FOR THE COMMUNITY

- a place where new initiatives could be taken to try to solve problems in the community in new ways, and where you could get support for taking such initiatives

### TECHNOLOGY

- a place where for example elderly and less technology fluent adults could get help with internet, public papers, and all the new things that many people did not understand,; but also a place where you could learn how to Skype with the daughter in Australia and similar things

### CRAZY IDEAS

- a place where for example young people or unemployed could create teams for new ideas for all sort of things, local, European, technological, artistic, whatever, and where they could get support for starting out such crazy ideas

Then, the house. A room, a house, a building, what?

It was agreed to make some very simple and first descriptions of the facilities and then work with the community to find possible ways later on.

And, who could work in the House of Change?

Again, first ideas were described, such as paid staff, sponsored staff, volunteers, young people in practice, unemployed in agreement with the labour

market office, seniors and who knows: people from other communities in other countries on different exchange programs.

Of course, money was brought up all the time: who will pay for all this. Here the trainer played a very important role: let's not set ourselves check mate by trying to find out who will pay. Let's focus on the concept and explaining this concept in the community. Sometimes financial solutions pop up on the way.

The trainer and one of the unemployed agreed to try to create a concept hand-out with illustrations and looking attractive. It would be presented at the next meeting.

## CAPACITY

Collecting response and input, "synthesizing" the material, drafting a concept, developing innovative ideas for activities and target groups, planning a concept hand-out to the community and the European project - and starting to plan the very important interactions with community players.

## WHAT NEXT?

Creating a very clear and well-described and attractive concept hand-out and planning how to create dialogues about the concept with people in the community. In fact: presenting the "project" to the community!



## STEP 5



## DESCRIPTION

The concept or the "project description" was produced and discussed at the following meeting.

The trainer and the unemployed could not hide the emerging pride: the project looked really good and was very well presented, with photos from the city, etc. This calls for a celebration ☺

The first big step was taken: describing a super new project and presenting this project to the community.

One month ago they would not have believed this...

However, new challenges appeared as a consequence of the good work done:

- how to present the project to the community?
- to whom and why?
- in what way: meeting, mail, informal, formal?
- what do we want to get out of all this presenting?
- will it be about money?

The trainer stepped in and proposed: what is the real purpose of presenting the idea to the community? What do we wish to obtain?

Not money at this stage, let's put that in the background for a while. It's not clever to meet people for the first time and ask for money. They would not like. So, what's it about right now?

It's about getting support and creating alliances. It's about building capacity for the project to take the next steps.

So, what would we like to obtain at this stage?

When presenting and explaining the project we would like to:

- create interest for the project among community players
- receive statements of support from community players
- agree to collaborate with the community players to take further steps to realize the project

A lot of work and contacting, many meetings.

Team: why don't we just arrange one big meeting with all of them? Much easier...

Trainer: Yes, true, but perhaps this is better at a later stage. Why? Because our project and our "story" should be told in many different ways to create interest: the municipality needs one story, the bank another and the company yet another. They need to understand the project from their very different points of view and interests.

Once this has happened, yes, then we can bring them together.

The Team then defined this important sub-mission as: we would like to create clear interest and support from a group of community players from different sectors.

## CAPACITY

Creating a real concept and a project description, discussing how to promote a project in the community and how to approach different players in the community in different ways, applying clever "tactics" when approaching the community taking into consideration their special interests - how to start to get into the real-world game of support, alliances and... funding.

## WHAT NEXT?

Now the big question was: who are the community players and how to approach them?



## STEP 6



## DESCRIPTION

Reality approaching: who are the relevant community players and how to approach them?

Long discussions: why this player, not the other?

Along the discussions the team learned to ask a crucial question: why would the individual player wish to support the House of Change? Which are their interests and motives? What would they gain?

This exercise was very complicated: the team needed to learn to "see the things from the points of views" of very different community players.

And more: not only "see the things", but agreeing on what kind of story the different players would need to hear.

