

# D4.1: Community Co-Lab Handbook



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**Document Information**


|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Document Reference    | D4.1  |
| Document Title        | Community Co-Lab Handbook   |
| Author(s)             | Joe Cullen  |
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| Reviewer(s)           | Remos Armaos, Greg Holloway   |
| Agreement no.         | 101089601   |
| Dissemination level   | PU Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/><br>PP Restricted to other programme participants (including EACEA) <input type="checkbox"/><br>CO Confidential, only for members of the Consortium (including EACEA) <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Programme             | Erasmus+ Key Action 3   |
| Start date of Project | 01/12/2022  |
| Duration              | 24 months   |
| Project Coordinator   | AGID - PT   |

**Abstract**

This document gives an overview and guideline, for the expected activities and outcomes, for programme participants taking part in the MYSTIC Community Collaborative Labs (CoLabs). It sets the scene for participants and provides them with an essential outline of the activities, content and the format that the Community Co-Labs will follow, including the methodology for the action research experiments carried out in the Co-Labs.

**Document History**

| Version no. | Date    | Contents and/or changes made             |
|-------------|---------|--|
| 1           | 30/6/24 | Draft version                            |
| 2           | 14/7/24 | Reviewed and additional text added       |
| 3 (Final)   | 22/7/24 | Reviewed and additional references added |

| Quality Control Check   | Y/N  | Reviewer recommendations/comments |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Generic Minimum Quality Standards</b>  |  |                                   |
| Document Summary provided (with adequate synopsis of contents)  | Y  |                                   |
| MYSTIC format standards complied with – including EU official logo and disclaimer                       | Y  |                                   |
| Language, grammar and spelling acceptable   | Y  |                                   |
| Objectives of Description of Work covered   | Y  |                                   |
| Work deliverable relates to adequately covered  | Y  |                                   |
| Quality of text is acceptable (organisation and structure; diagrams; readability)                       | Y  |                                   |
| Comprehensiveness is acceptable (no missing sections; missing references; unexplained arguments)        | Y  |                                   |
| Usability is acceptable (deliverable provides clear information in a form that is useful to the reader) | Y  |                                   |
| <b>Deliverable specific quality criteria</b>  |  |                                   |
| Deliverable meets the 'acceptance Criteria' of: user perspective, user friendliness                     | Y  |                                   |
| <b>For Supplementary Review Deliverables only</b>   |  |                                   |
| Deliverable approved by external reviewers  | n/a  |                                   |
| <b>Checklist completed by</b>   |  |                                   |
| Name: Remos Armaos  | Signature:  | Date: 22/07/2024                  |

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## Document Summary

This document provides a guide to the MYSTIC Community Collaborative Lab (Co-Lab) programme. The programme supports the youth workers/volunteers and young people who have completed the MYSTIC online development and training programme and Immersive Residential Programme to apply the Community Mediator and Community Leader skills they have learned to work collaboratively with other stakeholders to design and implement action research projects in their communities.

The programme methodology uses an action research approach situated within an organisational framework that replicates a 'holding environment' – a space in which young people can explore and experiment with 'thinking outside the box' without fear of being criticised, patronised or punished. The Co-Labs enable creative thinking through co-creation and co-production, using the 'design thinking' methodology that is applied in the MYSTIC project as a whole.

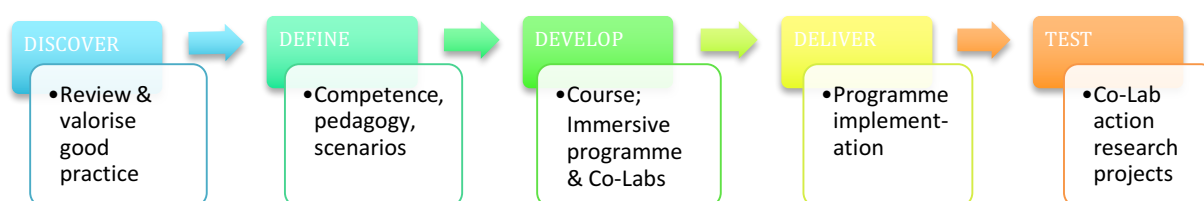
The document sets out the context for the Co-Labs, and describes the aims and objectives of the Co-Lab programme. It describes the methodology to be applied in the Co-Labs, and provides procedures, guidelines and tools to help the MYSTIC partners and other stakeholders tasked with delivering the Co-Labs to develop and implement successful community-based action research projects.

The document includes examples of real-life action research projects that have been developed primarily within the youth field to help stakeholders involved in delivering the Co-Labs apply the Co-Lab methodology in practice. These case studies are supplemented with a list of references and resources to support successful Co-Lab design and implementation.

## 1. Introduction

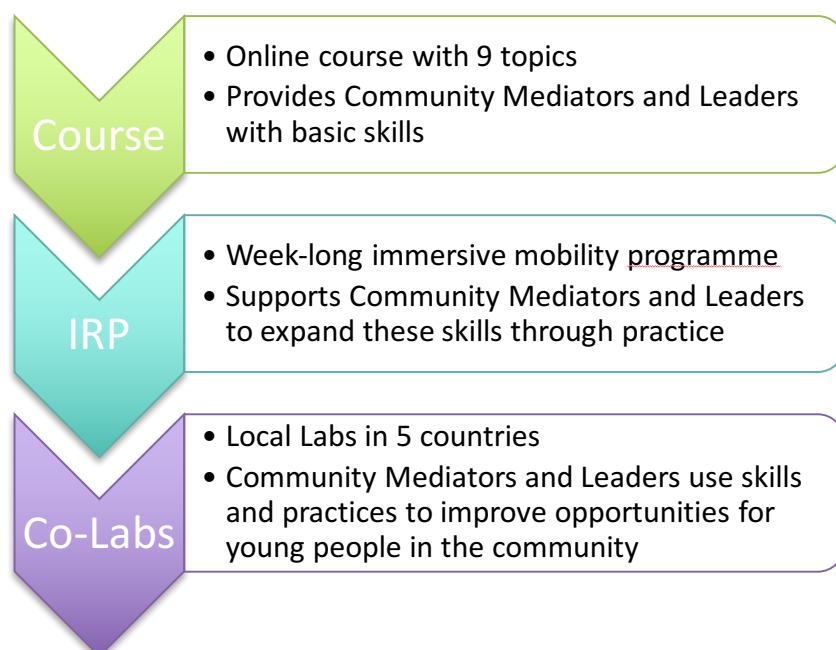
### 1.1 The Co-Lab programme in context

The Community Collaborative Lab (Co-Lab) is an integral component of the overall MYSTIC programme which aims, essentially, to turn youth workers into Community Mediators and young people with fewer opportunities into Community Leaders. It plays a key role in the over-arching ‘design thinking’ approach adopted by MYSTIC that, like the project’s ‘theory of change’, aims to move from a ‘presenting problem’ to an evidence-based solution. As shown in Figure 1, the essential aim of design thinking is to solve problems through ‘co-creation’, through a five-stage process.



**Figure 1: Design thinking approach**

The Co-Lab programme is situated both in Stage 3 of that process – the ‘Develop’ stage – and in Stage 5 – the ‘Test’ stage. In the preceding stages the ‘Discover’ (empathise) stage developed an understanding of the problem - how young people with fewer opportunities can contribute to a sustainable, inclusive Europe – through reviewing, assessing and valorising existing databases of good practices. The ‘Define’ (identify) stage then applied the results of the ‘discover’ stage to develop a competence framework and pedagogic model for MYSTIC. These two stages set the scene for developing the assets, methods and tools that were used to help turn youth workers and young people into Community Mediators and Community Leaders. In Stage 3 – Develop – the online Community Mediator and Leader foundation course was developed to deliver the training to help Mediators and Leaders acquire the skills they need. It also created the Immersive Residential Programme – IRP – as well as the framework for the MYSTIC Co-Labs. In Stage 4 – Deliver – the online course and IRP were piloted with 50 youth workers and 50 young people. Stage 5 – the ‘Test’ and ‘Evaluate’ stage – marks the final stage in the MYSTIC journey in which the learning derived from the piloting process will be applied and reviewed through delivering community action research projects in MYSTIC Community Labs, as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Relationship between IRP, On-line course and Community Co-Labs**

As Figure 2 shows, the three MYSTIC key learning and development components – the online course, IRP and Co-Labs - are integrally inter-connected. The pedagogic model for MYSTIC is based on a ‘blended learning’ approach, combining self-paced remote learning (the online element) through the foundation course, which includes an online interactive game, with face-to-face learning delivered through the IRP. This blended learning model means that the foundation course, IRP and interactive game are developed in tandem with each other along the same time frame within the implementation plan over Stage 3 of the design thinking process. As noted above, the assets, methods and tools developed through this stage are then applied in the delivery and testing stages through piloting the foundation course and IRP and then working with the results of that piloting by implementing action research projects in MYSTIC’s Community Co-Labs.

The relationship between the three components therefore changes as MYSTIC moves into its Delivery and Testing stages, as illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Delivery Sequence**

As Figure 3 shows delivery of the foundation course, IRP and Community Co-Labs follows a linear progression, with each element feeding into the succeeding element. This progression broadly follows Bloom’s taxonomy of learning from ‘remembering and understanding’ through ‘applying and analysing’ to ‘evaluating and creating’. The Foundation course helps MYSTIC programme participants understand the landscape of youth inclusion and acquire the core skills to work in it; the IRP

provides a space for them to apply this understanding and core skills to develop practices they can use in situations in their communities to solve problems, and the Co-Labs provide a space to apply those practices in action research projects working with specific, real problems. To some extent, this progression mirrors the progression model in the MYSTIC competence framework.

Given the context described above, there are two important purposes that need to be addressed by the Co-Lab programme:

- It needs to build on and reinforce the competences and training modules delivered through the Foundation course and the practical embedding of the course within the IRP
- It needs to focus on creatively applying and evaluating these competences and training modules as well as the practical experience acquired in the IRP through delivering real community-based projects that make a difference to young people's lives.

## 1.2 Overall aim of the Co-Lab programme

The MYSTIC Co-Lab programme supports the youth workers/volunteers and young people who have completed the MYSTIC online development and training programme and Immersive Residential Programme to apply the Community Mediator and Community Leader skills they have learned in working collaboratively with other stakeholders to design and implement action research projects in their communities.

