

System Leadership: developing and using political skill:

Facilitators Guide

March 2021

Overview of Workshop

The workshop is designed to help those involved in system change to take forward their plans through understanding and navigating the system and organisational political of change.

Based on the HeLPA study finding, specifically participants will be invited to:

- Understand change as a journey
- Think about the political landscape of change
- Understand their stakeholders and their interests
- Identify the elements of system leadership and political skills
- Understand and using political skills, strategies and actions

Setting up the workshop: co-design stage

The workshops should ideally be co-designed with participant representatives, especially workshops to be delivered single project teams.

The co-design stage should review the purpose of the workshop and seek to align the activities with the developmental learning needs of participants. This might include a review of the anticipated project team's current and future challenges, a discussion of specific change projects, and the desired outcomes of the workshop.

Key issues to consider in the set-up phase include:

- relevance of activities
- determining the activities to be carried out as 'pre-work'

- relevance of language and terminology
- schedule of activities and timing
- sensitive issues or other considerations
- participants who may dominate interaction or who may need to be encouraged to engage
- underlying team dynamics and power relationships
- physical or virtual room arrangement
- use of technology and resources
- post-workshop feedback

The facilitators should emphasise the importance of creating a safe space for people to feel able and willing to share their views in a respectful and developmental way.

Setting up the workshop: pre-work activities

Given time and resource constraints, it is possible to allocate certain activities as pre-work in advance of the workshop. In particular, the production and sharing of a 'plan-on-a-page' for the project team or a similar type of logic model can assist the initial workshop activities. For an open workshop, with mixed participants not working on a shared project, pre-workshop activities could include a similar reflective exercise to review the priorities for their given change activities. Another example of pre-work might be carrying out the preliminary stages of stakeholder analysis, i.e. stakeholder identification.

Communication and instructions to participants should be clear about any pre-work and where it will be used in the workshop.

Sample Timetable

The design of the workshop can be varied between whole-day and half-day. Below is an illustrative timetable of sections and activities, but this should ideally be reviewed and agreed with participants.

Time	Activity
9.00-9:30	Arrival and refreshments
10:00-10:05	Welcome & Introductions, inc. Aim of workshop, ground rules, workshop context
10:05-11.20	Context of Workshop & Study Overview
11.00 - 11.25	Part 1a. Mapping the Journey and Thinking about Your Landscape
11.25 – 11:40	Refreshment break
11.40 – 11:55	Part 1b. Deep Dive Analysis into Political Controversies
11:55 – 12:00	Part 2. Understanding Stakeholders
12:00 – 12:25	Part 3. Understanding ‘What’s in it For Them’
12:25 – 12:40	Refreshment Break
12:40 – 13:30	Part 4. Political skills and strategies for working with stakeholders

NB. Slide numbers refer to the general slide deck not the third-sector slide deck.

Welcome and Introduction to the workshop

Indicative Timing: 5-10 minutes

Slides: 1-2

Group formation: Whole group session (using the main channel if virtual)

This session is designed to meet the following purpose:

- Introduction of facilitators and participants
- Overview workshops aims and schedule
- review the ground rules and use of technology

Instructions:

1. Facilitator to talk through slides and invite questions from participants

Context of workshop

Indicative Timing: 10-15 minutes

Slides: 3-5

Group formation: Whole group (or main channel if virtual)

Materials and Resources: HeLPA Study

The session is designed to meet the following purpose:

2. To orientate participants to concepts of 'organisational politics' and 'political skill'
3. To detail the HeLPA research evidence that has informed the workshops
4. To contextualise the workshop in difficult system change

To introduce the workshop as:

- Recognising the 'political landscape' – understanding the types of environments
- Mapping the 'controversies' – locating the issues around which people disagree
- Understanding the 'stakeholders' – understanding the key actors, their motives and strategies

- Thinking about ‘strategies’ – understanding how you can respond positively to challenges

Instructions:

1. Facilitator to talk through slides and invite reflection from participants

Part 1a: Mapping the journey and thinking about your landscape

Indicative Timing: 25-30 minutes

Slides: 6-9

Group Formation: Whole group with optional reflection in small groups

Materials and resources: Slides, flip chart, Post-it notes, breakout rooms, chat function if virtual

Activity 1a

The session is designed to meet the following purpose:

- To understand change as a dynamic journey
- To understand the nature of political landscapes (and their connections)
- To help participants reflect on their own political landscapes and connections
- For participants to map their journey (talk through plan on a page)
- To help build consensus and reveal underlying tensions
- To determine the priority issues

Instructions:

1. Talk through change as a journey using slide prompts (slide 6)

2. Use Jarret's' weeds, high ground, rocks and woods analogies to understand political landscape (optional)
3. One or two people to talk through their political landscape and journey
4. Group or pair's reflection on your landscape (post-it notes or chat function)
5. Use urgent/important matrix to determine priority or significant issues
6. Vote on up to 3 most urgent and important issues to take forward (using post-its or chat function)

Part 1b: Deep Dive Analysis

Indicative Timing: 15-20 minutes

Slide: 11

Group Formation: Whole Group and break-out groups

Materials and resources: Slides only, breakout rooms if virtual

The session is designed to meet the following purpose:

- To produce a more developed understanding of the political issues or controversies identified by participants, e.g. what are the issues and what makes them controversial

Instructions:

1. Facilitator to introduce the exercise
2. In break-out groups, participants spend 5-10 minutes to reflect on:
 - a. How are the chosen issues and controversies manifest?
 - b. What makes them controversial?
 - c. What impact does the controversy have on the change process?
3. Feedback for 10 minutes as a whole group

Part 2. Understanding Stakeholders

Indicative Timing: 5-10 minutes

Slides: 12-16 (optional slides included)

Group Formation: Whole Group (and group work)

Materials and resources: Slides only

The session is designed to meet the following purpose:

- To identify and provide analysis of key people or groups who complicate change
- To use 'political animals' analysis as a more novel way of understanding stakeholders
- To provide a basis for devising strategies to manage these stakeholders.

Instructions:

1. Facilitator to talk through slides and invite questions reflection from participants
(there are two linked optional activities)

Part 3: Understanding 'what's in it for them'

Indicative Timing: 25 minutes

Slides: 17-18

Group Formation: whole group and breakout groups

The session is designed to meet the following learning outcomes:

- To deepen the stakeholder analysis with a focus on interests and agenda
- To consider the attitudes and needs of important stakeholders

- To consider the actions individuals or groups could take to support or resist the change
- To consider what the team could do to move non-compliant people to a position of neutrality
- To consider what action could be taken to encourage support

Instructions:

1. Explain activity and split group into breakout groups (15 minutes)
2. Take feedback for 10 minutes

Part 4. Political skills and strategies for working with stakeholders

Indicative Timing: 40 minutes

Slides: 19-24

Group and room formation: whole group and breakout groups

The session is designed to:

- Consider the elements of system leadership needed to manage change
- Understand 'influence without authority'
- Identify some of the political skills of system leadership
- Extend discussion on the key strategies and activities that could be used to manage the interests and agenda of different stakeholders (who had been identified and analysed in the previous activity).

- Identify next steps or action plan for change

Instructions:

1. Introduce session and associated concepts/skills (slides 15, 16, 17) (5 minutes)
2. Form breakout groups to identify targeted strategies for each stakeholder group (20 minutes)
3. Feedback to main group and next steps (15 minutes)