

## **VALE – NJ**

### **Conducting an Organizational Assessment**

V1a: 2-11-14

New Commons

Consider this piece, on conducting an organizational assessment, a discussion starter for developing a customized scope of work for doing an assessment for VALE. Herein is what has worked for New Commons with past assessment projects.

New Commons has consulted with NJEDge for the past 3 years on forging strategy, establishing policy governance, developing a dynamic organizational structure, and creating a partnership between academics and technology to deepen teaching and learning.

### ***The Organizational Assessment***

#### **A proposed approach to conducting an organizational assessment**

New Commons suggests VALE consider three steps in the assessment process that have worked well in previous organizational assessments:

1. Form and facilitate a small work group of 5 or 6 VALE people to scope out the assessment in terms of areas of focus and what assessment methods would be used
2. Design and administer a survey of the members. The survey could be done in Survey Monkey or a similar tool
3. Design and facilitate two, one-half day workshops about 30 to 45 days apart. Workshop one would focus on analyzing and understanding the implications of the composite results of the survey. Workshop two would focus on developing a game plan for improving capabilities for going forward.

Additional steps may be added as we determine a more detailed assessment of VALE's needs and desired outcomes.

#### **Areas to consider for assessment**

In 2011 and 2012, New Commons worked with The Quilt to develop its Quilt Peer Review (QPR) process and tool. The Quilt is the national technology network of regional and state networks like NJEDge. The QPR process is administered by The Quilt for its members. The Quilt assembles a team of peers to conduct an organizational and strategic review. The QPR self assessment tool is distributed by a member organization to key stakeholders to help it understand its strengths and weaknesses, and to set the stage for increasing capabilities. The results are anonymously aggregated and then reported to everyone.

The QPR self-assessment tool is composed of nine elements and eighty-nine practices of organizational effectiveness grouped in two clusters, each with two sub-sections. Each element includes a range of practices (6 to 12 currently) to self-assess a member organization's level of capability. Each practice has 5 levels of capability ranging from 1 (does not apply) to 5 (pioneers with innovation). Each practice is categorized as a "Basic" or "Advanced" level within each of the 9 elements.

A Quilt member selects only the assessment elements among the nine they want help with.

### *Cluster one*

External focus – how the organization interacts with and relates to important external entities

1. External relationships
  - a. User Relations
  - b. Stakeholder Relations
2. External advocacy and value proposition
  - a. Advocacy
  - b. Long Term Strategy

### *Cluster two*

Internal focus – how the organization manages and organizes itself

1. Internal organization
  - a. Operating Structure
  - b. Governance
  - c. Revenue and Finance
2. Internal strategy
  - a. Risk and Innovation
  - b. Culture

VALE could select the assessment elements from The Quilt list that work for it as well as develop its own additional elements.

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## ***New Commons Background***

### **New Commons Capabilities**

New Commons is a consultancy and a new kind of think tank - one that goes beyond analysis and reporting. Innovation and change drive us and our clients. Our clients need tangible results, so we help them move from thought to action by helping them build a



network with the right capabilities, and then mobilize that network of know-how to get the job done. Think...Link...Do.

We have been in the professional services business for 32 years, established in 1982. New Commons has completed over 1000 projects. As a business we operate as a cooperative where each employee owns a share of the company. Our focus is the future of organizations, networks, and communities. We do planning, public engagement, governance, leadership, organization building, and implementation.

Our clients include/have included: Businesses...Economic Development Entities...Entrepreneurs...Hospitals and Health Care....Regional Technology Networks...Trade Associations...Communities/Neighborhoods/an Island...Public Schools...Colleges and Universities...Libraries...Housing Organizations...Philanthropic Foundations...Community-Based Organizations...States and Municipalities.

Capabilities/areas of passionate practice: community and economic development planning; organizational design; cities, communities and place; public and higher education; technology and education; library of the future; and digital literacy.

New Commons knows how to engage stakeholders to deeply understand what they want. We know that engaging people early in a design process creates effective conditions for implementation.

## **New Commons Library and Education Projects**

### Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

#### *Project - Library of the Future...completed*

As public libraries become less and less about access to books, what do they become? New Commons designed and facilitated a three conversation process for developing the library of the future; conversation one was with funders of library change; conversation two was with the state librarians and other state staff from each state; conversation three was with continuing education coordinators from each state. Libraries have begun playing a role in growing the economy by creating maker spaces (e.g., 3-D printers), offering training courses, being business incubators and tailoring information to businesses. Summaries of the 3 meetings were produced.

### Boston College

#### *Project – Leadership for Change...completed*

Robert Leaver served as founding business partner of Leadership for Change – a graduate level, credit-bearing executive development program for change agents. Robert taught in the program for 17 years in three modules: groups/teams, organization, and society.



