Visions, Actions and Partnerships (VAP)

2 to 4 hours

2 to 10 people

Low

RESOURCES REQUIRED

MATERIALS:
- Paper;
- Pencils;
- Tables;
- Chairs;
- Room; and
- Optional: computer, projector and screen to project the summary table

HUMAN RESOURCES:
A facilitator.

SUMMARY

"Visions, Actions and Partnerships" (VAP) is a planning tool that allows participants to express their personal vision, potential contributions and expectations of others, so as to define a common vision that incorporates the ideas and potential roles of all participants. This tool can also be used to identify additional stakeholders and partners who could be involved in a plan, project or roundtable.

Strengths ⬆
- Simple;
- Ensures that no individual(s) monopolize(s) the discussion and that everyone has an opportunity to speak.

Weaknesses ⬇
- Without a good record of individual contributions and effective follow-up with participants, the exercise could be manipulated and used to give greater weight to the positions of project proponents.

Information
Consultation
INVOLVEMENT
COLLABORATION
Empowerment

OBJECTIVES

This work method seeks to coordinate the actions of various individuals and/or organizations that could contribute to common goals. It also seeks to motivate these stakeholders by planning activities and supports that will contribute to the realization of their individual goals while also contributing to a shared vision.

WHEN TO USE

The VAP tool can be used to initiate the planning of a project or activity. It could also be an effective way to fine-tune or facilitate the integration of new partners in a project already under way. When inviting participants, one should consider all individuals and/or organizations that might be vital to or interested in participating in the activity. This tool can be used prior to the <u>Suivi des Engagements et des Attentes (SENAT)</u> tool and can be used to keep track of the partnerships and planned actions.

In Quebec, this tool could be used by watershed organizations, municipalities, regional roundtables on the St. Lawrence, regional environmental councils (CREs), priority intervention zones (ZIP) committees and Aboriginal communities. It is well-suited to small groups but could also be used with larger groups if they are divided into sub-groups.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Estimated preparation time: 2 to 3 hours

1- Recruiting participants
The organizers should begin by identifying the stakeholders affected by the analyzed issue, determine their interest and invite them to participate in an initial meeting. If it is not possible to bring all the stakeholders together at the same time, a summary table can be prepared on an ongoing basis by the facilitators, following meetings with smaller groups <u>(e.g., kitchen table meetings)</u>. Additional stakeholders may be identified during these meetings, and further meetings can be organized to get them involved.

2- Logistics
The organizers must reserve a room in which to meet, with enough chairs for all the participants. They must also provide paper and pencils for all the participants. If there are more than 10 participants, the group can be divided into subgroups, with the tables arranged accordingly.

ACTIVITY

1. Explanation
The facilitator welcomes the participants and explains the VAP process. The facilitator then elaborates on the topic that will be discussed (10 minutes).

2. Reflection
The facilitator invites the participants to reflect individually on a future scenario that would lead to the successful completion of their goals or projects. The facilitator invites the participants to answer the following questions.

Vision: What do you envisage?
Actions: How will you bring this vision to fruition?
Partnerships: Which individuals and/or organizations can help you realize your vision, and what could they do?

The participants should write their answers to these questions on paper (20 minutes).

ACTIVITY

3. Sharing of thoughts
After the reflection period, each participant will be asked to share his/her thoughts with the rest of the group. The responses noted on the sheets of paper could be posted on the wall for everyone to read, especially in the case of a large group divided into sub-groups (60 minutes).

4. Discussions
As a group, the participants discuss the various responses noted, with a view to identifying a common vision, actions to be implemented by group members, and partnerships needed outside the group. The group discussion will also highlight complementarities among the responses pertaining to actions and partnerships. The facilitator can summarize the responses in the following table format:

VISIONS	ACTIONS	PARTNERSHIPS
Description of the outcomes sought if everyone's goals could be fulfilled.	What we will do to contribute to the vision and/or influence partners who can also contribute. Indicate the stakeholders within the group who are willing to act as leaders.	Partnerships outside the group and what is expected of them.

If a large group is divided into subgroups, one person from each sub-group can present the subgroup's summary table in plenary, and the facilitators for the activity as a whole can prepare a final, combined summary.

AFTER THE ACTIVITY

The results obtained will be incorporated in a draft action plan and will eventually lead to commitments among the stakeholders in the group. The VAP tool also helps identify outside partnerships of which the group has expectations. The commitments made and the results of the actions taken can be tracked using the SENAT tool.

If an incremental approach is used (several meetings or the progressive involvement of stakeholders identified during prior meetings), a debriefing meeting should be organized or a summary table should be made available to share the final results with all participants.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Avoid developing a single vision statement of the kind often adopted by businesses. Consider the individual visions of each participant and how they could complement each other, so that each participant can achieve his/her timeline through the joint activity that will be planned;

- In the partnerships column, avoid listing partnerships without specifying the contribution sought; and

- Follow up on the actions that have been planned, through follow-up meetings, project management tools or the SENAT tool. Without follow-up, the participants may feel they are working for nothing and this could lead to frustration by creating expectations that are not addressed.

