



The clever man will tell you what he knows.
He may even try to explain it to you.
The wise man encourages you to discover it for yourself.

Reg Revans

DESIGN YOUR COOP STRATEGY

Welcome to Step Two !

So, now that you have selected a project idea, let's discover how to pass from the idea to the action. That is the essence of **strategy**.

Through this second step you will guide participants to put themselves in their clients' or beneficiaries' shoes and design their strategy starting from their real needs and aspirations.

The objectives of step 2 are:

- To research and analyse the needs and aspirations of your potential beneficiaries (you can call them also target or clients).
- To reflect on how worker and social cooperatives tackle harsh problems and respond to urgent needs in their communities.
- To design collectively your project proposals based on your real-world discoveries.

We propose to you the following activities and resources (but, as always, remember: you can adapt this journey to your needs!)

A. The starting point: the people and their needs ! (60 min)

In step 1 you stated in a general way the needs and opportunities that your project would like to address: these are your hypothesis about them, i.e. what you think these needs and opportunities are, how you imagine people perceive them and what you figure that people do about them.

Now let's deepen a bit on your hypothesis and put them on a paper to make them clearer and more explicit.



USER'S GUIDE



We propose you two powerful visual design tools:

- a. **Situation tool** will help you to take into account important issues about the problems, needs and aspirations you want to tackle (STEP 2 – TFS 1 – Situation tool).
- b. **People tool** will help you focus on your potential beneficiaries and clients. First of all, who are they? And then, what do they think and what do they do about the needs and aspirations you want to address? (STEP 2 – TFS 2 – People tool).

Here it is how the process goes:

Set clearly your initial hypothesis

Print the templates (possibly in a big format like A1 or A2) and stick them on the classroom wall. Start with Situation tool.

Situation tools ask you to respond to 4 questions:

1. What do we know about the situation? When does it occur? Where, in which context, why? To who? How?
2. What shall we explore more in depth about the situation?
3. What are the problems and needs associated to the situation? How does it affect people? Which are the characteristics people experimenting the same situation share?
4. What are the opportunities and threats associated to the situation?

We suggest you to divide the class in different working groups:

- each one focus on some specific questions of the tool and try to respond to the questions asked in a synthetic and clear way
- each group write its ideas on post-it and stick them on the template (one post-it = one idea).
- Then the whole team reviews the entire templates and discuss the different ideas generated. Try to be very specific in the discussion: group similar ideas and select only the ones that the team decides are the most important, in order to reach a maximum of 3-4 ideas for each box. The goal is to identify clearly and explicitly the most important insights and hypotheses, in order to check the whole coherence of the situation and the full picture of the people involved in it.

Then pass to People Tool.

People tool focuses on the people that you assume are experiencing the specific situation. It is important to imagine and name a specific person, even if he/she is not real, that represents the ideal archetype of the people your project will direct to. You should answer to the following questions related to the context of the situation:

What do they think and how do they feel about the situation? It is important to





express it in the same words people would use to, to empathise and speak with their own words.

1. What do they do in relation to it? What would they like to improve, change, eliminate about it?
2. Who do they listen to? How can we reach them with our project? Where and when?
3. Gains and Pains: What do they really like and dislike about the situation? What elements would potentiate their gains and reduce their pains?

Again, we suggest you to divide the class in different groups (switching the members of the previous groups) and follow the same process described above:

- each group focus on some specific questions of the tool and try to respond to the questions asked in a synthetic and clear way
- each group write its ideas on post-it and stick them on the template (one post-it = one idea).
- Then the whole team reviews the entire templates and discuss the different ideas generated, in order to reach a maximum of 3-4 ideas for each box.

Warning : In the next sections we will propose you some optional activities. You might not have the time and opportunity to do it with your team. If you do, we warmly suggest you to carry it out, since it is a relevant learning experience.

