

Outline of Structure and Ways of Working for The Forum

Draft. Esther Ridsdale, 5th April 2011

Introduction

The purpose of the Civil Society Forum is to provide an open space for leaders to engage on the practical challenges in building Civil Society. Working groups will provide one of the practical mechanisms for doing this. This note defines a process for opening up the space for people to engage, how to make it a space in which anyone interested can engage, and engage productively. It also aims to generate a multiplier effect on people's individual and combined contribution.

Part one describes proposed overall structure of activity

1. Guiding principles for Forum activity
2. Structure of Forum activity; Scope of Working Group Activity & Outline Activity Schedule

Part two outlines the working process for Working Groups

3. Formation of Working Groups
4. Working Group Documentation

Part 1: Structure of Activity

1) Guiding Principles for Forum Activity

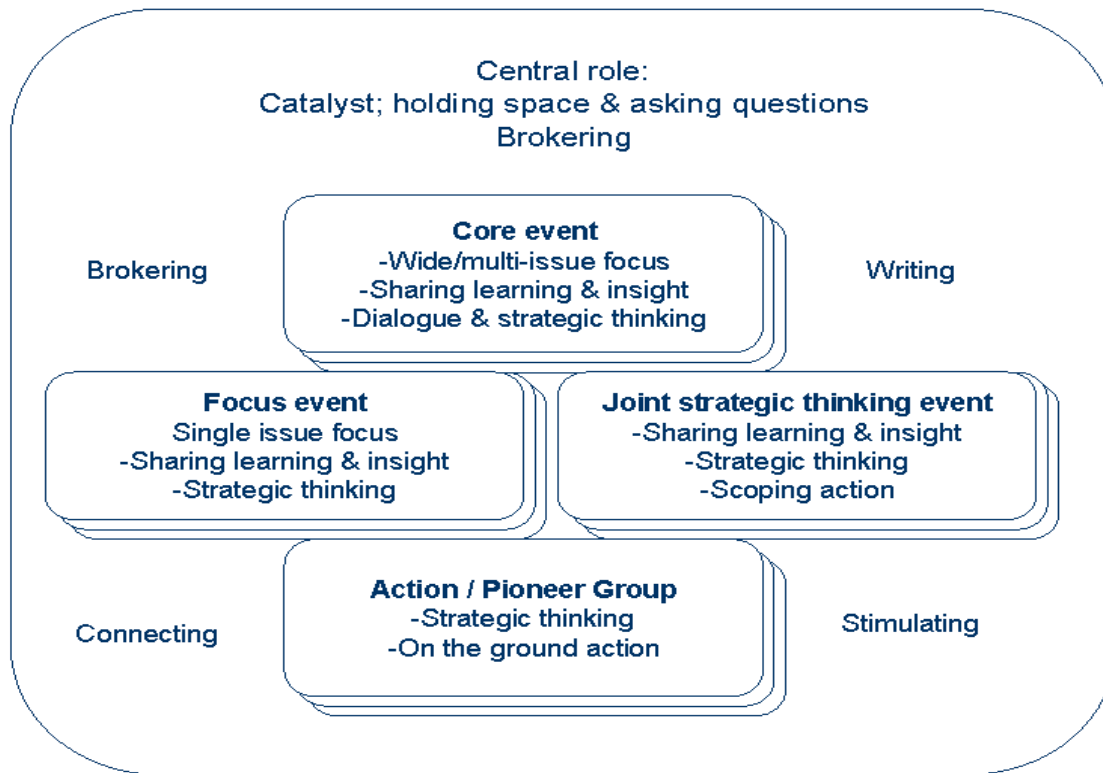
1. Open access to anyone interested
2. Individual and joint commitment to ensure time spent is of value to all participants
3. Joint commitment to ensure time spent provides value to a wider audience
 - a. Learning is made available to anyone interested
 - b. Seek to draw on principles of social movements to facilitate widespread impact
4. Joint commitment to reflexive practice to learn and improve value and impact of work
5. Commitment to own learning; seek transformation of our own behaviour before consideration of what we believe others 'should' be doing
6. Individual and joint commitment to protect and build the reputation of the Forum
7. Commitment to holding widespread social benefit as a higher priority than financial reward for any forum activity.
8. Aim to work beyond the constraints of money as a transactional mechanism. At a time where finances are tight, in a world where need is always great, seek to experiment with and leverage other mechanisms of exchange.
9. Openness in operating, conscious attention to keeping the workings honest to the principles outlined above and to other challenge and scrutiny arising and to evolve the framework in response to this learning.

