



## Workshop Venue Guide

Choosing the right venue for your wellbeing consultation workshop is extremely important to ensure that you can run a successful event. Clearly, you will want to use an attractive space, but you need to give considerable thought to making sure you get one that is suitable. While venues may not be perfect, there are some criteria that do need to be met in order that the activities included in the workshop can take place as intended and that everyone can participate in them. You can consider the suitability of the venue against a number of factors. You need to ensure that the venue chosen is at least adequate in respect of each of the characteristics discussed and ideally that it is well suited to the workshop event and the likely participants attending.

### 1.0 Space

You need a space that is adequate for the numbers that you anticipate will attend. This may be similar to how many you would expect for a PPN or municipal district plenary meeting but may be more if you can communicate the significance of the event and attract more member groups to participate. It is important that everyone can move around comfortably. Remember that the workshop includes 3 distinct sessions; an initial presentation, the table-based asset mapping exercise, and the visioning exercise based around 6 stations spread around the walls of the room. (You may have multiples of 6 stations if you expect very large numbers and may need two or more rooms.)

This means that you will need to have space for adequate numbers of tables and chairs AND the space for groups to move around these at the edge of the room, travelling from station to station, with an option for some seating at each of the stations.

You need to consider people who may use wheelchairs or other walking aids and ensure that people will be able to move about in the space safely.

### 2.0 Display opportunities

The workshop requires considerable display area. This is primarily for the visioning exercise which involves 6 “stations” (corresponding to the different community wellbeing headings) that need to be spread out around the room. (see Fig. 1 below) The stations need to be separated from each other so that conversations can go on at each without interfering with groups at neighbouring stations. There are also some materials for display in the animation exercises when people arrive (see Fig. 2 below) and space will also be required for the workshop feedback sheets (see Fig. 3 below), although these may be located on the door or just outside if possible for people to complete as they leave out of sight of the facilitators.



Fig. 1 One of six “stations” in the Visioning exercise

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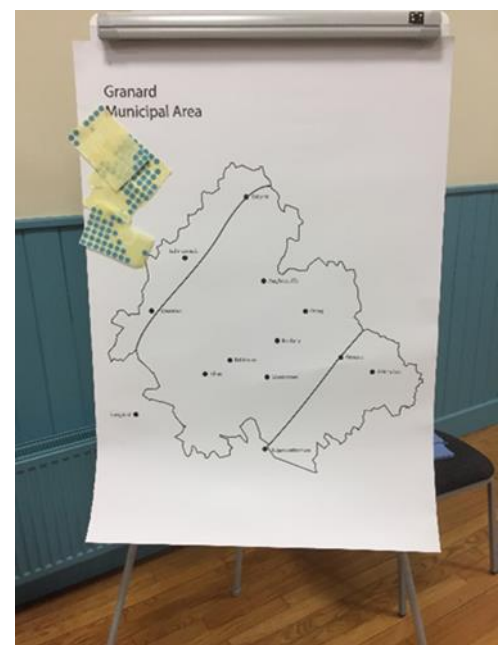


Fig. 2. “Where I live” animation exercise

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**Fig. 3. Workshop Feedback Sheets (located at/near exit)**



It is important that you establish whether it is acceptable to stick display materials to the walls with Blu Tac or some other method that is suitable to the materials you need to display and will not damage them. The venue may have display boards, in which case you need to check that they are large enough and that there are enough of them. Be clear with the venue about what is acceptable to them and what is not. The display areas have to be suitable, for example not over windows where light will shine through the materials and make them difficult to see and use.

### 3.0 Access

In order to attract member groups to participate it is vital that the venue is somewhere where everyone is comfortable to attend. Be aware of sensitivities within the community, or within groups in that community, and attempt to find as neutral and acceptable a venue as possible that provides the necessary space.

The accessibility of the venue is influenced by its location. Do people know where it is and can they reach it easily? This may mean different things in rural and urban areas, but you should give some thought to whether it is a suitable venue given the community (city/ county/

municipal district) you are trying to reach. Linked to this are questions about whether there is adequate parking, access by public transport, etc.

Importantly the venue should be fully accessible to those who want to attend the workshop. This means that it should be accessible to people using wheelchairs or other mobility aids. This applies both to the room(s) used for the workshop and to other venue facilities such as toilets.