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B. Go out and interview potential beneficiaries /clients to test your hypothesis in the real world (30 min) (optional activity)

Interviews are a powerful action-learning activity that makes the team go out of the classroom and deal with real people. Once participants start investigating the reality of the situation and the needs and aspirations perceived by people, they usually get surprised about how much they learn and how much they differ from their initial ideas.

Thus, it is an interesting experience for the team to contact at least 5 potential beneficiaries and clients and talk to them to get their feedbacks and their views about how they are framing their project.

We suggest you this simple framework to work with the team on the things they want to learn and how they are going to ask the questions, i.e. the goal of the question and their formulation. ([STEP 2 – TFS 3 – Interview template](#)).

Give a print of the tool to each group and make the team work in groups on elaborating possible questions. Then have a group discussion to select the 5 to 8 questions that they consider are the most relevant.

Ready? So let's go out of the room and talk with real people!

Warning: it is important that participants take notes about the answers at the end of the interviews (and not during them!) so that they can keep a record of the main points.

C. Bring it all back to classroom (30 min) (optional activity)

Once the team has carried out the interviews, you shall have a short debriefing session in order to share and check the information, insights and findings.

First, group all the answers together under their corresponding question, then analyse and discuss them with the group to get the main 2-3 big ideas for each question.

Now you may check again with participants their/your Situation and People templates: what about the initial assumptions you made? Did they get confirmed? Did they change? Are there new things to add?

Usually they change more than a little. If so, do not worry, just remove, change or add the information in order to get a more accurate and validated picture of your potential beneficiaries and clients.





D. How do worker and social coops respond to people's needs? (30 min)

The objective of enterprises is to provide services and products that respond to market and people's needs in order to get money in exchange for them. That is why is important to accurately investigate them if you are willing to create your entrepreneurial project.

Worker and social cooperatives are special enterprises created to satisfy the needs and aspirations of their members who share specific values (as you saw in Step 1) and are moved and inspired by a set of different motivations. However, like any other enterprise, cooperatives must be economically viable and satisfy the market needs.

Worker cooperatives contain the following basic features:

- The power is in the hands of workers, who democratically decide about the business strategy and share risks and responsibilities. In a worker co-operative, the majority of the workers are members and vice versa.
- They have the objective of creating and maintaining sustainable jobs and generating wealth for their members, in order to improve the worker-members' quality of life, dignify human work, allow workers' democratic self-management and promote community and local development.
- The free and voluntary membership of their members, in order to contribute with their personal work and economic resources, is conditioned by the existence of workplaces.

If you want to know more about worker cooperatives, take a look to the International Standards of Worker Coops [here](#).

In this document (**STEP 2 – FOCUS POINT 1- Good reasons to coop**) you will find a brief explanation of these features and motivations and some real examples from different countries about how they are concretely brought to every day's practice. Then you can attempt answering the question at the end of the focus point and see how your good reasons match with your ambitions and priorities.

It's important to know that there is also a different kind of cooperative enterprise, where the workers can be members and co-owners: social cooperatives.

Social cooperatives are specifically aimed to serve the community needs, through social, educational and environmental services. Some of them are specialised in the reintegration, through work, of disadvantaged and marginalised workers (people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, ex-prisoners, addicts etc). In a social cooperative, the decisions are taken by members who can be the workers but also the users or other community actors (i.e. local authorities, associations, etc).

Want to discover more about this topic? See the world standards of social cooperatives [here](#).





E. Design your proposal from people's needs and aspirations (60 min)

So, now that you have a clear picture of what your future clients want and value, let's design your service or product proposal.

Again, we provide you a visual design tool that can help in designing the whole model (**STEP 2 – TFS 4 – Coop Canvas**) that you can print in a big format (we suggest A1 or A0) and stick to the classroom wall.

First of all, you should write on the top of the Canvas the purpose of your project: it is a good idea not to lose sight of the overall objective of your efforts. You have already worked on the purpose in Step 1, so just have a look at your notes and copy and paste!

