

Priority Sort: An Approach to Participatory Decision-Making



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Agenda

- Introduction
- Priority Sort Exercise
- Reflection and Discussion
- Tips and Tools

Introduction

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What is Priority Sort?

A participatory priority-ranking exercise

It can be used to:

- Define the scope of an evaluation
- Prioritize strategic planning goals
- Define a complex concept

What is Priority Sort?

- Priority Sort has small groups of stakeholders or “experts” rank-order specified items
- The outputs are:
 - a) comparative rankings:
 - b) rich qualitative data; and
 - c) engaged participants
- Priority Sort evolved out of Q Methodology

What is Q Methodology?

- It is a research method used in psychology and other social sciences to study people's "subjectivity"
- Q Methodology has been adapted and used in many fields
- The International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity (ISSSS): the official organization committed to all things Q: www.qmethod.org

Priority Sort Exercise

The Scenario

- You work at a small not-for-profit organization
- Management is overhauling the employee benefit package.
- Which benefits are most important to staff?
- This is just the beginning of the process.

Form Small Groups

- Form groups of 5-6
- Within each group, aim for a good mix of:
 - age
 - gender



Part 1: Rapid Sort

- Each benefit is printed on a recipe card
- With your small group, sort the cards into 5 categories:
 - 5 = More important
 - 1 = Less important
- Go with your initial impression (knee jerk reaction)
- Use a democratic process, move quickly
- You have 10 minutes

Part 2: Forced Sort

Now it gets more difficult...

- Refine your sort so that there are no more than 4 cards in each category
- Try to come to agreement about where each benefit should go
- Use blank cards to record any other important benefits (do not sort these)
- You have 25 minutes

Reflection

- How did the exercise feel to you?

What Happens Next?

- Large group discussion about:
 - New items
 - Items that generated a lot of discussion
 - Items where ratings differed substantially between groups
- Analysis of the rankings
- Analysis of the discussions
- Summary of findings
- Decision-making process
- Reporting back

Sample: Reporting Back

Important to most

- Paid stat holidays
- Health & dental
- Paid sick days
- Flex time
- Paid personal days
- Pension/RRSP

Important to some

- Working with other evaluators
- Supplementary EI
- Life insurance
- Telecommuting
- Disability insurance
- CES membership
- PD budget
- PD time

Examples

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Example: IP COMPASS



Example: IP COMPASS

- Self-assessment framework to help clinical sites consider their level of IPE preparedness
- To help clinical sites consider what they can do to enhance their preparedness to teach IPE.
- Constructs, factors and indicators generated as part of the study's first phase.
- Priority sort used to identify critical factors for IPE preparedness.

Example: Laying the Foundation for IP COMPASS

<u>Level of Specificity</u>		<u>Example</u>
1,000 Feet	8 Overarching Constructs from study	“Vision and Leadership”
500 Feet	General Themes (Factors)	Effective IPE champions are in place
100 Feet	Specific Sub-themes (Indicators)	IPE champions engage staff from all professions, including nursing and medicine, in IPE IPE champions gain and maintain senior leader support for IPE Etc.

