PROCESS EVALUATION
OF
GREATER EASTERHOUSE INTER-AGENCY FORUM
ON
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Prepared by
Jan Cassidy
Health Promotion Evaluation Specialist
For
Greater Glasgow Health Board
Summary

- The forum is responding to a clearly defined need in terms of tackling the issue of domestic violence and in adopting an alliance approach

- The forum has developed aims and objectives to which individuals are committed and work is progressing from these

- A structure has been established to progress work with the use of sub groups

- Members are committed to the need for joint work in addressing domestic violence and in improving inter-agency communication

- Much groundwork has been done in getting the forum, for example agreeing aims and objectives, appointing a chair and organising a recent large scale event

- Consideration has been given to the language used by the forum

- Resources are shared between partners
1. Introduction

There is growing recognition nationally of the significance of domestic violence as a public health issue. A recent summary report produced by the Scottish Office (1) describes recent work in Scotland highlighting the extent of the problem and the impact it has on all aspects of the health of those affected.

With growing awareness of the issue comes agreement on the need to tackle domestic violence by taking a multi-agency approach set within the context of a national framework. The recent SNAP report on Domestic Violence (2) highlights this:

"A multi-agency approach is essential to ensure an improvement in the health of women experiencing domestic violence. No one agency has either the resources or the requirement to deal in isolation with domestic violence." (pp 22)

Such a multi-agency or alliance approach to this complex issue and the resources committed to working in this way demands the need for evaluation. Achievements in health gain from alliance working can be difficult to demonstrate, and evaluation must become an integral part of alliance planning and working. Appropriate short term measures of change should be sought to monitor progress towards targets and the alliance must examine how it operates in order to maximise its effectiveness. Such information gained from monitoring and evaluation can help document the development process of alliances, record their achievements and is an essential component of accountability.

The Greater Easterhouse Inter-Agency Forum on Domestic Violence has been in operation now for several years. Core membership of the group consists of representation from:

Benefits Agency
Community & Primary Health Care Trust
Easterhouse Women’s Aid
Easterhouse Social Work Department
Easterhouse Women’s Centre
Easterhouse Community Safety Centre
Family Support
Greater Easterhouse Alcohol Project
Greater Glasgow Health Board, Health Promotion
Neighbourhood Housing Management
Strathclyde Police
Victim Support

The main forum meets approximately every six weeks with sub groups meeting more frequently as workload demands.
II. Methodology

The model chosen for this process evaluation of the Greater Easterhouse Inter-Agency Forum on Domestic Violence was that developed by Funnel et al - ‘Towards Healthier Alliances’ (3) (T.H.A. Pack) (see Appendix 1). This pack is designed as a tool for planning, evaluating and developing health alliances, and provides a framework for agreeing indicators of success.

Evaluation aims were agreed as follows:

- To evaluate appropriate process indicators of alliance working of the Greater Easterhouse Forum on Domestic Violence

- To raise awareness among group members of the role of evaluation in the work of the forum

- To use the evaluation results as a basis for future planning by the forum

- To use the evaluation results to identify achievable targets and output measures for future evaluation

The process indicators outlined in the pack were then developed into a questionnaire appropriate to the Greater Easterhouse Forum. The evaluation was conducted as follows:

**Session One:** A dedicated meeting of the group was arranged to conduct the evaluation. The concept of evaluating health alliances and the model being used was introduced. Some of the terminology used within the questionnaire was also clarified at this stage.

The six forum members present then completed the questionnaire on an individual basis. After answering a set of indicator questions relating to each process category, individuals then allocated a score between 0 and 10 on how well they thought the alliance was performing in each of the process indicators. The questionnaire took one and a half to two hours to complete. A short discussion at the end of this meeting allowed members to air their views on the questionnaire and to identify any issues they wished to discuss at the following session.

Questionnaires were posted to the eight absent members along with guidance notes to aid completion. These were followed up with two reminder phone calls.