## 1.3 Strategic objectives of the Co-Lab programme

- To set up Community Co-Design Labs in five European locations to apply the skills learned in the development and training programme (IRP) to deliver solutions to community problems focusing on inclusive and sustainable futures
- To carry out action research experiments to deliver these solutions in the Community Labs and evaluate the results
- To support at least 10 young people with fewer opportunities to participate in each Lab (50 in total), working with at least 10 youth workers in each Lab (50 in total)
- To develop at least 5 ideas for community projects in each Lab (25 in total)
- To deliver at least 2 projects implemented or under way by project end (10 in total)

## 1.4 Supporting the Call General Objectives

MYSTIC's Description of the Action (DoA) sets out how the Co-Lab programme is expected to contribute to realising the general objectives of the Call (ERASMUS-YOUTH-2022-YOUTH-TOG) as follows:

- Networking to enable young people to set up joint projects, exchanges and training
- Supporting youth organisations to learn how live better together post-pandemic and design sustainable future ways of living
- Supporting EU Youth Goals and EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 – engaging young people with fewer opportunities in life-enhancing developmental and learning experiences; connecting them with other young people from different backgrounds, empowering them to take charge of their own lives.

This means that the design and implementation of the Co-Lab programme needs to:

- Create an environment that makes it possible for young people and youth workers from different backgrounds to collaborate, using co-creation methods and tools, in project development activities, preferably involving trans-national collaboration

- Include project work that covers topics addressing post-pandemic issues (e.g. inequalities and the digital divide) and the climate change threat
- Prioritise a focus on young peoples' personal development and surfacing their talents and creativity.

### 1.5 Supporting the Call Specific objectives

Similarly, MYSTIC's Description of the Action (DoA) sets out how the Co-Lab is expected to contribute to realising the specific objectives of the Call (ERASMUS-YOUTH-2022-YOUTH-TOG) as follows:

- Promoting active citizenship, young people's sense of initiative and youth entrepreneurship including social entrepreneurship
- Strengthening the employability of young people – through including activities on employment strategies, social innovation and entrepreneurship.

This means that the design and implementation of the Co-Lab programme needs to:

- Reinforce the project's commitment to the Call general objectives of supporting young peoples' personal development by providing them with the awareness, vision and skills to become active contributors to shaping the future of their communities
- Provide activities that are relevant to young peoples' lives and which support the acquisition of skills that are transferable and applicable in the real world
- Focus on developing opportunities for young people to improve their life opportunities, particularly in the labour market and in entrepreneurship.

### 1.6 Supporting Call Horizontal aspects.

The Co-Lab is also committed to supporting three 'horizontal' dimensions of the Call. These reinforce the Call general and specific objectives described above, as follows:

- Environmental sustainability – the programme aims to support the European Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus, and the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 by helping young people and youth workers to contribute to improving quality of life post-pandemic, through, inter alia, supporting green lifestyles.
- Digital dimension – the IRP needs to support both young people and youth workers in acquiring the digital competences needed to become Community Mediators and Leaders, as well as contributing to improving their employability.
- Common values, civic engagement and participation – increase the civic engagement and participation of young people with fewer opportunities by supporting them to acquire the skills to become Community Leaders.

### 1.7 Who this Handbook is for

This Handbook aims to provide procedures, guidelines and tools to help the MYSTIC partners and other stakeholders – for example local delivery partners - tasked with delivering the Co-Labs to develop and implement successful community-based action research projects.

### 1.8 Structure of this deliverable

This deliverable is set out as follows:

- Following this introduction, Section 2 describes the methodology for implementing the Co-Lab programme

- Section 3 focuses on the logistics and practical aspects of delivering the Co-Lab programme, including guidelines and procedures for running the Co-Labs
- The concluding section – Section 4 – provides examples of real-life action research projects that have been developed within the youth field to help stakeholders involved in delivering the Co-Labs apply the Co-Lab methodology in practice
- Annex I provides key references used in the deliverable.
- Annex II provides resources to support the set-up, delivery and evaluation of the Co-Labs.

## 2. Co-Lab Methodology

### 2.1 Conceptual model

The conceptual model for the Co-Lab programme builds on the model developed for the preceding Immersive Residential Programme (IRP). This adopted an ‘alchemic’ approach to youth work, reflecting a process of combination, transformation and creation. It aimed to create an environment in which the hidden, latent and possibly ‘illegitimate’ talents, creativity and potential of young people – particularly young people with fewer opportunities - can be surfaced, nurtured, validated and productively applied to community development and social innovation. The model emphasised four modes of learning and development:

- **Critical reflection** – which aimed to encourage participants to think about, review and reflect on key questions that describe their life, their world, their situation, their behaviours, their future. Critical reflection also aimed to provide a space and opportunity to explore how protocols, rules and procedures around behaviour and communication within the group can be agreed on by all participants.
- **Collaborative dialogue** – which aimed on the one hand to support participants to exchange their perspectives and experiences with each other and encourage young people and youth workers to ‘step into each other’s shoes’, reach a collective understanding, through ‘sense making’, about how to work together to solve problems of mutual interest.
- **Action learning** – which aimed to support reformulation of presenting issues and practices through applied ‘learning by doing’.
- **Co-creation** – which aimed to encourage participating young people to apply their talent and creativity by working with each other, to think outside the box and together design action research projects that can be implemented in the Community Co-Labs.

These four modes of learning and development form the foundation of the Co-Lab approach, but the approach also marks a shift forward from **exploring** ideas for transformative community action-based projects to the **implementation** of projects so that they make a real difference to young people’s lives and the lives of their communities.

This shift from exploratory to transformative mode involves the application of two inter-related elements:

- The holding environment
- Action research.

### 2.2 The Holding Environment

As with the IRP, the Co-Lab needs to create a safe space in which creativity can be supported and risks can be taken without fear of ridicule or sanction. A key component of the Co-Lab methodology therefore draws on the concept of the ‘holding environment’ developed by Donald Winnicott. Winnicott (1965) argued that a child’s journey to self-awareness – the transition between the child being entirely dependent on its mother/carer to becoming an autonomous self – is shaped by the space – the ‘holding environment’ -in which the child makes the separation between dependency and autonomy<sup>1</sup>. In individual development, the holding environment is a ‘transitional space’ – an ‘in-between’ space - that has been described as ‘a meeting place between potentiality and authenticity’, located neither within the self nor in the ‘real’ world. The transitional space allows the

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<sup>1</sup> Winnicott, D (1965) *Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*, International Universities Press

child to move from an 'idealised' state in which the child's identity is completely merged with that of its mother to a state in which the child gains its own psychic structure and concrete sense of autonomy.

In organisational theory, the holding environment is migrated to the group context, becoming a space that is receptive to the birth of new ideas that will eventually stimulate change and growth (Kaplan, 1978). Kaplan suggested that the group, or system, in order to be receptive to the birth of new ideas, needs to create a holding environment in the workplace, group and organizational life that meets the conditions of *safety* and *security* so that individuals in groups and systems feel they can reveal their inner experiences and covert agendas, and risk new behaviours, without fear of being abandoned, ridiculed or punished<sup>2</sup>. So the Co-Lab can be thought of as a compressed transitional and transformational journey and 'rite of passage' (Van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1982). As Figure 4 shows, like the IRP, the Co-Lab provides a physical space in which this organisational holding environment can be set up and maintained.



**Figure 4: Moving from the individual to the organisational holding environment**

This requires:

- Physical spaces and working arrangements that promote democratic collaboration between members of the group
- Space and opportunities for creative risk-taking
- Rules and procedures that ensure the safety, security and emotional well-being of participants, so that everyone has a voice and no-one is blamed or made to feel inadequate
- Clear boundary-setting and governance arrangements.

## 2.3 Action research

### 2.3.1 Definition and overall approach

Definitions of action research vary considerably as it is not located within a single discipline but has rather emerged over time from a broad range of fields and historical sources. It is variously described as a research method, a process, an approach, an orientation to inquiry, a learning tool, or a technique to enable interventions and social change.

According to Rapoport (1970) it is a merger of academic social science with practice considering 'both the practical concerns of people in immediate problematic situations and the goals of social

<sup>2</sup> Kaplan, L. (1978). *Oneness and Separateness: From Infant to Individual*. New York: Simon & Schuster

science by joint collaboration'. According to Carr and Kemmis (1986) improvement and involvement are central to 'action research', It tries to achieve an improved understanding of a practice, improved understanding of a situation and the improvement of practice.

Collaboration between researchers and practitioners is seen as central to the action research process (Whyte, 1986). But other forms of action research go further than 'collaboration' to apply a methodology that involves 'target groups' not simply as passive collaborators but active co-creators of the research itself. As Paulo Freire put it, action research is "The action and reflection of people upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire 1972). This kind of 'participatory action research' (PAR) involves active co-creation in the research experiments by research users and local communities:

'Action research is a participatory democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.' (Reason & Bradbury, 2001:1).

The participatory nature of action research is seen as a method of empowering users, by facilitating their 'access to research proposals, programmes and findings', and ensuring that the research process seriously considers their needs (Heller et. al., 1982). Correspondingly a central purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in their everyday lives, and therefore it has 'emancipatory' intentions. As described by Reason and Bradbury (2001) 'action research is about working towards practical outcomes and also about creating new forms of understanding, since action without reflection is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless'.

Against this background, action research has a long track-record of working in community development, and with a distinctive 'participatory learning' approach. Participatory approaches such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) developed in the global South, has strong historical and practical correlations with the field of Education Action Research. Popular education movements arose in connection to agendas of social change, especially in Latin America (Freire 1970, Borda and Rahman 1991). Action research has strong historical connections with community-based initiatives, influenced strongly by the work of Freire (1970) and Borda (2003), particularly in relation to grass-roots social and political movements. Many of these projects recognised young people as a key catalyst in promoting social change. For example, the Institute for Community Research in Hertford USA founded a Youth Action Research Institute (YARI) in 1996, reflecting the growing interest in using AR within community youth projects. YARI promotes the use of youth-led action research projects for personal, group and community development. Its methods include training young people in ethnography based AR techniques and having young people training their peer-group to use AR for social problem solving<sup>3</sup>. In these kinds of projects, there is a strong emphasis on 'co-generative learning'<sup>1</sup> - creating space and opportunities for young people to co-design, co-produce and co-implement change projects (Greenwood and Levin, 1998). Key principles include:

- Construction of arenas for dialogue and mutual learning as a work form: construct an area where participants and researchers engage in a dialogical relationship.
- Co generative research: the research process emerges out of joint experiences and from mutual reflections.

