



BigPicnic policy brief 6: Organisational development through food security

BIGPICNIC TOPIC



FOOD 2030 PRIORITIES



SDGs

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Recommendations

Overall: Organisations should embrace new approaches and draw on a broad spectrum of expertise as catalysts for change.

- Build and/or strengthen relationships with national and international networks, acknowledging the strategic advantage these relationships offer.
- Empower curators and education staff to work more regularly and directly with local communities through support, resources and training.
- Embed participatory research and development approaches such as co-creation, science cafés and Team-Based Inquiry across the organisation, to identify and explore new subjects, respond to relevant issues/demands and strengthen internal and external relationships.
- Strategies to maintain momentum and encourage legacy (of projects, knowledge and relationships) should be considered throughout and beyond individual projects.

Background

Organisational-development thinking provides management and staff with the ability to introduce change systematically, by applying a broad selection of techniques and methodologies. This, in turn, leads to greater personal, group, and organisational effectiveness.

However, organisational change can be a challenge as it requires investment in new approaches and new skills and the support through internal and external mechanisms. BigPicnic provided informal learning settings

(botanic gardens) with an opportunity to trial new approaches (co-creation, Team-Based Inquiry and Responsible Research and Innovation) to engage with new and diverse audiences on the subject of food security. This allowed botanic gardens to look at how they work with their local communities, reflect upon how these links can be strengthened through new, innovative approaches and consider the benefits these can bring to the organisation itself.

Findings

Within BigPicnic, botanic gardens acted as an inclusive space, or hub, for dialogue around food security, encouraging and facilitating discussion across different stakeholders to inform policy and strengthen (or create) relationships between different societal actors. New approaches, new audiences and the topic of food security were used to develop the organisations' conservation and education offer and build expertise and stakeholder support mechanisms.

In addition to new community audiences, the Partners established local Food Security Advisory Groups made up of local experts from policy, industry, food production and civil society. These groups helped the organisation to co-create their food security goals and ensure these were relevant to the needs of the organisation and the local context. Challenges to organisational development included the hiring of new staff for a limited time (just for the duration of the project) which can lead to new skills, knowledge and relationships being lost. In addition, aspects such as the general openness for change, the age and history of the organisation or the structure/hierarchy of staff can also be important factors to consider and address if change is to happen. The ability to link to various disciplines or external stakeholders to utilise knowledge and expertise or collaborate beyond organisational boundaries are also important considerations for institutional change. These can be challenging, particularly for smaller organisations with limited institutional links and networks.

Some Partners in the project used BigPicnic's approaches (e.g. co-creation) and events (e.g. science cafés) internally with staff from their own organisations as well as with new external audiences. Internal co-creation was shown to be an extremely valuable exercise which resulted in better communication across departments, a deeper understanding of the project's objectives and a wider support network for the project leaders to draw upon. From these co-creation sessions, topics for science cafés were developed, thereby bringing in the interests and expertise of different actors and stakeholders to the project.

Conclusion

Informal learning sites (including botanic gardens) are centres of knowledge and expertise and have an important role to play as inclusive educational hubs within their local communities. Understanding this role can be key to an organisation's development.

The value of networks should be recognised. Having direct contact with relevant organisations, groups or individuals is a strategic advantage for building knowledge and resilience. The ability to communicate with local people about local problems is invaluable for responsible research and education.

Participatory approaches such as co-creation can support organisational development and lead to new opportunities in unexplored or unexpected topics, fields of work or partnerships.



Quotes

“The results have been amazing. You will indeed be surprised by how much you can take out of a co-creation session and by how people you never expected could add value to your work. Co-creation really gives you a parallel view and an understanding of what people expect and need. So making them part of the design process is definitely inspiring and enriching.”

Elena, The Royal Botanic Garden of Madrid

“We also co-created with the staff of our Garden, organising Garden breakfasts and a co-creation session to choose the themes and locations of our science cafés. This allowed us to get to know each other better, and try to break through the staff hierarchy. This also meant our staff gave us feedback and their opinions on the activities we were doing in the project, and as a result they were more interested in the project. However, as the organisers of these breakfasts, we always felt it was us, directing the co-creation, steering our colleagues into what we thought they should be saying and thinking.”

Izabella, University of Warsaw Botanic Garden

Big Picnic

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