

SPREAD THE WORD



A guide to finding your village
project's starting point

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WHY SHOULD I READ THIS GUIDE?

In today's Sweden, small towns and villages are struggling. There aren't enough easily accessible services, and many people are leaving to move into bigger cities. The government promises to help, but often nothing changes, leaving people on their own to find and access the services they need.

But there is hope: If the village communities work together, their villages can be improved and make necessary changes. By speaking up in meetings, making plans for the future, and working together, we can improve our communities.

A study found that working together is the most important factor for creating positive change¹. When people join forces, they can do things that would be impossible alone. By teaming up, we can make our towns better places to live.

Collaborating has many benefits: it can save money, lead to better decisions, bring in new ideas, and help different groups work together more effectively.

In the next pages, you will see examples of how to start working together, along with tools and information to help make it happen.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS GUIDE?

Creating meaningful change needs more than just individual efforts; it needs collective action and collaboration. No single person needs to be a hero with all the answers. Instead, it is about using the collective will and energy of groups that are committed to making a change.

Whether you're an individual motivated to address a challenge or part of an association wanting to create change in your village, this guide is for you. It will help you assess your starting point, define your challenges, identify available resources, and establish a shared goal for your group. If you believe change is overdue in your village, this guide is essential reading for you.

8 TIPS FOR COLLABORATING SUCCESSFULLY

1.

Organize teamwork with clear task assignments for everyone.

2.

Choose which challenge to work with wisely. Start small!

3.

Keep communication open and honest to build trust, and share useful knowledge with others.

4.

Create a space where all partners know about each other's problems and what they want to achieve.

5.

Give everyone a chance to be part of the process and contribute.

6.

Encourage people to talk in person and give chances for meetings where they can meet face-to-face.

7.

Make sure leaders and everyone else agree on what they're doing together.

8.

Make sure the team knows who they are, what they want to achieve, and why they are doing it.

UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION

Collecting insights and opinions

Understanding the situation your villages community is very important, when starting a project, to make it successful.

Begin by looking into what is or isn't there. Have there been efforts regarding this topic before? What is lacking or standing in the way of tackling this challenge? By understanding

Next, consider who important people in the community are regarding this project. Talk to them to understand their views and ask about their thoughts on your project. They might have insights you haven't considered. Let them know they're not committing to anything by talking to you. This makes it easier to approach them.

To get more opinions, you can create a survey asking people about their ideas and what changes they want to see (Google Forms is an easy way to do this).

A few good questions to ask are:

- How satisfied are people with the situation?
- What specific changes would you like to see in the village?
- What motivates you to get involved in community projects?
- How do you prefer to receive information about community projects and activities?
- What are your hopes for the future development of the village?

When talking to people, you can also ask if they'd like to join your project. Explain clearly what you need from them. Be ready for some people to say no—they might be busy. You can offer short-term tasks or ways for them to help with specific parts of the project if they're interested but don't have a lot of time.

Show how your project can help the community and match its needs and goals. Explain how it can solve problems and make existing projects better. You want to make sure everyone benefits from your project without adding more work for them.



SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING YOUR STARTING SITUATION.

What is the focus or topic of change for your project?

Who would be valuable to talk to regarding your project?

What are possibilities you have for reaching out to people?

Whose perspectives are important to listen to and consider?

What are key questions to ask during conversations with important parties?

What is the payback for those who get involved in the project?

What do you need to know more about?



BECOMING A TEAM

Creating a First Shared Vision

The backbone of effective collaborative work lies in the creation of a shared vision. It serves as the compass that guides every step of progress and provides a foundation to fall back on in times of uncertainty. For this vision to be meaningful, all involved in the project should participate in its creation or at least agree to it.

A shared vision brings everyone together, coordinates efforts, promotes unity and makes greater impact possible. When everyone agrees on where the team is headed and why, it fosters a shared understanding and sense of responsibility. By crafting this vision together, the team can build trust, encourage open communication, and ensure agreement. Starting a collaborative project with a shared vision fuels the passion and commitment to achieve collective goals.