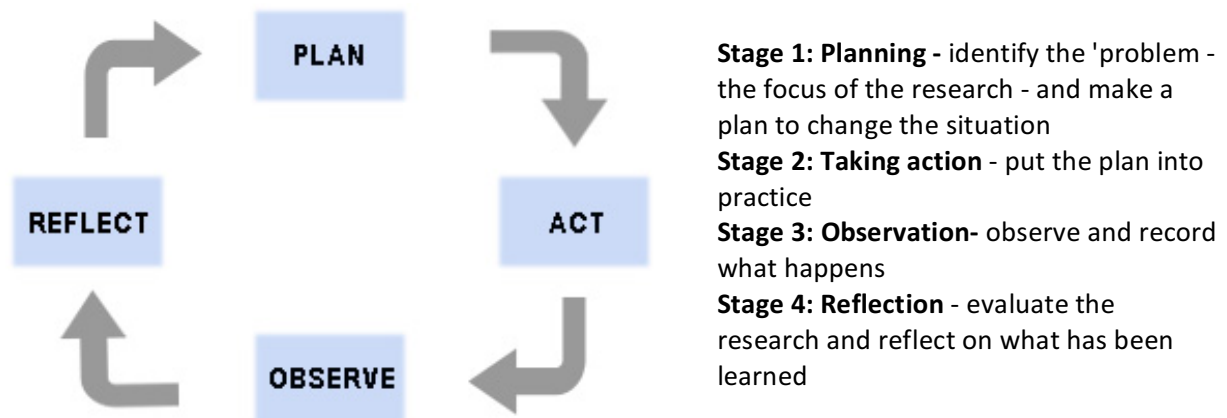
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<sup>3</sup> <https://yparhub.berkeley.edu/home>

- The use of multi-method techniques and work forms: this rejects the notion that AR is a particular theory or set of techniques.

### 2.3.2 Action Research Methodology

Although action research varies, it retains a core framework that is commonly used across a range of contexts. This is based on a cycle of four steps (Kemmis and McTaggart,1988), as shown in Figure 5 below.

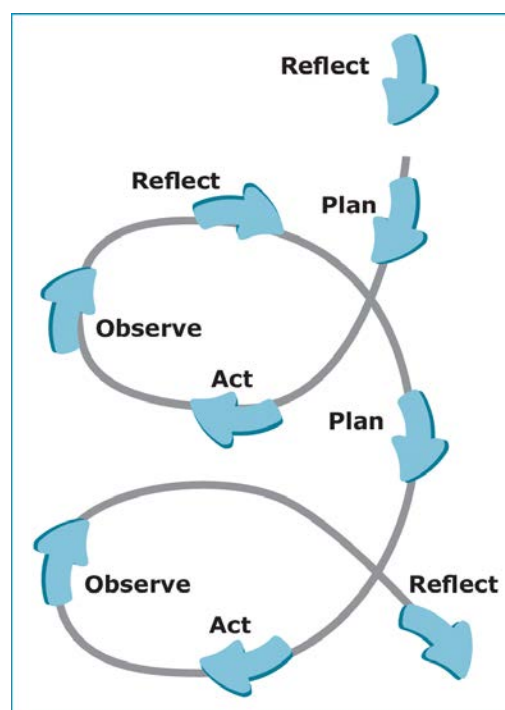


**Figure 5: Cycle of action research ((Kemmis and McTaggart ,1988)**

Some variations on this model cover five, six or even ten steps. A common variation is:

problem (focus) setting → planning → acting → observing → evaluating → reflecting

In practice, action research projects tend to take a 'spiral' rather than a circular form, as shown in Figure 6 below.



In this model, action research goes through a series of iterations. The first cycle of problem-setting, planning, acting and reflecting, ending with the 'reflection' stage, then leads on to the next stage of planning. The "planning" isn't a separate and prior step; it is embedded in the action and reflection steps. Short, multiple cycles allow greater rigour and relevance to be achieved.

As change is the intended result, effective action research depends upon the agreement and commitment of those affected by it. So the 'target groups' need to be involved in the process as equal partners and co-producers of the research

**Figure 6: Action Research 'Spiral' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986 )**

The key principles of this model are that action research:

- is focused on 'practice', not just 'theoretical' research
- develops through iterations of incremental changes
- aims at creating change, either individually, institutionally, or societally, through a 'bottom-up' approach.

The essential elements of the steps involved in the model - in practical terms - are that they are:

- incremental – the research is responsive to any findings that may occur, i.e. a second action research cycle should not be carried out before reflecting on what has been learned in the first cycle
- practicable – the action research plan, and the actions taken to implement it, need to be do-able and observable
- inclusive – action research usually has a 'social change' focus, but is also needs to be accountable, and shared - particularly with the people who are being 'acted upon'
- re-iterated – the cycle can be gone through as many times as is necessary, or until time and resources are exhausted.

It is also important to keep in mind some additional principles and practices of action research that are specific to the domain in which MYSTIC works – i.e. working with marginalised young people (BRIDGES Collective, 2022):

- Young people 'on the margins' are not mere recipients or beneficiaries of the programme but need to be recognized as producers of knowledge
- The youth worker is not an expert who offers solutions but the facilitator of a research-intervention process. He/she understands knowledge as a product of collaborative, co-creative experiences and the relationships they establish

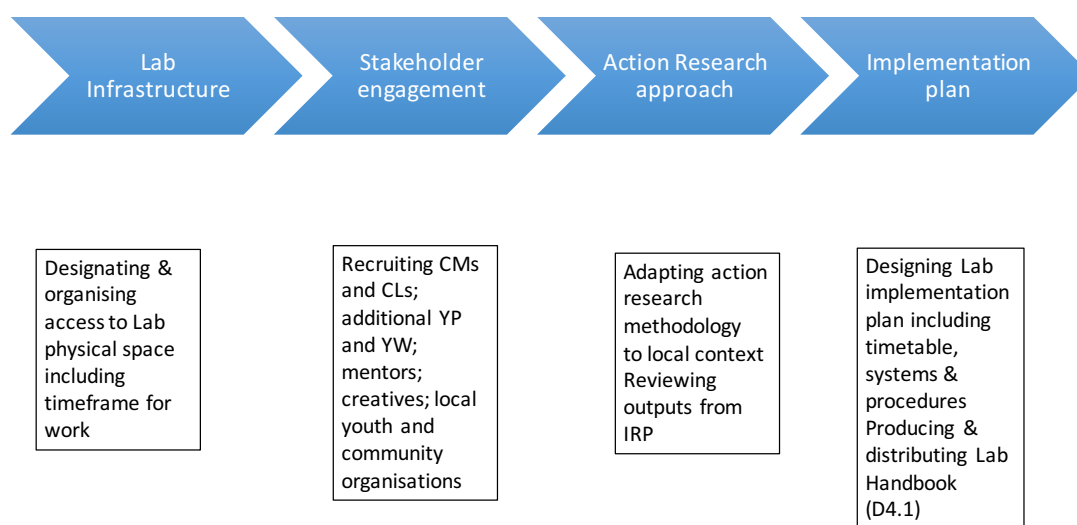
- Transforming social realities always implies a change in power relationships. Participatory methods require knowledge to be used for the transformation of power relations - in contrast to traditional intervention positions, whose goal is mainly the opposite: to adapt people to social structures.
- Participatory action research requires the participation of all the stakeholders responsible for producing this change, i.e. it is essentially a systemic intervention that involves a diversity of stakeholders with different values and interests.

### 3. Putting the methodology into practice

#### 3.1 Overall implementation approach

Putting the model into practice in MYSTIC requires careful consideration of the local conditions and context prevailing in the Community Lab locales. This means that the overall implementation approach set out below is intended as a Guideline for developing specific action research experiments in the Labs, rather than an implementation 'Bible'.

Figure 7 shows the generic implementation approach for the Co-Labs.



2

**Figure 7: Co-Lab implementation approach**

As Figure 7 shows, the approach entails four stages:

**Stage 1 – Lab infrastructure organisation.** This focuses on designating and organising access to the physical space in which the action research experiments will be designed and implemented, as well as developing a timetable for the work to be carried out. The assumption is that MYSTIC partners will not be developing these spaces from scratch but will be utilising either their own premises or the premises of local partners. What is crucial in this stage is to ensure that all stakeholders involved have a clear and common consensus on who is doing what, where and when.

**Stage 2 – Stakeholder engagement.** This focuses on Recruiting Community Mediators and Leaders, as well as additional young people and youth workers not previously involved in the MYSTIC project if appropriate. It also provides an opportunity for the MYSTIC partners to engage with mentors, creatives and local youth and community organisations with an interest in collaborating in the work of the Co-Labs. The assumption is that the core group of participants in each Co-Lab will be comprised of the youth workers and young people who have previously participated in MYSTIC’s Immersive Residential Programme (IRP).

**Stage 3 – Action research approach.** This focuses on adapting the action research methodology described above in Section 2 to the local context by developing a clear methodology that is centred around specific community-based projects that will make a difference to young people’s lives, and

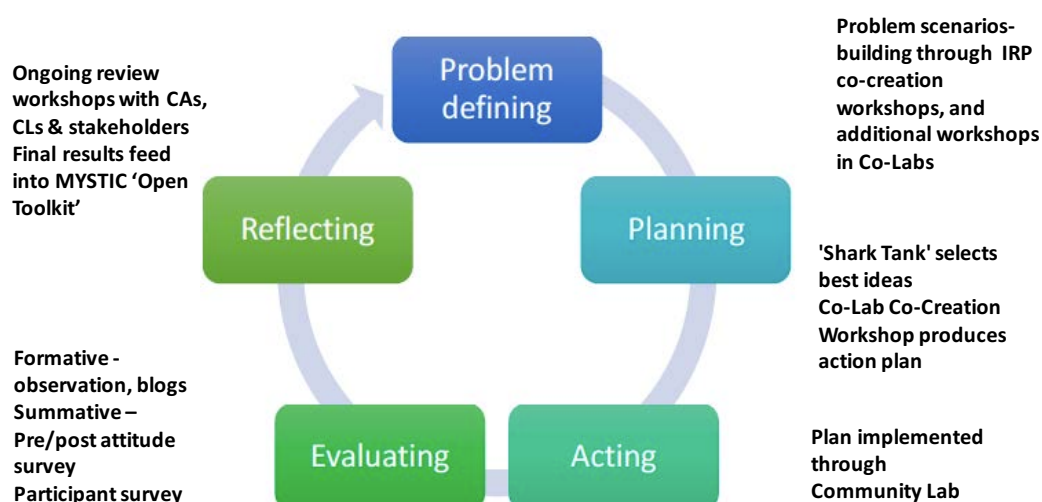
which will be seen as meaningful and relevant for young people. The foundation for this methodology is a review of the outputs from the IRP, including the storyboards and implementation plans developed in that programme – as described below in Section 4 of this deliverable.