**Session Two:** Six weeks later the forum met again. A summary of the results from the questionnaire was presented back to the group, which formed the basis for group discussion. The average score for each process category was plotted on the ‘perceptual cobweb’ form the T.H.A. pack to illustrate visually how the forum had scored itself in each main category.
III. Indicators

The pack used for this evaluation presents a number of indicators of success for both process and output evaluation and suggests selection and customisation of indicators to suit the individual alliance. Each of the five process indicator categories provided and their main elements were used in this evaluation. These were defined as follows:

1. COMMITMENT: The partners are committed to the goals of the forum, holding a shared vision of what the group can contribute and gain as a whole and as individuals. The partners are open and honest in this respect.

Group Purpose: The alliance should gain support for clear and common goals at all organisational levels.

Resources: The alliance should identify the necessary resources, including people, money and time, and the appropriate contributions from partners.

2. JOINT WORKING: The forum partners work together as a team to produce joint strategies and action plans and seek opportunities to develop new areas of work together. Joint work implies equal ownership and appropriate input from each partner.

Strategies And Action Plans: The alliance aims to have joint strategies to address their priorities, with clear roles and responsibilities.

Flexibility: The alliance aims to be dynamic, responding to the changing needs of the participants and the wider community.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY: Forum members are fully accountable and can provide justification for their actions to each other, to the partner organisations and to the wider community. Each member takes responsibility for this. Evaluation is built in to the work of the forum.

Responsibility: Alliance partners aim to share responsibility for the outcomes of their activities.

Evaluation: The alliance aims to evaluate throughout its activities and use the results to inform further work.
4. **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION:** *The forum involves the community in all its activities, including agenda setting, planning, decision-making and operational activities.*

**Liaison:** The alliance aims to involve the community in all alliance decisions and activities.

**Empowerment:** The alliance aims to empower representatives and the wider community to be equal partners and make an active contribution to its goals.

5. **COMMUNICATION:** *The forum has effective two-way communications between the members, and between the members and partner organisations.*

**Shared Information:** Partners aim to share any relevant information and increase networking at all levels.

**Accessibility:** The alliance aims to be visible and recognisable to the public.
IV. Results

Five postal questionnaires were returned, giving a total of eleven respondents from a possible fourteen. The following is a summary of the responses given for each of the major categories in the questionnaire.

COMMITMENT

(a) Group Purpose
Forum members feel they are responding to a clearly identified need in terms of both improving the safety of women and children and in improving services to women and children. It was also widely felt that there was a need to approach this work in a multi-agency way thus improving inter-agency communication. One respondent felt this way of working raised awareness of issues surrounding domestic violence in the individuals involved and at an agency level. Another highlighted that such information exchange between agencies could in itself lead to improved practice.

Several key sources were mentioned in relation to identifying need. These can be classified as:
- *agency recording and documentation*, with Police, Housing, Women’s Aid and Social Work being mentioned specifically, although one respondent felt that police records under-represented the scale of the problem
- *research*, with both national and local research being cited
- *agency experience* was mentioned by several respondents, where need was apparent through daily working experience and contact with those affected

Almost all respondents agreed that the forum had established aims and objectives and that these were being used to guide the work of the forum, although these seem to have been set fairly recently. Two members felt that work was still needing done on target setting, prioritising and establishing a timetable. One respondent did not know if the group had aims and objectives and another said it did not.

Members contribution to the work of the forum and the level of senior support for the work both seemed to be variable. It was felt that while there was sharing of ideas at the meetings, members contributions have not been identified in a formal way and that perhaps the forum needed to do this. Five respondents felt fully supported at a senior level in their involvement in the forum while the remainder felt less supported or felt that senior support was variable in general. It was felt however, that attendance by senior personnel at the forum’s recent conference showed some degree of support.

The forum has gone some way in agreeing terms of reference. The term ‘domestic violence’ has been discussed and a common definition agreed, but a few members felt that the terms ‘domestic abuse’ and ‘multi-agency working’ required further clarification.

(b) Resources
The forum ensures appropriate individuals are involved and new members attracted by regularly reviewing and discussing membership and by written invitation when needed. Again, the recent conference held was felt to be helpful in this respect.
It was felt there was good representation of statutory agencies, but no private representation. Most recognised little or no community involvement although one member felt there was good community representation.