Meaning: the team had to create several "versions" of the House of Change project. They certainly did not learn this in school 😊

The conclusion was that the team would contact the following players in what they called a first round of community approach:

- the municipality at the highest level possible, even including the mayor (!)
- the local and national banks in the community
- the community's leading insurance company

- the 3 major private companies in the community
- the primary, secondary and vocational schools in the community
- a major social NGO operating in the community
- and of course the local European project partner and their “allied”

The “how” was not so complicated, as we are talking about a relatively small community: the concept paper would be delivered in nice print and by mail at the same time to the identified contact persons, and with an invitation to meet the team for further explanation and dialogue.

The concept hand-out was accompanied by an “invitation letter” to each individual community player, briefly indicating the story that should be told to this special player.

The meetings would then elaborate on these first indications.

## CAPACITY

Scanning the community and possible alliance partners, learning about how to tell the mission story in different ways according to different players’ different interests, using tactical approaches to create interest and link to different organisations’ interests, contacting important people in the community and inviting them to further dialogues.

Such capacity is extremely useful no matter what you might wish to obtain in a community! It’s about working the community, navigating in the community, gaming the community 😊

## WHAT NEXT?

Different stories - same project! That was the next challenge.

Easy to deliver the concept to people, easy to invite them to dialogues - not so easy to plan how the project should be presented to the different stakeholders and players!



## STEP 7



## DESCRIPTION

The team delivered the invitations and managed to set up a line of meetings with some of the players. The team was a little surprised to see that several players showed an unexpected interest in at least arranging the dialogues.

Trainer: well, perhaps you underestimate the way people see “initiative”. Perhaps they are not used to such open and bold initiative-taking and perhaps they appreciate it.

Also because we did not start the contact by asking for money!

The next meeting was about preparing the dialogues that were set up.

How to tell the story in different ways to different players?

This discussion was extremely difficult and had to deal with a lot of frustration and giving up on the way.

The trainer was also in trouble, because she was not at all trained to think in this way.

The helping hand came from one of the European project resources still in contact with the trainer and the local initiative. This project resource had some experience from similar challenges and gave valuable input to the team.

After some heavy struggling, the team ended up with an idea of how the different stories could be told, and they now realized how important it was to

change the first idea of a “social center” to the House of Change, as it was difficult for them to imagine how to “sell” the social center to for example the bank, the company or the school.

The results were the following story plots to be explained at the meetings, in which by the way the local European partner took part:

- the municipality: the center can help solve social problems and in new ways
- the companies: the center can help create new and dynamic initiatives in the community, good for private enterprise and business
- the bank and insurance company: the center can help change the mentality in the community, creating interest in initiative-taking and consequently interest in financial measures
- the schools and colleges: the center can offer various after-school initiatives for children and young people, supporting their general interest in learning and their sense of initiative
- the social NGO: you can use the center for finding new solutions in direct interaction with groups of citizens, for example help to elderly, child care, young people in the streets, etc.

## CAPACITY

Contacting important people and organisations in the community, learning how to describe initiatives from the point of view of the organisations to create interest, learning that a project has many angles and many interpretations, learning to play the alliance game well - and learning to work your way through sometimes complicated problems and discussions.

## WHAT NEXT?

The next 2 weeks were about meeting the community players, and hopefully harvest some useful outcomes.



## STEP 8



## DESCRIPTION

Those were hard times for the team. They were nervous when approaching people, scared of making mistakes, scared of failing. The first meetings were very difficult and called for a cold beer at the pub and some heavy after-talk. But after the first meetings they noticed that they were more relaxed, they presented the project in a much more confident way, and they felt that the people they met were quite impressed. In general they were surprised to be met with considerable respect from almost all people and organisations.

One of the last meetings was with the Mayor herself, and the Mayor was very impressed when discovering that the team had carried through a number of dialogues with the most important stakeholders in the community. They could see that this made a big difference to her: she started to see them as *capable*. And politicians like to work with *capable* people...

