

Consulting Project Proposal

Thank you Save the Children for asking me to work with your Tensta division in Stockholm, in implementing a large system intervention involving various stake holders connected to the well-being of young people in the area.

We understand that you are a national non-profit organization with 76 000 members, founded almost 100 years ago with the mission of standing up for the rights, needs and voices of children, teenagers and young adults. We further understand that you have initiated work on a national level, towards re-thinking the welfare state, recognizing that your historic role of lobbyists in relation to the public sector has proven insufficient in addressing the needs of young people, as it doesn't address the problem from a systemic point of view.

You have chosen the area of Tensta since the situation for young people in regards to quality of education, deadly violence, crowded housing and unstable and financially strained family situations is particularly challenging here. We understand that Tensta has a population of roughly 17 000 citizens, 85% of which are born or have at least one parent born in a non-European country, reflecting an ethnic and socio-economic segregation pattern apparent also in other major urban centers across Sweden. This, in your view, provides grounds for prototyping change that might prove beneficial also for other socio economically disadvantaged communities across Sweden. My immediate collaboration partners at Save the Children will be both representatives from the national level and a core team out of the staff of 40 people working on the ground in Tensta.

We have a shared understanding that the issue is not primarily one of financial resources, as the area has one of the highest teacher-student ratios in Stockholm, the largest police force, the biggest social sector, the most youth centers available etc. Simply doing more of the same – channeling more resources into the same old system – seems not to be sufficient, as long as this system remains divided into siloed perspectives, rigid power structures, stale relationships and outdated ways of working where, as you have explained

it, “it is more important to not do something wrong than to do something right”. You have described the frustration you have felt during meetings between the municipality and various citizen groups, set up in an oppositional way where the citizen groups share everything they see wrong about the leadership of the area, and the leadership defend themselves in order to “save their face”, both parties leaving unsatisfied and more set in their opposition of one another. You have further described private conversations you’ve had with both citizens groups and the municipality, where both sides express their respective frustrations. Citizens, feeling powerless, not listened to and supported according to their realities and cultural backgrounds, with a deep mistrust of change initiatives that never seem to deliver desired results. Municipal staff, feeling trapped between demands from mandates laid out by Stockholm City, demanding results based on a lack of understanding of the reality they are faced with, and the community they serve. Further, you have described how your own staff, along with other nonprofits operating in the area, have felt overwhelmed with the immediate social needs to attend to, unable to find time or space to think through long-term strategies for effective change work.

In our discussions, we have come to the conclusion that in order for meaningful change to occur, a whole systems approach needs to happen, where all actors of the larger system affecting the situation of young people – including non profit organizations (large and small), various citizen groups, Stockholm City and its subunit of the community district of Spånga-Tensta – need to come together, understand the issues at hand together, find common ground and build a shared vision of a desirable future. In the process, reconfiguring relationships and power dynamics, encouraging self-reflection on the part of everyone, and leveraging the strengths of each stakeholder towards the wellbeing of the young people of the area. We understand that you see your role in this as facilitator and bridge between various stakeholders through your somewhat neutral position as a non-profit organization, able to mediate and understand the perspectives of both citizens and public sector.

You have declared your interest in my services based on the unique competency I hold through my degree in Transdisciplinary Design, with a special focus on

management and organizational change. We have established shared values in regards to human-centered design, the importance of organizational self-reflection and learning, and the need for systemic approaches, networks, trial-and-error, and co-creation. You also acknowledge my experiences of seven years of community organization and creative change work in Tensta, as well as the performance based research I have conducted. This research, as discussed, maps issues of race, immigration and performed roles in relation to the area and the larger context of Sweden, identifying key issues and tensions in the relationship between young people in the community and public officials. We have a shared understanding of the problem as being one much connected to dysfunctional relations, roles and expectations, many of them rooted in the idea of the Industrial “face less” welfare state that provides for groups and classes, where individuals are seen as passive beneficiaries of services rather than active co-creators of the welfare state they are a part of. This relationship has proven to be extra dysfunctional in regards to situations charged by racial prejudice, where relationships between the public sector and communities of color suffer even more from helper-victim, or protector-aggressor patterns in their relationships to each other. We both recognize the need for a shift in culture and relations, towards a culture of psychological safety, experimentation and individual agency, both on behalf of citizens and public sector staff.

METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

Within the scope of this initial collaboration between Save the Children and myself, I have recommended using as a foundation a large system intervention called “Future Search”. This method, grown out of an Organization Development tradition focused on humanistic values and systems level interventions, brings between 60 and 80 people from all stakeholder constituencies together in one room. They meet for 16 hours spread across three days, sharing stories about their past, present and desired future. In this process, a common ground is established, and action items and strategies developed together. A key component of this method is to explore the bigger picture before seeking to fix any part, making sure people understand and see the perspectives of each other before moving on towards shared goals, strategies and action items. Problems and conflicts are treated

along the process as information, not action items. Responsibilities are accepted voluntarily by the various stake holders, with potential results being shared visions, draft policies, strategic frameworks, action plans and process designs.

The method will be adjusted and developed drawing from my expertise in storytelling, design for social innovation and participatory arts. Through this added approach, citizens (including young people themselves) can express their thoughts and feelings without having to talk about themselves, rather they can pour their experiences into fictional characters or “personas” representing various sub sections of the community or other stakeholders. Assessments of past, present and future states can also be expressed through visual language, oftentimes capturing the symbolic, deeper meanings involved. We would also explore these different states, and moving between them, through gestalt techniques such as systemic constellation work and/or theatre of the oppressed, where complex, emotional and embodied understanding of systems relationships can be explored and set in motion towards more desirable states from various points of view of the system. Adding aesthetic elements to the forum, would serve to spark imagination, agency and a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. This approach would also assist in addressing sensitive topics connected to race, discrimination and prejudice in a way that feels less unsafe, threatening or uncomfortable than discussing it heads on, for all parties involved.

