Group Training Exercise: Newcomer Housing Funding Allocation Simulation

Objective:

This exercise simulates funding allocation for newcomer housing, integrating budgeting, prioritization, stakeholder engagement, and risk assessment. Participants apply theory to practice, enhancing critical thinking, collaboration, and decision-making skills crucial for funding newcomer housing projects.

Participants:

Designed for housing staff leaders, this exercise involves cross-team collaboration, regular meetings, integrated planning, clear communication, stakeholder engagement training, and feedback mechanisms. While each agency is structured differently, aim to include team members in various roles, such as: development and grant writing, intensive case management, reception and placement, and job placement or financial capabilities.

Key Learning Objectives:

After completing this exercise, participants should be able to:

- Describe and use budgeting techniques and considerations in funding allocation.
- Develop prioritization criteria for housing projects.
- Engage and collaborate with stakeholders.
- Understand local housing practices to implement risk assessment and mitigation strategies in project management.

Duration:

Approximately 2-3 hours, depending on group size and depth of discussion.

- 30 minutes to Review instructions
- 1.5 hours Newcomer Housing Funding Allocation Simulation (Template Sheet Print-out)

Materials Needed:

- Sample project proposals for newcomer housing initiative
- Budget allocation sheets

Instructions:

1. Scenario Introduction: Provide background on the community. Detail demographics, housing, funding, stakeholders.
   Estimated Time: 10 minutes

2. Project Proposals: Divide participants into groups, with each group representing a housing organization or agency. Provide each group with project proposals for different newcomer housing initiatives. These proposals should vary in scope, cost, target population, and expected outcomes.
   > Assign each group a hypothetical need based on real-life examples from your respective resettlement agency.

- Example: "You are assigned to HIAS, which is experiencing a high number of single mothers with children."
- Identified need: "Housing solutions for single mothers with children."
- Task: Create a housing solution tailored to this specific need.

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

3. Needs Assessment: Based on the group's hypothetical scenario, conduct a needs assessment to identify the gaps to be bridged to effectively and efficiently address the issue at hand.

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

4. Budget Allocation: Assign each group a hypothetical budget for funding allocation. The budget should be sufficient to support some, but not all, of the proposed projects. Encourage groups to consider budgeting techniques such as cost estimation, resource allocation, and contingency planning.

Estimated Time: 30 minutes

5. Prioritization Criteria: Develop criteria as an entire team before dividing into groups for evaluating housing focused proposals, considering urgency, impact, scalability, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness.

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

6. Stakeholder Engagement: Emphasize the importance of stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process. Encourage groups to identify relevant stakeholders (e.g., government agencies, community organizations, residents, newcomers) and consider their perspectives and preferences when allocating funds. Prompt groups to consider the following methods of community and stakeholder engagement:
   a. Internal Collaboration: Involve internal departments like grants, procurement, finance, and legal in decision-making.
   b. Regular Meetings: Hold regular cross-departmental meetings to discuss goals and stakeholder feedback before, during, and after the project.
   c. Integrated Planning: Include multiple departments in planning processes from the start.
   d. Clear Communication: Establish communication channels for sharing updates and information.
   e. Training: Provide training on stakeholder engagement for internal teams.
   f. Feedback: Implement mechanisms to gather and incorporate feedback from various departments.

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

7. Risk Assessment and Cost Analysis: Introduce potential risks and challenges associated with each proposed project (e.g., funding uncertainties, regulatory hurdles, community opposition). Ask groups to conduct risk assessments for their selected projects and develop mitigation strategies to address identified housing risks.

     a. Instruct groups to conduct a comprehensive cost analysis that considers the following:
          i. Housing Staff Time: Assess the time required for housing setup, housing training, and housing maintenance.
          ii. Housing Staff Capacity: Ensure there is enough personnel to manage the solution without overburdening the housing team.
          iii. Opportunity Cost: Consider what other housing projects or tasks might be affected by dedicating resources to this solution.
          iv. Justification of Effort: Weigh the potential benefits against the time and effort required to implement the solution.

Estimated Time: 25 minutes

8. Presentation and Discussion: Have groups present funding decisions, criteria, stakeholder engagement, risk mitigation. Facilitate discussion by encouraging feedback from other groups.

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

9. Reflection: Conclude with lessons learned, challenges, and improvements in the funding allocation process for newcomer housing projects.

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Newcomer Housing Funding Allocation Simulation (Template Sheet Print-out)

This template can augment the above exercise by helping participants assess their own proposed projects or those of other groups. Use this template to review project proposals, assess based on criteria, allocate funds collaboratively, and submit recommendations for newcomer housing projects.

Estimated time: 1.5 hours (time will vary depending on team/group size)

Project Proposal:
Overview: Provide a brief description of the proposed housing project, including its objectives, target population, and expected outcomes.
Budget Request: Specify the total amount of funding requested for the project.
Priority Level: Rank the project proposal on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest priority and 5 being the lowest.
Prioritization Criteria: Identify the criteria used to evaluate and prioritize the project proposal, such as urgency of need, potential impact, scalability, and cost-effectiveness.
Stakeholder Engagement: Describe how stakeholders, including government agencies, community organizations, and residents, were involved in the development of the project proposal.
Risk Assessment: Identify potential risks and challenges associated with the project proposal, along with strategies for risk mitigation.
Recommended Funding Allocation: Indicate the amount of funding recommended for the project proposal, based on the budget request, priority level, and evaluation criteria.