The results of this hard work along more than 3 weeks were:  
A *House of Change Alliance* was created, including the local EU partner, the social and youth departments in the municipality, one of the companies (a

technology company; the others were not interested at this point, but asked to be included later on), the local bank (the national bank was not interested, neither was the insurance company), a secondary school and the two vocational colleges and the social NGO (that was extremely interested, of course).

Quite an accomplishment as almost 50% of the contacting was successful. Also the municipality promised to work with the labour market office to ensure the needed participation of unemployed in the project.

However, and a most positive spin-off, 3 other players unexpectedly contacted the team, as many people now knew about the initiative in the community (a lot of networking “for free”).

The local TV station, a small public/private entrepreneurial support center and a local music school had been informed about the initiative and wished to interact with it, as they could see many opportunities in such an open and dynamic center.

They were of course integrated in the House of Change Alliance.

Moreover, the people from the municipality gave the team an important challenge: we would like you to promote the initiative in the wider community and among people to 1) find out what people need (especially elderly and young people) and 2) identify possible resources for the House of Change (such as skilled seniors, unemployed, young people, experts in this or that and volunteers).

As they said: please do this and please report back to us, as this is very important to us.

Well, extra work for the team, but very useful - and now the team was officially acknowledged by the local authorities... 😊

## CAPACITY

Meeting people at all levels and from all sectors, learning to approach them in different ways, learning to see things from their side, learning to present a complicated project and learning to bring the results together as a strong milestone platform.

## WHAT NEXT?

The quite exhausted team (looking back at 2 months of hard work) was quite proud of their milestone achievement: the *House of Change Alliance*. They rightfully saw this Alliance as an open door to the success of the project. But after the celebration: new challenges ahead, and big ones. First the community survey and mobilisation of resources for the municipality, then the big question: money and resources to create the center!



## DESCRIPTION

The community survey was extremely interesting and positive: many people were interviewed as to ideas for the center and what they would like to do in the center, and surprisingly many people showed an interest in supporting the center through offering their time, skills and experience.

This reaction from the community was of incredible importance to the hard working team. It was as everything they had been doing suddenly made sense:

people appreciated what they were creating.

Along those many informal dialogues the team learned some very important lessons that they shared with the European project: people were “hiding”, isolated, with no apparent will to initiatives; and yet, when other people took an initiative, they suddenly appeared on the scene and wished to participate. A very important lesson.

The team created the summary for the municipality and used the surveys to start describing more in detail what the House of Change should be about. Now the biggest of all the steps: resources for establishing and running the House of Change. Words are nice, money more nice ☺

But at this point the clever trainer made a time-out: let’s use some hours to look back at what we did, how we did it and why we did it - to fully understand where we are now.

The team was surprised to see what they had accomplished, but one of the comments was also: yes, nice, but we started with an idea about a center and we still haven’t got the center!

Trainer input: that is true.

However, if we had rushed to the municipality to ask for a house, the answer would have been NO. We had no credibility, we did not do anything.

Jumping up like lions and falling down like lambs, like most projects.

Now we have earned the respect, built up trust and credibility and learned a million things on the way.

NOW we are prepared for the next steps. Now we are able.

Without the support and dedication of the community, we can do nothing.

In the beginning we could not ask for money; now we can and in a legitimate way.

## CAPACITY

Scanning the community, identifying people’s interest, mobilising people, reporting outcomes, reflecting on what happened, learning the lessons and realistically assessing one’s strengths and weaknesses.

## WHAT NEXT?

So they turned to the big new challenge: who will pay, who will give resources, who will make this happen?

Money, people, equipment, a building, and so on...



## STEP 10



## DESCRIPTION

So, after 3 months of work, the unavoidable questions: financing and resources! Who will pay for all this, what resources are needed and how they be mobilized? How could the House of Change create economies?

It’s not only about money, buy money matters.

The team started to list what kind of resources were needed to establish the center:

1. a physical place
2. installations of all kinds

3. technology
4. operational costs
5. human resources in the center

Those were 5 most important resource needs the team identified.

Then a long debate: contributions from supporters and sponsors is not only about money, but about donating services, technology and things.

