

CREATING AN ACTION PLAN

Time: 1 hr. min.

Age: All

WHAT IS IT?

An action plan is nothing more (or less) than carefully listing all the things that your team needs to do. It outlines your strategy for completing the project.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Action plans make your work more intentional.
- It is difficult to hold each other accountable for the project goals unless there is a written plan of work to be accomplished.

WHEN IS THIS USEFUL?

Once you have clearly defined your problem, decided on what project to do, and power mapped.

MATERIALS: flip chart / markers

CORE CONCEPTS: accountability, politics, public work, democracy

SKILLS: action plans, negotiating, teamwork,

ACTIVITIES / STEPS:

- 1. Look at the Power Map:** To create an action plan, teams might want to start by looking at their evolving power map and thinking about the resources and obstacles that will affect their project idea. Teams may want to keep the following questions in mind when studying their community map:
 1. What is our project's overarching goals and mission statement?
 2. How much time do we have to work together?
 3. What information, resources and power do we need to implement our project's goals and mission?
 4. What are the possible barriers to meeting our project's goals?
 5. Are there possible alternative courses of action?
- 2. Themes or Intermediate Goals:** The next step is to begin thinking of the themes of your project. These usually are the large things you need to do to do your project (intermediate goals). Helpful questions might include: At the end the PA, what do we want to accomplish? What things do we need to do in order to finish our project? How

will we know we succeeded? This is a good time to revisit (and even potentially revise) your project's mission statement.

- 3. Prioritize goals:** Which goals are most important (which goals are absolutely necessary to complete your project)?

- 4. Which Comes First?** Together, draft a plan of goals in sequential order. Your team might have to come up with a series of preliminary goals that they need to accomplish in order to arrive at their final goal. Sometimes you have to put off your major goals until later, sometimes you need to work on more than one goal at the same time. While the group may not be ready to develop a specific weekly timeline at this point, try to have team members prioritize tasks—what needs to happen first? What is the logical way to order the goals so you can complete your project?
 - a. **Possible mini-exercise (can be used for step 3 Prioritize and step 4 Which Comes First?):** Once you have identified your major goals, sometimes it is good to break into small groups and ask each group to rank the goals in order of importance and/or the order in which they should be done. Then come back together and compare what people came up with, highlighting differences between plans, and that there is more than one way to create an action plan. Decide together which order is best.

- 5. Brainstorm:** Next, take one of the project's intermediate goals—i.e. if the project is starting a community garden, one of the project's major goals may be to make sure that the garden is visible in the community and that neighbors are encouraged to participate. Begin by brainstorming a big list of all the things that need to be done to implement that goal. What are different possible strategies for promoting the garden to the community? How would neighbors feel welcome? What would make people want to participate? Stress to teams that this list can be huge and they should try to think as broadly as possible to get everything down on paper.

- 6. Setting Objectives:** Building on the large list of possible steps, next try to get the team to think of more specific objectives that will enable them to reach their goal. While team member may have many ideas of how to make the garden visible (buying billboard ads, giving away vegetables, etc.) some ideas may be more realistic than others. Good objectives clearly state how you will reach a larger goal. It may be helpful to keep in mind that a good objective is "SMART," or:
 - **Specific:** It addresses the matter specifically
 - **Measurable:** It can be measured to determine whether it has been achieved.
 - **Achievable:** It is within the means and capacity of your group.

- **Realistic:** It is practical and can be accomplished within a reasonable time frame.
- **Time-bound:** The time period for reaching it is clearly specified.

7. Setting Tasks: For each objective, have group members brainstorm all the possible steps that would be required to complete the objective. Next, prioritize these tasks. Team facilitators could ask: Which things are more important than others? Which intermediate steps must be done first before moving onto other steps? What different strategies are appropriate to each step? Try to make a logical progression of each thing you need to do.

8. Creating Timelines: Next, match these preliminary goals and immediate steps up with timelines. What is realistic to get accomplished in a certain time? While timelines are important, keep in mind that they may change as each group moves forward into implementing their project.

9. Creating accountability mechanisms: What things do you need to do to make sure the work gets done one time? Sometimes it helps to have a team member's job as accountability checker, they check in on those who are doing the task.

10. Plan celebrations! As long as you are doing all this work, you might think how you will celebrate. One important thing is that plan on finishing their project on the last day of PA, this gives you no time for reflection, evaluation, and celebration.

** Note that some groups will not complete an action plan with every step they will do, but will identify major goals and then make a detailed plan when they get to them.*

EVALUATION:

- What was it like to make this action plan?
- Was it difficult to make decisions on what to do? Did you decide democratically? Were there power dynamics at play?
- Is your plan more complicated or take more steps than you first thought? What things did you not think of before making the plan?
- How will this help you get your work done? What can you do to be accountable

ACTION PLAN!

Theme / Intermediate Goal	Objectives	Tasks	Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
Themes are the major areas or dimensions of your project. Goals are the long-term outcomes of your project.	Each goal can be divided into a set of clear objectives that detail how you will reach that goal.	Tasks are the specific steps needed to accomplish each objective.	Defines who is responsible for carrying out the various tasks.	Shows when each task needs to be completed.	Shows how you know that you have been successful in implementing each goal.

Sample Public Achievement Action Plan: A Community Garden

Theme / Intermediate Goal	Objectives	Tasks	Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
Plants 1(a) Select and purchase or have donated plants for garden	Talk with a garden expert on what plants are best.	--find contact for expert --discuss which plants we like -- contact and invite to talk with our group	Becky	September 25	--expert coming to group --assess how helpful expert was
	a. Contact greenhouses to see if they will donate plants. b. Plan B: If no one will donate, plan fundraiser	-- get contact information -- write letter asking for donations -- follow up by arranging meetings	Paul, Alyssa, Terran	October 1	donated plants
Publicity 1(a) Ensure that the community garden is visible to the neighborhood, and that community members feel encouraged to participate.	Secure a minimum of five public service announcements in the local press.	--Make a list of all the newspapers in the community --Write the announcement and distribute it to each paper --Call each paper to follow up	John and Lisa	April 1	Five announcements will appear in the local press.
	Make door-to-door contact with the 20 immediate residents in the garden's neighborhood.	--Plan one day for entire group to go into neighborhood. --Come up with a list of talking points / questions	Entire Group	October 25 st	1. Attendance of neighbors at our opening 2. Number that participate / volunteer in our work.
	Contact a minimum of 5 different community groups (Boy Scouts, churches, etc.) and solicit volunteers.	-- make a list of community groups, and contact information -- email and call groups -- plan to follow up with volunteers	Parris, Jordan, Clara	March 1	1. Number of agencies contacted 2. Number of volunteers
	Distribute flyers about launch event to the entire neighborhood.	--Plan one day one week before launch event!	Entire Group	April 15	