

BOOSTER

PEER GROUP MODEL

**For the arts, culture
and event sectors**



Funded by the European Union –
NextGenerationEU



**Sustainable Growth
Programme for Finland**

BOOSTER is a peer group model that supports mental wellbeing. It is intended to promote the work ability of self-employed people, freelancers, grant recipients and sole proprietors in the arts, culture and events sectors.

“

The peer group was really good and gave me faith and self-confidence to promote my own employment, career direction and tools to promote my own occupational wellbeing.”

“

Right from the start, I felt I could breathe easier realising that I wasn't alone.”

Finnish Institute of
Occupational Health



Taiteen edistämiskeskus
Centret för konstfrämjande
Arts Promotion Centre Finland



Teme

cupore

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM PEER GROUP ACTIVITIES

A lot of research supports the benefits of peer support. Peers share enough in common with each other to understand each other's experiences and situations.

Peers can provide, for example:

- Information and tips
- A sense of hope, relief from worries, and ways to strengthen coping skills
- Support for growing as a person and a professional

In a peer group, one can see that participants are not alone and that perhaps others are also struggling with similar challenges.

Booster is not intended for resolving crisis situations or treating mental health problems.



HOW TO ORGANISE A BOOSTER PEER GROUP

- When organising groups and group discussions, it is advisable to limit the group size to a maximum of 10 persons.
- Meetings can be held either remotely or in person. Select one or the other, as hybrid events generally do not support an equal discussion.
- Reserve 2–3 hours for each meeting.
- In addition to the opening and closing meetings, select from seven optional themes that you would like to cover in your Booster group. Focus on one theme per meeting. For example:
 1. Meeting: Opening
 2. Meeting : Selected theme
 3. Meeting : Selected theme
 4. Meeting : Selected theme
 5. Meeting : Selected theme
 6. Meeting : Closing
- Try to organise the meetings according to the schedules of the individual participants.

THEMES FOR BOOSTER MEETINGS

OPENING MEETING

Grouping and common rules

SELECTED THEMES

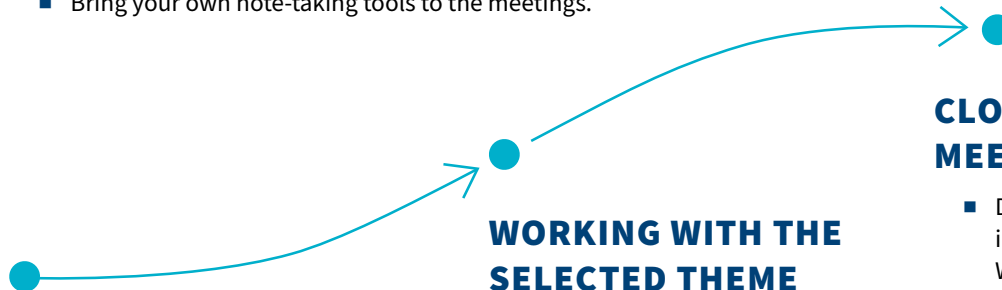
- Work ability and recovery
- Professional identity
- Self management and time management
- Developing and communicating your competence
- Money
- Collaborations and psychological safety
- Networking

CLOSING MEETING

Future planning and closing of group activities

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR EACH MEETING

- Agree on who will lead the discussion and manage the time.
- Remember to take breaks.
- Bring your own note-taking tools to the meetings.



OPENING THE MEETING

- Begin by exchanging news within the group. How are you today? What thoughts have arisen from the last discussion?
- Review the common rules for the meeting.

WORKING WITH THE SELECTED THEME

- Read together the introduction to the selected theme for the meeting.
- After reading the introduction perform a task related to the theme.
- Discuss solutions.

CLOSING THE MEETING

- Discuss the lessons and insights from the meeting. What can you take from the discussions at the meeting into your everyday life? What did you find important to you in the discussions?
- Discuss the observations that arose from the meeting. Where did you succeed as a group? How could you develop the activities of your group?

PEER ACTIVITIES CAN BE SUCCESSFUL WHEN

- Participants feel that they have sufficient resources for peer activities.
- Participation in the group is voluntary.
- Participants commit to joint activities. Everyone contributes their best to group activities.
- Discussions within the group are confidential. They are not discussed outside the group.
- Everyone in the group is equal.
- The group goes through the principles for a safer space together
 - these can be found on the next page or on the other side of this card.