Let's take a look at a group in the fictional village Vackerby that came together to talk about who they are and what they want to achieve.

TEAM VISION IN VACKERBY

What is our goal as a team?

Getting to know our neighbors

What do we want to achieve our goal?

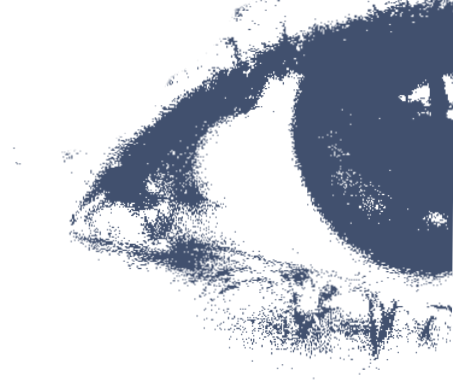
Bring the people of our Village together and create possibilities to socialize

Who do we want to benefit?

The residents of Vackerby (creating a more resilient community)

OUR TEAM wants to bring the residents of Vackerby together

SO THAT the community feeling gets strengthened and neighbors have a chance to meet each other.



WHO ARE WE AS A TEAM?

What is our goal as a team?

What do we do to achieve our goal?

Who do we want to benefit?

OUR TEAM

WHAT WE DO (FOR WHO)

SO THAT

THE IMPACT WE WANT
TO ACHIEVE



FINDING A STARTING POINT

Collecting and labeling ideas

After having established the framework for what your purpose as a team is, it is now time to ideate on steps you can take to get closer to a goal. You need to have a clear goal. You can take what you have written on the previous page and use it as your goal.

In the case of the team in Vackerby, they have made their goal: *"We want to bring the residents of Vackerby together so that the community feeling gets strengthened and neighbors have a chance to meet each other."*

Then they began to collect ideas for measures to achieve this goal together. They were encouraged to write everything down, big or small, serious or playful.

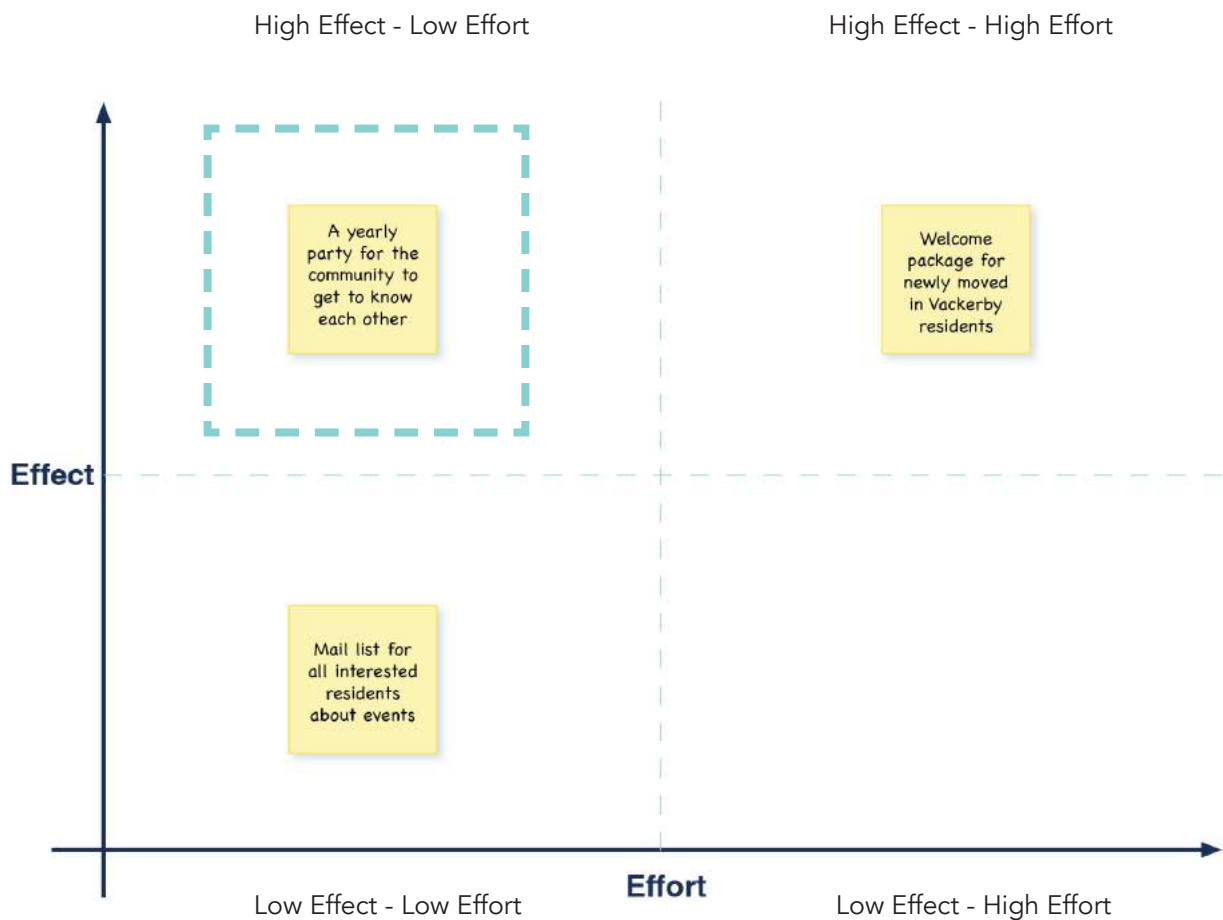
These ideas were collected and then put into an **Impact-Effort Matrix**. This served as the purpose of showing which ideas are good starting points, what ideas might be good to do as a small side project and what would be good to plan in as a long term project to work towards their goal.