**Stage 4 – Implementation Plan.** This focuses on designing a Co-Lab implementation plan including timetable, systems and procedures for delivering the action research experiments. It also includes dissemination of this deliverable – the Co-Lab Handbook – to co-ordinating partners and key stakeholders.

Within this overall approach, what is required is that **Lab co-ordinators develop their own specific action research projects in close collaboration - co-working - with their target groups**. This needs to be done, following the principles of action research, as an iterative process that involves:

- Introducing the action research idea to young people - and other stakeholders - through an interactive workshop programme
- Encouraging the target groups and stakeholders to think about possible action research projects (experiments) that are small, practicable, inclusive and iterative
- Reviewing the ideas generated for action research projects in a collaborative, participative way and coming to a consensus on which idea to proceed with - for example by getting the target groups to 'vote' on the best idea
- Making sure that all the target groups and stakeholders have an equal stake in implementing the plan
- Making sure that evaluation is built into the process - for example by observing what happens in practice and recording the outcomes
- Building space for reflection on the outcomes of the action research and feeding what has been learned into another cycle of action, if required.

To help Lab co-ordinators do this an illustration of this generic Implementation Framework is shown in Figure 8 below.



2

**Figure 8: Action research implementation framework**

Figure 8 shows:

- The first stage in the process is **problem-definition**. This focuses on working with the young people participating in each Community Lab to co-produce ideas on problems of interest - i.e. identifying 'what's broken'. The mechanism used to do this is an interactive workshops programme. Some of the ideas are already worked up into storyboards and embryonic implementation plans through the work carried out in MYSTIC's IRP programme – as described in Section 4 of this deliverable below
- Stage 2 takes the ideas developed in Stage 1 and firstly puts them through the 'Shark Tank' - a process through which participating young people, and stakeholders, critically review and evaluate the ideas. Each idea is voted on and the best idea is selected for further development. A dedicated workshop is designed and delivered to produce an **Action Plan** for putting the idea into practice - i.e. 'how to fix what's broken'.
- Stage 3 - The Action Plan is **put into practice**. The Community Labs integrate and co-ordinate the resources available - host infrastructure; mentors, champions, social entrepreneurs, MYSTIC staff, community organisations, youth services - to deliver the Action Plan.
- Stage 4 - the plan is **observed and evaluated** in action. At Stage 3, evaluation systems and tools are put into place to track progress on the plan - for example observation protocols, diaries, blogs. These are then applied as the action research takes place. At the end of the action research experiment, this formative evaluation data is combined with ex-post evaluation data - collected, for example, through participant surveys, to evaluate the success and outcomes of the experiments.
- In the final stage, the learning from observing and evaluating the experiments is **reflected on** and triggers the next cycle of the action research 'spiral'. For example, a Community Action Learning Set is held to discuss how to promote the sustainability of the experiment in the future. The MYSTIC 'Open Toolkit' takes the learning and applies it to scale up and out these results.

### 3.2 Co-Labs - step-by-step implementation

This section provides some guidelines, good practices and tools to design, implement and evaluate the action research projects in the Co-Labs. It follows each step in the action research methodology, as set out in section 2 above. Before going into each step in detail, this section starts with a brief summary of the methods and tools often used in developing, and documenting, the action research process.

Participatory action research **methods** – i.e. the activities carried out to design, implement and evaluate – an action research project - include: “participatory observation, community meetings, resource mapping, problem identification and visioning, transect walks, testimonials, theatre, personal / family / community diaries, timeline analysis, public dialogues, engagement with state authorities / investors / others, events and processes to reflect and learn from these, use of media, community exchange, using multi-media as inputs into these (or creating them from these), re-strategizing, documenting”<sup>4</sup>. Choosing appropriate methods depends on who is involved in the project, the project objectives and the context in which it operates. The MYSTIC on-line foundation course provides a comprehensive set of resources that provide guidance on what these methods are, how they work, and which tools to use to implement them, in particular:

- 6.1 Supporting active participation and empowering marginalized young people
- 6.2 Promoting creativity, problem-solving and out of the box thinking
- 6.3 Designing inspiring learning and development programmes
- 7.1 Planning and delivering learning and development programmes

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<sup>4</sup> A toolkit for Participatory Action Research

- 7.2 Learning and development environments
- 7.3 Learning and Development Guidance and support
- 8.2 Actively engaging young people
- 8.3 Choosing the right mix.

**Documentation** (recording, registering the process) is an essential component of PAR. It is about capturing what is being done, how and why and who is involved at each stage of the PAR cycle. The main reasons for documentation are <sup>5</sup>:

- To ensure that your information is accessible to your stakeholders as this enables them to learn, participate and be involved in further Action Research cycles.
- To learn – reflecting and documenting your work will allow you to look at the big picture, therefore minimising mistakes.
- To collect empirical evidence – demonstrating results is necessary for ongoing improvement and for meeting funding requirements.
- To share with others – documentation is an important part of your work as it enables you to share your work with colleagues and services conducting similar work. This can help others save time and offers more people the opportunity to improve their work practices and share their learning.

### 3.2.1 Stage 1: Problem definition, study and diagnosis

#### **Objective and outcomes**

This is the preliminary phase whose main objective is to define the situation or the local reality, to study the context and, as a result, to elaborate an initial diagnosis of the 'problem'. This implies the introduction of participating youth workers and young people into the social reality in which they operate. The observation of the specific context and the collection of objective and subjective data will help make a diagnosis of the problem. Good observation requires observing what is happening and describing it in a way that is adjusted to reality. It can be described as:

- See what is happening
- Describe what is happening
- Record what is happening

Once we have all the input, we need to transform data into the information that leads to the specific definition of the problem on which the group is going to intervene. It is important to be able to describe and understand what is happening in relation to the problem to be addressed, as well as all those values, behaviours, phenomena, etc. that sustain that reality. When establishing a diagnosis, it is important to include the different stakeholders to obtain other perspectives and build a shared understanding that will be the basis of our action.

#### **"How to"**

Even if the problem seems already defined or, on the contrary, diffuse, there are some steps to organise how the information is gathered:

1. Make a preliminary observation of the local context of intervention. Collect some first thoughts/feelings that will serve as a foothold to work with the different actors/stakeholders.
2. Choose the research topic or the problem. Hold a group session with participants to facilitate dialogue and self-expression on:

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<sup>5</sup> Action Research Induction Kit

- Main difficulties/needs of young people, personal experiences "to express what motivates or irritates them", or the definition of a future or ideal situation.

The session can be moderated with different methods: start with an ice-breaking activity to find affinities among the participants, continue with a brainstorming or a problem tree to detect problems, finishing with the categorization of the results. You can also work in a focus group or perform a lifeworld analysis.

3. Collectively agree on what you need to know and the data you want to collect, as well as the scope of the research (micro / macro).

The first step to look for information is to ask the right questions:

- What should we ask ourselves?
- What is known about this topic?
- What methods are we going to use to collect this information?
- How / who will do it?

4. Design the process of information gathering and agree tasks among the participants.

5. Once the data has been collected, organize it in a clear and understandable way for all the participants.

### **Analysis, Diagnosis**

1. Categorize data and try to look for patterns in open responses. Use triangulation to see how data from different sources support or contradict each other. This activity must be done by the group.

2. Carry out a group reflection on the problem with the information collected so far.

3. Contrast the conclusions with other stakeholders. Organising a focus group to present the conclusions to other interested parties will help you involve them and listen to their different perspectives and interpretations.

4. Make a diagnosis and a proposal for intervention. After that, the group can answer the following question:

- How can we use the results of the research to carry out the transformation we pursue?

5. The research and diagnosis may reveal gaps in the skills/knowledge of the participants. It is important to collect those needs to include them in planning as peer learning processes. This will be part of the change in people's lives. The group must answer the question:

- What do we need to know / learn to develop our activity?

### **Advice/questions for recording**

It is useful to keep a logbook as a record of the steps taken as well as to record all the meetings, agreements and group discussions. It is advisable to be a living document and accessible to the whole group, for this the digital media can be of great help.

The participation and involvement of the young people and other stakeholders should be promoted: the division of tasks such as taking minutes or producing meeting materials is a step beyond simple involvement in the discussions.

One of the findings of the collection of information will be identification of those other parties necessary in the process. The data collection stage is a good time to meet them and also contact them. Doing a stakeholder's map can help in this purpose.

## Supporting materials

- Logbook
- Agendas and meeting minutes
- Resources for facilitating meetings, group dynamics
- Cloud based and collaborative working apps (GDrive, Dropbox, etc.)
- Video/voice recording of meetings/discussions
- Social media
- Reports

## Tools For Information Gathering:

- Interviews with key informants (semi-structured interviews)
- Informal conversations
- Focus groups, co-design workshops, video, spoken word
- Design of participatory, dynamic methods
- Surveys, published research, other data
- Publications from forums and congresses
- SWOT analysis
- Mapping tools
- Minutes of face to face meetings, and focus group.
- Stories and narratives

### Something to think about

Pretty much all of what has been described above involves 'lifeworld analysis', and is covered in detail in the MYSTIC Foundation Course - 1.2: Community Mapping and Lifeworld Analysis. Participants in the MYSTIC IPR were involved in case studies and problem-solving exercises using lifeworld analysis. This resulted in a number of 'problem definition' outputs produced through the IRP which will provide useful material to build on.