Most respondents felt that the key personnel required were involved. Four members commented that the forum required better senior representation and that there were gaps which needed to be addressed. For example, one respondent commented that some individuals listed as forum members regularly do not attend. Additional suggestions for forum membership included a G.P., drugs related agency and a criminal justice representative.

Ten respondents felt they were an appropriate individual to be involved in the forum, while one felt it should be someone more senior with a policy making remit who was involved from their agency.

The forum does not have an official coordinator although two members saw the chairperson as having this role. It was agreed that the chair had very good skills and brought much needed focus to the group. Members are encouraged to attend by their own level of commitment but also by holding effective and well organised meetings and by setting objectives and sharing of tasks. It was felt that where the issue of non attendance was discussed it was done so briefly via apologies submitted, but that regular non attendance was an issue needing further discussion.

To date, agencies represented on the forum have shared resources and that the forum has no dedicated budget. Resources are often given in kind, for example with provision of venues and training. It was suggested that the forum might need to raise it’s profile and promote it’s work in the future to attract funding. Another respondent suggested a need to constitute the group and have a dedicated bank account.

All members felt the work of the forum was a priority for them and a key part of their job remit both in terms of the issue of domestic violence and working in a multi-agency way. The frequency of forum meetings had been agreed informally and was felt to be adequate.

Additional resources required by the forum were identified as:
- Photocopying
- Stationery
- Money
- Personnel/Decision Makers
- Publicity Materials
- Training
- Facilities/Venues for meetings

**JOINT WORKING**

(a) **Strategies and Action Plans**
Common themes and goals have been identified by the forum, although members contribution to this process was again felt to be variable. An action plan and targets have still to be developed. One member also commented that perhaps there is an assumption that everyone knows what these are.
(b) Flexibility
Most respondents felt there had been little or no conflict within the group. Others who felt there had commented that this had surrounded a conflict between the forum and individual agencies aims, or arose from the differing perspectives of the different agencies. One member commented that where such conflict had arisen it had helped to increase understanding between members.

It was widely felt that the forum was at too early a stage to have considered it’s response to changing needs. It was commented that the group stays flexible by staying in touch with changes in the field and seeking to extend the forum and exchange ideas. The gap in community membership was again highlighted here.

New work is generated by research and discussion, the experience of representatives working with each other and also via the recent conference held.

Training for forum members has been done informally with members learning through participation in the forum. Early awareness raising training was also mentioned while recognising that newer members may have missed out on this.

ACCOUNTABILITY

(a) Responsibility
It was widely recognised that the forum is not answerable to the community in any direct or formal way, but was felt by some to be answerable in an indirect way through the respective organisations involved.

There is no one formal way that the forum is answerable to the partner organisations. This is mainly done on an individual basis with members reporting back to their own management, and through distribution of forum minutes.

(b) Evaluation
The forum does not yet have a structured plan for evaluating its work. Individual pieces of evaluation have been conducted with specific pieces of work, mainly the recent conference. One member also mentioned evaluation of school work done, although no one else mentioned this, raising the issue of how evaluation is recorded and communicated. As yet, evaluation is not an integral part of the forum’s work or being used to demonstrate accountability.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

(a) Liaison and Empowerment
Any liaison with the community is currently done through the agencies involved and their contact with the community. As yet there is little or no direct contact with the community, although the group has had some community representation in the past. There is therefore no real direct community participation process and the community is not directly involved in the decision making process of the forum. Several members feel this is an issue requiring further discussion.
There has to date been little or no direct requests for information from the community and it was felt that there was probably very little awareness of the forum within the community.

COMMUNICATION

(a) Shared Information
It is largely up to individuals to communicate information on the work of the forum back to their own organisations although the recent conference was seen as one method used to inform agencies of it’s work. There is also some sharing of information within the forum by bringing relevant key reports and research to the group for distribution and discussion. The ‘agency information’ standing item on the agenda was felt to be useful in this respect. Sub groups were also mentioned as a means of sharing information.

