axis of influence series:

Voice ©

It's all about influence ....

Who it is for...

People who are a part of, or working with, community groups, community networks, tenant & resident groups, patient groups, forums .. in fact pretty well any type of organisation in the voluntary or community sector wanting to influence public agencies, social landlords, statutory agencies, partnerships!

You can use **Voice** to look at a part of a group's work or everything that it does!

What it can do ...

✓ prompt discussion and debate – about aims and structures

✓ monitor and evaluate influence and impact on the decisions made by public agencies

✓ identify a group's capacity to influence

✓ identify what is needed in order to be more influential

✓ identify external factors which affect how influential a group is

✓ increase motivation and optimism about the group and its purpose

✓ help people to understand the local political landscape

✓ help people to see how their issues link with those of others

✓ help people to see the value of building trust and relationships to increase influence

✓ help groups to action plan for development and influence

Voice

Can help groups to work together better, work out how influential they are and plan what to do to become more influential!

I like the flexibility – you can move in any direction, up, down, across – Voice recognises that community groups aren't in a place where they stay
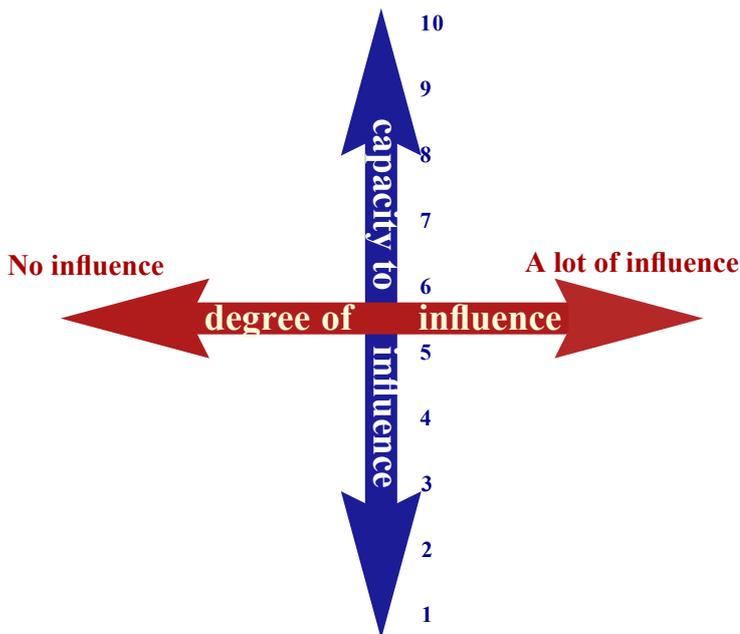

Who could use it?

Neighbourhood planning groups

Patient forums

Community networks

Refugee networks

Tenants & residents groups

Housing Association Scrutiny panels

Development Trusts

Parish Councillors

Expert panels

Voluntary sector organisations

Community-led planning groups

... and more

for communities who want to increase their influence

This is Voice

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

capacity to influence

No influence — degree of   influence — A lot of influence

The vertical (blue) axis:

10 systematic steps help groups to discuss and mark their current capacity to influence

They work through each step at a time, using a series of questions.

Often people get to talk about things they have never discussed before and ask the questions that they never dared.

The idea is to put a cross on the vertical axis, by the Step that suits the group the most.

The horizontal (red) axis

Asks everyone to say how influential they feel the group is

This naturally leads people to explore why they feel like that: do you feel your group is very influential because it has had a lot of successes? Do you feel it is not very influential because you are not very clear about what you are trying to achieve?

Voice then encourages groups to bring all this information together, plot where they think they are and plan some actions to get there!

- -

How you can connect with Voice - *what **changes** can offer .....*

The Taster - Voice introduction and overview
This is a a half day presentation with participative exercises. It offers a brief outline of
Voice for those who :

- May have heard about Voice and want to know more
- Want to 'have a go'
- Want to champion Voice within your own organisation
- Understand how Voice and echo* interact

Voice work with groups - Facilitated Voice session/s with groups
Typically this is a full day with members of a community group, community network or voluntary sector organisation. Participants work through Voice together, in facilitated discussion to develop an initial action plan to increase their influence

Voice Facilitator Training
This is a 2-day course where people who already have facilitation skills and who already work with groups learn about Voice and how to deliver it. The 2 day course is complemented by a comprehensive resource pack.

Once they start working with Voice, people find all sorts of surprising ways it can help them:

- A trainer has used it to frame a whole programme of course work
- A couple of organisations are working with Voice to help them attain particular 'Standards'
- Different groups are using it to help them work more collaboratively
- Groups are using it as an evaluation tool
- Organisations have used it to consider the training needs of a voluntary sector Board or management committee
- It has been used to frame funding applications

* echo is a sister resource - a framework for public sector agencies to use to assess how open and responsive they are to community influence. Our experience suggests that Voice and echo definitely go together