PAYS DE COCAGNE

The VAP method was used in November 2013 as part of the Pays de Cocagne Sustainable Development Group's (PCSDG) "From Land to Sea" project in New Brunswick. The purpose of the "From Land to Sea" watershed project is to facilitate understanding of the relationship between human activity in the Cocagne watershed and water quality in the tributaries, estuary and bay of the Cocagne River in New Brunswick, to see how their respective activities could complement each other to achieve this goal and to determine what else is needed.

A planning meeting attended by eight individuals representing coordinators, project partners and PCSDG partners (Department of the Environment, local governments, Moncton University, Southeastern Anglers Association, Plant Medic and the Shediac Bay Watershed Association) was held in November 2013. The participants began with an individual reflection (see photo below) and then shared their thoughts. An initial table was created at that time and later updated during a September 2014 meeting, before being summarized. The summary table is provided below, as an example.

Actions by PCSDG's "From Land to Sea" project, and partnerships sought to achieve a common vision regarding the Cocagne watershed

VISION	ACTIONS AS PART OF THE "FROM LAND TO SEA" PROJECT	PARTNERSHIPS SOUGHT (WITH STAKEHOLDERS OUTSIDE THE PRESENT GROUP TO ACHIEVE THE VISION)
• Access to nature; balance between nature, business, recreation, water use, residential, agriculture, aquaculture; • Ecological, terrestrial and aquatic integrity: biodiversity, water quality, fish (quantity, health), shellfish. Can harvest shellfish; can swim; • User-friendliness: places and opportunities to meet, diversified groups in terms of age and generations; • Availability of and access to local products; • Active and inclusive population (greater opportunities to get from place to place on foot or by bicycle; sailing, canoeing; kayaking); • Sustainable economic development: attractive to business and industry (enable community to be self-sufficient and ensure availability of jobs).	Expected deliverables from "From Land to Sea" project: • Watershed models (paper maps and interactive web map • Two developed sites that can serve as models • Opportunities for sharing and discussion Pays de Cocagne Sustainable Development Group (PCSDG): • Dialogue between stakeholders and coordinating body • Survey on special places • Provide documentation and maps already in the groups databases • 3D digital map • Lectures, workshops and activities during Les Cocagneries event Southeastern Anglers Association (SAA): • Promotion of beneficial management practices • Interactive Google map Plant Medic • Site development proposals for the marina site	agricultural producers, businesses and resource users: Stories, photos, sound practices and testimonials that could be incorporated in the watershed model Rural community: • Incorporate the knowledge generated by the project into the land use plan • Assess the available options, identify sensitive areas • Zoning and validation in consultation with all stakeholders • Environmental regulations • Public discussion on wishes, assets and strengths, with a view to defining avenues for development • Newcomer orientation policy • Definition of criteria for types of companies to attract • Island eco-park and park along river/shore, paths, playgrounds, parking areas for cars and bicycles • Regular local market • Lectures • Promote and update the existing map of recreational paths Amend existing legislation (provincial and federal) to reduce water pollution and ensure the ecological integrity of our area. It should also be noted that several local businesses and organizations and government departments already contribute to the vision through their activities.

CONTINUATION

This table was included in a presentation to the rural community to set out the expectations of project partners. The tool provides a simple representation of how the expected actions will complement the actions of the project partners in a way that contributes to the vision identified for the future. The table can be updated as new partners come on board. The table headings will be used by the group to prepare the annual report for the project. Since this exercise was carried out as part of a project that was already under way, the actions column first lists the project's expected actions and then addresses the roles and responsibilities of the organizations taking part in the project.

After the meeting, the partners who were present became more actively involved in the project which had, until that time, been implemented mainly by the coordinating body. The reflection exercise identified ways to involve the public (agricultural producers, businesses and resource users) in the project, as well as ways the rural community could use the project findings. It is hoped that the rural community will contribute to the vision expressed by the participating partners by providing input for a land use plan to be developed in the near future.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

CCC-CURA: http://www.defisdescommunautescotieres.org/.

Beaulieu, N., 2012. L'Outil "Visions, Actions, Partenariat" (VAP) pour la planification dans la gestion concertée de l'eau. Available online in French only at http://www.concert-eau.org/planification-suivi-et-evaluation-pour-la-mobilisa-tion-concertee/visions-actions-partenariats-vap.

Crofton, Fiona S., 2001. Sustainable Community Planning and Development: Participation Tools & Practices: Final Report. Ottawa: Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 134 p.

ROBVQ, Boîte à outils sur la participation citoyenne. Available online in French only at https://www.robvq.qc.ca/guides/consultation_publique.

The Coastal Communities Challenges—Community-University Research Alliance (CCC-CURA) comprises a group of partners and researchers concerned with issues pertaining to resilience and governance for coastal and riverside communities in the context of climate change.

The Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec (ROBVQ) comprises some 40 watershed organizations operating in Quebec. It is a key partner of the Quebec government in the development of watershed management measures.