

Self-Assessment of Democratic Character in Organizations, Version 1.2 – October 2006

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Purpose of Research:

This project aims to develop a practical way to understand and assess democratic character of organizations in the social economy. (The social economy consists of co-operatives and nonprofit enterprises including community economic development and Aboriginal economic development.) The key product of the research will be a self-assessment questionnaire for use by organizations interested in democratic practice. Organizations are invited to use the questionnaire; to provide comments and suggestions; and to report results. The researcher will distribute revised questionnaires based on evaluation of the feedback. Other products may include a database of results and publications about the questionnaire, its development, patterns in the ways different types of organizations assess themselves, benchmarks for questionnaire results, and what these things show about participants' ideas concerning democracy.

To assist in the research:

- please answer the questions below as they apply to an organization to which you belong – you may wish to have your board of directors or stakeholder groups complete the questionnaire together
- please comment in the right-hand column on questions that seem particularly useful or not (use reverse if necessary)
- please fill in the last page and return a copy or summary of your questionnaire to the researcher

If you would like to receive free updates about the progress of the questionnaire, please supply your e-mail address or other contact information:

Evaluation: 1 = not at all — 5 = always/high priority						
Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Comments: clarity or relevance of question
Area of Assessment: Democratic Commitment						
1.1 How important is democracy to your organization?						
1.2 Is democracy a purpose of your organization? (Does your organization exist to create more democracy?)						
1.3 Is democracy a means to achieve your organization's purposes?						
1.4 Is democracy reflected in your organization's statements of its vision, values, or mission?						
1.5 When you think of democracy in relation to your organization, what is the first or most important thing (event, process, result) that you think of? (<i>Please write below:</i>)						
How important is the thing you identified above in the annual cycle of your organization's activities?						
						PLEASE AVERAGE YOUR SCORE ON QUESTIONS 1.1 TO 1.5:

Evaluation: 1 = not at all — 5 = always/high priority						
Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Comments: clarity or relevance of question
1.6 How applicable to your organization are the following definitions? (a) Democracy means direct participation by the people.						
(b) Democracy means decisions made by elected leaders.						
(c) Democracy means individual freedom.						
(d) Democracy means justice for all.						
(e) Democracy means informed debate.						
(f) Democracy means equality and dignity of people.						
(g) Other – Please give your own definition if different from above.						
Area of Assessment: Association-Stakeholder Cohesion						
Note: “Stakeholders” usually include users/clients and employees, and may include managers, professionals, suppliers, funders, investors, community leaders, government agencies, and other organizations.						
2.1 Do you have a clear sense of which main group or groups are supposed to benefit from the existence of your organization? <i>In the “Comments” column, please list these “key stakeholders.”</i>						
2.2 Do you have a clear sense of the key stakeholders’ values, concerns, and vision?						
2.3 Does your organization attempt to identify the key stakeholders’ values, concerns, and vision? <i>(How? Please give an example.)</i>						
2.4 Do the key stakeholders share a common vision of the future and common objectives?						
2.5 In general, do key stakeholders identify with the organization and have a feeling of belonging or ownership?						
2.6 Do you have a clear sense of which other groups, besides the key stakeholders, have an interest in your organization’s success? <i>Please list these groups, your “secondary stakeholders.”</i>						
2.7 Do you have a clear sense of the secondary stakeholders’ values, concerns, and vision?						
2.8 Does your organization attempt to identify the secondary stakeholders’ values, concerns, and vision? <i>(Please give examples.)</i>						
2.9 Do all the relevant groups in your community participate in your organization? <i>(Which ones do not?)</i>						
						PLEASE AVERAGE YOUR SCORE ON QUESTIONS 2.1 TO 2.9:

Evaluation: 1 = not at all — 5 = always/high priority						
Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Comments: clarity or relevance of question
Area of Assessment: Association-Enterprise Cohesion						
3.1 Do the strategic focuses of your organization (its key activities) reflect things that are important in the lives of its key stakeholders? <i>In the "Comments" column, please list the key activities.</i>						
3.2 Do the strategic focuses (key activities) of your organization reflect its competencies, capacities, and competitive advantages? (Are the things you do most also the things you do best?)						
3.3 Are there complementarities or synergies among the key activities of your organization? (Do the services and benefits of your organization make sense as a package? Does succeeding at one make others easier?)						
3.4 When your organization thrives (has surplus or expanded resources), do the key stakeholders experience improved benefits? <i>Please give an example.</i>						
3.5 When your key stakeholders thrive (have surplus or expanded resources), does the organization benefit? <i>Please give an example.</i>						
3.6 How well do the key stakeholders understand the full range of your organization's activities, services, or products?						
3.7 How well do the key stakeholders understand the ways they would benefit if your organization were more successful (had more resources to work with)?						
3.8 Do the patterns of use, work, or behaviour by key stakeholders make the best use of your organization's assets and potential? (Do they behave in such a way that costs are minimized, capacity is fully utilized, and volumes are optimal?) <i>Please give a positive or negative example if one comes to mind.</i>						
						PLEASE AVERAGE YOUR SCORE ON QUESTIONS 3.1 TO 3.8:
Area of Assessment: Informal Stakeholder Participation in Decision-Making						
4.1 Does your organization have particular methods for collecting suggestions from members of key stakeholder groups? (Examples: a highly visible member services desk, comment cards, newsletter that prints stakeholder letters) <i>(Please indicate in the "Comments" column what your organization does.)</i>						

