Backbone Support Team – Profile Descriptions

This is part of a series of Guidance notes designed to assist users of the Effective Collaborative Action methodology. You can find the **full methodology here**

This Guidance note provides principles, profiles, and example terms of references for a Backbone Support Team to be able to fulfil their role as guardians of a collaborative effort.

Introduction

It is important to resource our Backbone Support teams based on the needs and desired outcomes of the collaborative action you are taking. The number of team members depends on the needs and funding of the engagement: it could be 1 or 2 people covering many roles, or several people doing discreet roles. However, experience tells us that it is better to have a team of people that bring different profiles and networks.

Below are profile descriptions that can be used as a basis for writing a job description or terms of reference, and links to example Terms of References from UNDP Green Commodities Programme's prior experience.

Overarching Principles for Recruiting

- Search out and strongly encourage women and BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of colour) candidates to apply to ensure we are actively promoting equity, diversity and inclusion.

- Thoughtfully select what candidate qualities are required and what are desirable. This is to ensure you get a good range of applicants. For example, a communications or facilitation role does not need to have technical competence in the commodity or agriculture, it is only a desired addition.

- Position the fee / salary scales in line with their counter parts. Often within the public and not-for-profit sector they cannot pay the same as the private sector, but try to get the best people you can, especially for the leadership roles.

- All Backbone Support team members are role models of the essential practices, so include these competencies in all the terms of reference: experience with

systems leadership, competent at working with power, training in working through conflict, proven highly effective communication and listening skills.

- All Backbone support team members are also process guardians, deeply committed to the effort and process and support the learning and transformation of everyone involved.

- In the Covid-19 era it has become essential to have the ability to communicate and interact virtually. Include these skills in the terms of reference.

Profile Descriptions to Adapt

LEADERSHIP

- Proactive contributor to decision-making and willingness to fully share responsibility for all decisions taken

- Good understanding of how to lead negotiations within complex situations, with several different stakeholders to deliver a desirable outcome

- Ability to apply systems thinking to challenges and opportunities and for strategic development

- Ability to externally represent the project accurately and inspire commitment towards a wide range of stakeholders, including top-level executives as well as mid-level core supporters/opponents

- Able to work with and manage change effectively

- Well-developed personal strategies for time and complex process management

- Has multiple experiences of working in different political and cultural contexts and the commitment to adapt the processes to the current context

- Proven track record of effectively inspiring & managing others (possibly a team of people) to achieve desired results

PROJECT COORDINATION

- Honestly cares about other peoples' needs and opinions, and can listen deeply to their concerns and wishes.

- Is an excellent relationship builder, and has proven experience developing trusting and long-lasting professional networks.

- Has proven excellent communication skills, both in presenting, speaking, pitching and listening.

- Has an entrepreneurial, self-motivating and positive attitude to work and life.

- Is a fast and keen learner, who understands when to balance pushing forward and when to have patience with the process.

- Participated in training on collaborative and systemic leadership styles with ability to apply learning.

- Solutions focused

- Ability to create shared solutions from differing opinions

- Is comfortable using the internet, office software, conference calling facilities, and online meeting solutions

- Is fluent in <insert local language(s)> and English (oral, written, reading)

Desired

- Knowledge and experience working with supply chains in sustainable agricultural commodities and/or Food Systems.

- Knowledge and experience working with ＿＿＿ (insert relevant commodities or ＿＿ approaches).

- Previous experience working in ＿＿＿ (location/country)

- Fluency in other languages (insert as relevant)

FACILITATION

Please see separate guidance for this role.

COMMUNICATIONS

Required

- A minimum of 5 years of work experience in communications and/or public relations, or media, especially on subjects related to development and environment in multi-stakeholder settings.

- Experience working in partnerships, multi-stakeholder initiatives

- Strong creative and writing skills, with the ability to translate complex concepts into easy-to-understand communications content

- Experience with online communication and good web, IT, social media skills

- Fluency in written and spoken English

- A solid knowledge of and experience with working effectively with the media

Desired

- Experience creating content / using video

- Existing network with national / local media

- Enjoys brand development

- Experience working with digital communications

POLITICAL LOBBYING/NETWORKING

- Understanding how to influence shifts in decision making and political positioning

- Understanding how the power structures in the commodity and in the country work

- Analytical and problem-solving skills, with a proactive approach to finding and proposing solutions to challenges

- Existing network within the relevant sector(s) and landscapes

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Works and plays well with others

- Good collaboration skills across cultures and hierarchies

- Can work across a matrix organizational structure and get work done

- Can influence where they have no direct power

- Ability to nurture effective relationships virtually / at a distance

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

- Works and plays well with others

- Experience working inside the private sector internationally or nationally

- Familiar with the commercial and business language to create business cases

- Knowledge and experience working with supply chains in sustainable agricultural commodities and/or Food System

- Strong existing network with the local private sector

EVENT ORGANIZING / ONLINE COLLABORATION

- Experience with event coordination, online and in person

- Excellent organizational skills

- Experience with virtual tools for collaboration

- Keep things on track and good at record keeping

- Experience of working in different political and cultural contexts

LOGISTICS & ADMINISTRATION

- Experience with knowledge management

- Experience managing budgets and finance

- Knows the value of order and organization and effectively brings this to the initiative

- Supportive and helpful attitude

- Takes initiative and is creative to get things done

- Cares about procedures

Examples

Communications Officer in Papua New Guinea on palm oil

Communications Manager in Mongolia in cashmere.

Mongolia Sustainable Cashmere Platform – National Project Manager

Liberia Palm Oil Platform – Platform Manager

Indonesia Sustainable Palm Oil Platform Coordinator (FOKSBI)