PROSOCIAL

the science of working better together

SUMMARY OF THE EIGHT CORE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1) Strong group identity and understanding of purpose. A group functions best when its purpose is clearly understood and perceived as worthwhile by its members. A group also functions best when it offers a strong group identity, such that members are proud to belong and enjoy their time together. PROSOCIAL is about creating cultures that *constantly* reflect on the "towards" move dynamically.

Example Methods: The core method here is continual reflection on the purpose, and using it as a guide to daily action. Other 'one-off' approaches include the group ACT matrix, scenario planning, strengths-based questions e.g. "What are we doing at our best", The miracle question e.g. "Imagine it is five years in the future, everything has gone perfectly, what would you see, hear, be doing, etc?". Outputs include mission, vision and value statements but these are less important than continual reflection on 'towards'.

Key assessment question: To what extent do group members feel a sense of belonging and shared purpose with the group?

Key planning question: What do we most care about? And how can we create a sense of care, belonging and safety in the group?

2) Equitable distribution of costs and benefits. Most people have a strong sense of equity that is violated when someone receives benefits disproportionate to their contributions. Perceived fairness is essential for high group performance. Often this is about balance of effort (workload) and reward. Perceived unfairness is sometimes 'undiscussable' in groups and sometimes it is discussed endlessly but in ways that do not lead to positive change.

Example Methods: Role clarity, anonymous surveys, transparency regarding allocation of rewards and benefits, communication skills training to build assertiveness and listening to multiple perspectives, open discussions of fairness, training re distinction between distributive and procedural justice and their importance for motivation.

Key assessment question: To what extent are the demands and benefits of participating in this group distributed equitably between its members?

Key planning question: How will we ensure fairness in this group?

3) Fair and Inclusive decision-making. If you want good decisions and motivated people, group members need to be involved in making the decisions that affect them, particularly agreements about how the group runs. This can take the form of consensual decision making but in some circumstances consultation with a designated leader/representative, voting or even the opportunity to make objections (veto powers) can be enough and more efficient.

Example methods: daily/weekly/quarterly meetings focusing on short to medium term goals as appropriate**,** consultation, participative democracy [informed voting], consent based decision making e.g. Sociocracy, consensus oriented decision making

Key assessment question: To what extent do group members feel involved in making the decisions that affect them?

Key planning question: How will we decide in a way that involves those who need and want to be involved?

4) (Peer-based) Monitoring of agreed behaviours. Self-serving behaviours increase when there is a lack of transparency of those behaviours. In hierarchical organisations, monitoring agreed behaviours tends to be seen as the job of the manager. But such top down monitoring is often coercive and serves the needs of the manager. Ostrom's work suggested that monitoring is better performed by peers as part of the normal interaction of group members.

Example methods: Processes for noticing what others are doing such as meetings, reporting, swapping roles, etc.

Key assessment question: To what extent do group members know what others in the group are doing?

Key planning question: How can we be aware of what each other are doing? How can our behaviours be transparent?

5) Graduated responses to unhelpful and helpful behaviors: No one is perfect when it comes to fulfilling the obligations of a group. Even the most capable and well-meaning members can fail, especially given competing demands upon their time and attention. Transgressions do not imply mal-intent. Effective groups have in place responses to transgressions ranging from open conversation to find out what happened, through to sanctions or even, ultimately, exclusion from the group. Most groups not only require responding to discourage unhelpful behaviour, they also require responding to encourage helpful behaviours.

Example methods: coaching-based performance conversations [not just evaluative], buddy systems, clear and justified rules and consequences

Key assessment question: If someone behaves in a way that is unhelpful or disruptive in this group, to what extent do people respond appropriately to discourage that behaviour? If someone behaves in a way that is helpful or cooperative in this group, to what extent do people respond appropriately to encourage that behaviour?

Key planning question: How should we respond to one another to encourage cooperation and discourage unhelpful behaviors?

6) Fast and fair conflict resolution. Any group that involves committed individuals acting authentically will inevitably encounter conflict as people have different interests and information. It is best to plan for conflicts and their resolution from the beginning.

Example methods: developing skills in listening and assertiveness, creating a role for trusted impartial mediators, or a judicial committee with rotating membership, an escalation process: self-reflection → 1 to 1 conversation → mediated conversation → arbitration, committees for assisting mediation, or arbitration.

Key assessment question: To what extent does the group have fast and fair conflict resolution processes?

Key planning question: How should we resolve the inevitable conflicts and differences that will arise within and between groups that are authentic?

7) Authority to self-govern (according to principles 1-6). The seventh design principle shifts the focus away from the internal social organization of the group and toward external relations. Every group is embedded in a larger society that can limit its ability to govern its own affairs. These constraints can interfere with the objectives of the group and the implementation of design principles 1-6. For example, the context might impose excessive regulation on how the group behaves (e.g. when Human Resources departments constrain conflict resolution to formal procedures) or minimise the capacity of the group leader to act as a leader.

