

## **Creation of an Initiative Group**

This section will describe what an Initiative Group is and how to create and coordinate an Initiative Group.

The next important step after the survey is to create an Initiative Group. Based on the survey, activists begin to cooperate with volunteers who have responded to becoming a member of the Initiative Group and are ready to work on solving the social problems of the area. The creation of the Initiative Group is a very important and key moment in the activities of activists, since the further result of solving the social problems of the community depends on the work of the Initiative Group.

- **What is an Action Group?**

The essence of the Initiative Group organization is the collaboration of individuals to solve problems that affect their daily life and create the strength of the community. In other words, the task of the Initiative Group is the participation of residents and members of the group in identifying problems and further solving these problems.

The main task of activists is to form a permanent Initiative group that will work on a specific issue for some time, but can also take up the solution of new issues as they arise and the group grows.

When creating an Initiative Group, there are three main stages to which activists should turn their attention.

- 1) Search for people
- 2) First public event
- 3) Support and coordination of the Initiative Group

### **1) Search for people.**

You and several activists conducted a survey in a certain area and decided to create an Initiative Group in residential area. You have a certain idea based on the survey and have already decided what kind of IG you want to create. What to do next?

Step 1. If you have acquaintances in the selected community, invite them to your team as it will be easier for you to connect with other residents and invite them to the IG. If you have no acquaintances in the chosen community, then it's okay, since the main resource for finding people for Initiative group is the result of the survey. As mentioned in the previous section, during the survey, you need to identify stakeholders who want to join your IG and ask for their contact number or email address to be notified of further meetings. Also, you can use other tools to attract new faces to your team. For example, post a meeting notice on public notice boards and other places, or hand out flyers near local schools and kindergartens, etc. Then, you contact all stakeholders and schedule the first public event.

## 2) First public event

The first meeting with future members of the Initiative Group is special and it is important that they have a favorable impression and decide to join your IG. Consider what should happen at the first meeting:

- Greet people;
- Ask everyone to introduce themselves
- Explain why you are forming this group and how you see the group work
- Explain what activities you hope people will participate in

Also, you can use a guest speaker or show a short video. It is important to leave time for questions and answers.

Here are some practical tips:

- Conduct the meeting in a location that people can easily reach and find easily.
- Make sure that the room is comfortable
- Do you want to provide food or drinks?
- Be sure to end the meeting at the time you told people
- You can distribute the necessary materials for review
- Announcement of the next event and meeting

## 3) Support and coordination of the Initiative Group

In this section, we will explain to you what you need to do to keep people involved in the project and how to keep the group working throughout the entire activity. For this, there are several important principles that will help you build a sustainable and active Initiative group.

- **Don't take over all the work (Make a commitment)**

Don't do all the work yourself — every envelope you send, every phone call you make, every page you print is a lost opportunity to get someone else to do the job. When members of the Initiative Group take responsibility for some work, they feel that they are an important part of the community. Also, when a person gives time and energy to the organization, his personal commitment is so great that they will want to further develop this group and community. However, if meetings are the only activity of your group, they may be the reason for the decrease in the number of participants. Therefore, after a short discussion and meeting, the IG participants should be involved in other activities, such as writing a letter, collecting signatures from other residents, etc. One of the main points is also explaining why the participation of a particular person will significantly help the community. What is his unique role in this project and even if it is just a matter of increasing the number of participants, explain why this is important.

- **Personal interests**

People join the Initiative Group if the groups' task is to solve problems that concern them personally. Moreover, each member of the group may have their own personal interests. For example, older citizens often join groups in search of companionship and a desire to continue to be useful after retirement, many people join because they want to acquire new skills that will help them in a professional direction. Also, many believe that doing something for the community is their civic duty. So, ninety-nine percent of the time, self-interest works in favor of Initiative Group, and if you understand what people want, you can tailor your program accordingly. People join and stay with a group that reflects their humanity and values, as well as touches on certain forms of personal interest. Giving people a reason to get involved means presenting them with a problem that concerns themselves. This means creating a specific description that will present the problem in a simple and personal way. And even if the problem has been carefully considered and thought through, if you fail to explain it to people in a simple, quick and exciting way, people are unlikely to respond.

- **Listen**

It is by listening that you get information and demonstrate your interest. It's not just a lack of words, it's the ability to ask people the right questions and insert approving remarks, and also to express interest. Listen to the answers and show that you are trustworthy. It is also worth listening to information about the skills that Initiative group members may have, useful contacts and networking. For example, if you have a young person in your group, then this means that he / she can help in promotion on social networks. Or if you have a former lawyer in your group, this person can help with writing a letter to the administrative authorities.

- **Celebrate victories and have fun**

In fact, it is very important to celebrate victories and have fun with the IG team. When groups' members share their fears, hopes and visions of the future with each other over a cup of coffee after a meeting, that part is as important as scheduling meetings. It is important to understand that joint dinners, birthdays, New Year's parties or summer picnics are also part of the organization process. The power of entertainment is really great and every organizer should make the process of organizing and coordinating IG interesting and fun.

An initiative group is a living organism that will change constantly. If leaders and other members work hard enough to listen, build relationships based on reciprocity and respect, and inspire themselves and others, then they will become stronger together. Leaders, community organizers and volunteers come and go, but the Initiative Group itself will continue to exist if all steps are taken correctly. If the group is organized, then it can increase its strength.

- **Safety measures and precautions during your activity.**

During the social activities in a certain society, it is important to observe the safety measures of the activists themselves. Since, working in an unknown residential area can involve a variety of risks. For example, psychological or physical harm, traffic accidents or violent threats. For these

reasons, activists are strongly encouraged to take safety measures and be careful when working in local communities and areas. It is recommended to avoid uninhabited places, keep the mobile phone on, inform family and friends about the meeting point, have identification documents with you and act deliberately in an unstable and dangerous situation.