### Danbury Public Library (CT)

#### *Project - The Future of the Danbury Public Library...completed*

Through surveys and conversations with senior staff at the DPL, New Commons identified some key trends and impacts shaping the future of the library. We identified the emerging conditions that raised longer-term issues that had to be immediately addressed. New Commons also conducted workshops with both key staff members and key community stakeholders.

### HELIN – Higher Education Library and Information Network...ongoing

#### *Project: Digital Repository for RI and the Region*

HELIN is a consortium of libraries in RI and Southern NE. It has begun planning for a statewide digital repository to house all non-proprietary information for public access by users. It will be a searchable repository using key words. Information fields will include: business and economic development, culture, community, education and libraries. New Commons designed and facilitated the community engagement process and wrote the design brief for the repository. We are currently developing the phase II engagement process.

Previously for HELEN we conducted an organizational assessment, developed a strategic plan and designed a board governance model.

### Providence College

#### *Project: In inquiry into the impact of technology on teaching, learning and campus life*

For five years, New Commons conduct targeted conversations with faculty students and administrators to understand the current and future impact of technology on teaching, learning and campus life. We designed and administered surveys and produced summaries of the findings.

### RISD

#### *Project - Fusion Arts Exchange...completed*

Designed and administered an action-learning program for 20 international students for 2 summer-long institutes. The program included designing and administering an assessment survey and facilitating workshops. The program brought together cutting edge thinkers, designers, teachers, institutions, and technology to provide a select group of international students an opportunity to explore how digital media shapes our global culture.

### South Kingstown, RI School Department

#### *Project - Policy Development...ongoing*

New Commons is developing a high leverage policy framework and process to take the South Kingstown schools into the 21st century. The policy framework is using student achievement as the pilot policy to develop. We developed a policy on setting policies for the school committee. New Commons is reviewing 111 school system policies to consolidate and omit, and then develop a common format for them. Additionally,

designed and facilitated two system-wide planning retreats among school committee, administrators and the community.

#### Union Theological Seminary (NYC)

##### *Project - Space Needs Analysis...ongoing*

New Commons serves as a partner with Newman Architects of New haven Ct on this project serving in two capacities with services provided by Senior Consultant, Robert Leaver. First was to provide expertise in three of the critical programming areas for the redesign of the use of space. These include: technology and teaching and learning, library of the future, and community building. The second contribution was to co-lead with Newman Architects the community engagement process.

### **New Commons Technology Projects**

#### Regional Technology Networks...Completed and ongoing

*Project: For more than twelve years, New Commons has worked with regional technology networks in the region and nationally.*

These networks are consortiums of members that can include, beyond higher education (which is present in all of them), one or more disciplines such as: health care, K to12, municipalities and public safety. The networks provide access to the Internet (Internet 1 and Internet-2 – the research network accessible in RI only to Brown and URI. A regional network also offers discrete services like data storage or disaster handling. Several of the networks have begun to see their significant role in helping to grow the economy.

- For the Connecticut Education Network, beginning in 2012, undertaking strategic planning and stakeholder engagement...ongoing
- For Internet-2, completed scenario planning for the future of the organization and the next architecture for the national I-2 backbone...completed
- For MAGPI (Philadelphia and NJ) developed an advisory/governance body...completed
- For MCNC of North Carolina, for 4 years, conducted a yearly planning cycle built on a strategic plan, and the development of a stakeholder relationship map...completed
- For NJEdge, since 2011, strategic planning, organizational design and forging the partnership between technology and academics...ongoing
- For OSHEAN (RI and southern NE), for 10 years, undertook a planning process, organizational assessment, governance and a community forum...completed
- For The Quilt (the network of 30 regional technology networks), guide a yearly strategic planning cycle, executive development and board governance; one special project was to design and field test the Quilt Peer Review instrument of 9 organizational elements for an organization to use to self-assess what is effective and what needs improvement...ongoing

#### Broadband Rhode Island...completed and ongoing

*Project: The impact of digital technology on people, community and the economy*

Over the past 3 years, New Commons has worked on 5 BBRI projects



- Created a public engagement process for people to develop public policies to shape the future adoption of broadband, including public education, economic development, basic literacy and E-government. The results of these sessions were crafted into a formal set of policy recommendations...completed
- Developed a digital literacy curriculum, a train-the trainers program and nurtured an ecosystem of trainers, training sites and community mobilizers to train, as many as possible, the one-third of Rhode Islanders who don't know how to go online to become digitally literate...completed
- Conducted a pilot project on the digitally connected city in the RI cities of Central Falls and Pawtucket...completed
- Presently conducting a community inquiry into the role of digital technology in fostering a digital culture, digital economy: Camoin associates is conducting targeted interviews with business leaders to identify their assessed impact of the presence of high speed internet in RI on the economy and their business...ongoing
- Presently facilitating a process for envisioning a gigabit community for Aquidneck Island, which is includes Newport, Middletown and Portsmouth, RI....ongoing