Example #2

Goal

Help 2,500 women in their journey out of poverty

Activities

10 programs training in: trades & technology; self employment; employment

Short-term outcomes

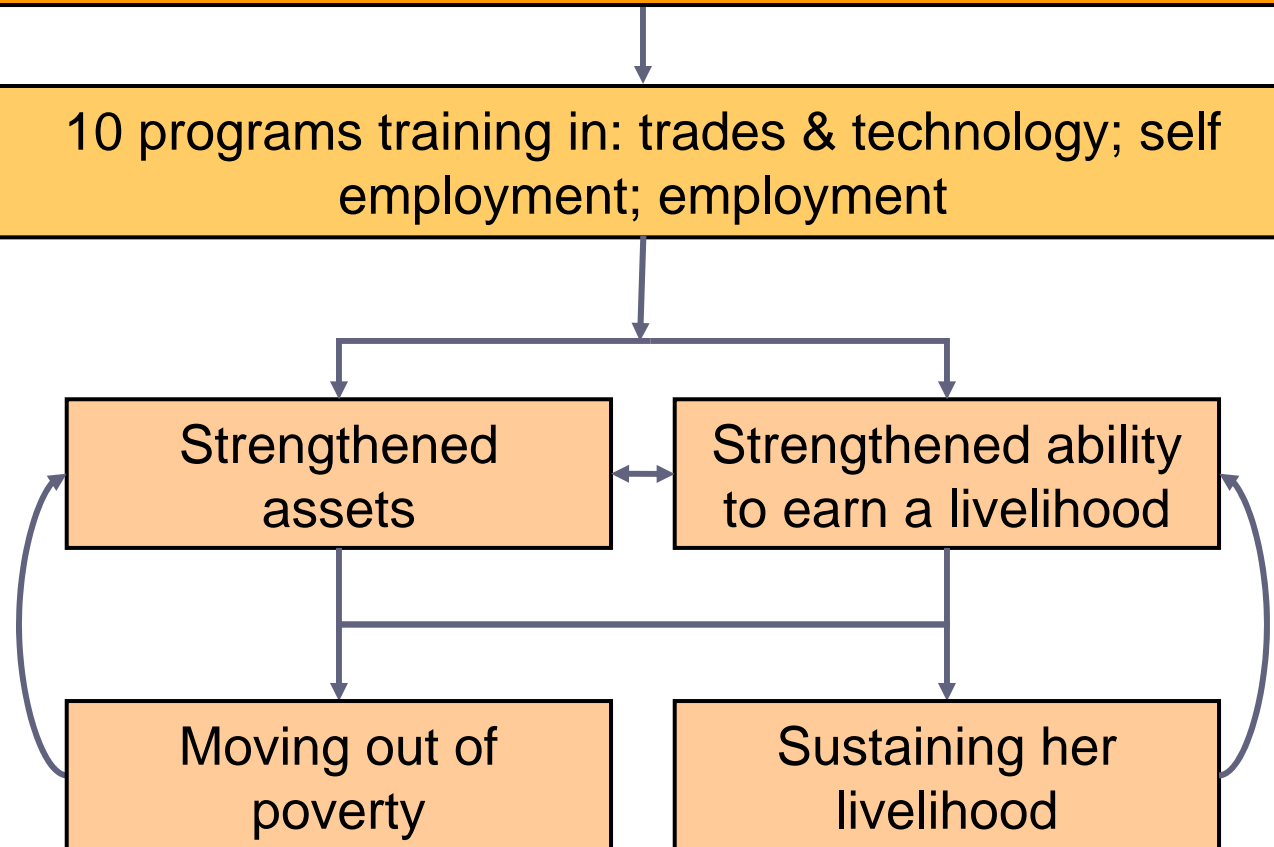
Strengthened assets

Strengthened ability to earn a livelihood

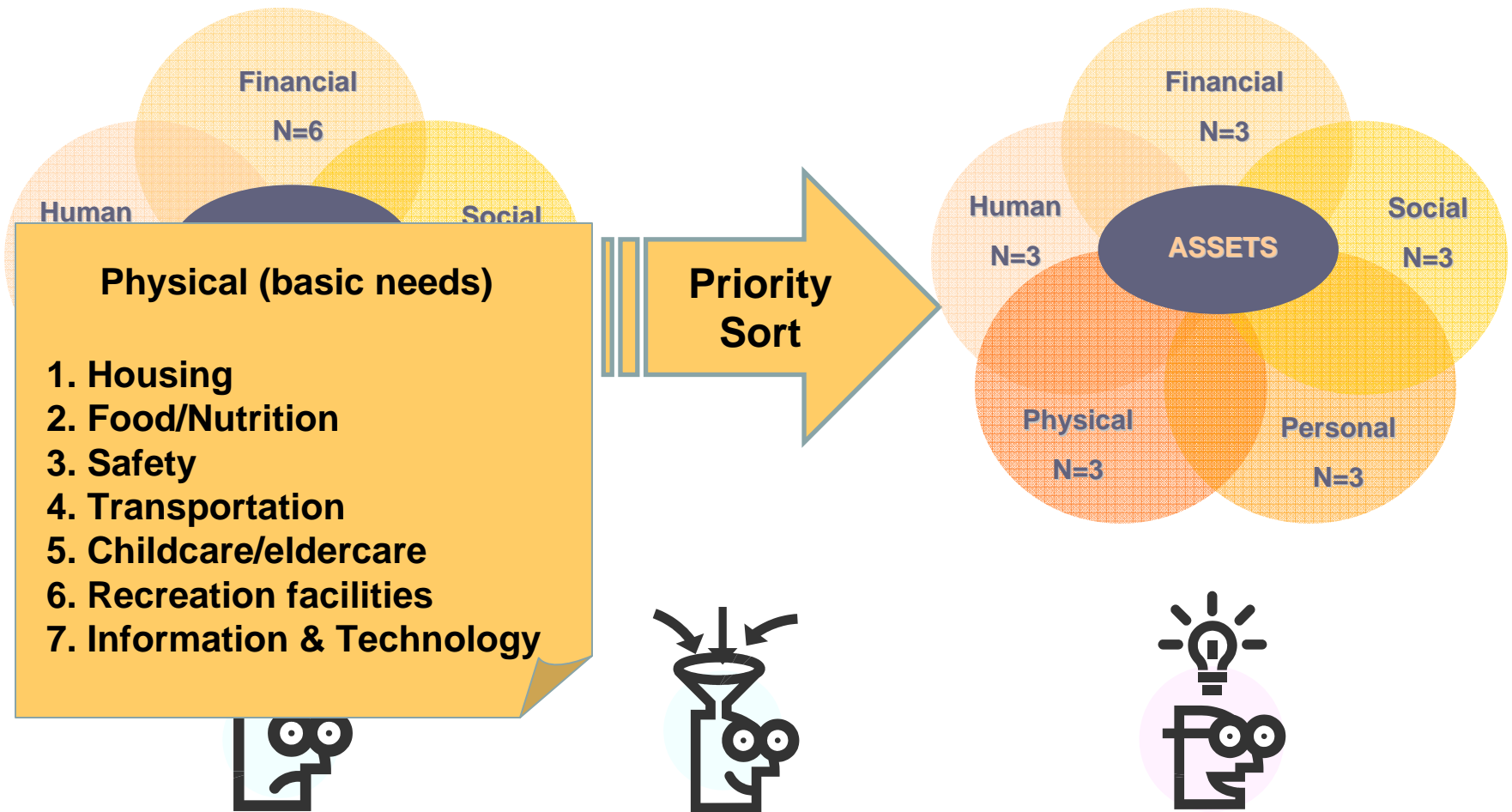
Long-term outcomes

Moving out of poverty

Sustaining her livelihood



Example #2



Reflection and Discussion

Reflection

- How can you imagine using this approach in your own practice?
- What factors would make this approach more or less useful?

Tips: Planning

- Prepare the items
 - At the right level (500-foot)
 - All at the same level
 - Not too abstract
- Get the right people:
 - In the room (topic expertise, vested interest, decisive)
 - At each table (mix of perspectives) → Seating plan

Tips: Managing Expectations

- Frame the activity within the context of the larger project
- Make sure people understand how the activity fits
- Clarify that the process informs decision-making, rather than being a decision-making process.

Tips: Implementation

- Do a dry run
- Provide a clear explanation of the process
- Keep to the time limits
- Have a trained facilitator at each table
- Have a trained note-taker at each table
- Acknowledge that it is difficult!
- Post relevant cues

Tips: Facilitation

- Manage group dynamics:
 - Make sure everyone has a chance to speak
 - Moderate anyone who is overpowering others
 - Deal with people's frustration
- Keep the group moving through the items
- Deal with any underlying issues that prevent progress

Tips: Analysis

- Remember this is a qualitative technique
- Look for:
 - items that were identified as important by any of the groups (rated 1 or 2)
 - Items where there was disagreement in ratings within groups
- Analyse the reasons that certain items are/aren't important
- Check that items are interpreted in a consistent way

Tips: Reporting

- Prepare different reports for different audiences
- Balance simplicity with thoroughness

Resources

- Package on website

<http://www.cathexisconsulting.ca/interesting/index.htm>

- Slide deck
- References on Q-Methodology
- Item card template
- Anchor sheets
- Note taker template
- Ranking compilation template
- Analysis template

Q & A

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