Evaluation: 1 = not at all — 5 = always/high priority						
Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Comments: clarity or relevance of question
4.2 Does your organization have a record of acting on suggestions made by members of key stakeholder groups? <i>If so, please give an example of a suggestion that was implemented.</i>						
4.3 Does your organization recognize, reward, or celebrate new ideas?						
4.4 Does your organization conduct organized inquiries to find out what stakeholders think? (for example, surveys; focus groups; study committees; townhall meetings) (<i>What does your organization do?</i>)						
4.5 Does your organization distribute information to stakeholders about the strategic issues or choices it faces, prior to making a decision?						
4.6 Can stakeholders freely access information about your business structure, performance, audited statements, and so on?						
4.7 Are you confident that your key stakeholders understand the business you are in, well enough that they would not be surprised by any decision your organization is likely to make?						
4.8 To what extent is your organization a topic of conversation for key stakeholders among themselves (outside of formal meetings)?						
4.9 To what extent do leaders in the organization hear from and listen to ordinary members of the key stakeholder groups?						
						PLEASE AVERAGE YOUR SCORE ON QUESTIONS 4.1 TO 4.9:
Area of Assessment: Formal Stakeholder Participation in Decision-Making						
5.01 Please give an example, below, of a key decision made by your organization within the last 3 years: How much formal input did the key stakeholder groups have in the above decision? <i>In the "Comments" column, please indicate the mechanisms by which their input was made (examples: member meetings, mail ballot, committees)</i>						
5.02 In general, are stakeholders actively involved in or consulted about the key decisions made by your organization?						
5.03 Does your organization attempt to consult stakeholders in ways that are convenient, efficient, and interesting for them? (<i>In what ways?</i>)						

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Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Comments: clarity or relevance of question
5.04 Is there a sufficient number of meetings of all key stakeholders?						
5.05 Is there sufficient attendance of all key stakeholders at these meetings?						
5.06 Are disagreements brought out in the open in your organization? <i>(Please indicate an example of an issue about which there were differences among stakeholders within the organization.)</i>						
5.07 Once out in the open, are disagreements resolved in a way that is accepted by all stakeholders? <i>(How was the issue you mentioned in 5.06 resolved?)</i>						
5.08 Does your organization do anything (such as special advertising, services, events, or committees) to encourage the participation in decision-making by any of the following groups? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young people • senior citizens • women • parents • people with disabilities • members of specific cultural groups • low-income people • other <i>(Please specify)</i> <i>Please indicate what your organization does.</i>						
5.09 Do you provide training in running meetings or participating in them effectively?						
5.10 Does your organization try particular techniques to encourage exploration of a wide range of views and issues in discussions? <i>(What are these?)</i>						
5.11 Has your organization experimented with alternative methods for decision-making besides conventional meetings and voting? (For example, e-democracy, talking circles, selection of representatives by lot... <i>Please specify if so.</i>)						
						PLEASE AVERAGE YOUR SCORE ON QUESTIONS 5.01 TO 5.11:
Area of Assessment: Leadership						
6.1 Are the leaders (board of directors, managers) of your organization chosen in an open and transparent way? <i>(How is this done?)</i>						

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6.2 Do your board members effectively represent the interests of all the stakeholders?						
6.3 Is there sufficient stakeholder participation in selection of board members?						
6.4 Does your organization have specific techniques to draw out candidates from diverse backgrounds? (<i>Examples?</i>)						
6.5 Does the leadership of your organization (board and management) visibly reflect the demographics of its key stakeholders (age, ethnicity, gender, place of residence, common interest etc.)?						
6.6 Are your board members adequately trained for their jobs?						
6.7 Are your board members sufficiently independent of management?						
6.8 Is there sufficient turnover among your board of directors?						
6.9 Do a sufficient number of persons from stakeholder groups participate on committees (operational, policy, advisory) other than the board of directors?						
						PLEASE AVERAGE YOUR SCORE ON QUESTIONS 6.1 TO 6.9:
Area of Assessment: Core Services and Facilities						
7.1 Do you attempt to identify the key stakeholders' specific needs for products or services? (<i>How?</i>)						
7.2 Have your services, products, or activities changed in recent years in response to changing needs among the key stakeholders? <i>Please give an example and indicate how you found out about the new or changed need.</i>						
7.2 Have ideas proposed by key stakeholders led to innovations in your services, products, or activities changed? <i>Please give an example.</i>						
7.3 Do the services or products offered by your organization explicitly reflect social or ethical values of the key stakeholders? (such as						