In support of the above The Forum aims to:

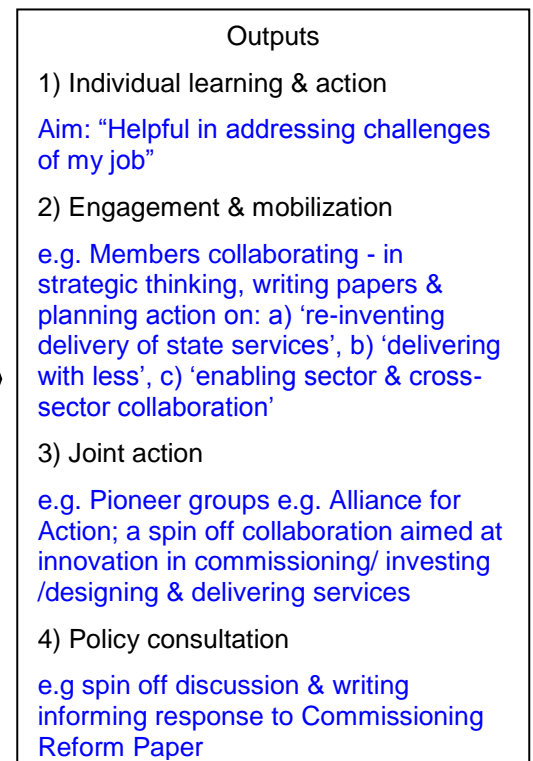
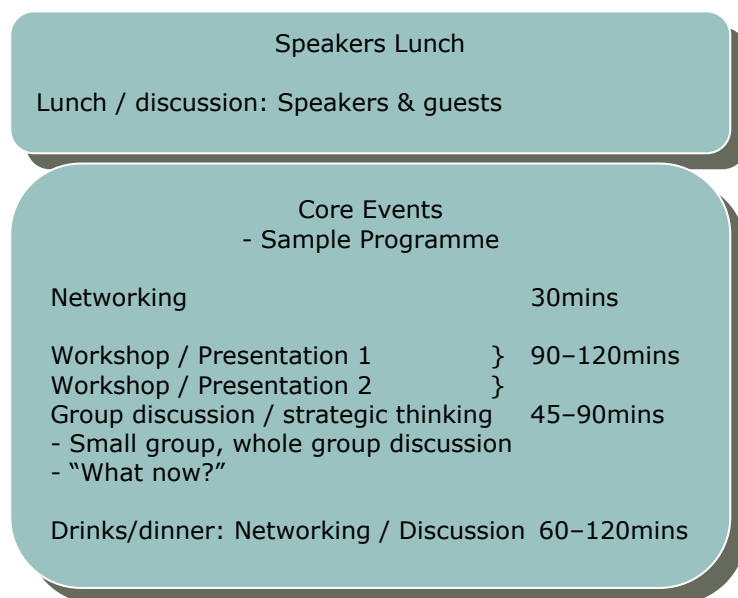
10. Promote the use of systems thinking and systemic approaches - drawing on principles and practice of systems thinking and whole scale change in the work
11. Promote the use of participative approaches (and the value of open engagement of everyone in the matters that concern and affect them).
12. Draw on principles of social movements in its work to work in a way that benefits are shared and thinking and initiative of wider value is made available.
13. Draw on all the above to leverage greater value from the contribution of everyone involved and pre-existing resources drawn on and disseminated during the course of work and in so doing to create a multiplier effect, multiplying the value gained for all.