The language of inter-agency communications has been discussed by the group and agreement reached that communications need to be clear and plain speaking. Two members felt this issue needed work on an ongoing basis.

There seems to be limited but ongoing influence on the policies of the partner organisations. Some organisations have received training, and a few members felt that participating in the work of the forum had been a learning experience in relation to policy development in their own organisation. Again, the issue of needing decision makers on the group was raised in relation to policy development.

It seems unclear how aware other departments within the partner organisations are of the forum and how to access it. Several members felt there was perhaps a need to raise the profile of the group generally within the organisations.

(b) Accessibility
It was generally agreed that the forum was not very accessible to the community and that they were probably unaware of its existence.

The forum’s identity as a group is still developing. Consideration has been given to the title of the group but not in relation to its image or in how to promote the forum.
Scoring of Process Indicator Categories

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<td>Communication</td>
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* The wide range of scores within the category of Community Participation may reflect differing interpretations of the term ‘community’ and the concept of ‘community participation’. The wide range of scores within the category of Communication reflect the different views of how the forum communicates internally as opposed to externally with other agencies and the community.

The higher average scores given for the categories of commitment and joint working are also reflected in the written responses in the questionnaires for each of these categories, and highlight areas of strength in the internal working of the forum.
V. Conclusions

Areas for Future Discussion

The evaluation exercise has raised many positive aspects of the forum’s work as highlighted above. But it is also useful to consider the challenges raised by this process. Several of these issues were discussed at the second evaluation meeting. These and some possible measures for consideration are presented here, not as prescriptive solutions, but rather as a menu of suggestions for the forum to consider in its future planning.

1. Aims and Objectives
   - While the forum has set aims and objectives, how well are these communicated to all members of the forum?
   - Is there a clear distinction between individual agency and forum aims?
   - Is there a need to further develop an operational plan with targets, timescales and resource requirements?

There were two respondents who seemed unclear of the forum’s aims and objectives, so it may be worth checking out how well these are communicated and committed to within the forum, and that any remaining tensions between partner agency aims and forum aims are dealt with.

The formalising of the group’s aims in a strategic document might assist this process and also provide an opportunity to use such a paper in publicising the work of the forum to the parent organisations and wider.

Revisiting the forum’s aims and objectives, in conjunction with the evaluation results could provide an opportunity for the forum to prioritise future work. This could then be developed into an operational plan with defined targets, time scales and resource requirements. This would enhance communication and planning with partner agencies with the forum demonstrating clear forward planning of projects and defining the commitments required.

2. Communication
   - Is there a need to clarify the attendance, contributions and commitment expected of those involved?
   - Should the forum consider a strategy for gaining more senior level commitment where this is felt to be lacking?
   - Is there a common understanding of the notion of ‘community participation’?

The issue of lack of senior level commitment and regular non attendance was raised on several occasions by a number of respondents. There is recognition that attendance by senior personnel and some other forum members is difficult due to other operational commitments, but it seems the issue requires further discussion to reach a solution which is satisfactory to the majority of members.
It may for example, be necessary to extend a specific written invitation to senior personnel to attend particular meetings where policy or resource decisions are being discussed and where an outcome requires key decision makers to be present. If senior personnel are only being asked to attend a few meetings per year, and have a clear role and input they may be more able to attend.

Such ad hoc membership might also be considered for bringing in other key personnel as and when required without having to expand core membership of the group. This would enable the forum to tap into a wide range of expertise, and such individuals may be more likely to contribute for a time limited period to complete a specified objective.

There was wide variation in response to the issue of community participation in the forum. While most members acknowledged there was little or no such participation, others felt this to be adequate. It seems that a common understanding is required of the terms involved and the process for involving the community in a meaningful partnership.

3. Resources
   • Is there a need to consider what future resources will be needed and how each partner agency can contribute?
   • Does the forum need a strategy for estimating and accessing additional resources?

The issue of accessing resources is a challenge for most alliances. Again, adopting a more strategic approach to planning and estimating resource requirements may help when approaching agencies for resources.