The team worked to come up with a first resource plan for the House of Change:

#### A physical place

The meetings with the municipality indicated that they would not be able to finance a lot, but they might be able to provide a location and cover some operational costs, as several buildings in the community were in fact not used anymore. However, those locations of course needed some refurbishment, and the municipality was not able to finance such costs.

A first plan was: dialogues with the municipality, identifying a suitable place, and work on the building through volunteering.

#### Installations

Part of installation could be managed by volunteering, but considerable initial costs could be foreseen.

A first plan: get help to estimate the installation costs and integrate those costs in the centre's establishment budget (not in the operational budget).

#### Technology

As the center should offer state of the art technology, at least to some extent, hardware, internet and software was important, also to give the centre a dynamic image and make it attractive also to young people.

A first plan: dialogue with the technology company in the Alliance and work with them to find sponsors, either from the company itself or from the big hardware and software providers in the country, known to be positive towards technology donations.

#### Operational costs

The municipality was expected to finance physical operational costs as to the building and probably also internet and other operational costs.

But to make the centre work, human resources should be present in the centre - to coordinate and manage, to guide, to help, to take initiatives, and to take the centre further.

The team discussed this for a long time. The dilemma was: what should be the balance between paid work and volunteering? And how could volunteering be made sustainable?

A first plan was to go for 2 ½ time centre workers + volunteering as a starting point and then work for more paid work as soon as the centre was able to create activity and economies.

A crucial point was, of course: how can the centre create economy, in the beginning and in the future?

Several ideas were discussed, but at this point the trainer stepped in and said: let's present these first ideas to the Alliance and give them the challenge to find solutions in collaboration with us!

And this time by bringing them all together for a joint and very well prepared workshop: *how can we together ensure the establishment of and first operations of the House of Change?*

This represented a BIG MILESTONE:

Bringing together all the mobilized resources in the community to join the mission and collaboratively find solutions to economy and resources!!

#### CAPACITY

Taking project ideas to reality, estimating costs and resources, designing

activities and foreseeing human resource needs, planning financial support and sponsor initiatives, and working with partners to create solutions.

#### WHAT NEXT?

Establishing the first House of Change Alliance joint workshop, preparing the workshop and briefing the participants carefully.

And: making the workshop attractive and important to the community players.



#### STEP 11



#### DESCRIPTION

Planning such an important workshop is not easy, in particular because the team knew that this workshop might mean success or failure - or at least a considerable set-back.

First a lot of contacting, making sure that the workshop was held at a time allowing all Alliance partners to attend. In the middle of all this contacting one of the unemployed proposed something quite unexpected:

- trainer, you are always talking about the European project and how we must work with the other partners and trainers, right? Well let's do that now, now we need them. My idea is: what about organizing a European workshop BEFORE the Alliance workshop about the financing and the resources, to support our initiative and to create a good spirit in the Alliance, and to show that we are working in Europe, not only in our local community, and that people in Europe appreciate our initiative?

Some confusion and hesitation.

Trainer: yes, I see your idea, but I am not sure the European project can do that, I mean finance that... It means traveling and accommodation and things... Not so easy.

The proposer did not give up:

- yes, I know that, but if we talk to the local project partner, and to the project and to some of the local supporters, it might be possible, say to invite for example 2 or 3 EU project resources to such a workshop...

The team asked the trainer to discuss this as soon as possible with the local project partner and search for a solution.

The planning of the Alliance joint workshop was therefore postponed until the European workshop had been tested.

The result was that the EU project and the local partner agreed to share the simple traveling and accommodation costs and invite 2 EU project resources to a 1 day workshop (afternoon + evening) with the Alliance organisations, including the Mayor.

The mission of the European workshop was to create strong support in the Alliance for the House of Change and explain the future perspectives of such an initiative and how it could impact dynamically the local community - and to support the initiative on behalf of key European policies.

Part of the mission would be to explain that such a centre might serve as an exchange facilitator between for example young people from the community and young from other European countries, and how this could create more dynamic mentality in the community.

So, the job was now to plan a double workshop, not only one.