### 3.2.2 Stage 2: Plan

#### Objective and outcomes

This stage consists in the design of the action plan that is going to be implemented. That means the preparation of the actions that will lead to the "solutions" of the problem or the transformation of the starting situation. Planning includes clarifying the problem to be addressed, identifying the actions that will be carried out and designing the action plan. All stages of PAR must be participatory and collaborative, and the planning stage is not different. At this point, the group should meet with other stakeholders to talk about what they will do and how they will do it. The final result will be an action plan that includes, in addition to the actions, all those management and monitoring tools to assure a successful outcome. This plan must be flexible and adaptable to the PAR as a process.

#### "How to"

At this stage, the group has been working together and should be able to self-organise for the drafting and implementation of the plan. It is about achieving a collaborative group that manages and supports itself in the different tasks and with a perspective to include the different knowledge of its members. The group co-ordinator/facilitator will act as facilitator not as a leader or conductor.

Once the group is organised, prepare a technical session to explain in detail what the design of the activity proposes in a practical way. This session should be interesting, informative and 'fun' and should emphasise team-building. At this point it is expected that the participating Community Mediators and Leaders have a sound theoretical knowledge for the design and planning of projects that covers the areas of management, monitoring and evaluation, as well as dissemination. The MYSTIC online course is a good source to check the process of designing and implementation of action research projects, in particular, as noted above:

- 6.1 Supporting active participation and empowering marginalized young people
- 6.2 Promoting creativity, problem-solving and out of the box thinking
- 6.3 Designing inspiring learning and development programmes
- 7.1 Planning and delivering learning and development programmes
- 7.2 Learning and development environments
- 7.3 Learning and Development Guidance and support
- 8.2 Actively engaging young people
- 8.3 Choosing the right mix

The group must establish in a document the agreements for the elaboration of the plan: number of meetings, frequency, programme, participants, task division, decision making mechanism, etc. Once the plan has been drafted, communicate it to the stakeholders involved. Particular attention should be paid to the introduction within the plan of time and resources for peer learning activities that promote the personal development of the group members.

### **Advice/questions for recording**

Apart from the logbook or the working documents such as minutes or the plan itself, communication and dissemination are keystones. In this case, digital media can be the best communication channel. It is advisable to include a dissemination section in the plan choosing the tools to use for communication and setting the type of outcomes (video, posts, stories, etc.) the group will produce.

### **Supporting materials**

In addition to the supporting materials of the previous stage, other supporting materials include:

- Work plan
- Evaluation strategy
- Dissemination strategy
- Performance indicators document
- Peer learning plans.

### **Tools for Planning**

- Audit of team skills
- Peer learning
- Tools for accessibility of activities for young people
- Methods for group facilitation.

#### **Something to think about**

As with the “problem definition’ stage, a lot of work has already been done through the MYSTIC IRP to develop embryonic plans for community-based projects to be delivered through the Co-Labs. In particular, the IRP groups have produced storyboards, and baseline implementation plans for a number of action research ideas. This material should be used as a foundation for the planning stage

### 3.2.3 Act - putting the plan into practice

#### **Objective and outcomes**

This phase corresponds to the project implementation. Because, as noted above, action research is an iterative process, it involves regular monitoring, observation and analysis of what is happening. For this reason, the ‘evaluation’ stage is also included in this section on implementation.

To act consists of:

1. Doing what we set out to do, and implementing the plans creatively and systematically.
2. Communicating with others and involving them in the project.
3. Keeping track of what happens.
4. Putting in place evaluation systems and tools to monitor progress.

#### **"How to"**

The different actions for the implementation stage of the project include:

- Checking that meetings are held as planned.
- Checking that decisions are respected.
- Moderating and supporting conflict resolution if necessary.
- Offering support for peer learning.
- Keeping individual contacts with the group members and minimising barriers to participation.
- Keeping open communication channels with stakeholders and other groups.
- Ensuring that actions are effectively disseminated and have impact.
- Collecting evidences and information on the implementation process, including personal insights of participants, adjustments to the initial plan, final results and compliance with target indicators.

#### **Advice/questions for recording**

The implementation of the actions should have an internal (group) and external (community) impact. It is essential that all evidence of that impact is collected and the actors are aware of changes incurred. Moreover, dissemination of the actions is of key importance. The communication should include all relevant media but specifically those that young people are used to and with their own code of language (visual, content, etc.).

#### **Supporting materials**

- The MYSTIC website
- MYSTIC Social media channels

- Evaluation toolkit.

### **Tools for Monitoring And Follow Up**

- Management tools for project monitoring – examples of these were covered in the MYSTIC IRP on Day 2 (design thinking tools to review design); Day 3 (Implementation plans, including using design thinking tools like journey maps); Day 4 (management tools like GANNT charts, theory of change)
- Tools for conflict resolution
- Methods for group facilitating
- Evaluation tools – these are provided in MYSTIC D.5.1.3 – Revised evaluation Toolkit for Community Co-Labs

#### **Something to think about**

Again, work has already been done through the MYSTIC IRP on putting action research projects into practice, including using methods and tools for identifying challenges and gaps in implementation plans, as well as preliminary work on monitoring and evaluation, including using 'theory of change'. This material should be used as a foundation for the 'acting' stage

### **3. 2.4 Stage 4 - Observe and Reflect**

#### **Objective and outcomes**

The objective is to review and reflect on the learnings from the process carried out and their evaluation. The group have to spend time thinking about the findings and lessons learnt and building a shared understanding on the "after situation" (a narrative) and then decide if another cycle of action has to start up.

#### **"How to"**

- Bring the data together, synthesize the observations and evaluation of the PAR process and identify themes, patterns and relationships.
- Carry out a group reflection with the information collected so far to identify all possible interpretations.
- Check out and refine the group conclusions sharing them with other actors.
- Use the conclusions and insights to finalise or start a new PAR.

#### **Advice/questions for reflection**

Some questions for reflection <sup>6</sup>:

- What did the project achieve? Evidence?
- Did we answer the question? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What worked? Why do we think it worked? Evidence?
- What didn't work so well? Why not? Evidence?
- What do we understand better or differently? Evidence?

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from: On PAR. Using Participatory Action Research to Improve Early Intervention

- How were specific actors, such as young people or their parents, affected by the process? Evidence?
- How well did the process enable real participation? Particularly of the least empowered stakeholders? Evidence?
- Do we have their feedback and ideas?
- What was particularly difficult to achieve or to understand?
- Does our written story (documentation) properly account for all parts of the process and the lessons we learnt?
- What do we want to incorporate into our ongoing practice?
- What do we want to do differently? Evidence?
- What do we want to try now?
- What new questions have been raised by the findings of this inquiry? Evidence?
- Should we explore any of these 'new' questions?
- How will we share (distribute/publish) our story?

It is important to properly close the PAR with the actors engaged in it. A closure session, event or celebration can help do that.

### **Supporting material**

- Resources for meeting facilitation, group dynamics
- Video/voice recording of meetings/discussions
- Social media

### **Tools for Observation And Reflection:**

- Minutes of the meetings
- Observation tools or questionnaires
- Video recording
- Analysis of evaluation data; evaluation reports

#### **Something to think about**

Since learning, and reflection on that learning, is a key objective of action research, regular ongoing documentation on what happens as the action research progresses, and collecting evaluation data for monitoring and outcomes assessment, is crucial for the Co-Labs success. MYSTIC D.5.1.3 – Revised evaluation Toolkit for Community Co-Labs – provides all of the tools necessary to do this as an accompaniment to this deliverable (D4.1). It is the responsibility of Co-Lab delivery partners to ensure effective evaluation is implemented using these tools.

### **3.3 Implementation checklist for Co-Lab delivery partners**

This section presents a template for Co-Lab delivery partners to develop an action plan to design and deliver their Co-Lab, based on the implementation approach set out in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 above. The template is based on a checklist of key elements that need to be in place for successful Co-Lab implementation.

### MYSTIC Community Labs Action Plan Checklist

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>COUNTRY AND CITY</b>                                      |  |
| <b>CO-LAB ADDRESS</b>  |  |
| <b>NAME OF DELIVERY PARTNER ORGANISATION AND LAB MANAGER</b> |  |

#### 1. Physical infrastructure

| Item   | Description |
|--|-------------|
| Which physical space(s) will host the CoLab?   |             |
| Is this space managed solely by the delivery partner?  |             |
| IF NOT solely managed, which other actors are involved and have they agreed to provide space and facilities? |             |
| Are there any access or accessibility issues that need to be taken into account?                             |             |
| Does the space provide the necessary facilities – e.g. IT systems – to run the Co-Lab?                       |             |

#### 2. Organisational set-up

| Item  | Description |
|---|-------------|
| Which additional partner organisations/key stakeholders will be involved in delivering the Lab(s)? (brief description)  |             |
| Is there an agreement in place between the MYSTIC delivery partner and other participating partners on roles and tasks? |             |
| If YES, please summarise the agreement and roles and tasks involved   |             |

#### 3. Target group and outreach/recruitment strategy

| Item  | Description |
|---|-------------|
| Who are the young people targeted to participate in the Lab and how are they going to be reached/recruited?   |             |
| Who are the youth workers targeted to participate in the Lab and how are they going to be reached/recruited?  |             |
| Which additional stakeholders (e.g. community organisations, mentors, creatives) are targeted to participate in the Lab and how are they going to be reached/recruited? |             |
| What are the plans for awareness-raising/recruitment/dissemination?   |             |

#### 4. Resources

| Item  | Description |
|---|-------------|
| What human resources will the partner organisation assign to working with the target group in the Community Labs? |             |
| What human resources will other organisations assign to working with the target group in the Community Labs?      |             |
| Which additional resources will be required to deliver the Co-Lab?  |             |

#### 5. Timelines

| Item   | Description |
|--|-------------|
| When is the start date for the Co-Lab programme? |             |
| When is its launch date?                         |             |
| When will the programme end?                     |             |

#### 6. Action research experiments

| Item   | Description |
|--|-------------|
| Do you aim to work with existing ideas/storyboards/plans for action research?  |             |
| IF YES, list each of these in the 'item' boxes below and provide a brief summary for each in the 'description' boxes |             |

#### 7. Activities planned at each stage of the action research process

Summarise the actions to be taken for each stage of the action research process in the Table below.

| Stage                   | Objectives | How these will be achieved (what actions will be taken to deliver this stage) |
|-------------------------|------------|---|
| Problem Definition      |            |   |
| Planning                |            |   |
| Acting                  |            |   |
| Monitoring & Evaluating |            |   |
| Reflecting              |            |   |

## 4. Examples of action research

This final section of the Handbook provides good practice examples of of real-life action research projects that have been developed primarily within the youth field. These are intended to help MYSTIC delivery partners and participating key stakeholders involved in delivering the Co-Labs apply the Co-Lab methodology set out above in practice.