4. Evaluation
   • When and how should evaluation be considered and what are the training implications of this?
   • Have appropriate evaluation measures been decided?
   • How are current achievements being evaluated and recorded?

Evaluation is crucial to the work of any alliance and should be considered at the planning stage, with the identification of appropriate process and output measures relating to the aims and objectives of the group.

The forum has already made considerable progress and should consider how its achievements are being recorded and communicated. Establishing an annual review mechanism, perhaps with the production of an annual report would allow the forum to consider evaluation as part of a planning cycle and provide an avenue to record and communicate its progress and achievements to others. Being able to demonstrate accountability would also help the forum in accessing resources for its future work.

It is probably unnecessary for all members of the forum to be skilled in evaluation techniques, but consideration should be given to how this area of work might best be co-ordinated, perhaps with one member accepting responsibility for its management or with the establishment of an evaluation sub-group.
VI. Closing Remarks

This process evaluation has highlighted a number of crucially important strengths of the Greater Easterhouse forum, particularly in the areas of commitment and group purpose. When members are aware of what they can contribute and gain by being involved in an alliance, then the rest can be developed. The exercise has also highlighted a number of areas the forum should consider addressing which will strengthen group cohesion and purpose, and might help the group identify areas in which to set achievable targets in the future.
References

1. Henderson, S., Reid-Howie Associates. 'Domestic Violence in Scotland: Summary of Key
   Conclusions and Recommendations of Recent Reports' The Scottish Office Central Research
   Unit (1998)

2. Scottish Needs Assessment Programme 'Domestic Violence' Scottish Forum for Public Health
   Medicine (1997)

3. Funnell, R., Oldfield, K., Speller, V. 'Towards Healthier Alliances' Health Education
   Authority (1995)
APPENDIX 1
Greater Easterhouse Multi-Agency
Domestic Violence Forum

‘Alliance Process Evaluation’

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<th>Process Indicators:</th>
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Please state which organisation you represent on the forum:
PROCESS INDICATORS

1. COMMITMENT: The partners are committed to the goals of the forum, holding a shared vision of what the group can contribute and gain as a whole and as individuals. The partners are open and honest in this respect.

The two main elements to consider are:

(a) GROUP PURPOSE: The alliance should gain support for clear and common goals at all organisational levels.

1. To what extent is the Greater Easterhouse forum on Domestic Violence responding to an identified need?

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2. What evidence is available which identifies this need?

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3. Has the forum identified and written down its *joint* aims, objectives and targets?

4. If so, to what extent have these informed the work of the forum?

5. Has each partner identified what it can contribute to and gain from the forum, and what other partners have to contribute and gain?

6. To what extent do senior levels of partner organisations recognise and support the forum’s objectives?
7. How does the forum involve senior managers and key decision-makers and politicians in the group where appropriate?

8. Has the forum agreed a set of terms of reference?

(b) **RESOURCES:** The alliance should identify the necessary resources, including people, money and time, and the appropriate contributions from partners.

**People:**

1. How does the forum ensure that it involves the appropriate people to consider the particular health issues, localities and interventions of interest?

2. Does each partner agency contribute the personnel it can to the forum?
3. Do you feel you are the most appropriate person to represent your agency on this forum?

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4. Has the forum appointed a co-ordinator? If so, do you feel he/she has the appropriate skills and level of responsibility?

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5. How does the forum encourage the same people to attend meetings?

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6. Are reasons for not attending openly discussed?

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7. How does the forum review membership and attract new members?

8. To what extent is involvement in the forum balanced between public, private, voluntary and community sectors?

Money:

1. How does the forum ensure there is an adequate budget to achieve its objectives, including funding for its overall co-ordination, for training and for support needs of the participants?

2. Does each partner contribute what it can to the budget?
3. How does the forum actively look for additional sources of funding?


Time:

1. To what extent does your partner organisation allow you to prioritise time for the forum?


2. Is your work on this forum an important part of your job remit?


3. How does the forum decide on how often it should meet?
4. Do you think the forum meets often enough?

5. What other resources has the forum identified as necessary?

2. **JOINT WORKING**: The forum partners work together as a team to produce joint strategies and action plans and seek opportunities to develop new areas of work together. Joint work implies equal ownership and appropriate input from each partner.