Example methods: structures supporting self-management, values and purpose based strategy, Agile, Sociocracy – double-link leadership

Key assessment question: Does the group have authority to govern itself without excessive interference from outside the group?

Key planning question: How can we take responsibility for managing our own affairs? How should we lead and how should we protect ourselves from undue influence from outside the group?

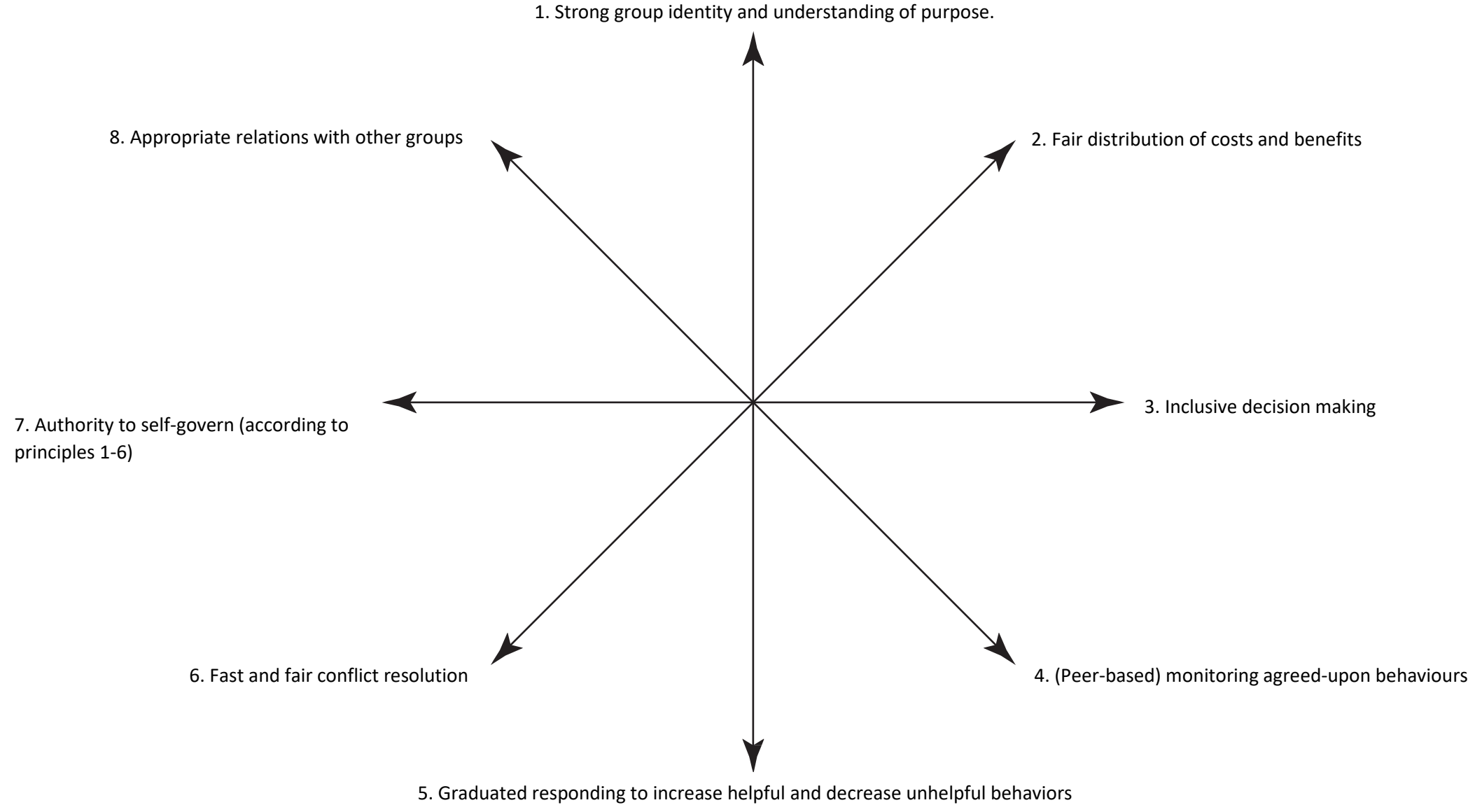
8) Collaborative relations with other groups. If we are to build systems of cooperation, a group must relate to other groups using principles 1-7. This can go wrong in two ways: a) other groups may not cooperate with you (e.g. they don't include your group in important decisions, behave in ways that can't be monitored, and so on), or b) your group may not cooperate well with other groups. In this fashion, the *same* design principles are relevant at *all levels* of a multi-tier hierarchy of social units.

Example methods: systems for reporting out to other groups, or coordinating groups, networking events

Key assessment question: Does the group have purposeful, fair, inclusive, transparent and effective relations with other groups? Does the group primarily serve its own interests, or those of its larger context?

Key planning question: How can we have better relations with other groups? How can we contribute to building whole systems that work?

Rate your group on each of these principles (very poor = towards centre, very good = towards edge). Join the ratings to create a 'wheel'.



An example of what your spoke diagram might look like (note this figure has the old principle names):