Three types of good practices are provided based on three levels of implementation:

- Large-scale, long-term implementation
- Medium-scale, medium-term implementation
- Small-scale, short-term implementation.

**NOTE:** The examples are provided to illustrate how action research can be applied in the youth field in different contexts and at different scale. All of the examples provide useful lessons in how to do action research in practice. However, given the resource and time constraints MYSTIC is subject to, it is recommended that the action research projects developed in the MYSTIC Co-Labs are pitched at the third of these levels, i.e. small-scale, short-term implementation projects. That said, it is still appropriate within MYSTIC's remit and objectives to think about more medium or even larger scale projects and in this case focus on carrying out what are often called 'feasibility' or 'proof of concept' projects to validate these projects.

In any case, all projects should:

- Avoid over-ambition – it will not be possible, for example, to change the entire EU education system in three months, unless you want to do a feasibility or proof of concept project on this theme
- Be practical and do-able – projects should be designed in line with the time, resources and facilities available
- Be relevant and meaningful for young people and their communities.

### 4.1 Large-scale, long-term example



'Share My City' (SME-City) was a 2-year project part-funded by the European Commission under the 'Prevention of Crime' programme. It aimed to understand and put forward solutions, using action research, to the problem of 'youth crime' and 'anti-social behaviour' in European city centres, by piloting solutions in three city centres - London (UK), Valladolid (Spain) and Perugia (Italy).

The project applied the 'spiral' action research approach – i.e. successive iterations of problem definition; planning; action; observing and monitoring and review and reflection. Bridging points between these different iterations were provided through regular monitoring, then feeding the results of monitoring into review and reflection activities, which led to revisions of the starting implementation plan where necessary.

**Stage 1** of the project – problem definition - used lifeworld analysis to collect 'stories' of crime and disorder in city centres from the diverse points of view of all sections of the community – looking at the problem through the eyes of young people, residents and workers, business-people, tourists, politicians and police. This involved collecting and analysing data on crime and anti-social behaviour in different inner city locations, as well as in-depth interviews and 'vox-pop' video recordings with different stakeholder groups to capture the 'lived experience' of crime and anti-social behaviour.

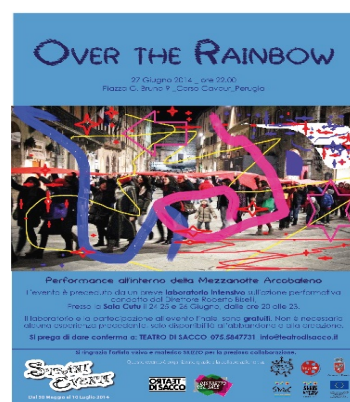
The research produced some key findings about patterns of crime and anti-social behaviour, the factors that contribute to conflict in inner cities, and how conflict might be reduced.

**Stage 2** of the project – planning – firstly entailed working with the different community groups and police and local authorities involved to explore how some of the ideas proposed in the first stage of the project could be put into practice. This involved a series of ‘consultation syndicates’ to co-design a series of interventions aimed at reducing tension, conflict and crime and anti-social behaviour. These consultation syndicates involved four sections of the community - Community institutions - local authority representatives, law enforcement representatives, representatives of other agencies; Businesses – owners, managers and people who work in bars, clubs, off licences, restaurants and other local businesses; Community actors – this focused on two main sub-groups: residents associations and schools, but also included other stakeholders like youth organisations; Young People themselves.

**Stage 3** - acting – entailed piloting the programme of interventions in the three cities. The over-arching methodology used in each city was the same, focusing on delivering community-based interventions that aimed to encourage different community groups to explore ‘otherness’, and how perceptions of the ‘other’ can lead to victimisation, marginalisation and, in some cases to conflict and harm; then, through ‘out-of-the-box’ events, to get these different groups to engage with each other in activities outside their normal routines and experiences. This over-arching methodology was applied in different ways to reflect local context.



In London, the centrepiece of the programme was a street festival called ‘Something Different’. This took over the public square in Dalston, a district in the east end of the city, to run a two-day programme of events, the theme of which was to get people out of their comfort zone by turning things upside down. Examples included a community graffiti wall; tarot reading done by famous musicians; street board games; an improvised street theatre that involved the public in plays set in derelict factories, and a music festival that combined punk, R&B and the Kurdish Youth Orchestra



In Perugia, the programme focused on piloting the ‘Community Animator’ role, which provides the prototype for MYSTIC’s ‘Community Mediators and Leaders’. The Animator was the catalyst for a wide range of actions aimed at breaking down barriers between community groups and neighbourhoods. These actions included a community newspaper and a programme of ‘Strani Eventi’ (Strange Events) which covered things like Night Tango, Open Air Chess, Public Street Philosophy Debates and Community Food Festivals.

**Stage 4** – observing and reflecting – involved three elements: ‘formative’ monitoring and review as the programme progressed, so as to apply adjustments to the programme design and implementation plan where necessary; operational and summative evaluation of the project,

focusing on assessing its efficiency and effectiveness as it evolved and assessing its outcomes and impacts at project end, and review and reflection actions at the end of the project, which focused on synthesising the lessons learned, and feeding these into a sustainability and transferability strategy. A range of monitoring and evaluation tools were used, including statistical analysis (participation rates; website and social media traffic), audience observation instruments, audience feedback surveys, participant surveys, interviews and focus groups.

The main outcomes identified through observation, evaluation and reflection included high audience rating of programme activities; raised awareness of factors leading to victimisation and conflict; increased tolerance of other groups; greater sense of community solidarity; reduced anti-social behaviour.

## 4.2 Medium-scale, medium-term examples



COMANITY was a 2-year European transnational project that aimed to develop a new role in youth work – the ‘Community Animateur’. The Animateur acts as a “Social Mediator”, aiming to bridge the gap between young people who feel they have been left ‘on the margins’ and ‘mainstream’ institutions. This new role was validated through a series of action research projects created by the Animateurs involved

KEYSTONE was another 2-year European transnational project. Its main objective was to run a ‘Collaborative Support’ programme for young people let down by mainstream education. The programme provided spaces – in ‘Community Labs’ – that allowed young people to express their creativity and learn new skills so as to co-create action research projects aimed at solving issues and problems in their community.

Although both COMANITY and KEYSTONE follow a similar two-

year time frame to the SME City example, their operational scale was pitched more at a local level, involving bounded actions within local communities in a wider range of European cities. As a result, they generated a larger number of action research projects, at a smaller scale, than SME-City. Both COMANITY and KEYSTONE used a similar action research methodology involving:

In **Stage 1** – problem definition - both projects used lifeworld analysis, focusing on capturing the lived experience of marginalised young people. This stage took a long period of time and involved several iterations of consultation, review, reflection and problem re-statement, mainly because marginalised young people have been let down by and are suspicious of the ‘system’, and it needs time to for the action research team to establish trust, credibility and buy-in.

In **Stage 2** of the project – planning – both projects used design thinking tools, including ‘co-creation workshops’ and ‘storyboarding’, to involve young people in co-producing ideas, designs and implementation plans for community-based action research.

**Stage 3** - acting – involved carrying out the plans. A range of community-based projects were delivered across both projects. These are some examples.



Source: COMANITY project

**COMANITY: 'Breaking Barriers', Santander, Spain**

'Breaking Barriers' was a collaboration between COMANITY Community Animateurs, NGOs working with young people, graffiti artists, community agents and young people. It brought together newly-arrived young immigrants from different countries in Central Africa. The main objective of the project was "by co-operating and working together, to transform weakness into strength".

The Animateurs used their networking and lifeworld analysis skills to get in touch, and work, with local agencies and raise 14k euro to fund the project. They created a 'graffiti wall' to illustrate the lives of young immigrants, and a programme of song and story-telling. The main outcomes of the action research were: raising community awareness about young immigrants and reducing prejudice; helping young immigrants acquire the language skills they needed to better integrate within the community; supporting the integration of young immigrants through leisure activities with local people

**COMANITY: 'Raising aspirations for Young People in the criminal justice system through Cooking', London, UK**

This project was developed by one of the Community Animateur trainees from Docklands Outreach. Initially working with the local Youth Offending Team and young people, she used lifeworld analysis and action learning workshops to identify young peoples' key needs. She realised that the young people would not engage through traditional methods but all shared a love of food. Cooking was therefore employed as a vehicle for collaborative action. She devised a six-week programme of lunch time cooking and eating sessions. These were used to identify young people's interests, and set future goals for them. These included preparing CV's, searching for training opportunities, applying for jobs and accessing therapy sessions. The main outcomes of the project were increased networking with local partners, positive relationships built with participating young people, introducing young people to support services, information and ideas sharing with key stakeholders.

## KEYSTONE



In **London**, two projects were selected and implemented from the ideas generated through the workshops. The first was a podcasting studio that developed from a number of ideas explored by the group around music, telling stories about young people's lives in the community and interactions with young people in the other pilot sites. The second developed a local youth football team in collaboration with a local professional football club. Both address continuing challenges for young people about getting their voice heard and having something to do that is separate from the prevailing youth violence culture.



In **Lisbon**, young people used what they had discussed and explored about environmental issues in the CSP programme as a basis for choosing what they planned to improve. Visits they had made to a local reservoir and to highly polluted-beach areas generated an idea to re-design and refurbish the cafeteria area of the school in which the Community Lab was being run. They collected waste from the beaches and reservoir and re-cycled it to refurbish the cafeteria.



In **Perugia**, the action research used the technical, social and personal skills acquired through the CSP to design and implement a 'Community Reporting' intervention in the city. The participants used a variety of tools – including traditional article writing; blogs; video and podcasting. 60% of the participants delivered a 'product' from the Community Reporting work that was published in the KEYSTONE website



Source: KEYSTONE project

In **Athens**, the Community Lab organised a street event to raise awareness of the issues around young people's addiction and its stigmatisation, as well as three radio broadcasts on this theme, delivered through the STROFI web radio studio. In Thessaloniki collaboration with 'Solidarity Now' has led to the setting up of an action research initiative in a Lab based in the 'Youth Shelter' to help immigrant youth integrate into mainstream society.

