"Inventory and Ideation" Learning Object

Link to online version: https://fl-rda.org/inventory-and-ideation/

Title	Inventory and Ideation
1-sentence summary	Uncover opportunities to harness team expertise and resources to collaborate.
Time to implement	45-60 minutes
Purpose of tool	- Move beyond individual expertise and recognize the diverse assets and resources available within a team, such as professional contacts and organizational contexts - Understand what individuals are willing to bring into the collaboration and make available to the team - Connect assets and other resources between members to formulate potential collaborative opportunities
The steps	Individuals considering a collaboration are brought together to discuss their collaborative potential. First, individuals present their knowledge, skills, and other resources they wish to bring to the collaboration. Second, the group collectively brainstorms ways that connecting subsets of those knowledge, skills, and resources could enable a collaborative project. The two steps are described in more detail below. **STEP 1: Individual Assets and Resources Inventory** *(15-20 minutes)* - Each person should speak for 1-2 minutes on the expertise, ideas, perspectives, or other assets or resources they are willing to bring to the current collaboration. Such resources should include not only their expertise and current activities, but also the larger pool of resources they have access to. Examples of additional resources are members in their professional network, unique characteristics of their organizational setting or geographic location, skills and prior experiences (both academic and non-academic), etc. - The resources of each person should be documented (see the accompanying worksheet) so that all members can reference the list for the next step. **STEP 2: Ideation around Collective Opportunities** *(30-40 minutes)*

	- Once individual assets and resources are recorded and made visible to all members in the worksheet, a brainstorming exercise is undertaken to consider what connecting two or more of the individual assets/resources could facilitate in terms of a collaborative project idea. - Each collaborative project idea can be verbalized and documented for all members to see ([see worksheet](#)). It is a fruitful exercise to generate project ideas that connect assets and resources from different subsets of the group, as well as consider project ideas that would require all members to collaborate. Certainly, getting to this latter circumstance where *all* members are necessary for a project to come to be is the goal. - After brainstorming 2-5 collaborative project ideas, take a few minutes to consider if any project ideas can be combined. Individuals may also wish to start expressing excitement or concerns about particular project ideas. However, it is not necessary to make a final decision about a project idea at this stage, especially if this activity will be followed by additional collaborative brainstorming and discussion activities.
Key guidance	- If this activity is done in person, the "worksheet" described and linked above could be replaced by a whiteboard or large sticky note written on with markers. - If done online, the "worksheet" is likely best created and maintained in a virtual document where individuals can all see and, if shared, all document their assets, resources, and ideas.
The outcome	A **diverse set of assets and resources** held among members are revealed. **Collaboration possibilities** are explored and joint project ideas generated.
Example use cases	**Leveraging Limited Resources** A new collaboration may need to be scrappy before seeking external funding to gather some initial evidence of its potential for success. As such, it is beneficial for members of a group to consider what resources they already have access to in their current positions and settings. These existing resources can be used, for example, to trial parts of a larger project idea and gather some pilot data to justify the collaborative project's feasibility. This information and traction can be written into future requests for funding, such as grant applications, to realize a full-blown project. **A Closer Look Sparks Innovation**

	Another way in which a collaboration (new or ongoing) benefits from considering its shared assets and resources is to create new perspectives on the capacity and potential for the group to explore alternative directions in their work. By nature of revisiting everyone's skills, knowledge, and other assets and resources, and trying out new combinations of them, a group may unlock a project idea that was previously overlooked. Relatedly, these asset and resource combinations may lead to innovative and creative ideas for projects.
Q&A:	
- When should this be applied?	This activity would be especially productive for relatively **small (5-7 members), new teams** first considering ways they could work together on projects. If a larger team is considering this activity, more time will need to be allotted for sharing assets, resources, and project ideas. Alternatively, if a larger team first organizes into smaller sub-groups, this activity could run as described. For **ongoing teams or those adding new members** this activity would allow for exploration of what new or alternative projects could be pursued, given the addition or uncovering of previously untapped assets or resources.
- When *not* to use this?	A team that is already very familiar with each others' knowledge, skills, and other resources may find this activity less helpful than others. However, for a long-term collaboration, this activity could serve as a refresher and reminder, especially as individuals' capabilities and environments may have changed since the collaboration began. Additionally, it may help remind members the array of expertise and other resources they have access to via the team, some of which they may have forgotten about.
- What should I do next?	After a group has generated some broad project ideas, and perhaps expressed interest in a subset of them, an activity such as Question Brainstorms would help teams take the next step of crafting specific questions–be they research questions or curiosity questions. These questions and other further brainstorming could be directed at one or more project ideas generated as outputs of the current activity.
- What evidence is this based on?	This activity draws inspiration and guidance from the two group-oriented activities listed below. • **Strategic Doing's** asset sharing and "link and leverage" steps were drawn heavily on to create the two steps of this learning object. • **Liberating Structures'** "15% Solutions" activity served as inspiration, in particular, for the first use case in this learning object.
- What if I want to learn more? What	**Strategic Doing** provides a step-by-step scheme for getting groups to quickly plan, enact, and check in on a project for the purposes of

are other complementary tools?	strategic advancement (a streamlined version of strategic planning). **Liberating Structures** provides dozens of inclusive group activities for the purpose of mobilizing the ideas and work of a group, breaking the mold of typical top-down leadership that sets and manages the agenda. "Step 2" in this learning object is similar to **Affinity Mapping**, an activity included in University of Michigan's Ideation Jam events. Learn more about these events in this published article. An alternative to "Step 2" in this activity, which is written with a focus on collaborative brainstorming conducted aloud, is to do "**brainwriting**." Brainwriting removes some of the social pressure and distractions that generating ideas aloud can produce. Instead, participants write and exchange ideas on paper, through several rounds, for others to consider and add to.

Inventory and Ideation - Assets & Opportunities Example

For guidance on using this tool: https://fl-rda.org/inventory-and-ideation/

STEP 1: Individual Assets and Resources Inventory
What expertise, skills, connections, environments, and other resources does each person bring to this collaboration?

Name	Assets and Resources Bringing to Collaboration
Pavle	- University facilities (specialized labs) - Data science, machine learning - Partnership with a local environmental non-profit
Indy	- Bioinformatics - Connection to local, diverse stakeholder network (non-academics) - Adjacent to the Bay
Taddeo	- Equipment (sensors, boats, servers) - Experience accessing and using large national datasets - Teach large undergraduate research courses

STEP 2: Ideation around Collective Opportunities
If some of the assets and resources from two or more people were joined, what potential project could be enabled?

Project Ideas
1. Leverage large national datasets for historical data and use data collection capacity of large undergraduate research courses to collect water quality indicators from various water sources, including the Bay, before and after major storm events. Use of the high computational power of machine learning will facilitate processing of the large dataset.
2. Develop new undergraduate research courses focused on the impact of major storm events on local bodies of water as well as the downstream impacts on ecosystems, agriculture, and human health. Can leverage freely-accessible national datasets, analyze new water samples from local sources, and learn new data science techniques for large-scale analysis.

Additional rows can be added to the above tables to accommodate more team members or additional project ideas.

Inventory and Ideation - Assets & Opportunities Worksheet

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