I. What makes a working group valuable?

During the introductions, participants reflected on a high-value or successful working group or community in which they are involved and what made it valuable to them.

- Interaction of ideas; energy of new members
- Listserv that provides useful information
- Learning and connecting to my work; Fun
- Share tools, connect with colleagues and accomplish strategic objectives
- Clarity of objectives
- Fast track a specific task
- Diversity of rich ideas
- Fun when we had a specific task (ex. manual)
- External impetus and WHO guidelines
- Brings energy
- Cross sectoral learning outside my core group; Experts from different groups
- Collective effort
- Unpredictable and fun
- Melting pot of ideas
- Frequent contact with calls and on-line communication
- See what is going on; who are the players
- Members committed and accountable to each other
- Engage people as individuals
- Network of experts
- Talking to people; new techniques
- Ask questions and get answers and advice
- Unexpected twists, fast-paced; changing and prizes
- Engaged member base; vibrant listserv
- Task team with specific to do’s; sense of accomplishment
- Way to connect within a large group
II. How to assure a bad working group?

During the TRIZ exercise, participants were asked “How can we make sure we have the worst possible, non-functioning, painful working group?” 1-2-4-All was used to develop ideas and produced the following list:

- No ability to express views or no room to participate
- No goals, direction, mandate or workplan
- No accountability or follow-up
- Lots of busy work with no purpose
- No prizes or FUN
- Late communication and no follow-up e-mail
- No meetings
- Long meetings with no refreshments
- No leadership or poor leadership
- Inflexible timing (especially across different time zones)
- Too many leaders
- Too many agendas

III. Actions that we can take to keep us from engaging in undesirable and unproductive working groups

Participants thought about what we might be currently doing that in any way, shape or form resembled the unproductive list above. They then developed a new list of steps or actions that will help us stop what we know creates undesirable results. These ideas were written on cards and categorized on a sticky wall.

A. Planning

- Plan meeting
- Plan well in advance
- Take time to plan meeting
- Consult with participants before deciding about meeting schedule
- Carefully plan and fix meeting dates and time taking into consideration time zones of working group members
- Schedule one hour per week for WG activities at beginning of week
- Agreement on who, when follow-up
- Brainstorm a really interesting topic for people to attend meeting
• Pre-meeting planning by co-chairs for next meeting
• Plan way ahead
• Have a set schedule with an agenda which outline accountability for actions and responsibilities
• Plan ahead to avoid having no meeting and conversely avoid having to cancel meetings (maybe set a clear time line, such as 2 weeks in advance)
• Plan ahead to include time for follow-up from meetings (1 hour minimum)

B. Goals
• Have a defined objective or terms of reference for the working group, with a defined duration
• Time-bound working group and not afraid to end it when it finishes (rather than find another purpose for it)
• Differentiate what type of group: Community of Practice or Interest Group or Working Group?
• Formulate a purpose for the group
• Define clear (SMART) objectives for the tasks at CORE and follow through
• Have a defined work plan and goal for the group and defined objective for each meeting
• Clear objectives—realistic with a timeline
• Develop specific objectives and work plans

C. Meeting Process
• Have guidelines for running the group
• Put follow-up activities (emails, calls, etc.) on list or calendar to cross off when completed
• Set up a reminder on phone/computer for follow-up
• Define time line
• Share responsibility for facilitation—drive motivation for participations
• Limit membership
• Prepare follow-up tasks before working group meeting to ensure more timely follow-up afterwards, e.g., disseminate action plans via email prior to the meeting to facilitate updates to plans, create template for meeting notes and assign notetaker with deadline for draft
• Make it fun! Co-chairs should brainstorm and solicit/survey members for fun ideas
• Social media use—use fun photos on Twitter or Linked In discussions
• After action reviews
D. **Leadership**
- Re-evaluate and/or retrain WG leadership
- Leader has a work plan and adheres to the guidelines and expectations for the group
- Ensure that each co-chair has a clear role/task in the working group
- Strong leadership (committed/available)

E. **Expectations**
- Ask members for ideas and solicit involvement
- Clarify expectations
- Have a plenary session at the CORE meeting to discuss working groups—ideas, things to change, etc.

F. **Accountability and permission to participate:**
- Negotiate dedicated time/LOE for CORE WG as part of annual work planning process
- Include CORE Group activity on your personal work plan at your job and dedicate time to it

G. **Resources**
- Explore funding for working groups

IV. **Bold ideas for a high value working group that attracts and retains members:**
Participants used 25-to-10 crowd sourcing to brainstorm, discuss and rate ideas:

A. The top ideas discussed were:
- Carve out a real working group with a clear purpose from the larger “interest group” (those on the listserv)
- Members plan and execute meetings
- Rotating agenda planning committee & chairs reach out
- Bring in new ideas (controversial) to discuss
- Thought-provoking questions
- Participatory approach to defining objectives and revisit during the year
- Humor

B. Ideas as written on the cards and scores:
- Carve a working group from the interest group; WG has a clearly defined purpose/end product and time frame (22 points)
- Have members plan and execute meetings (22)
- Rotate membership on the agenda planning committee (20):
WG leaders reach out to 2-3 different WG members for ideas and to engage around planning next agenda to ensure everyone has voice and new ideas

- Ask thought-provoking questions to get ideas and participation (20)
- Bring in new or promising practices (controversial) to debate and discuss (20/19.5—one person rated the ideas as 3.5 but 4 with a good facilitator)
- Participatory approach to defining goals/objectives/purpose (and revisiting as needed) (19)
- Humor (19)
- Recognize them with participation awards; each meeting, one person is given praise or a certificate (19)
- Professional incentives (18)
- Bring in a famous or well-known expert in the sector of your working group during every meeting (18)
- Member of the month—highlight an engaged member (with PRIZE) (18)
- Only have membership in the WG for 6 months at a time with 1 deliverable required (18)
- Limit its duration so people know they will participate for “x” amount of time (17.5)
- SURPRISE—Keep things interesting by always changing what will happen (17)
- Develop common interest goals (ask members for ideas) (17)
- Creating space and time for all members to speak e.g., self-introduction and facilitator calling name again (16.5)
- Presentation from a well-known speaker (16)
- Start with story of interest (16)
- Ask members what they are working on in their organization and incorporate that into the work plan (14)
- Pay for level of participation (hold it in Hawaii, Fiji, or somewhere great (14)
- Member speed ideas sessions like speed dating (12)
- Group video and social media usage (11.5)
- Have people work on a tangible assignment they are already working on or that leverages work they are already doing (11)
- Give members opportunity to voice opinions and assume desired roles (11)

V. Evaluation of Workshop:

In addition to written evaluations, participants provided the following comments on what was good (+) about the workshop and what they would like to see changed (Δ).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+</th>
<th>Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We had an opportunity to do the techniques – learn by doing</td>
<td>Would like to add more time and have role plays; ex. fishbowl for practicing facilitation techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressed real problems</td>
<td>Would be great to have a workshop on running virtual meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle seating</td>
<td>Would like information on how to keep non-auditory listeners engaged in virtual meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good networking opportunity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun – ex. selling card ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Free for chairs</th>
<th>Would like to hear more successes from co-chairs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All participating – there was a chance for everyone to participate</td>
<td>Too CORE WG focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to be creative problem solvers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good examples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not boring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided time for reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought provoking questions asked</td>
<td></td>
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</table>