2) Structure of Core Forum Activity

The Civil Society Forum – Role / Fora



Format for Core Events



Part 2: Outline of the working process for Working Groups

3) Process for Formation of Working Groups

Stage 1: Identification of an area to be addressed, scoping and formation of stewardship group.

1. A suggestion for an area to be addressed is made & put to The Forum Steering Group. – A suggestion can be made by anyone.
2. The originator or another volunteer drafts a context note describing the area to address. (see below for description)
3. The originators and Forum steering group together make a preliminary decision on whether this is appropriate and likely to have sufficient interest. If it does...
4. The originator and steering group decide who to circulate this to to review and refine or change it with the aim of seeing whether there is a quorum who agree on:
 - 1) a context description,
 - 2) a terms of reference for the work, what it will involve and what success would look like, and an initial outline of the territory and stakeholders in the area (see below for requirements for Territory Analysis to be developed and inform inputs and invitations to the working group) and
 - 3) are willing to act as stewards for a working group taking responsibility for the working group and its success. This means that there needs to be agreement on how the work will be organised and how those less involved in organising enact a stewardship role in ensuring success.
5. The Forum Steering Group need to agree the quorum and the group need to be willing to agree to the parameters outlined by the Steering Group. The parameters will initially be decided on a purely case by case basis but with the intention of evolving some general terms and guidelines.

Stage 2:

6. Develop Terms of Reference for Working Group, plans and Territory Analysis (see below).
7. Evolve Working Group membership and develop Terms of Reference and expand Stewardship Group as appropriate
8. Develop plans for activity of the Working Group

Stage 3:

9. Working Group activity

Stage 4:

10. Review and react to the findings of the review. This needs to be done both:
 - a. as an integral part of the Working Group activity and
 - b. as a joint activity with the Stewardship Group and Forum Steering Group.

Reflexive and responsive practice:

This is a core principle of The Forum and needs to be conducted as a theme throughout the work, routinely walking the talk through systematic process:

- Review/study; including consideration at each stage of who else has an interest in this, how should we respond to this knowledge e.g. by working collaboratively
- Plan the activity.

- Act / Do the work
- Review/study and act on the findings again. Including review of each meeting, plan and other activity or output of The Forum.

4) Working Group Documentation

The aim of the document is to support the development of work which is beneficial to those involved, maximises potential for wider impact whilst protecting and building the reputation of the Forum and those involved.

1. Context Description

A brief (1/2 – 3 page) outline of the proposed area to address note describing the suggested issue to address, why this is felt to be important, any assumptions or paradigms underpinning thinking on why this is a problem / opportunity and on proposed approach for addressing it. This should be 1 – 3 pages long.

2. Outline approach.

- Proposed aims, outcomes and practical outputs from the work
- The nature of the activity - events and other activity proposed (see Scope of Working Group Activity for options and requirements)

This may be only a few lines long in the initial proposal but developed during the course of conversation with potential stewardship group and as the working group forms

3. Territory Analysis

The aim is to 'walk the talk' in enacting the principles of The Forum in allowing open engagement, and building on and working with existing players and thinking. An initial analysis needs to be completed at the early stages of forming the stewardship group and developed during planning and through the work if the group such that the territory analysis is an output of the work that could be of value in its own right both to the group and other. It needs to address:

- What are useful inputs to the work? (How can we find out what useful inputs would be?)
- Who else is doing work in the area (and what)?
- What value might there be involving them?
- Suggested priorities for inviting / engaging others and consideration of whether to consider others:
 - before finalising scope and plans for work
 - in planning of meeting dates

4. Terms of Reference

The above documentation needs to be pulled together into a full Terms of Reference containing the information required for the Stewardship group to work together to ensure success, to allow others to understand the intentions and choose their engagement and add suggestions and other input accordingly.