Instructions for this how to use this method can be found on page 11



This is the structure which helps you label your projects in order to see which ideas are good to prioritize.

These are ideas that came up in Vackerby:



One idea was labeled as having a high effect achieving the goal with a low effort in the implementation:

- Organizing a yearly party for the community to get to know each other

Ideas in this label are good ideas to get started with in the process. If you have more than one idea your team can decide through voting which one of the ideas in the label you want to work on first.

The group in Vackerby settled on starting with the planning of the party as their first project. They now also have two ideas they can work on afterwards.

DEFINING GOALS

The group identified their starting idea, low-effort ideas. Those are excellent starting points. To implement these ideas, they need to be transformed into well-specified goals, making them easier to follow through with. The S.M.A.R.T. goal method helps in this process.

Specific:	Target a specific area of improvement
Measurable:	Find a way to measure or indicate progress.
Assignable:	Make it clear who is assigned what.
Relevant:	How is the goal relevant to what you want to achieve through it?
Time Bound:	Make a timeline and set a deadline for achieving the results.

Let's apply this method to the idea of **having a party once per year:**

Specific: "We want to have one party per year in which everyone in Vackerby can come together to get to know each other and spend time together."

Measurable: "We are successful if at least 50 people come."

Assignable: Person A is responsible for inviting organization A. Person B will plan activities. Person C will book the space and be responsible for the fika.

Relevant: "We want to have a party in order to strengthen the community feeling and make our village an attractive place to live."

Time Bound: "We want to have this party latest by the 5th of June, before people leave to go on summer vacation."



OUR S.M.A.R.T. GOAL

The goal we have right now:

MAKING IT

Specific

Measurable

Assignable

Relevant

Timebound



MORE THAN JUST MONEY

Recognising what resources are available

When someone says “resources”, many people immediately think of financial resources, and for many villages and initiatives this is a difficult topic. Often an idea is dismissed with the thought: “We don’t have enough money for that.”. But money is not all that is needed to develop a village. Other resources are needed even more. It can be difficult to understand what exactly is available. Here are a few guidelines to help you identify what resources your project has.

■ TEAM RESOURCES

What experience, skills, knowledge, connections do the team members have?

▲ PHYSICAL RESOURCES

What facilities, machines, tools, transportation possibilities, objects are already available to the team?