The two main elements to consider are:

(a) **STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS**: The alliance aims to have joint strategies to address their priorities, with clear roles and responsibilities.

1. To what extent have common themes and goals been identified by the forum?
2. To what extent have all members contributed to priorities, strategies and action plans?


3. Have all members agreed their role and responsibility within the action plan?


4. Have the strategies and action plans been agreed by your own organisation?


(b) **FLEXIBILITY:** The alliance aims to be dynamic, responding to the changing needs of the participants and the wider community.

1. Have members been prepared to compromise in order to resolve conflicts?


2. Are these situations then used by the group as learning opportunities?

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3. How does the forum respond to the changing needs of the partners and the wider community?

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4. How does the forum generate new projects or areas of work?

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5. Is training and support provided for all members and is the uptake monitored?

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3. **ACCOUNTABILITY**: Forum members are fully accountable and can provide justification for their actions to each other, to the partner organisations and to the wider community. Each member takes responsibility for this. Evaluation is built in to the work of the forum.

The two main elements to consider are:

(a) **Responsibility**: Forum partners aim to share responsibility for the outcomes of their activities.

1. How are the forum members answerable to the community for their actions?

2. How are you answerable to your own organisation for the actions of the forum?

3. How does the forum demonstrate that both praise and blame are shared between all partners?
Evaluation: The forum aims to evaluate throughout its activities and use the results to inform further work.

1. Has any evaluation been done at any stage of the forum’s work?

2. Is evaluation built into the work of the forum and if so, how is this done and reported?

3. Has the forum assessed the participants’ needs for training and support in evaluation techniques?

4. How is evaluation used to demonstrate accountability to the members, parent organisations and the wider community?
4. **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION:** The forum involves the community in all its activities, including agenda setting, planning, decision-making and operational activities.

The two main elements to consider are:

(a) **LIAISON:** The forum aims to involve the community in all forum decisions and activities.

1. How does the forum liaise with the community and identify need?

2. To what extent has the forum incorporated public views into its plans?

3. Does the forum have community representatives in the group?
4. How involved is the community in decision-making at all stages of alliance working?


(b) **EMPOWERMENT:** The forum aims to empower representatives and the wider community to be equal partners and make an active contribution to its goals.

1. In what ways does the forum encourage and value contributions from community participants?


2. How does the forum provide the training and support necessary for the community and its representatives to play a full part within the alliance?


3. To what extent do all forum members feel there is joint ownership of the alliance?


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5. **COMMUNICATION:** The forum has effective two-way communications between the members, and between the members and partner organisations.

The main elements to consider are:

(a) **SHARED INFORMATION:** Partners aim to share relevant information and increase networking at all levels.

1. How does the forum communicate with the partner organisations?

2. Have members agreed how they will feed back the achievements of the forum to their own organisations?

3. To what extent do forum members pool appropriate and relevant information?
4. Has the forum considered the language used in its inter-agency communications, ensuring that it is understandable?


5. To what extent do forum members have the opportunity to influence policies/strategies of the other partner organisations?


6. To what extent are other departments of the partner organisations aware of the forum and how to access it?


(b) ACCESSIBILITY: The alliance aims to be visible and recognisable to the public

1. To what extent do you think the forum is accessible to the community?


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2. What approach does the forum have in responding to requests for information from the public?

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3. Has the forum considered the language used in public communications, ensuring that it is understandable?

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4. Has the forum considered its group identity and the means by which it will be recognised?

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5. Have the partners agreed how the 'group identity' will be used by the forum and by participating organisations (such as a forum name, logo, style)?

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Process Indicator Scoring

On the basis of the questions you have answered in the questionnaire, think about how the forum is performing as a working group in terms of the five process categories. Please rate each category from 0 to 10 and mark them on the scales below.

The rating scale is from 0 to 10 where 0 is the forum at its weakest and 10 is at its strongest.

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