THE VSP APPROACH  
to Successful and Sustainable Initiatives

Centre for Initiatives on Children, Youth and Community  
Carleton University
Introduce the VSP and discuss how it was developed

Explore the organization of the VSP and the inclusion of questions and potential challenges

Share some of our experiences in developing and applying the VSP

Discuss how it had evolved from a tool to a broader approach
DEVELOPING THE VSP APPROACH

- Planning and diagnostic tool
- Based on Canadian research
- Incorporates lessons learned
- Evolved into a conceptual framework, and
- Holistic approach
CREATING THE VSP

Lessons from successful and sustainable initiatives clustered around three themes:

- **VALUES**: provide the foundation for action
- **STRUCTURES**: help you get and stay organized
- **PROCESSES**: help make working together effective
WHAT CAN THE VSP DO FOR YOU?

- Helps you see the bigger picture
- Think “outside” of the box
- Provides a common language
- Gets beyond the talk stage
The VSP maps on to a basic problem-solving model

Stage 1: Identify Interests and Decide to Act

Stage 2: Develop Your Plan

Stage 3: Implement Your Plan

Stage 4: Evaluate, Adjust and Revisit Your Plan

Successful and Sustainable Initiatives
HOW THE VSP IS ORGANIZED

- The VSP provides questions for you to think about at each stage of an initiative
- It also identifies potential challenges
- These are only suggestions
- Use your knowledge and experience to identify questions and potential challenges in your initiative
Values are the foundation for working together!

- Learn to listen to discover what people find “meaningful”
- Invest the time to build relationships based on trust
VALUES ARE THE FOUNDATION

- The V component highlights questions to keep in mind as you begin to get to know people
- Also identifies potential challenges
KEY INSIGHTS FOR VALUES

- The issues have to be meaningful
- Local connection and ownership are important
- Leaders and champions should be involved
- Core values form the basis of a shared vision
Questions:
- Have those most directly involved discussed their vision?
- How much support is there for the shared vision? How do you know?

Potential Challenges:
- There may be competing visions.
- People want to move quickly to action.
# The V Is For Values! Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Tasks (What Will Be Done?)</th>
<th>Responsibility (Who Will Do It?)</th>
<th>Timelines (By When?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Local Connection:**  
1. Who is involved?  
2. Who else should we reach out to?  
3. Who might we reach out to later?  
4. How will we get the support of key stakeholders? | | | |
| **Local Ownership:**  
1. Where does the issue or concern come from?  
2. Was it identified by community members?  
3. Does it focus on the concerns of only a few members?  
4. Who is willing to do something about it? | | | |
| **Community Vision:**  
1. What is our community’s vision?  
2. Have those most directly involved discussed their vision?  
3. How much support is there for this vision?  
4. Are there competing visions and have these been addressed?  
5. How will this vision be shared and will others get a chance to have their input? | | | |
The Structures Component of the VSP identifies a number of elements including:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Decision-making
- Resources
- Partnerships
Creating Effective Structures

Questions:

- What organizational structure, if any, is in place?
- What options are there for your organizational structure?
- Does the organizational structure reflect the culture and experience of your group?
The potential challenges you may face include:

- The organizational structure you developed may be seen as a “clique”
- The organizational structure may send a message that there is a hidden agenda at work
- Others may be suspicious or resistant
### S is for Structures! Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working Together:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. What organizational structure, if any, is in place? | 1. How do we ensure the structure is in place? | 1. Who will implement this structure? | 1. By when?
| 2. How was this organizational structure developed? | 2. How were the tasks developed? | 2. Who will be responsible for tasks? | 2. By when?
| 3. What message does it send others about who we are and what we are trying to accomplish? | 3. How does it reflect the context we are working in and the culture of our community? | 3. Who will be responsible for leadership? | 3. By when?
| 4. What options are there for our organizational structure? | 4. What options do we have for tasks? | 4. Who will be responsible for responsibility? | 4. By when?
| 5. Does the organizational structure reflect the context we are working in and the culture of our community? | 5. How does it reflect the context we are working in and the culture of our community? | 5. Who will be responsible for timelines? | 5. By when?

| Leaders | | | |
| 1. How can we work the type of leadership our community needs to address this issue? | 1. How can we ensure the leadership is effective? | 1. Who will lead the efforts? | 1. By when?

| Investment In Capacity | | | |
| 1. What are our community’s assets? | 1. What assets do we require to meet our needs, address our problems, and implement our solution? | 1. Who will implement the capacity building? | 1. By when?
| 2. What assets are required to meet our needs, address our problems, and implement our solutions? | 2. What assets do we require to meet our needs, address our problems, and implement our solutions? | 2. Who will implement the capacity building? | 2. By when?
| 3. How can we further build our capacity to meet our needs? | 3. How can we further build our capacity to meet our needs? | 3. Who will implement the capacity building? | 3. By when?
| 4. How can we ensure that capacity once developed is utilized and remains within the community? | 4. How can we ensure that capacity once developed is utilized and remains within the community? | 4. Who will implement the capacity building? | 4. By when? |
The Processes Component of the VSP identifies a number of elements including:

- Coordination
- Communication
- Early wins
- Evaluation
Questions:

- Who will do the coordination – paid or volunteer?
- Do you have a plan to share information within your group? With others in the community?
- Have you thought about how you will evaluate what you are doing?
◆ Lag time between meetings and action can result in lost momentum
◆ If activities are seen as “one time” events, they will not become the normal way you work together
◆ People are wary of evaluation and don’t see it as an important tool to help decision making
# P is for Processes! Worksheet

## Questions

**An Iterative Process:**
1. How informal or formal should our process be?
2. How are decisions made in our group? Do people have a chance to have their say?
3. How will we solicit the views of the broader community on an ongoing basis? How will we encourage their participation in decision making?
4. What’s working well? Not so well? What adjustments should we make to improve our process?

**Inclusive, Non-hierarchical and Diversity-sensitive approach:**
1. How can we ensure our approach is inclusive?
2. How will we ensure that the leadership represents our needs, aspirations and values?
3. How will we ensure that community members are involved in decision making?
EVOLVING FROM A TOOL TO AN APPROACH
THE GREATER GOOD

VALUES

COMMON VISION

STRUCTURES

GROUP DYNAMICS

INDIVIDUAL PARADIGMS

GROUP DYNAMICS

INDIVIDUAL PARADIGMS

PROCESSES
THANK-YOU!

www.carleton.ca/cicyc