

# Metaplan Protocol

Source: adapted from Metaplan techniques first proposed by Eberhard and Wolfgang Schnelle; and workshops by Dr. Tina Blythe, Project Zero

### Purpose

To build common understanding of a complex problem by systematically identifying its constituent parts, as a first step toward developing recommendations for possible solutions and action plans.

### Time allotted

About 30 minutes to one hour (or more), depending on the size of the group.

### Group format

This protocol can be used with large groups of up to 200 people, as well as small groups of six or more. It requires a facilitator with knowledge and experience of the protocol.

### Facilitation tips

- This protocol works best if one person, preferably someone who is familiar with the protocol, acts as the facilitator. This person will not contribute his or her ideas to the discussion.
- The facilitator first works with the whole group to agree the question and/or problem statement that will be explored. The quality of the question and problem statement matters.
- The facilitator sets the scene by introducing the context, the question and/or problem statement and describing the objective.
- The participants record a specified number of responses to the question – one each on a post-it note (or using an other technology conducive to posting a response that can be moved). The number of responses depends on the question, the total number of participants, and the number of groups that will be formed for exploring the responses. Allow about five minutes for recording responses.

*Note that the meta-plan protocol can be done as a whole group activity, or the group may form sub-groups and then compare the sub-groups' responses to the activity. For this version of the meta-plan protocol, we will be dividing the whole group into two sub-groups.*

- Participants are divided into two subgroups. Each sub-group is assigned a wall space, ideally on opposite sides of a room.
- Participants take turns reading their responses and posting them on the wall. The time needed for this part of the activity will vary by the number of sub-group members and the number of responses they have been asked to prepare.
- When all the responses are posted, participants are asked to observe the responses in silence, and then begin clustering them by topic or theme. The clustering is also done in silence. Allow at least five minutes for this part of the protocol.

- When the clustering is complete, ask the sub-groups to silently observe their work.
- Next, ask the sub-groups to trade walls and to examine the work of the other sub-group. The sub-groups may now talk amongst themselves, discuss the other groups clusters, and consider them in relation to the clusters they formed. They may re-arrange the other sub-groups clusters. Allow at least five minutes for this activity.
- Next, ask the sub-groups to return to their original wall. Ask them to observe the clusters, now modified by the other sub-group. Ask them to consider the changes.
- Next, ask the group what they will do next with the clusters and the topics/themes they represent. Note that they could:
  - List the topics and themes on a separate sheet and use voting dots to prioritise them
  - Map the topics/themes on an impact/feasibility grid
  - Collect additional information about the topics/themes
  - A combination of these and/or other actions