

Appendix C

Innovators Forum

HOW TO PLAN AND ORGANIZE A SUCCESSFUL FORUM?

The basic steps to planning and organizing a successful Innovators Forum are as follows:

STEPS
1. Selecting a material for the Forum
2. Determining who to invite
3. Determine a meeting place
4. Selecting a date
5. Develop and distribute the Innovators Packet
6. Preparing Discussion Questions
7. Setting the Agenda
8. What happens at the Forum
9. Evaluation and follow-up

SELECTING A MATERIAL FOR THE FORUM

Any combination of the following criteria can assist a jurisdiction in selection of a material suitable for conducting a Forum:

- Sufficient quantity of material going to landfill as identified in the Waste Generation Study/Discard studies and Voids Analysis studies.
- Little or no recycling of this material at this time.
- Opportunity for source separation to avoid contamination issues associated with diversion from commingled wastes.
- Potential for reduction or reuse.
- Unstable markets where cost of recycling often is not covered by the market price received (e.g. low or negative value recyclable).
- Cluster of industries or grouping of industries with similar discards being generated. The grouping would increase the likelihood of motivated.
- Examine a number of materials, types and quantities that have the possibility of a business/product/development, a potential for combining or synergy with a number of materials.
- Regional synergy. For example: the generation of restaurants/institutions food waste in one location could be utilized at a vermicomposting project in another community. The result could be a flexible-manufacturing unit with more than one location but with cooperative ownership, marketing, equipment share, or other shared arrangement strategy.

- Motivated players: materials may come from special discard streams, people who have already stated a desire to have their production material reduced, reused, or recycled, but need an idea/product. They may be willing to do a recycled manufacturing product in-house if they really get behind the idea. The source of motivated players will come through discussions with interested parties over the years, businesses that have called looking for places to recycle byproducts of their business activity or through the data collection from business sources.
- Need for potential products in this region that could be made from discarded materials.
- Resources (staff and money) to follow-up on the ideas generated by the Forums with an defined direction

DETERMINING WHO TO INVITE

Innovator Forums benefit from the participation of all interested parties – suppliers and potential users. Emphasis should be on inviting persons with diversity, interest, commitment, and ability. Person's known in the manufacturing or subject area can be invited to contribute ideas and possible resources.

Potential invitees include:

- Suppliers
- Potential users
- Manufacturers
- Artists
- Engineers known for their creativity
- Industrial design, engineering, and conservation studies students that may bring resources/research/creativity to the table
- People known for their problem solving skills
- Inventors/Innovators/ idea people
- Professors/Science and Industrial Arts Teachers/

Depending on the focus of the Forum, other invitees can include:

- Haulers
- Recycling Processors
- Agency representatives
- Investors/Bankers/Economic Development Agency representatives

GETTING ATTENDEES TO ATTEND:

Public service announcements can be utilized to call for idea people, solution people, just get the word out and see who calls

- Call people and ask for referrals
- Call around to agencies.

This is a format that has continued to be successful in getting people to attend workshops and meetings.

- Pull together lists from other meetings and suggestions.
- Contact them personally, talk to them about the Forum and find out their interests and concerns. This is also good preparation to make sure that interest areas are covered in the workshop, or references are made that would further the subject development along.
- Ask for their commitment to attend. If they do not give their commitment, say you will call back after you send them materials. If they say, they can not attend this one, ask if they want to be included on the notes or in further meetings. If the date has not been set yet, ask them what would be a good date, and that you will work with others to get the dates that they can attend if possible.
- Ask them if they know someone else who may be interested and if they have their name and phone number.
- Send information. If at all possible, fax the agenda right before the meeting as another reminder to them. (It would have all the “what, when, where”, on the top).
- Call and remind participants right before the session.

Often organizers make the mistake that developing a flyer and sending it out, or sending out a PSA is enough. In this day, there is too much information coming at people and the flyer, letter, or PSA is lost in the other messages. It is the high touch targeted approach that works. It works because it helps to form a more effective work session by hearing what the concerns are from the targeted population so that the sessions can be planned around that. The other written material should be seen as “in addition to” what has been done (above).

It also is a high touch way of breaking through all the other bombardments of information, letting the potential attendee know that their input is wanted and needed, and to get their commitment to attend.

DETERMINE A MEETING PLACE

The selection of the meeting location and ambiance can assist or hinder the creativity necessary for a successful Innovators Forum. Aspects to consider include:

- Comfortable
- Convenient access
- Demonstrates elements of innovation and applied techniques (uses reused or recycled materials, green building, composting, etc., depending on subject of Forum).
- Lighting (natural or well lighted to keep people energized)
- Space is adequate for numbers that will attend.
- If breaking into groups, size and smaller tables.
- Wall space to hang flip chart pages on.
- Counter or table space for samples or hands-on exercise
- Break area to facilitate casual conversations

EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

- Flip chart
- Snacks
- Drinks
- Sample products

DEVELOP AND DISTRIBUTE THE INNOVATORS PACKET

The packet should be distributed in advance of the meeting.

PREPARING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A strong facilitator with prepared questions is essential to jumpstarting the Forum. The Forum should not be too structured but certain objectives need to be achieved. Initiating the meeting with prepared questions can overcome initial hesitancy of the participants.

Some sample questions include:

1. Could this recovered material be used as substitute for some virgin material being used locally?
2. Is there a new product that could be made from this scrap material?
3. What organizations/potential collaborations could be involved with this product? For example: if it is scrap wood: Woodworkers Guild, Redwoods United production, chip for composting, new products, particleboard. Who's doing what?

Sample Solution statement: What is a general/specific need that this new product/etc could support.

Who is doing what in the field of _____?

Who wants to do more? Plans? Should we develop a guide of resources?

What are the barriers to _____?

Listing them.

What could be done to transcend or reduce the barrier?
Dealing with them one by one.

Creating a _____? How could that be done?
What are the barriers to that?

Has anyone done _____?
Would you do something like this? Barriers?

What are the challenges of using the materials from _____?

What are the challenges of marketing the materials?
What are the challenges of marketing the service?

What are some of the value added materials that are being made now?

What are the barriers to more products being made?
What could be done to increase this possibility?

What is the availability of _____ materials?
Who's doing what? Barriers? Needs?

What monetary and business resources are needed?

SETTING THE AGENDA

The agenda needs to balance a tight agenda with opportunities for creative brainstorming. More than a half-day session tends to lose people. Possible multiple sessions may be necessary. The agenda should include the range of issues from conceptual to implementation. The variety of backgrounds of invitees is the greatest problem-solving tool available.

SAMPLE AGENDA

Agenda

Introductions (keeping them to a minimum time (who, what they do, why they are here)

Questions to stimulate the conversation

Brainstorming

How to reach next steps

Flip Charts and minute taker (why you need both)

Form development for minutes

Arrangement of Flip charts

Doing the minutes

What is the follow-up

HOW TO TURN THE IDEAS INTO A VIABLE BUSINESS?

Since not all ideas come out in the Forum, follow-up time is needed. Jurisdiction staff should make themselves available to participants after the Forum and any follow-through is completed. Some participants will need organizational support in order to develop their marketing plan.

This can be provided through the RMDZ or small business organizations. Participants should be asked whether the Forum should be continued in the future.