## CAPACITY

Creating outlook mentality, exploiting available resources, combining local and “global”, using available resources to create new resources and learning how to plan strategically to achieve your goals.

## WHAT NEXT?

Planning the double workshop carefully and with good quality and carrying out the workshops with positive results.



## STEP 12



## DESCRIPTION

It was agreed to have the European workshop some weeks before the Alliance workshop - to create a strong spirit among the local supporters. In the European workshop 2 representatives from the European project would participate and all Alliance partners were invited, including the Mayor. Most Alliance partners accepted the invitation, also out of curiosity...

The primary idea of the European workshop was to support the Alliance, to explain how the House of Change initiative was back-up by top priorities in Europe and the importance of the community working together to make the centre a reality.

In particular the European workshop would focus on explaining the *wider benefit* of such an initiative for the community; how it could help solve social problems, create new initiatives and help create a more dynamic environment in the community, but also help create more visible interaction between the community and Europe.

The tactical game was of course to encourage the Alliance partners to support the centre financially and as to resources at the following Alliance workshop.

But, as the team was well aware, you don't organize a European or an Alliance workshop in a bar - or in a school classroom.

You have to find a suitable place.

Therefore the team decided to contact the local TV station to ask them to collaborate and to contact the local hotel and encourage them to offer nice facilities for the meeting, including some coffee and small meals.

This time the unemployed were prepared to “play the game” called we need to find a suitable place for the workshops: they did not believe in contacting the hotel and asking for support directly, but if the TV station did that, promising to broadcast from the events, the hotel was likely to be more open to negotiations. Of course it supported the mission that the Mayor decided to attend both workshops. In this case all the players benefitted from the TV-hotel-Mayor cocktail. This how things happen... They knew that by now...

The team was quite satisfied with the success of this sub-mission and looked very much forward to the two workshops which were the result of several months' hard work.

## CAPACITY

Planning important events with European and political representation, getting support from local stakeholders through the alliance with other stakeholders, playing the game of “win/win”, and learning to achieve support when all parties would benefit.  
Part of this capacity could very well be called “professional” capacity.

#### WHAT NEXT?

The two workshops should be carried out and hopefully with a clear result: establishing the House of Change in the community.



#### STEP 13



#### DESCRIPTION

Both workshops were well organized and were carried out as planned. The European workshop was very dynamic due to clear and strong and direct input from the European participants, making it almost impossible for the Alliance partners not to support the centre.

The European workshop was easy for the team: it was run by the European guests, and they knew how to do that.

But the Alliance workshop 3 weeks after was a big problem for the team: it was a win or lose milestone event for the team and for the mission. Would they get the needed support or not? Would they have to take several steps back - or event start from scratch?

Such events are like the “moment of truth” and the team knew that.

This was why they had long discussions about: how can we do our best to get the support we need? How can we approach the Alliance partners in a strong and respectful but also direct way; not asking for charity, but driving a strong community joint venture?

The team had the feeling: if we do it right, we win; if we do it wrong, we lose. So, long and complicated discussions in the team. Lots of learning also...

The brave conclusion was: we will play the game this way: we will give the Alliance a joint mission and challenge.

The joint mission and challenge was: the Alliance should discuss not IF but HOW the House of Change could be a reality after this meeting.

How can the Alliance join resource forces to make that happen? Who can cover what?

This was an incredible brave decision from the team: they staked everything on one throw, handing over the responsibility to the Alliance, replacing the softer IF with the direct HOW.

The reason for this decision was that they felt confident from several months of hard work.

Therefore the Alliance workshop was planned to have 3 steps:

1. Presenting the mission and challenge to the Alliance partners
2. Offering free discussion space among the partners to discuss possible solutions
3. Plenum conclusions on how the partners would contribute

#### CAPACITY

Learning to organize important dialogues with partners in the most efficient way, developing the cleverest approach to the partners, playing high-game when needed and appropriate, acting with confidence and taking brave decisions and risks when needed.

## WHAT NEXT?

The European workshop went well, as expected. Now the moment of truth: the Alliance workshop.