PRINCIPLES FOR A SAFER SPACE

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Everyone is responsible for their words and actions. It is better to ask than to assume. We cannot know another person's experiences, thoughts, life situation, or other personal matters. Try to recognise your own potential position of power in relation to others and act accordingly.

LISTEN AND LEARN

Making mistakes and asking questions are part of growing and learning. Ask questions boldly and strive for constructive communication, both giving and receiving feedback. Change your actions accordingly.

RESPECT AND GIVE SPACE

Give space and make sure that everyone can participate in the discussion. Pay attention to how much you are talking and the accessibility of the language you are using. Explain terms that are not understandable to those outside your reference group.

INTERVENE

If possible, intervene in situations where safer space guidelines are not being followed.

DON'T ASSUME

Don't make assumptions based on appearance or behaviour. Similarly, don't make assumptions about someone's sexuality, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, values, socioeconomic background, health, or ability to function.

Sources:

Väestöliitto - the Family Federation of Finland: www.vaestoliitto.fi/vaestoliitto/turvallisemman-tilan-periaatteet/ (referenced 15.3.2024), Trade Union for Theatre and Media Finland: www.teme.fi/fi/16705-2/ (referenced 10.2.2024) and UN Association of Finland: www.ykliitto.fi/turvallinen-tila (referenced 10.02.2024).

OPENING MEETING

OPENING 1. INTRODUCTION AND COMMON GOALS

Getting to know each other and discussing the common goals of joint activities help ensure the smooth functioning of the group and mutual trust between members.

Introduction

Getting to know each other creates a foundation for interaction and trust between group members. As you get to know each other, you can understand each other's backgrounds, strengths and values. This helps reduce uncertainty and prejudice, which in turn encourages open and honest communication. As group members get to know each other and feel seen and heard, trust can begin to build. Trust allows them to share their opinions and ideas without fear.

Common goals

Goals guide actions. For a group process to be successful, it is important that all members share a common understanding of what they want to achieve in the group. This reduces conflicts and helps group members understand each other. Shared goals create commitment, because when goals are formulated together, each member has a sense of ownership and responsibility for achieving them.

TASKS 1 AND 2. INTRODUCTION AND COMMON GOALS

TASK 1. Introduction

Time: 30–45 min

Pair up and interview each other. Choose the questions you want to discuss. You can switch pairs to get to know more members of the group.

- What inspired you about your field in the first place? How does this motivation manifest in your work today?
- What has been your most significant success so far, and what did you learn from it?
- What has been the best piece of advice you have received during your career, and how has it influenced the way in which you work?
- What is the most important value you live by in your professional life, and how does it manifest in your daily work?
- In which situations do you feel most appreciated and realise the significance of your work?

TASK 2. Definition of common goals

Time: 30–45 min

- Reflect and write down independently for 5-10 minutes what you expect from your peer group. You can reflect on what is current in your work and what you would like the group's advice or feedback on, for example, something related to networks, skills, wellbeing, collaborations, finances or tools.
- Discuss your expectations in pairs.
- Discuss together the expectations shared by the entire group. What kind of goals can you set for the peer group based on these expectations?

OPENING 2. COMMON RULES

Creating common rules helps build a psychologically safer and more predictable environment in the group in which everyone knows how to act and how to treat others.

This promotes:

- Unity and group dynamics, as rules guide the behaviour of group members and facilitate the resolution of conflicts.
- A sense of security, as each member knows that there are limits and that everyone is treated equally.

Common rules also help maintain trust over the long term, as they provide all members with an understanding of how the group works. This reduces uncertainty and helps the group focus on what is actually being done.



TASK 3. COMMON RULES

Time: 30–45 min

Establish common rules as follows:

- Reflect on and write down independently for 5–10 minutes group processes you have been involved in. Write down successful experiences of working in groups (collaborative and group work, gatherings, events, etc.).
- In pairs, analyse why the process was successful. What was done right in the process? What were the conditions for success?
- In pairs, analyse and write down the factors behind the success. With your partner, form wishes for the group based on these conditions. How would you like to see you work together as a group?
- Write down the common wishes concerning rules. Make sure that everyone's wishes are written down so that they can be returned to later. You can write down the common rules on a whiteboard, on paper, or in an electronic document that is shared with everyone.
- Consider what you would do if a conflict or disagreement arises in the group.

TASK 4. AGREE ON PRACTICAL MATTERS

Time: 15–30 min

Agreeing on practical matters at the first peer group meeting creates a clear framework for action and helps ensure that the group can focus on common goals without ambiguity. Well-planned practical matters reduce misunderstandings, create a sense of security, and promote smooth operations.

Key practical matters that should be agreed on:

1. Schedules

- How often and how many times will the group meet?
- Duration and time of meetings?
- Will it be possible to change the agreed meeting times?

2. Meeting place and format

- Will the group members meet face-to-face or will the meetings be held remotely?
- If face-to-face, where will the meetings be held?
- If remotely, who will invite the participants to the remote meeting?

3. Roles and responsibilities of participants

- Will the group have a leader or facilitator to oversee the meetings? Will the leadership responsibility vary between meetings?

4. Confidentiality

- What confidentiality rules should be agreed on? Will all discussions be held within the group, or can they be discussed outside the group?

5. Participation and absences

- How will members notify about absences?
- What happens if a member has to leave the group early?

6. Communication and contacts between meetings

- How will group members stay in touch between meetings?
- Will there be a common channel for sharing materials or discussing between meetings?

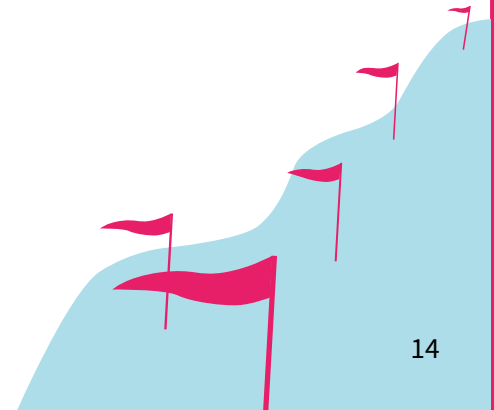
TASK 5. SELECT THEMES FOR THE MEETINGS

Time: 15–30 min

The number of meetings (5–9) is selected by the members, of which the opening meeting and closing meeting are part of the group's natural processes and therefore have been planned for you in advance. Select the themes for the other meetings by discussing them. Take into account that you will have time to discuss only one theme per meeting.

Themes you can select from:

- Work ability and recovery
- Professional identity
- Self management and time management
- Developing and communicating your competence
- Money
- Collaborations and psychological safety
- Networking



WORK ABILITY AND RECOVERY

OPENING 1. **BALANCING WORK RESOURCES AND DEMANDS**

Work resources

- Enable personal growth, learning and development
- Inspire and motivate
- Lighten the burden of work demands.

Example:

- Feeling that one's work is significant and meaningful
- Working in well-functioning groups and communities
- Freedom and opportunities to influence one's own work
- Opportunity to utilise one's own competence, varied and diverse work tasks

Work demands

- Require physical, mental or social effort to do the job.
- Can lead to stress and/or burnout if prolonged or excessive.

Example:

- Demands related to the content, quality and quantity of work (own and external demands)
- Financial uncertainty and irregular work
- Competition (funding and job opportunities)
- Feeling of loneliness and exclusion

**Identify the demands and resources of your job!
This way you can find ways to reduce the demands
and strengthen the resources.**

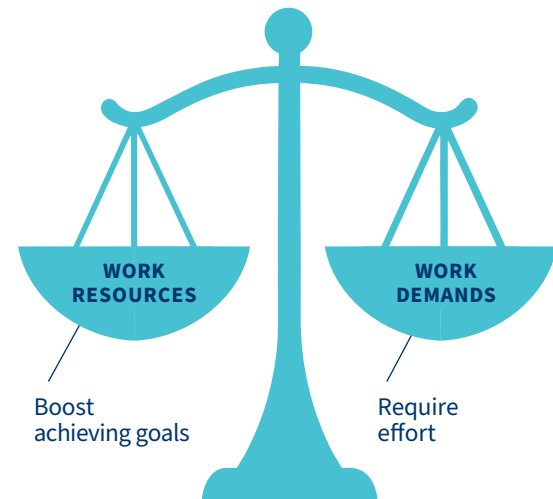
TASK 1. BALANCING WORK RESOURCES AND DEMANDS

Time: 30–45 min

**Reflect on the questions below independently
for 5–10 minutes:**

- What are the strengths of your own work?
- What inspires you and helps you cope?
- Do you need to balance the scales more?
- Do you need to reduce or increase the demand factors?
- What methods do you have to reduce the load factors?

Based on the questions, discuss together the factors that inspire you and support your coping skills at work, as well as the ways in which you have been able to influence your experiences of stress.



OPENING 2. **RECOVERY**

- Moderate, intermittent stress is a normal part of work and activates us in our activities.
- A healthy person can withstand short-term, intense stress peaks.
- Prolonged and excessive stress impairs functional capacity and wellbeing and can, at worst, lead to symptoms of burnout.
- Adequate recovery of physical, mental and social resources should occur both during the working day and in one's free time.
- Experiences of stress and effective recovery methods are individual. Look for and try out different methods to see which ones promote your recovery.

What promotes recovery

- Detaching your mind and body from work: do something completely different from your work during your free time.
- Relaxing: calm down and do something that does not require effort from you.
- Time for yourself: find time to do things you choose, not things others require.
- Developing new skills (not related to work) supports a sense of accomplishment and control.

TASK 2. RECOVERY

Time: 30–45 min

Reflect on the questions below independently for 5–10 minutes:

- What was your day like when you felt you were recovering well?
- What went well?

Discuss successful recovery experiences together. Consider whether you can find similarities between them and whether there are any methods among them that you could try in your own everyday life.



PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

OPENING 1: DEVELOPING YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

- Identity refers to a person's perception of themselves. Identity develops in interaction with other people.
- Professional identity refers to a person's perception of themselves in relation to their work.
- People often enter careers in the arts and culture sector through a hobby. It is common for a hobby to become more serious and progress through semi-professionalism to professionalism. In this case, the process is simultaneous with the development and moulding of one's own identity. This causes one's own identity to become intertwined with one's professional identity.

TASK 1. DEVELOPING YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Time: 30–45 min

Reflect on the questions below independently for 5–10 minutes:

- Who were your key influences at the beginning of your professional journey?
- What moments have been significant in the emergence and development of your own professional identity?
- How have your professionally significant skills or qualities developed?

Have a group discussion based on these questions.



OPENING 2. YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

- Identity is a lifelong process that is influenced by events in one's life, as well as by feedback and recognition from others. It is typical for values and goals to change throughout life.
- Key questions in building identity are: where am I coming from, who am I now, and what am I becoming?

TASK 2. YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Time: 30–45 min

Reflect on the questions below independently for 5–10 minutes:

- Recall a specific moment or event in which you were seen or recognised as a professional. What was the experience like?
- Reflect on your situation now. What would you need to be seen or recognised as a professional?
- What are three professional goals you would still like to achieve?

Have a group discussion based on these questions.



SELF MANAGEMENT AND TIME MANAGEMENT

OPENING 1. SELF MANAGEMENT

- Freelancers and self-employed people in the arts, culture and events sectors operate without a permanent workplace or work community, which means that there is no fixed management or supervisor structure. As a result, self management and time management skills play a key role in building a sustainable career path.
- Self-knowledge, awareness of one's own limits, and familiarity with working environments are essential for managing oneself.

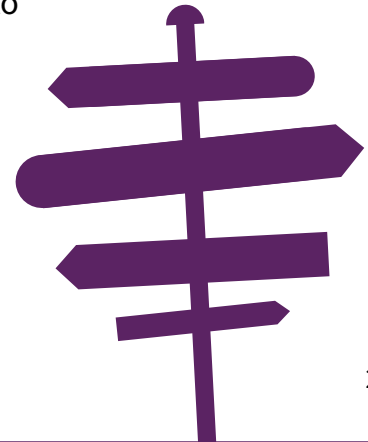
TASK 1. SELF MANAGEMENT

Time: 30–45 min

Reflect on the questions below independently for 5–10 minutes:

- What is good management?
- What is bad management?
- What kind of manager are you to yourself?
- How do you apply the characteristics of good management to managing yourself?