● TIME RESOURCES

How much time is available for the project from those who are interested in working on it?

★ FINANCIAL RESOURCES

How much money is available to be invested into achieving the goal of the project?

EXAMPLE

In the example of Vackerby, Team “Talk” wants to throw a party to bond with their neighbors because they feel like they don’t know them very well.

They have people who are *good at planning events, spreading the word, and creative thinkers who know how to plan on a budget.*

Person A, through their association membership, can organize a *venue for the event*. Person B has a *set of speakers*, while Person C offers *transportation assistance* with their car.

They want to have the party in 3 Weeks. They all work until 5 pm, and *Wednesdays are the only day they can all meet*. So, they’ve got to make the most of their few and short meetings together.

Financial resources are limited within the team. *Each member is willing to contribute a little financially, but they’ll need to plan smart and ask for favors from others* to make the party happen.

WHAT RESOURCES DOES OUR TEAM
HAVE FOR THIS PROJECT?



TEAM



PHYSICAL



TIME



FINANCE

IMPACT-EFFORT-MATRIX

What? Individually coming up with ideas and labeling them together with the help of the matrix

Why? To identify first steps towards a goal.

What is needed?



A clear goal that you want to achieve as a team



30-60 Minutes



3-15 people

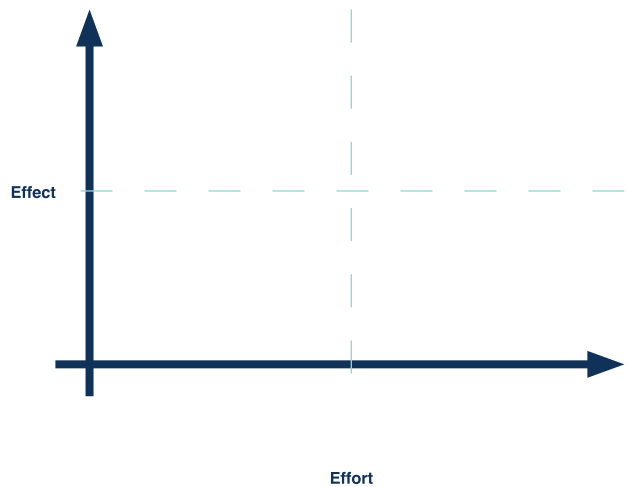


↓ Pens and post its for each participant

2x A3 Papers for drawing the matrix

Prepare:

Tape two A3 papers together and draw out the matrix like this:



1. Frame your goal as: “*What is needed in order to achieve ...?*” and let your teammates come up with ideas **individually**. Take **10 minutes** and write **each idea on its own post it**.
2. Take 5 minutes to let each group member place their ideas on the matrix.
3. In 15-45 minutes discuss the different ideas and its placements. Rearrange if necessary

You now have a variety of ideas and a reference for which of them are good starting points.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

WEBSITES:

sessionlab.com

SessionLab is a free platform designed to assist with planning, organizing, and facilitating workshops, meetings and other group activities. It offers a lot of customizable templates, tools, and resources to be able to plan effective meetings.

canva.com

Canva is a free platform for designing visuals like posters, flyers, invitations and social media posts. It is easy to use and the many available templates make it easy to quickly design visually appealing content.

miro.com

Miro.com is a free digital whiteboard for real-time teamwork and creativity. It allows to make plans and documentations of meetings and project just like you would with post-its or big pieces of paper and markers.

Google Forms

Google Forms is a free digital tool to create online surveys. It allows you to view the results in graphs and can easily be converted into excel sheets.

BOOKS:

The Workshoppers Playbook

Jonathan Courtney

This is a short book providing techniques for running productive meetings. Reading this playbook enhances facilitation skills, promotes teamwork, and improves meeting outcomes, fostering innovation and productivity in group settings.

REFERENCES

1. Hansen, Morten T., and N. Nohria. 2004. "How to Build Collaborative Advantage." MIT Sloan Management Review, October. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/How-to-build-collaborative-advantage-Hansen-Nohria/c257de7aad-5b7785ea373e8a6ec5662003397e93>.

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