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Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Comments: clarity or relevance of question
products identified as fair-trade, services identified as inclusive) <i>Please give an example from your organization.</i>						
7.4 Do the services or products offered by your organization reflect democratic values such as equality, respect, fairness, inclusion, and accountability? <i>(Please give an example.)</i>						
7.5 Are your organization's facilities sufficiently accessible for all the stakeholders?						
7.6 Are your organization's facilities situated, arranged, or finished in any particular way that reflects the values of the key stakeholders?						
7.7 Do you offer or create public space (e.g. for community events) within your facilities?						
7.8 Are your facilities a focal point for your community?						
7.9 Does your organization take specific steps to ensure that every member of the community feels welcome when entering your facilities? <i>(What are these steps?)</i>						
						PLEASE AVERAGE YOUR SCORE ON QUESTIONS 7.1 TO 7.9:
Area of Assessment: Education, Information, and Publicity						
8.1 Are key stakeholders regularly offered education or training that meets their needs?						
8.2 Does the information provided by the organization provide an understanding of how it functions?						
8.3 Does the information provided by the organization provide an understanding of who all the stakeholders are?						
8.4 Does the information provided by the organization provide an understanding of governance (annual meeting, board of directors etc.)?						
8.5 Does the information provided by the organization provide an understanding of the issues faced by the key stakeholders and their organization?						
8.6 Would ordinary members from the key stakeholder groups be able to explain the distinctive values and purpose of your organization?						
8.7 Do the advertising and publicity of your organization explicitly reflect social or ethical values of the key stakeholders?						

Evaluation: 1 = not at all — 5 = always/high priority						
Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Comments: clarity or relevance of question
8.8 Do the advertising and publicity of your organization reflect democratic values such as equality, respect, fairness, and inclusion?						
8.9 Do your advertising and publicity convey a stakeholder-driven character?						
						PLEASE AVERAGE YOUR SCORE ON QUESTIONS 8.1 TO 8.9:
Area of Assessment: Staff and Human Resources						
9.1 Do your staff and human resources policies reflect the values of your organization? <i>Please indicate one or more important values of your organization and corresponding policies.</i>						
9.2 Do the staff and HR policies of your organization express democratic values such as equality, respect, fairness, and inclusion? <i>Please give an example if different from 9.1.</i>						
9.3 Do you consider the staff of your organization to be “key stakeholders”?						
9.4 Does the staff of your organization visibly reflect the demographics of the population they serve (age, ethnicity, gender, place of residence, common interest etc.)?						
9.5 Does your staff understand the distinctive values and purpose of your organization?						
9.6 Are your staff effective in explaining to others (e.g. clients or users) the distinctive values and purpose of your organization?						
9.7 Are your staff knowledgeable about the clients or users, their concerns, and their needs?						
9.8 Are your staff a source of new ideas? <i>Please give an example of an innovation that came from a staff suggestion.</i>						
						PLEASE AVERAGE YOUR SCORE ON QUESTIONS 9.1 TO 9.8:

Evaluation: 1 = not at all — 5 = always/high priority						
Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Comments: clarity or relevance of question
Area of Assessment: Outreach and Community						
10.1 Does your organization network with other organizations in the same community that share similar values? <i>Please give some examples.</i>						
10.2 Does it network with organizations in other communities? <i>What kinds of organizations?</i>						
10.3 Do you undertake any organized activity (research, consultations) to determine broad issues and needs in your communities? <i>Please indicate what your organization does.</i>						
10.4 Are there specific things your organization does to overcome divisions in the community or communities that it serves (for example, community pride events)? <i>(What are the things you do?)</i>						
10.5 Are the staff and management of your organization visibly involved in community events?						
10.6 Does your organization involve itself in educational opportunities designed to instill democratic values in children or youths? (summer camps, picnics for staff/families with formative activities)						
					PLEASE AVERAGE YOUR SCORE ON QUESTIONS 10.1 TO 10.6:	

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE – SELF-ANALYSIS FOLLOWS

SELF-ANALYSIS

1. Please indicate in the chart below your average scores from question groups 1 – 10:

5										
4										
3										
2										
1										
Question group:	1 Democratic Commitment	2 Association-Stakeholder Cohesion	3 Association-Enterprise Cohesion	4 Informal Stakeholder Participation	5 Formal Stakeholder Participation	6 Leadership	7 Services & Facilities	8 Education, Information, & Publicity	9 Staff and HR	10 Outreach and Community

2. Based on the chart above, what appear to be your organization's strengths in democratic character?

3. What appear to be your organization's weaknesses in democratic character?

4. Do these results appear sensible based on what you know of your organization?

5. Did completing this questionnaire give you any new ideas about things to work on in your organization?

6. How could the questionnaire be improved? Are there different questions you would ask?

Please indicate the legal form of your organization:

- co-operative
- nonprofit enterprise
- association
- informal/unincorporated
- other

Please indicate the business/service sector of your organization:

- Community economic development
- Aboriginal economic development
- Financial services
- Retailing
- Social services
- Health
- Manufacturing or production
- Other:

Please indicate who filled in this questionnaire:

- **an individual** **OR** **a group**
- client(s) or user(s)
- staff
- volunteer(s)
- elected leader(s)
- manager(s)
- mixed or other:

Please assist in the research by returning a copy to:
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