Have a group discussion based on these questions.



OPENING 2. TIME MANAGEMENT

Time management is an important part of organising your own work and managing yourself. In the arts, culture and events sectors, it is common for work to have an uneven rhythm on a daily, monthly and annual basis. Sometimes there is more work, sometimes too much, and sometimes there are quiet periods.

From the perspective of wellbeing and success at work, it is important that you set aside time for recovery and make sure you get enough sleep, exercise and nutrition.

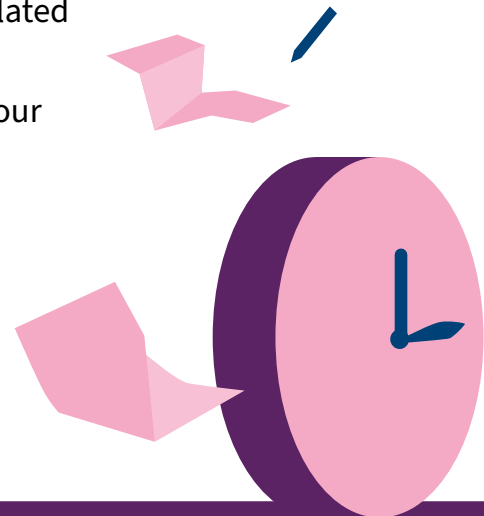
TASK 2. TIME MANAGEMENT

Time: 30–45 min

Reflect on the questions below independently for 5–10 minutes:

- What do you find challenging in organising your own work and time? How do you balance, for example, the relationship between your own creative work, related administrative tasks, and possible other work?
- What methods do you use to plan and manage your own time?

Have a group discussion based on these questions.



DEVELOPING AND COMMUNICATING YOUR COMPETENCE

OPENING 1. WHAT COMPETENCE DO YOU HAVE?

- Competence is the ability to utilise and apply one's skills, knowledge and abilities to achieve the goals one has set for oneself.
- Competence is based on the skills that a professional has learned and uses in their work.
- Skills are specific areas of expertise that are needed to perform one's work. They help one do something well, such as drawing, composing, writing or directing. Think of it this way: the shine of a diamond depends on the skill of the polisher.
- Working in the arts, culture and events sectors requires wide-ranging expertise in addition to core competence in the field. This includes, for example, knowledge of one's own sector, problem-solving skills, social skills, and skills in creating and maintaining relationship networks, applying for funding, pricing one's own work and negotiating.
- Competence develops throughout life in all the situations in which we operate. Competence can be developed through participation in training and aiming for a degree. However, most often, developing competence means learning new skills, taking on new challenges, and observing, analysing, and utilising what one learns in new situations.

TASK 1. : WHAT COMPETENCE DO YOU HAVE?

Time: 30–45 min

Reflect on the questions below independently for 5–10 minutes. Make two lists from the answers.

- **List 1:** What competence do you have?
- **List 2:** What competence do you need?

- Discuss the lists together.
- You can add to your own lists based on the answers given by others.
- Discuss your observations. What competence do you have that others could benefit from? What competence do we all have? What could we learn from each other?

OPENING 2. COMMUNICATING YOUR COMPETENCE

- Putting your competence into words is important in situations where you want to offer your work to someone else.
- This requires identifying your core expertise. What are you really good at? It is worth emphasising the types of competence that offer opportunities to do the kind of work you want to do.
- Competence is meaningful to others when they are interested in it or need it. When you talk about your competence, it is worth using examples that engage the listener in words that they understand.

TASK 2. COMMUNICATING YOUR COMPETENCE

Time: 30–45 min

Write a short presentation about yourself that communicates:

- What do you do?
- Who do you do it for?
- Why do you do it?

Use 10–15 minutes to write your presentation.