**Stage 4** – observing and reflecting – focused in both COMANITY and KEYSTONE on operational and summative evaluation, focusing on assessing its efficiency and effectiveness as the projects evolved and assessing outcomes and impacts at project end, and review and reflection actions at the end of the project, which focused on synthesising the lessons learned, and feeding these into a 'Transferability Toolkit' to support scaling the action research up and out.

A closer look at one of the community-based action research projects implemented in KEYSTONE reveals further insights into how action research works in more detail.

The '**Ajuda Cafeteria Refurbishment**' project was one of the KEYSTONE action research project implemented in Lisbon. Ajuda is a neighbourhood of around 30 thousand people and scores high on typical indicators of deprivation - 26% of the population are between 14 and 30 years old; 25% economically inactive; there is a high proportion of ethnic minorities; high rates of crime (drug and weapons related) and the area has the second highest school leaving (3.5%) rate and 4<sup>th</sup> highest NEET rate (26%) in Lisbon. KEYSTONE worked with a range of stakeholders, including local schools and NGOs, to involve young people as co-producers of action research aimed at solving real problems affecting young people in their community. The activities carried out in the project through the stages of the action research cycle are summarized below.



**Stage 1 – problem definition.**

This used a 'lifeworld analysis' approach involving a series of interactive workshops to understand the lived experience of young people. Young people talked freely about who they were; where they came from; what was important for them and what were they interested in.

Key topics identified included Identity; ethnic and religious background (Cape Verde, Morocco, Gypsy); what they wanted to change.



### **Stage 2 – planning.**

Co-creation workshops were used to storyboard ideas about how the young people could make a difference in their community. A big concern raised by young people was their future. This was linked to their fears about ecological threats – particularly how humans were treating the planet and how pollution affected life. The specific thing they cared about and wanted to fix was the space they spent a lot of time in – the school cafeteria.



### **Stage 3 – acting**

The young people organised a trip to Mãe d'Água reservoir - the largest and oldest water reservoir in Lisbon. There they visited the exhibition of a Portuguese artist – Xico Gaivota - who re-used the waste he found and collected on the beaches to create works of art. Together the group produced and implemented a plan to improve the cafeteria using waste material collected from beaches they visited around Lisbon.



### **Stage 4 – observing and reflecting.**

The group re-designed the cafeteria space by recycling the waste material they had collected from the beaches.

They observed how the refurbishment of the cafeteria had changed the environment in which they spent a lot of their time. One of the key changes as a result of their actions was to increase their sense of power and agency.

Whereas before they had no sense of ownership of their environment, that environment now contributed to their sense of efficacy

Source: KEYSTONE project

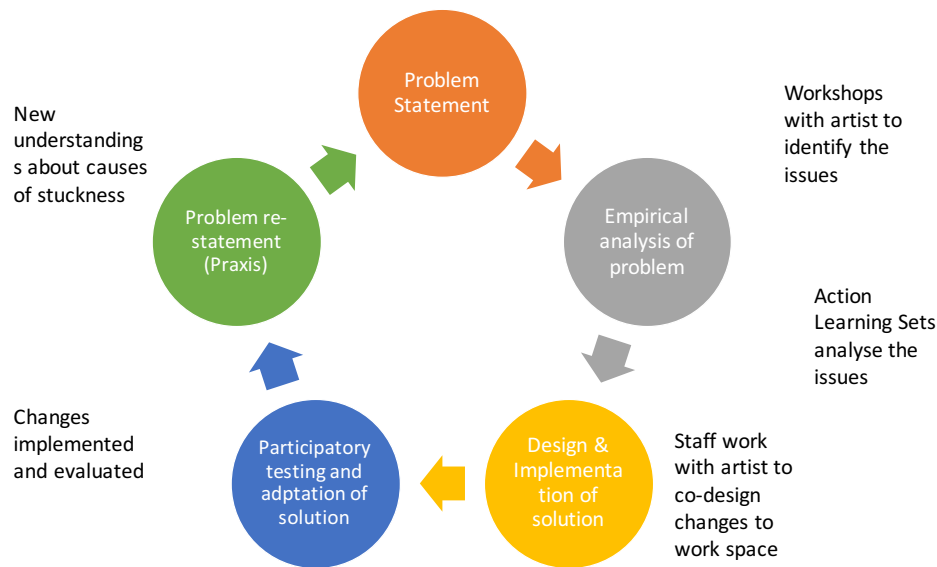
### 4.3 Short-scale, short-term example



Source: Kings Health Partners

**‘Creating spaces for well-being’** was a UK initiative aimed at making small changes to the physical environment of organisations in the National Health Service (NHS) so as to reduce stress, improve mental well-being and, ultimately reduce staff absences and ‘burn out’. It involved staff working with an artist to co-create changes to their workspace. The initiative was piloted with staff in three health services in London: An Elderly Care Ward in Guys and St Thomas’ Hospital; Camberwell Walk-In Sexual Health Clinic and Croydon Mood Anxiety & Personality Community Mental Health Team.

The example below shows how the action research was implemented in the Elderly Care Ward in Guys and St Thomas’ Hospital. Figure 9 summarises the activities carried out at each stage in the action research cycle.



2

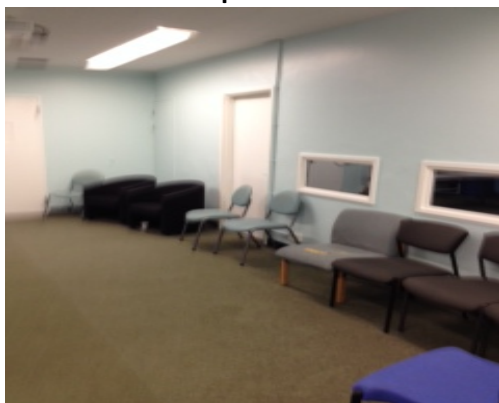
**Figure 9: Action Research Cycle – creating spaces for well-being**

**Stage 1** – problem definition – involved a group of staff from the care ward working with the artist to identify the issues and challenges faced by staff in their everyday working lives. Through a series of interactive workshops – using an ‘action learning set’ methodology in which problems are formulated through analysing actions – the main problem identified focused on the fact that the workspace was dingy and restricted compared to the magnificent city scape views of the ward. There was no appropriate space to deal with the emotional issues of working with patients at the end of life and no space for families to be given news of death sensitively. As a result, staff felt emotionally drained, stressed and reported low levels of mental well-being.

**Stage 2** – planning – entailed using co-creation workshops in which the artist worked with staff to design an intervention involving changes to the workspace in order to create more staff ownership of the space, reduce stress, improve mental well-being and contribute to outcomes like reduced absenteeism and burn-out. The intervention developed through this process was called ‘Therapy in a Box’. It involved a programme of lunchtime therapeutic sessions carried out in the ward ‘relaxation space’ over the working week.

In **Stage 3** – acting – the programme was piloted over 4 weeks. As the illustrations below show, using small design modifications, involving easily-available and inexpensive materials like cloth canopies, the workspace was transformed into the equivalent of a ‘health spa’ in which different therapies, like aromatherapy and massage, were made available to staff. At the start of the programme, only a handful of staff turned up to check out the therapy services. By the end of the piloting phase, the number of attendees was into three figures.

**Workspace before**



**Workspace after**



**Stage 4** - observing and reflecting – involved a comprehensive evaluation, monitoring and review approach which was implemented throughout the preceding stages. This focused on continuous reflection on the project aims and outputs and combined ‘formative’ activities – for example action learning sets – and ‘summative’ (outcomes-based) activities including a before and after staff survey of well-being using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS). The key outcomes identified by the evaluation showed an increase in staff mental wellbeing, as measured by the WEMWBS, reduced staff stress and increased separation between ‘down time’ and ‘work time’.

#### 4.4 Key messages from the good practices

Comparing and contrasting the different action research good practice examples reported on above, a number of common success factors can be identified. These can be used as ‘guiding principles’ to shape the design, implementation and evaluation of the MYSTIC Co-Labs. The key messages are as follows:

- Create a ‘holding environment’ in which young people feel safe, can explore things without criticism or punishment and learn from each other
- Situate the project in the lived experience of young people
- Take them out of their bubble to forage for ideas in new territory

- Put them in the driving seat and help them lead the action research process
- Use a 'artistic hook' – for example music, video, spoken word - as a catalyst for creativity
- The action research has to be fun
- Combine 'a big problem' – for example sustainability – with a practical problem – for example fixing the cafeteria
- The solution to the problem has to be relevant and make a difference to their real life
- Young people have to be involved in all stages of the project – from problem definition through to evaluation
- You only get young people's interest and involvement if the action research is relevant to their lives, has value for them and provides an incentive
- Don't use technologies that young people don't use
- You need to build trust and credibility from the start
- Use design thinking tools – e.g. co-creation workshops – to give young people a voice and get them to think out of the box
- Evaluation is really important to demonstrate you've made a difference and needs to be embedded throughout the action research cycle.

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## Annex II: Resources

This section offers examples on different topics that can help along the PAR process.

### Tools For Gathering Information

- 7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS & TOOLS FOR RESEARCH

Through data collection can deduce quality information that is a prerequisite for making informed decisions.

Through this article, you would understand why picking the best data collection method is necessary for achieving your set objective.

<https://www.formpl.us/blog/data-collection-method>

### INTERVIEWS WITH KEY INFORMANTS

- SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with an open framework which allows focused, conversational, two-way communication. The interviewer follows a guideline but is able to follow topical trajectories in the conversation that may stray from the guide when it seems appropriate.

<https://sswm.info/planning-and-programming/decision-making/gathering-ideas/semi-structured-interviews>

### INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS

- MULTIPLE FACETS OF LIBERATING STRUCTURES: INTERVIEW SNIPPETS

Find four small interviews explaining the meaning of Liberating Structures method: Getting started (and changed with Liberating Structures [LS]), How vital it is to work with other people using LS, Overcoming resistance to LS (and other seriously playful approaches, arguably). And Changing the approach to LS over time, how our focus may change to specific elements.