In order to properly fulfil the Coop Canvas and design your strategy you need to go through the 6 blocks that constitute it. We suggest you first to explain the whole Canvas and its elements to the team: then you can divide the team in smaller groups of 3-4 persons and assign to each group one block to work on. Once every group has made its contributions on the relevant block, the whole team reviews and refines the whole COOP CANVAS to check its consistency.

Here we propose to you some questions referred to each block:

- 1. Clients/ Beneficiaries:** to whom specifically is your project directed? Do you want a tip? Who did you interview in the previous activity? Which characteristics are common to all the people you want to address? Try to be as much specific as possible.
- 2. Needs and aspirations:** Which specific needs and aspirations of your clients/ beneficiaries are you willing to solve? Again, if you carried out the interviews in the previous activity you probably have already a clear vision about these needs and aspirations.
- 3. Solution:** how will you respond to the needs or fulfil the aspirations of clients/ beneficiaries? What do you propose? Can you express it in one or two simple statements?
- 4. Channel:** how will you be able to reach your clients/beneficiaries with your products and services? How will they get aware of what you offer? How and what will you communicate to them?
- 5. Costs structure:** how much will your project cost? How much money is needed to start and run the project?
- 5. Revenue structure:** how will the project be sustained? Will people pay for products and services? Will you look for donors and funds? How and where?





F. Focus on the economic and financial plan of your coop-working project (optional activity) (30 min)

Depending on the coop-working project that your team chose, the economic and financial planning might be more or less relevant for its execution. Hence we provide you a simple template to estimate (STEP 2 - [TFS 5- Financial Plan](#)):

- The needs for initial investments.
- The capital the group can gather thanks to the members' contributions to the project and /or thanks to donations and sponsorships.
- The costs that the projects will generate during its functioning.
- The incomes that it will generate both by offering services or products and thanks to voluntarily contributions and donations from people who are willing to support it.

We provide you the example of Music Coop project in order to facilitate the understanding of this easy tool. We suggest you to keep the estimations simple in order to encompass all the variables to take into account without going too much into details, since the economic elements usually are not so relevant at this stage and in this kind of coop working experiences.

What did we learn? (20 min)

Here you are an interactive quiz to test participants' learning about the topics covered in step 2. It is fun and interactive!

And a resume of the main learning points of step 2 to help you keep on track during the journey.





Abstract...

TIME	CONTENT	ACTIVITY - METHODOLOGY	RESOURCES	MATERIALS	SKILLS DEVELOPED	COOP PRINCIPLES RELATED
60'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set clearly your initial hypothesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in different groups Group review and discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STEP 2 – TFS 1 – Situation tool STEP 2 – TFS 2 – People tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print TSF 1 and 2 (possibly in A2-A1 format) Post its Markers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytical skills Empathy Observations skills Creativity Negotiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern for community Education, Training and Development
30'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (OPTIONAL) Interview potential beneficiaries / clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in groups Group discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STEP 2 – TFS 3 – Interview template 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print TFS 3 (one per group) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Writing skills Active listening Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern for community Education, Training and Development
30'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (OPCIONAL) Bring it back to classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in groups Group discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STEP 2 – TFS 1 – Situation tool STEP 2 – TFS 2 – People tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post its Markers White Canvas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytical skills Information processing Negotiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern for community Education, Training and Development
30'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do worker and social coops respond to people's needs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposition, Lecture Group discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STEP 2 – FOCUS POINT 1 - Good reasons to coop 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All the seven principles
60'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design your coop-working proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STEP 2 – TFS 4 – Coop Canvas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print TFS 4 (in A1 or A2 format) Post its White Canvases Markers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empathy Creativity Problem Solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern for community Democracy Members' economic participation
30'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (OPCIONAL) Focus on the economic and financial plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group work and discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STEP 2 – TFS 5 – Financial Plan 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic Maths Economic planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autonomy and Independence Members' economic participation
20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did we learn? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group reflection Coop-game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annexe 6 – Resume of learning points Interactive quiz - webpage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internet connection 		

Total time 170'

Total time (with optional activities) 260't