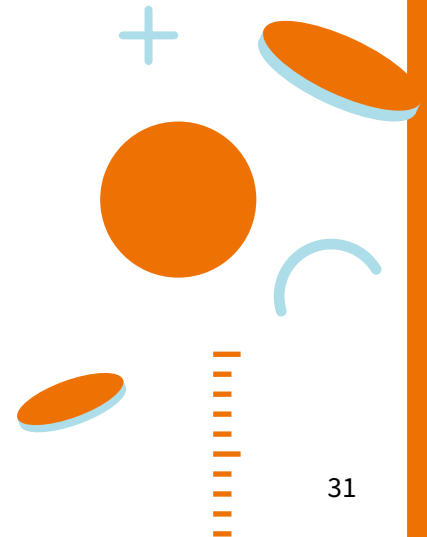
Present your competence to others.



MONEY

OPENING 1. FINANCIAL PLANNING

- Money is a central part of working life.
- Irregularity and uncertainty in work are often associated with the everyday lives of self-employed people and freelancers. Therefore, planning your own finances is an important skill.
- It is a common experience that social support systems are poorly suited to the needs and situations of freelancers and self-employed people in the arts, culture and events sectors.



TASK 1. **FINANCIAL PLANNING**

Time: 30–45 min

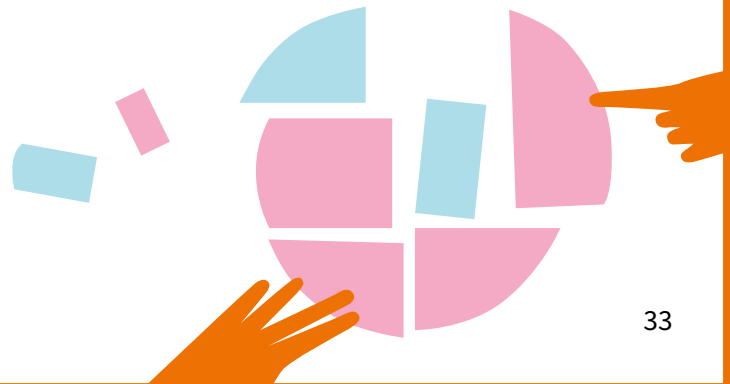
Reflect on the questions below independently for 5–10 minutes:

- How do you plan your own finances if your income is irregular?
- What concrete methods have you used to plan your own finances?
- What experiences do you have with the suitability of social support networks for freelance work in the arts, culture or events sectors? (For example, unemployment insurance or other social benefits.)

Have a group discussion based on these questions.

OPENING 2. **NEGOTIATION SKILLS**

- Negotiation skills are an essential part of working life skills. They can be practiced and developed.
- Often, freelancers or self-employed people are the underdog in a negotiation situation, especially when the negotiating partner is a large organisation. Challenging situations may also arise when negotiating financial matters among acquaintances.



TASK 2. **NEGOTIATION SKILLS**

Time: 30–45 min

Reflect on the questions below independently for 5–10 minutes:

- What are your experiences with negotiations related to money?
- Who do you discuss money with?
- What things do you take into account when pricing your skills, works or services?
- Is money taboo in the arts, culture and events sectors?

Have a group discussion based on these questions.

COLLABORATIONS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

OPENING 1. PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Psychological safety means that everyone has the opportunity to use their voice, express their opinions, and be accepted in the group.



Source: Edmondson, Amy C. 2018:
The Fearless Organization.

TASK 1. PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Time: 30–45 min

Reflect on the questions below independently for 5–10 minutes:

- Recall a group or situation in which you felt psychologically safe. The group or situation could be related to work or other aspects of your life.
- Think about what kind of actions in the situation created psychological safety.
- What could increase psychological safety in the groups or situations in which you are currently working?

Have a group discussion based on these questions.

OPENING 2. DEVELOPING COLLABORATIONS

- Working together and belonging to a group are basic human needs. Effective collaborations promote wellbeing.
- Collaborating is a goal-oriented activity that can be used to build new job opportunities for oneself.
- At its best, collaboration generates new ideas, new learning and unexpected discoveries.
- Developing collaborations begins with identifying current and future interesting partners. Next, it is a good idea to consider why you are collaborating. What is the goal of your collaboration?
- When developing collaborations, it is essential to show appreciation and build trust. Appreciation can be shown with small gestures and by giving feedback. Trust is built through actions and deepens over the long term. In a collaborative relationship, both parties must take responsibility for developing it.
- It is worth developing forms of collaboration by trying them out step by step. This also allows for mutual learning. The key to development is to create a common understanding of the challenge or problem to which a solution is being sought.