## STEP 14



## DESCRIPTION

At the Alliance workshop the mission and challenge was presented as planned to the Alliance partners. More than 20 key players including the Mayor and the director of the local bank attended the workshop, making it quite powerful - and making the team a bit nervous at the same time 😊

However, some surprise among the participants when they were requested to take responsibility and negotiate possible solutions. They were not expecting that.

They probably expected a normal meeting, and then another meeting, and so on...

The turning point was a strong input from the local bank director following the presentation of the mission and challenge: we need to agree with the team; it is our experience that if we do not use the moment in a powerful way, the project will lose momentum and energy and would slowly languish...

This statement made the Alliance partners jointly accept the challenge.

Sometimes a mission benefits from unexpected support: you need luck, you need help from other sources. But, as the team discussed after the meeting, if we did not frame and prepare this workshop, the “luck” would never happen... “Luck” can be invited through clever gaming.

Of course, after the strong input from the local bank director, the workshop went well.

Not all problems were solved, as expected, but the key resource problems were solved for a period of 2 years - or, at least capable Alliance partners dedicated themselves to solve such key problems that could not be solved in the workshop itself.

The Alliance jointly ensured the following key resources solutions:

### The municipality

- appropriate physical locations
- basic refurbishing
- basic physical operational costs for a period of 2 years
- appoint 1 social worker and 1 youth worker a certain amount of hours per week to work in the centre
- support the formal and legal administration of the centre
- negotiate agreements with the labour market office to ensure the volunteering of unemployed in the centre

### The local bank

- offer professional financial and entrepreneurial assistance to the centre and to

new initiatives a certain number of hours per week  
- donate a ½ time coordinator in the centre for a 2 year period

#### The technology company

- donate professional assistance to the centre and to new initiatives a certain amount of hours per week for a 2 year period  
- take responsibility for internet and basic technology installations  
- negotiate hardware and software solutions with the company's partners

#### The local TV station

- ensure strong promotion of the House of Change in the community and in the region  
- give new initiatives created in the centre access to media promotion

#### The local secondary school and one of the vocational colleges

- donate a number of teachers to work in the initiatives at the centre for a certain number of hours per week, including to some extent in evenings and weekends  
- encourage teachers to use the centre for experimentation with groups of pupils and students

#### The local EU project partner

- ensure and promote the European dimension of the centre, through European initiatives such as projects, exchanges, mobility and similar initiatives

#### The team

- responsible for coordinating the centre (one of the team members would serve as the ½ time coordinator)  
- work hard to create small economies at the centre, allowing a second ½ time coordinator to be financed after some time  
- work hard to create European activities in the centre, allowing the creation of small economies  
- seek further sponsoring continuously

The minor Alliance partners, such as the entrepreneurial hub and the music school promised to help create activity in the centre.

The conditions from the Alliance were very direct and clear:

- the centre must be managed with high quality and transparency, also financially  
- the support covered a 2 year period only, and continued support after the 2 years should be based on documented results  
- the centre was obliged to produce a clear evaluation at the end of the second year

Following the workshop, concrete agreements were drawn up with the different Alliance partners, and the Team acquired a kind of legal status in the community, but at the same time ensured independency.

## CAPACITY

Planning and running important meetings, risk-taking when appropriate, negotiating with important stakeholders, building credibility towards partners, using win-win strategies, driving project initiatives and driving important joint ventures.

## WHAT NEXT?

Creating interest, volunteering and human resources - populating the new environment



## STEP 15



### DESCRIPTION

Of course, a lot of celebration - 4-5 months of hard work was successful ☺  
To some of the unemployed it was a little like dreaming. Their lives had changed completely within a few months. Not their economy, but now with the support of the Alliance, also economic perspectives could be foreseen...

Mission accomplished - but, only the first half of the mission.  
Now the real work could begin: establishing the House of Change, mobilizing people, paper work, creating the first activities, etc., etc.  
Even more work ahead, but this time walking on solid grounds!

Besides the many practical tasks, the most important thing was to mobilize people and create the first activities. An empty centre would not impress the community - or the Mayor.

However, along the hard work in the community the team got in contact with many people, and therefore the mobilization was easier than expected: people were kind of expecting that the team would be in contact...

The mobilization aimed to create a group of volunteers to work in the centre, based on people's skills, experience and interests of course.

Therefore the following groups were contacted directly:

- retired seniors
- unemployed adults
- young people in possible NEET situations
- educators, youth workers and social workers to donate hours per week

After a few weeks of contacting and mobilizing, the team managed to establish a group of people with different skills, interests and experience to drive new initiatives in the centre and to offer assistance to citizens using the centre.

The team called this group the *Friends of the House of Change*.

In the beginning it was, of course, difficult, as there were no activities, and to help make the participation of the human resources more sustainable, the team decided to organize a *weekly briefing* among the volunteers.

The aim of those weekly briefings was to bring the volunteers together as a group, discuss their interests and skills and plan various activities and initiatives.

In this way the first population of the centre took place.

### CAPACITY

Community contacting, mobilizing resources, explaining mutual benefit, bringing people together, forming a team, planning initiatives and activities and coordinating the activities of others

### WHAT NEXT?

The house was there, the people were there, everything was there - which were the first activities?



## STEP 16



### DESCRIPTION

The house in action - *first step in a new mission* 

Mission completed. The House of Change was a reality. 7-8 months of hard work. But, as always, one mission completed generates the next mission: how to run the centre, what to do, what activities, how to create small economies, etc. The last step of the team was to define the new mission: working together, not as an unemployment team anymore but as a part of the new centre, for 2 years to ensure that the centre would receive support in the future.

New mission, new challenges, hard work, and new games to play...

The first activities in the House of Change started 3 months after the opening and were:

- open doors: come in and tell about your problems and needs
- ICT support for elderly: how to manage all the new online things for public authorities, banks, etc., and how to benefit from the internet yourself?
- parents group: how can we create new forms of child care and activities for children when the parents are working, also out of normal hours?
- support group for elderly and handicapped living alone and with problems in everyday life
- youth group: new ideas for creative media and technology
- the web team: creating and maintaining a dynamic website for the centre
- intergenerational group: experience seniors working with young people
- the European team: taking European initiatives to give a sense of Europeanness to the everyday life at the centre

The weekly briefings among the Friends of the House of Change discussed the various activities, and discussed possible new initiatives based on the people coming to the centre with problems, needs or ideas. In this way the centre could work dynamically and adjust to what was needed.

A constant focus in the centre was to spot and identify such activities that could create economy for the centre and for the people participating in the activities.

Therefore the coordinators and the weekly briefings continuously discussed such opportunities as :

- establishing a quality café offering all sorts of food and drinks to the many people attending the centre, and perhaps in an ecological or multicultural direction?
- offering various services to the community, based on the centre projects and human resources
- offering low-cost social services to citizens
- arranging meetings and seminars at the centre
- participating in European funded activities
- creating new business activities, driven by the groups working in the centre, for example in the fields of shops, food, sport, tourism and much more

One of the interesting ideas to work on was to offer consultancy to other communities in the county, region and even in the country wishing to establish similar centers or activities and in need of solid support and guidance.

*Why not use the experience and skills created in the long process of the House of Change to assist other communities and to generate small economies from this?*

Why not promote and exploit all this valuable capacity? Few other people in the

country were able to offer such capacity, based on practical experience. On non-profit basis, but being paid for work delivered, and in this way supporting the economy of the centre.

Those were the things discussed every week at the briefings.

## CAPACITY

Bringing people together for dynamic activities, driving new groups and activities, coordinating needs and interests between people, looking for economic opportunities from the activities, describing, promoting and exploiting your skills and experience - and selling your capacity to people and communities who need it.

## WHAT NEXT?

*What's next?*

Mission 2.0, of course: running the centre successfully and making sure that the evaluation of the centre after 2 years would lead to sustained and increasing community support!

Perhaps we can engage 3 other unemployed to learn how to run the center..?