The main objectives of the approach to:

1. Allow for everyone to get a fuller picture of the problem/s at hand from various points of view.
2. Break down entrenched ideas of “us” and “them” between and within organizations, rather allowing for a shared “us” to emerge.
3. Through careful facilitation embedded in an understanding of current tensions and power dynamics, provide a space where everyone feels seen, heard and respected on equal grounds.
4. Inspire, enliven and make the system of stakeholders feel motivated to enact change within their own subsections of the community.

5. Create mutual accountability, where both the more “powerful” agents and the less powerful ones are made responsible for specific tasks moving forward.
6. Create a space for all stakeholders to step outside of their own norm systems and identities, and in the “3rd space” provided by the intense networking event open up to transformation of roles and reconfigurations of relationships.

We both understand that for long-term change to occur, the approach needs be sustained through continuous work, attention, effort and proper feedback loops installed to assure that declared commitments are upheld, iterated and developed along the way. Along this process, I will offer my services as an occasional consultant and workshop leader, but the work to sustain the network and the commitments made during the Future Search will be resting upon the Save the Children staff in Tensta, with support from the national strategic leadership.

CULTURE

In order for Save the Children to serve in this role as network initiator and sustainer, we both understand that it is of vital importance that the values of silo breaking, psychological safety, self-reflection, systemic approaches and daring to enter the vulnerability involved in a truly co-creative process, are practiced also within Save the Children itself. You have shared that some of the entrenched ways of working that have come to define large organizations – whether they are public or nonprofit – are common also in the culture of Save the Children, such as a willingness among staff to be told what to do, fear of the unknown, or relying heavily on more traditional roles of “opposer” or “saver” rather than collaborator and co-creator. You have told me that you have started a process of redefining these values, by “walking the talk”, redefining the overall strategy of Save the Children on national and regional levels, engaging members in visioning processes around the deeper “why” of the organization, and educating your staff about more serving leadership methods. During the process leading up to the Future Search forum, I will assist you in this endeavor, through scheduling coaching sessions in organizational change methods such as appreciative inquiry. According to this method, you identify and leverage aspects of the

organization that work according to the values you want to move towards. This could be specific individuals, teams, processes, subunits or structures, that through rewards systems, positive examples, or internal learning initiatives are amplified. While structuring and forming the specifics for the Future Forum, I also suggest that we test some of these methods within Save the Children itself, as pilot projects or workshops rather than a three day event, in an effort to make the organization more comfortable with their new role and the working methods that accompany it.

PROJECT OUTLINE

PHASE 1: Settling the agreement

- Agreement approved
- Process introduced to Save the Children staff in Tensta
- Form core working group
- Sketch out initial plan for the forum and the internal coaching with Save the Children
- Specify roles and responsibilities within this core group for the practical arrangements around the Future search event.

- *Note that my role will be overseeing the process from a strategic standpoint, and practical responsibilities such as booking spaces, ordering catering, coordinating stakeholders, and keeping running lists of practical matters will be divided between the Save the Children staff in Tensta.*

Outcomes: Outline of schedule and planning process, time commitments and payments.

Timing: Jan 1-Jan 15

40 hours, 1000 SEK/hour excl. taxes.

PHASE 2.1: Planning the Future Search event

- Identify stakeholders along with Tensta staff, including parent associations, youth centers, kindergardens, the municipality of Spånga-Tensta, representatives from Stockholm City, and other non profits in the area.
- Interview stakeholders to properly understand motivations, goals and apprehensions going into a process of this kind.
- Identify and hire additional staff to lead specific sections of the Future Search, such as art and theater pedagogues.
- Divide tasks and coordinate working group

Outcomes: Planning process, role division, stakeholder mapping, purpose and vision clarified, practical arrangements for actual event prepared, stakeholders coordinated and informed.

Timing: Jan 15 – April 15

300 hours, 1000 SEK/hour excl. taxes

PHASE 2.2 (parallel to phase 2.1): Coaching Save the Children

- Conduct in-depth interviews with national leadership within Save the Children to identify current state of the organization in regards to desired working culture
- Provide coaching of smaller teams within organization
- Arrange for testing of Future Search workshops within selected parts of the larger Save the Children organization as well as the staff in Tensta.

Outcomes: Opportunities, issues and visions within own organization clarified.

Timing: Jan 15 – April 15

60 hours, 1000 SEK/hour excl. taxes

PHASE 3: Future Search event

- Coordinate Save the Children staff, hired staff and participants.
- Oversee activities.

Outcomes: See objectives for event listed earlier in this proposal.

Timing: April 16-18

25 hours, 1000 SEK/hour excl. taxes

PHASE 4: De-brief of event

- Lead de-briefing sessions with Tensta staff and national leadership
- Compile document of shared visions, draft policies, strategic frameworks, process designs and action plans.
- Co-design process for how to move forward with Save the children staff.

Outcomes: Plan for sustained change effort outlined.

Timing: April 20–May 10

100 hours, 1000 SEK/hour excl. taxes

PHASE 5: Continuous support and coaching

- Ten check-ins over the following six months, in regards to change process and network development.
- Coaching and workshops according to needs, outlined in a separate agreement.

Outcomes: Support in network development and internal change work.

Timing: May 20 – Nov 20

30 hours, 1000 SEK/hour excl. taxes

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you!