Strategic Options Development & Analysis (SODA) (2 days)

A methodology for exploring creative and consensual solutions to complex organisational challenges

What is this course about?

In the organisational environment, we are increasingly faced with complex and messy problems that require the identification and negotiation of creative, politically feasible and agreed solutions. Strategic Options Development and Analysis (SODA) is an approach to team analysis and decision-making designed to support groups to examine the options and associated ramifications of different ways of resolving a problematic situation they are facing. SODA explores how different members of a group understand and define the problematic situation in their own terms and places emphasis on ensuring the ownership of the group of the situation and its workable resolution. SODA can be applied to situations ranging from day-to-day operational concerns to longer-term strategic organisational challenges.

This course provides you with a practical introduction to SODA, its theoretical basis and real-world use. It provides you with the skills necessary to facilitate and guide a SODA intervention either from within an organisation or as an external consultant or facilitator. This course focuses on the management of both the process and content of a SODA intervention: From the capturing of the multiple perspectives that frequently exist concerning the specific challenge a team is seeking to address, through to the structuring and analysis of the options available for its resolution. Finally, this course highlights the potential challenges associated with the successful use of SODA and provides hints and tips for how to get the very best out of its use.

Who should attend?

Leaders, managers and staff of non-profit organisations responsible for or involved in organisational development, in particular:

- Executive directors
- Senior and middle management
- Staff responsible for leading or supporting organisational development
- Consultants supporting the resolution of complex organisational challenges

What will I learn?

After this course, you will be able to:

- Explain the important role of power and politics within the context of organisational decision-making, development and change
- Describe the main concepts and underlying principles of SODA
- Design a SODA intervention that is appropriate to the complexity of the problematic situation being addressed and within the constraints of the organisation’s context
- Understand the role and function of a facilitator in a SODA intervention, recognising the importance of individuality, subjectivity and ownership to the identification, analysis, option generation and negotiation of creative solutions to complex and messy organisational challenges
- Use cognitive mapping to construct detailed representations of individual understanding and analysis of an issue, supported by the application of clean language interview techniques
- Plan, manage and guide an oval mapping session or workshop to facilitate group problem identification and examination
- Facilitate and guide group problem analysis and option generation through the creation of causal maps based on the aggregation of individual cognitive maps and/or structuring of oval mapping brainstorming
- Facilitate the negotiation of sustainable consensus-based solutions accompanied by plans of action

**Course Approach**

Emphasis is placed on “action learning” and this course features presentations, structured learning experiences, facilitated discussions, individual and group activities.