This was the new game: the support will not come automatically; we will need to demonstrate value to the community to be able to sustain the House of Change. We are not on the public budget... 😊

## WHAT ABOUT THE 3 UNEMPLOYED?



What did they achieve, the 3 unemployed in the team?

3 very important things:

- they built a lot of **capacity** to create something that was not there, to create missions and work towards results and to believe in themselves; even if the House of Change was not successful, such capacity could be transferred to any other new initiative or mission

- they created **possible economies** for themselves: one of the unemployed became the ½ time coordinator of the centre; the second unemployed decided to learn how to run the centre café and earn a living through that; the third unemployed was expected to be the second ½ time coordinator as soon as the centre economy allowed it, and in the meantime she is taking ICT courses and administrative courses to better manage the coordinator role later on

- it is easier to **get up in the morning**, if you know that the day will bring you serious challenges and that you will have to do your best to succeed!

All these things could be taken further at the centre and by the individual “unemployed”.

Of course, the trainer was excited about all this. And of course the trainer continued to work as a volunteer at the centre, with a strong focus on the European team established at the centre.

An important thing to remember is that if the activities in the House of Change will grow, some of the other unemployed in the community might get a chance to break out of the dead-end situations as well... 😊



## LEARNING SESSIONS

What has not been included in this small case, are the many small learning sessions inserted along the 8 months long process.

Learning in this case does not take place in advance, but precisely when needed by the unemployed - when needed to overcome obstacles to accomplishing sub-missions and missions.

This approach ensures the full motivation and dedication of the unemployed. How are such learning sessions constructed?

Along the many steps, the unemployed (and the trainer!) had to face many complicated things.

When they were not able to solve the problems in the team, they defined a “learning need”, something concrete they needed to learn.

Then they approached this need in the same way as they approached missions in general: where can we find resources to help out, what capable people do we know, how can we get this knowledge or this skill?

Of course, the more the Alliance progressed, the easier it was to find such resources and to ask them to lend a helping hand.

Examples of such inserted learning sessions were:

- ICT and internet
- how to write letters to stakeholders
- how to plan a submission and implement the plan
- basic administrative things, such as creating a simple budget
- and things like that...

If such learning is proposed prior to the taking action, they would make little sense.

When inserted to accomplish a mission, they make all the sense in the world. Context matters...

As can be seen from the case, one of the unemployed in fact decided to attend more intensive courses in ICT and administration, as she was promised the position of the second centre coordinator as soon as the centre economy allowed it.

Capacity building can lead to substantial learning interests and learning needs.

## CELEBRATION AND GAMIFICATION

It is easy to imagine that all sorts of celebrations and gamifications could be inserted in the steps and especially at important milestones along the mission. It is easy to spot very many and important milestones along the sub-missions and missions in this case, calling for gamified approaches and for considerable celebration.

Imagine the feelings in the team when the Mayor accepted the invitation to both workshops - the European and the Alliance workshops... 😊

## HOW CAPACITY IS BUILT

The most important thing in the small case is: *how capacity is built*. This is the juice.

Capacity is NOT built through a long line of exercises in meeting rooms prior to taking action on the mission.

The taking action is NOT prepared through workshops about one's life, one's situation and traditional mental empowering.

The problem in the more "traditional" approaches is that for every empowerment day it becomes more and more difficult to face the reality. And mental empowerment does not change anything in the real world, it simply tries to help the unemployed survive.

Mental empowerment, self-confidence and personal strength is built up THROUGH taking action, through showing yourself what you can do, and that you can learn to play the game.

NOT through jumping into unrealistic missions or tasks, out of reach to any unemployed and to most other people, but through working the mission step by step, accomplishing small things in the beginning and taking bigger steps when ready.

You create the capacity you need to succeed in step 5 through working the challenges in step 4.

The empowerment, self-confidence and personal strength created in this way are much stronger than through mental empowerment in the meeting room, as it shows you what you can accomplish in real life and through working and impacting the reality around you.

Not to forget: mental empowerment in the meeting room creates no economy, whereas impacting the reality might indeed do that.