

GOVERNANCE

Phases I, II, and III



Activity: Catastrophizing

Goals

1. Understand how the program's current governance model (or decision making) works with unexpected issues
2. Understand if the model works well or has gaps
3. Identify and document issues that need to be solved

Prerequisites

None

Who Should Participate?

Current Governance participants, Community representatives

Length

60-90 minutes

Governance Definition

"A governance model describes the roles that project participants can take on and the process for strategic and tactical decision making within the project. In addition, it describes the ground rules for participation in the project and the processes for communicating and sharing within the project team and community."

- Ross Gardler and Gabriel Hanganu, [OSS Watch Governance Models](#)

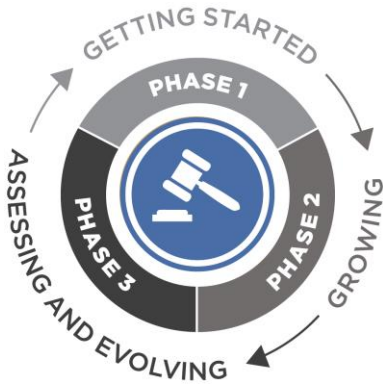
In simpler terms – it can be considered "how decisions get made."

Activity Instructions

1. Brainstorm a list of "catastrophes" that would have a significant impact on your program's ability to fulfill its mission (could impact governance, technology, community, or resources).
2. Prioritize list of catastrophes
3. For the top 2-3, discuss the response to catastrophes within the current governance structure. You don't need to solve the catastrophe; you just need to know who would decide how to solve the problem.
4. Identify gaps
5. Identify issues that may be causing these gaps
6. Consider if the current governance structure needs to be modified to better address gaps
7. Document governance policies or decision-making process as necessary
 - a. If this process has surfaced decision making processes that are not clear or documented, take the opportunity to document them.

Outputs

- A shared sense of potential gaps in current governance
- A shared sense of potential problems that can be used for future activities



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Facilitator Guide

- Facilitate the group in brainstorming a list of “catastrophes” that would have a significant impact on your program’s ability to fulfill its mission.
- During the brainstorming, there are no “wrong” answers. The suggestions can be outlandish. They may be fiscal or technical disasters. The idea is to understand how governance responds and handles the catastrophe and helps identify gaps in the model.
- If no immediate suggestions are given, you can “seed” they discussion with examples (or categories of examples) such as:
 - What if a key person (program director; board chair) won the lottery and moved to Tahiti?
 - What if a key element of your technology stack was discontinued?
 - What if a pivotal partner organization dissolved or stepped away?
- Make sure to encourage broad suggestions from the entire group.
- One way to prioritize (in person) is to use a sticker vote. In a sticker vote, each participant is assigned a number of stickers - these can be physical stickers in an in-person event or a specified piece of text (e.g., +1) in a virtual environment. Participants place their stickers or text alongside the options they’re voting for, according to the parameters of the exercise (e.g., most important, most likely, most interesting, etc.).
- Help participants move through the discussion and highlight the potential gaps in their current governance. This can set up next steps of how to address those gaps.

Potential Considerations

1. Why do some catastrophes resonate more than others?
2. Are some issues more emotional?
3. Is there a theme in the gaps (e.g., lack of partners, resources, etc.)

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Activity adapted from: Kaner, Sam, and Lenny Lind. 2007. Facilitator’s guide to participatory decision-making. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons/Jossey-Bass.