



Strategy Away Day

with the Co-operative Foundation in Manchester

Context

The Co-operative Foundation is the grant-making body of the Co-operative Group. Following a recent merger and subsequent governance reviews, fund integration and member/employee elections, the Co-operative Foundation had decided it was time to develop a new focus and grant-making strategy.

The Trustees had agreed to focus the Foundation's grant-making strategy on: *'Supporting the positive contribution of children and young people in our local communities'*. This was in line with the member consultation that had taken place in autumn 2008, and the new community investment plan approved by the Co-operative Group Board's Values and Principles Committee.

However, the Trustees were aware that this 'focus' needed to be narrowed down even further to allow the Foundation to develop a series of objectives which would allow for a more measurable benefit for the funds available and also reduce the number of applications that were declined.

ICA:UK was approached in January 2009 to design and facilitate a session during the Away Day in which Trustees and other invited participants could define, more specifically what was meant by 'positive contribution'.

Process

The process drew heavily on the two foundational methods of ICA's [Technology of Participation](#) (ToP).

After setting the context, an in depth opening [Focussed Conversation](#) lasted over 30 minutes. This conversation encouraged participants to share projects involving children and young people that they had been involved in, were proud of, or would like to be involved in and to clarify the positive contributions that these projects had enabled the young people to make. The intent was to move away from specific projects to the more generic positive contributions.

The key element of the process was the [Consensus Workshop](#). When a number of positive contributions had been identified, the 'Focus Question' for the workshop was introduced: *'What are the practical ways that children and young people can make a positive contribution to their local community?'*

Participants were invited to spend individual time, jotting down the positive contributions they could think of. They were then asked to draw a line under these and write a least two more contributions that were innovative, different and/or creative.

Participants were then allocated into named groups (to ensure a mixture of experience,

time as a trustee etc. in each group). Group members shared their ideas and wrote a number of cards answering the Focus Question. This activity generated enthusiastic and thoughtful conversations as participants built on each other's ideas.

The facilitator then led the clustering of the cards, and naming of the clusters.

Outputs & feedback

During the closing conversation of the workshop, participants realised that, as a group, they had come up with 5 generic positive contributions and three ways in which these contributions could be made, including '*embracing new thinking*'.

The Foundation Manager was then tasked to research how this information could be used to develop a series of objectives to define the Co-operative Foundation's unique grant-making activity. She was to take the results of this research to the next meeting of the Foundation later in the year.

Sarah Robinson, Foundation Manager wrote of the day:

"Thanks again for last week. Your contribution was absolutely crucial to the success of the day and we couldn't have done it without you. I've already started working on the grant-making model based on the themes."