**NOTE:** *It can be challenging for the PPN to address all the different needs of participants within the venue. To help with this by trying to identify what specific needs may need to be accommodated at the workshop, it is recommended that when member organisations are invited to attend you also include a request that they let you know about any particular needs they have, or ways in which you can assist them to participate fully.*

### 4.0 Sound

The majority of the workshop is made up of participatory exercises where there will be conversations within the groups at each table or station. This can create significant noise. More noise is generated when people are moving around, between stations or collecting refreshments. Too much noise can make it very difficult for people to participate either because it impairs their ability to hear, perhaps exacerbating existing hearing difficulties or increasing the challenge for people who are not working in their first language, and so forth.

The presence of soft furnishings such as curtains and carpets will usually help to absorb sound, but you should attempt to find out about the acoustics in the room(s), particularly when it is full of people.

If you have many people attending, it may be best to use more than one room and a multiple of the tables for the asset mapping and stations for the visioning exercise, so reducing the numbers and noise levels. Facilitators should always be conscious of the need to check that participants can hear, to speak up themselves and ask others to do likewise (or talk more slowly, etc.) where they observe that others are finding it hard to hear.



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Ultimately, keeping the noise to an acceptable level and maintaining effective communications is difficult with large groups of people all actively engaged in conversation around the exercises, but you should be aware of the challenges and do all you can to minimise them.

## 5.0 Lighting/ Sight

Having an adequate amount of light is critical so that those attending can see the materials and engage in the exercises.

It is possible that there are participants with visual impairments who may need additional support to fully take part. If you can identify these needs in advance this will allow you to find out what you can do to meet them (see *note under 3.0 above*). It may be that facilitators need specific guidance, or that large print sheets are provided. Give some thought as to how you can respond if such needs are present.

## 6.0 Equipment

Ideally set up the workshop with round tables in “cabaret style”, with the chairs set up facing towards the point where the initial presentation will be made. Tables should accommodate around 8 people, but numbers can successfully range from 6 to 10. Comfortable chairs are always good if that’s possible!! Square or rectangular tables can also be arranged in cabaret style (dotted about within the room).

These tables are then used for the asset mapping exercise. (see *Fig. 4 below and the Detailed Workshop Process resource material for details*)



**Fig. 4. Table for asset mapping exercise**

*Note that this venue did not have round tables, but the exercise worked satisfactorily without.*

It is helpful to have access to spare chairs and tables in case these are needed, and to allow for some chairs to be set up near the stations around the walls. This provides for people who may need to sit down during the visioning exercise, without having to move chairs away from the tables. Inevitably chairs will end up pulled all over the place. This is not a problem as long as they don’t present obstacles or hazards.

If necessary, you should investigate whether a microphone is available. This can be very useful, especially when large numbers are present, for the initial presentation and for the lead facilitator to use in giving instructions for the different exercises. Ideally this should be a “roving” microphone; not attached to a long cable. If it does use a cable, be aware of the hazard this creates and tape it to the floor or use other measures to prevent accidents.

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## 7.0 Refreshments

The workshop is quite long (2.5-3 hours) and refreshments are very important. They help to make participants comfortable, but also provide an energy boost. The Detailed Workshop Process resource material gives details about what is required for these and the timing of when they are provided during the workshop itself, but you need to check with the venue that they can provide appropriate refreshments at the required time, or that you can arrange for an external caterer to provide these.

It is also important that there is a supply of water and glasses throughout the evening. Check with the venue to see what they can provide or what arrangements you can make with them for the refreshments you need. Many PPNs have established traditions about what refreshments are served and when at meetings such as plenaries. The timing of when the refreshments are served at the workshop may be unusual and you need also to consider where these will be served from, and that there is adequate space, that will not interfere with the workshop exercises.

## 8.0 Setting Up

Always allow enough time to set up the venue completely well ahead of anyone arriving for the workshop. This is to allow you a chance to deal with any glitches or improvise if an unexpected situation arises, and so that it is possible to focus on the actual process of the workshop.

It is common that situations occur which require you to improvise in order to carry out the exercises in the workshop. As long as you try to meet the needs of all your participants and maintain the integrity of the workshop process, this is fine.

Investing in identifying the correct venue and getting the set up right will contribute hugely to the success of the workshop and the quality of the Vision that is developed.

