

The Learning NGO Questionnaire

This questionnaire can be applied to whole organisations, a single department or section, a project or a work team. It is important to be clear about what level of 'organisation' you are thinking about before answering the questions and to be consistent throughout. When you have completed the questionnaire, please follow the instructions on the 'Analysing Your Scores' sheet.

The 'organisation' under consideration in this questionnaire is:

Read through each of the following statements and place a tick in the box which best describes your view.

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Staff are rewarded for the contribution they make to the organisation's learning eg through positive feedback, time off for study. employee recognition.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
2. The organisation uses systematic procedures for the regular monitoring, review and evaluation of all of its project, programme and advocacy activity. User views are actively sought and gathered as a matter of priority.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

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Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. All organisation members who have dealings with the 'outside world' are expected to gather and share relevant information. Their managers take an active interest in 'debriefing' them about the information they have gathered.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
4. Information flows freely throughout the organisation, crossing departmental, sectional and locational boundaries without hindrance. ie people do not hold on to information which would be useful to others.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
5. Learning from experience is seen as 'everyone's business' and not left to specialist units or senior managers.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
6. The organisation has mechanisms for 'remembering' the experience of its current and previous work through the development of readily accessible databases, resource / information banks and information retrieval systems.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

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Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. The development of strategy is deliberately organised as a learning process. Feedback loops are incorporated to enable continuous improvement in the light of the experience of what strategies were followed and which were abandoned.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
8. The organisation systematically uses its learning to improve its own practice (quality improvement) and / or to influence the policy and practice of other organisations (advocacy).	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
9. The organisation documents and makes its experience available for a wider audience without using unnecessary technical jargon eg through publications, newsletters, providing training, etc.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
10. Policy making involves people at most levels in the organisation, according to what they can contribute to the process and not simply their status.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

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Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. All written reports and key documents are cross-referenced and made easily accessible to all staff.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
12. Monitoring and evaluation reports (and field visit reports where appropriate) are routinely analysed to identify what has been learned from the work and what lessons could be applied in the future.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
13. The organisation has a wide range of mechanisms for sharing experience between staff in different teams, sections, departments and locations (eg regular meetings, action-learning sets, coaching and mentoring, newsletter production, organisational intranet, and/or the development of written procedures and induction / training manuals)	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
14. The organisation enters into open co-operative relationships with other organisations in order to share and encourage mutual learning from each other's experience.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

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Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
15. The organisation has enough built in capacity to encourage staff to take periods of time out from their daily operational responsibilities in order to reflect on their work experience and learn lessons from it.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
16. Sharing experience and knowledge through co-operation and collaboration between staff / volunteers in the organisation is given a high priority even when time and other resources are limited.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
17. Managers at all levels create a climate which encourages experimentation and acknowledges that mistakes are an inevitable part of this eg managers admit their own mistakes; blaming is minimised so that people can openly and honestly discuss the issues.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
18. The organisation creates and encourages formal and informal opportunities for individuals to share with others the lessons they have learned.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

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Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
19. The organisation encourages its staff to develop a wide range of contacts with other agencies and to actively learn from their experience. Networking is seen as an important and legitimate activity and time is allowed for this.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
20. It is easy to access information on the lessons learned from other parts of the organisation.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
21. The organisation is skilled at converting raw information from internal evaluations and research into useable knowledge.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
22. The organisation is not vulnerable to losing its experience when individuals leave. For example, staff who leave the organisation go through a systematically recorded de-briefing to ensure that the organisation retains as much as possible of their knowledge and contacts.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

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Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
23. The systems of planning, accounting, budgeting, financial reporting and other management processes are organised to assist learning.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
24. The organisation has a strategy for 'scaling up' its impact which reflects the learning it has developed on 'what works' and what does not.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
25. The organisation is prepared to change its practice and priorities to reflect new knowledge and insights in its efforts to constantly improve its effectiveness ie the organisation does not hold on to outdated work practices and priorities simply because change is 'uncomfortable'.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
26. Learning is built into the organisation through the development and updating of systems, operational procedures and other ways of sharing the lessons gained from individuals' experience.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

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Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
27. The organisation has a systematic database (not necessarily electronic) of all its main areas of work activity which can enable staff and 'outsiders' to identify where expertise resides.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
28. The organisation regularly focuses on a theme of its work and draws conclusions based on an analysis of all of its practice experience and an understanding of the current 'state of the art'.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
29. Staff have access to a wide range of communication media (including email) and are encouraged to share information using media (including electronic media such as the internet and bulletin boards).	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
30. Staff are encouraged to visit other organisations and are expected to write up and share with colleagues what they learned from their visit.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

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Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
31. Individuals, groups and sections view each other as working partners and constantly strive to find out and meet each others' expectations and needs.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
32. Resources and facilities for individual development are made available to all members of the organisation. eg systems for coaching and mentoring; guidance through management supervision or staff development specialists; access to distance learning and self-study materials; attendance at training events and conferences.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
33. People feel able to enquire about and challenge each others' (and their own) assumptions and biases ie double loop learning ¹ is encouraged.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
34. People at all levels of the organisation are expected and encouraged to draw lessons from their work and feed this learning to other parts of the organisation. Learning is built into job descriptions and workplans and forms an important part of supervision and staff appraisal agendas.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

¹ Double loop learning is a concept developed by Chris Argyris and Donald Schön. It is learning based on the questioning of deeply held assumptions.

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COMMENTS

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Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
35. The organisation is linked to a wide range of networks and uses its contacts with other agencies to gather useful knowledge and skills and to benchmark ² itself against best practice.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
36. The organisation's staff are skilled at making their personal knowledge and wisdom available to others ie they have been helped to learn how to learn and how to communicate.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
37. The organisation uses a continuous improvement approach when analysing the knowledge and experience gained from its practice. Staff are encouraged to constantly ask themselves "How could we do this better?"	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

² Benchmarking is the process of comparing an organisation's performance with the best practices of other organisations in key areas of activity. It involves establishing common standards against which individual organisations can assess their achievements as a way of setting targets for improving their performance.

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Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
38. The information function is given sufficient prominence and is resourced adequately to enable the organisation to keep its information system and record-keeping up to date.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
39. The learning gained by one part of the organisation is quickly made available to others even if at first it may appear to be of little immediate relevance.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
40. The organisation is constantly building its capacity and innovating based on what it has learned.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Notes: