



SCHOOL for
THINKTANKERS

STUDY
GROUP
TASKS

On Think Tanks

STUDY GROUP TASKS

DESCRIPTION

Participants should choose the task they are interested in completing (please answer this form to do so, deadline 21 January). We will then group participants based on the chosen tasks and time zones and let each of you know how you've been grouped.

The tasks are voluntary but are an interesting part of the school which will let you explore an issue in more depth and engage with peers at a deeper level, therefore we encourage all participants to complete them.

To complete the tasks participants should use school materials, explore each other's organisations, ask trainers or their peers, and/or identify best practice from other thinktanks (you can use the Open Think Tank Directory to identify organisations)

TASKS

Governance and management

Identify an organisation and provide a critical description of:

- It's board highlighting its strengths and weaknesses and how it could be strengthened further.
- The research team and line-management arrangements, and how it could be improved.

Policy relevant research

Draft or refresh an organisation's Research Agenda. For this exercise, the agenda must have the following areas:

1. Organisational description. Include its mission, description (what type of organisation is it, and value proposition) core activities and strengths in policy, and any other relevant aspect.
2. Contextual analysis. Start with a brief background, diagnosis or description conveys why a think tank decides to concentrate in certain topics. Then consider the work of your organisation (or program) and identify at least three factors of your context that can help your research agenda, and at least three that can hinder or limit it. Remember to think across levels and consider exogenous, endogenous, and mixed factors. You can also use the questions on Reflection Box 4- Module 2 to help you tease out the context. For one of these factors, consider how you could either maximize its positive impact, or reduced its negative impact on your agenda.
3. Research priorities. List and describe the research priorities that your organisations focuses on. Try to link the priorities to the analysis of the context.

Communications

Pick a piece of research for which a large report has been produced (but does not have a policy brief). Then, do the following:

- Develop an executive summary. Remember that an executive summary for a policy brief should be no more than 300 words – shorter if possible.
- Write three recommendations or implications emanating from the research. Remember to be as specific as possible and include 'entry points' for action if you can.

- Start the process of writing a communications strategy for this policy brief by defining your audiences, communications objectives and key messages.

Finance and fundraising

Identify an organisation and using the table 7 from your background document reflect and determine what strategies you could use to re-think its funding model. First select one or all of the avenues of change identified: Re-structure, invest in fundraising, develop income generation activities and tap into local resources. Then answer the pertinent key questions for it and develop specific strategies to undertake it.

Monitoring evaluation and learning

Prepare a basic MEL strategy document for a programme or project of your choosing. We suggest the following components to guide this effort (but understand that it needs to be adapted to the organisation and specifics of the project):

1. The purpose of your MEL strategy: drivers why do you want to do MEL in your organisation?
2. The level at which your MEL strategy is focused and why: organisational, programme, or project (see forum) and a brief description of it.
3. The key policy influence goals/desired changes related to this level.
4. Identification of the policy influence strategies, outputs and outcomes related to those goals/changes.
5. Key questions that you have for monitoring and evaluating policy influence of the strategies, outputs and outcomes .
6. Indicators and methods / data sources you will use to identify the answers to your key questions.