<https://agilefacil.wordpress.com/category/facilitation-approaches-methods/>

<http://www.liberatingstructures.com/>

### FOCUS GROUPS, CO-DESIGN WORKSHOPS

- FOCUS GROUPS AND WORKSHOPS

Focus groups and workshops are techniques commonly used by researchers and community leaders to bring people together to participate in discussion on an issue or sets of issues facing the community. The emphasis in these meetings is to gather good quality information that can contribute to better informed decision making and improved outcomes.

[http://www.tba.co.nz/kete/PDF\\_files/ITP206\\_focus\\_groups\\_and\\_workshops.pdf](http://www.tba.co.nz/kete/PDF_files/ITP206_focus_groups_and_workshops.pdf)

- HOW DO FOCUS GROUPS WORK?

Focus groups is a method for collecting qualitative data. With focus groups, a moderator uses the group process with a small number of participants to stimulate discussion and

obtain information on the beliefs, attitudes, or motivations of participants on a specific topic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TwgVQIZPsw>

## DESIGN OF PARTICIPATORY, DYNAMIC METHODS

- **WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY DESIGN?**

They explain participatory design as an approach to design strategy that brings customers into the heart of the design process. Also known as “co-creation”, “co-design”, or “cooperative design”, it encompasses techniques useful to both the initial discovery and subsequent ideation phases of a project, where the end-users of a product, service, or experience take an active role in co-designing solutions for themselves.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DV\\_LHq\\_pPs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DV_LHq_pPs)

<https://www.participatorymethods.org/glossary/participatory-action-research>

## SWOT ANALYSIS

- **PERSONAL SWOT ANALYSIS**

Questions and tips to do a personal SWOT analysis

[https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC\\_05\\_1.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05_1.htm)

- **WHAT IS A SOCIAL MEDIA SWOT ANALYSIS?**

*SWOT* in SWOT analysis stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Understanding how to identify each of these areas is going to help you strengthen your overall social media strategy.

In this place, we can keep reading to find out more about the process and see how you can conduct a thorough analysis of your social media.

<https://napoleoncat.com/blog/social-media-swot-analysis/>

## Mapping Tools

- **MAP TOOLS**

Asset Mapping is a positive-focused way of celebrating community resources and connecting individuals, organisations and spaces for collaboration, empowerment and support.

<https://www.creatingcommunities.com.au/commonfutures/articles/neighbourhood-knowledge-why-you-should-map-your-community-assets>

- **CREATING A STAKEHOLDER MAP**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqZfiTp1HZw>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaO6\\_UC2Z0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaO6_UC2Z0)

## STORIES AND NARRATIVES

- **NARRATIVE AND STORYTELLING**

Storytelling is an ancient human tradition and a well-established means of passing on knowledge; whether it be portraying moral lessons through fables and fairy tales, or giving an insight into other cultures or eras through tales set in other contexts. Good stories keep

audiences compelled by creating situations that resonate with them. This connection to a story makes audiences more likely to engage throughout, to retain the information presented, and to relate to the behaviour in the story in a way that can translate to their own lives.

<https://mesh.tghn.org/its-complicated-workshop-2017/narrative-and-storytelling/>

<https://www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/a-storytelling-guide-for-those-who-stink-at-storytelling.html>

- TELLING STORIES: NARRATIONS AS LIVE EXPERIENCES

This is an example of narrations as life experiences that we can find every day on social networks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LcRpCa-xTc>

## VIDEO RECORDING

- COLLECTING AUDIO-VISUAL DATA, COMPOSING AUDIO-VISUAL ARGUMENTS

A big part of the research is the collection and use of audio-visual (AV) qualitative data. For that aim, you can use video cameras and microphones to gather information about participants and their experiences, and use video editing software to compose with this data as a part of the analysis and presentation of findings.

<http://www.digitalrhetoriccollaborative.org/2013/11/07/collecting-audio-visual-data-composing-audio-visual-arguments/>

## MINUTES OF MEETINGS

- STEPS IN WRITING MINUTES OR A MEETING

Meeting minutes are important to attendees and other business stakeholders who rely on them to make decisions and take actions, so the minutes should be recorded consistently and professionally. If your business hasn't adopted a customized method, you can use a standard format to record effective and useful minutes.

<https://smallbusiness.chron.com/steps-writing-minutes-meeting-79280.html>

<https://academichelp.net/business-writing-help/write-meeting-minutes.html>

## Tools For Planning

### CHANGE MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

- <https://daniellock.com/change-management-tools/#1.%20Interviews>

### AUDIT OF TEAM SKILLS

- HOW TO CONDUCT A SKILLS AUDIT AND IDENTIFY SKILLS GAPS

This manual explains how to identify skill gaps in a team.

[https://www.cognology.com.au/learning\\_center/how\\_to\\_identify\\_skillgaps/](https://www.cognology.com.au/learning_center/how_to_identify_skillgaps/)

- 7 STEPS TO CREATE A COHESIVE AUDIT TEAM

In the video she explains some sage advice on the soft skills required to build the best team you can.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urvmkNM7Xj8>

## PEER LEARNING

- A GUIDE TO PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING. HOW TO MAKE PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT A LEARNING EFFECTIVE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR?

This guide builds on research that the Effective Institutions Platform has undertaken on the process of peer learning, otherwise termed practitioner to practitioner learning. The research reflects on the experience of organisations which facilitate peer learning engagement and the experience of peer learners themselves. The guide outlines the concepts and principles underpinning peer learning and is intended to support actors engaged in peer engagement activities to maximise the outcomes of such processes. This guide has been written for use by both groups—facilitators and peer learners.

[https://www.effectiveinstitutions.org/media/The\\_EIP\\_P\\_to\\_P\\_Learning\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.effectiveinstitutions.org/media/The_EIP_P_to_P_Learning_Guide.pdf)

- PEER LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The 'Cross Course Crit' is an activity to bring together students from all three levels into small critique groups. Each group is a mix of first, second and third year students who talk about their current research and creative practice in turn. Their peers are encouraged to ask questions about their work and at the end of each informal presentation, every member of the group will write their feedback comments, observations and suggestions on a feedback form. Students can include this peer feedback in their professional and personal development folder

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrF9aB4IVTs>

- YOUTH PEER EDUCATION TOOLKIT

The Training of Trainers Manual is a curriculum tool to prepare master-level peer education trainers. The manual uses participatory techniques based on a variety of theoretical frameworks to ensure that future trainers are skilled and confident in their abilities to train peer educators and serve as informed resources for their peers. The manual resulted from a collaboration between the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and FHI 360. It was produced for the Youth Peer Education Network (Y-PEER), a project coordinated by UNFPA.

<https://www.fhi360.org/resource/youth-peer-education-toolkit-training-trainers-manual>

## TOOLS FOR ACCESSIBILITY OF ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- BETTER TOGETHER. A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

This resource has been developed as a starting point for engagement with young people in decision making processes and includes practical tools and tips to plan and undertake successful consultations and engagement activities. The guide is underpinned and reinforced

by the collective belief that engaging young people in the decisions that affect them results in better decision making and better outcomes for young people.

[https://officeforyouth.sa.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/39680/Final-Better-Together-Youth-Engagement-Guide-V3-2016-02-09.pdf](https://officeforyouth.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/39680/Final-Better-Together-Youth-Engagement-Guide-V3-2016-02-09.pdf)

## Methods For Group Facilitation

- LIBERATING STRUCTURES

Liberating Structures are easy-to-learn microstructures that enhance relational coordination and trust among working groups. They quickly foster lively participation in groups of any size, making it possible to truly include and unleash everyone. Liberating Structures are a disruptive innovation that can replace more controlling or constraining approaches.

<http://www.liberatingstructures.com/>

- THE 'DESIGNSCAPES' PROJECT

DESIGNSCAPES (Building Capacity for Design enabled Innovation in Urban Environments) is a H2020 project approved under the topic CO-CREATION-02-2016 - User-driven innovation: value creation through design-enabled innovation. One of the results of this project is a "resource kit for anyone who wants to apply design processes to unleash innovation potential in themselves, their team or their organization. The DESIGNSCAPES Toolbox is a collection of methods and tools that you can easily and rapidly use and apply to various innovation processes".

<https://designscapes.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/FINAL-DESIGNSCAPES-TOOLBOX-Letterhead-KvD-NM-FM-review-3-9-2018.pdf>

## Tools For Monitoring And Follow Up

- THE BEST PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS FOR (ALMOST) ANY TASK

Project management is difficult. Don't let anyone tell you differently. In the best of times, project management requires tracking down absent deliverables, analysing data to predict when things will be done, and communicating information to stakeholders. They use the best project management tools. They knew the kind of tools the work required, but not all of us are so lucky. To help you get started, this article provides a breakdown of six major types of project management tools and some standout solutions in each category. If you're ready to find the right project management solution.

<https://technologyadvice.com/blog/information-technology/5-of-the-best-project-management-tools-for-almost-any-task/>

## Tools For Conflict Resolution

- RESOLVE CONFLICT EFFECTIVELY BY TREATING EVERYBODY INVOLVED WITH RESPECT

Conflict between team members can seem to be an inevitable result of different people working closely together. Often, it can lead to productive change. But at other times, it can

damage teams and dramatically lower morale. Knowing how to manage and resolve conflict successfully can increase understanding within your team and improve people's relationships with one another.

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/videos/conflict-resolution-transcript.htm>

- **FACILITATING GROUP CONSENSUS**

When a team member simply can't agree, part of facilitating group consensus effectively is learning to manage difficult personalities in the meetings. This video share helpful tips that they teach in the meeting facilitation training.

<https://professionalismatters.com/facilitating-group-consensus/>

## **Evaluation Tools**

- **M&E TOOLS SOCIAL IMPACT EVALUATION SOLUTION. BEST ULTIMATE GUIDE TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLS**

Monitoring and evaluation is a combination of data collection and analysis (monitoring) and assessing to what extent a program or intervention has, or has not, met its objectives (evaluation). Monitoring is periodic and continuous, conducted after program initiation and during the duration of that program or intervention. The data acquired is primarily input- and output-focused and is generally used as an ongoing strategy to determine efficiency of implementation.

<https://www.sopact.com/monitoring-and-evaluation-tools>