



COMING TOGETHER

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INTRODUCTION

WHY COME TOGETHER?

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an effect on our ability – and our desire – to get together. Its long-term effect could be huge with old meeting habits being broken, people becoming isolated from others, and everything that has held our communities together suddenly seeming beyond our reach.

Now might therefore be the time to ask ourselves: why come together?

The answers will vary from person to person but the most important thing is that we come together. It is the act of coming together that provides the energy, the questions, the knowledge, the creativity, the planning, the laughter. The next question is: how? In times like these, it is a practical question as much as anything; but it is also an opportunity to imagine: How do we want to come together? What do we want our activity to be? How can we learn lessons from this year of being unable to meet, in order to improve the whole experience of being together?

Coming Together is a guide that encourages us to consider these questions as we come together once again. It is a guide for individuals taking the reins in order to make a difference; a guide for well-established groups wanting to see things in a new light; a guide for organisations that have grown tired of old habits. It requires us to consider who we are, where we want to go, who we should involve, and how to involve those whom we aren't involving.

Why come together? How do we come together? They are one and the same.

USING THE GUIDE

A GUIDE FOR WHOM?

Everyone who wants to bring people together to maintain some aspect of society: whether it's to hold an activity for an organisation, a club or an association; to hold an event; or to create something. For individuals wanting to know where to start, and for old hands wanting to try something different.

TO DO WHAT?

To come together. To arrange an annual programme for an organisation, to imagine a brand new music festival or to hold an event for your village or community. Coming together to discuss another excuse to come together!

WHERE DO WE START?

The first step is to bring people together – one or two, or more if possible. Two conversations ideally, a week apart. Digitally, in person, or a combination of both. Choose people you know but consider inviting people you don't.

Why not ask where everybody would feel comfortable – do we need to meet in person this time or will the use of video conferencing software do for now? You can also use **Resource 3** to offer people support.

HOLDING SESSIONS

Follow the guide, step by step, across two sessions. Record your findings so that everybody can see them. You can do this on a white board or a flip chart, or digitally on applications such as Miro or Zoom's white board. And remember to be as accessible as possible.

You are welcome to use the Resources as you wish. They include templates, images and instructions to help you, to inspire you and to deepen your discussion. Please feel free to share these with others. This process is all about being open and imaginative.

This is the creative mind at work...

PART 1: KNOWING OURSELVES

BEFORE SESSION 1

WHO WILL WE BE?: Identify a group of individuals to take part in the discussion

One or more people to invite others to a conversation about establishing/resuming/reconsidering/organising

SESSION 1 (THE CORE CONVERSATION)

WHO ARE WE?: A session to establish the group's principles

1. KNOWING OURSELVES: What are our assets and history?

Who are the individuals who are present and what are our strengths?

What is our history as a group / community?

What are our meeting habits (which evening/how often/this is new)?

2. QUESTIONING: What specifically is making us meet right now, this year?

Which aspects of the activity do we enjoy?

What additional benefits do we get from being here?

What drew us here in the first place?

3. IMAGINING: What is the best thing we could do?

Note ideas and choose the most exciting ones (not the usual or the most realistic ones)

4. REFLECTING ON THE IDEAS AT HOME

Share our ideas with anyone who wasn't able to attend but who wanted to.

AFTER SESSION 1

CONTACT EVERYONE WHO WASN'T AT THE MEETING BUT WHO WE'D LIKE TO BE PART OF THE CONVERSATION:

Share the topics discussed by sharing the record

Ask 'would you like to join us in the second session?'

PART 2: KNOWING OUR AIM

SESSION 2 (A WEEK LATER)

WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO?: Imagine, decide and plan our activity

Look over our notes from Session 1: This is **WHO WE ARE?**

1. WHY ARE WE HERE?

Note everything that is important to us

Note everything that is important to others apart from us

Note everything that is important to the wider community

List everything that we'd like to make a difference to

Choose three things from the list and place them in order of priority

Reach a consensus: **Our aim this year is to _____**

2. WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO?

Using **Our aim this year is to _____** as a basis, let's imagine all the things that we could be doing (event(s), a programme of activities, a production)

Discuss which ideas suit our community (i.e. **WHO ARE WE?** from Session 1)

Identify the one(s) that we're most excited about

3. WHO?

START WITH OURSELVES: Identify who we've already got

What skills and resources do we have that we could build on?

How much time and energy have we got personally to give?

INVITE TO THE DOOR: Identify what else we need

Where are the gaps in our abilities and energy?

Are we in contact with any other people?

OPEN THE DOOR: How can we attract people who are new to us?

What is the message?

What do we want them to contribute?

ENSURE THAT OUR DOOR IS WIDE-OPEN: How can we be inclusive?

In our neighbourhood, are there people we're not reaching or who need us to reach them?

Whom is it easy to forget?

How can we welcome them?

KEEP THE DOOR OPEN: Ensure that the team remains sustainable

How do we choose and share responsibilities?

Do we have to stick to the traditional 'duties' (those of the Chair, Treasurer etc)?
How do we transfer responsibilities?

4. HOW AND WHERE?

Location: a building/outdoors/digitally/a combination?
If we come together in person, what are the benefits?
If we come together digitally, what are the benefits?

5. WHEN?

Decide on a date and a time that is mutually convenient by asking: how can we make things easier?
Create an implementation schedule, working back from our **Aim**

6. CHECK THE IDEA AT THE END

What is the idea?
Who will it make a difference to?
Are we excited about the idea?
Yes? **Let's do it!**