TASK 2. DEVELOPING COLLABORATIONS

Time: 45–60 min

Reflect independently on the following questions and write down for 10–15 min:

1. Who are your most important partners in your activities or work?
2. How is valuing people reflected in your collaborations?
3. How do you build trust with your partners?
4. What will you do in the future to improve your collaborations even further?

Have a group discussion based on your observations.
What are the prerequisites for good collaboration?
What kind of collaboration is good for you?



NETWORKING

OPENING 1. **BENEFITS OF NETWORKING**

Networking can be very useful, for example in expanding and developing one's activities, as well as in supporting a self-employed person's own wellbeing. Many entrepreneurs have also received help from networks for coping with loneliness. However, networking requires time and effort, which is why networking can seem challenging.

Networks are very important for the self-employed. They can help you find partners and reach new employers or customers. Networking with other self-employed people can be very useful. With a colleague, you can share thoughts and concerns that others may find difficult to understand. Networking therefore supports both your work and your wellbeing.

Source: Airila, Auli & Bergbom, Barbara 2017: Verkostot pienyrittäjän tukena.

TASK 1. **NETWORK MAP**

Time: 30–45 min

Draw a map of your own network for 10–15 min:

- You can start by drawing a stick figure of yourself in the middle of a piece of paper.
- Add your professional network. Think about how far away different partners are from you (close network, external network).
- Write down ways you could expand your professional networks.
- List the parties you would like to network with and that would be useful.
- Remember to add networks that support your own wellbeing to the map.

Jakakaa toisillenne ajatuksia ja havaintoja kartan tekemisestä 15–30 min. Tässä vaiheessa teidän ei tarvitse vielä esitellä karttoja toisillenne, sillä sen vuoro tulee seuraavan alustuksen jälkeen.

OPENING 2. WHAT HELPS YOU SUCCEED IN NETWORKING?

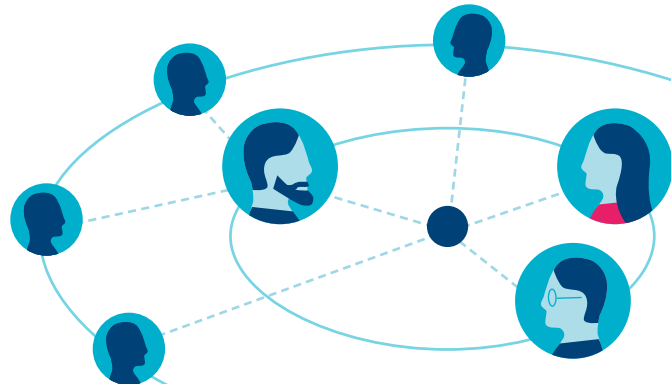
- **Common goal and objective.** A network should have a common goal and objective. Each party must benefit from the network or gain added value for their own activities.
- **Trust.** A network is based on trust. It is built by discussing and agreeing on common rules of the game. It is important to get to know the different parties in the network and understand their activities and goals. It is a good idea to make clear rules for the network's activities at the beginning of the collaboration: what are the rights and obligations of those who belong to the network, what is the division of tasks, what kind of agreements are needed? Honesty and openness increase trust. It is also important to be worthy of trust yourself.
- **Commitment.** Networking requires a commitment to collaboration and interaction. Commitment also helps in the formation of long-term partnerships. On the other hand, there are also loose networks that do not require continuous and time-consuming commitments.
- **Reciprocity.** A network is based on reciprocity. In the network, you receive and give to others. You must be prepared to share your own expertise and be willing to receive the views and knowledge of other members of the network.

Source: Airila, Auli & Bergbom, Barbara 2017: Verkostot pienyrittäjän tukena.

TASK 2. **PRESENT YOUR NETWORK MAP**

Time: 30–45 min

- Present your network map to the group.
- Listen as others take turns presenting their own networks. Give them the gift of an idea, symbol or image that will help them grow or develop their networks.



CLOSING MEETING

OPENING 1. **CONCLUSION OF THE PROCESS**

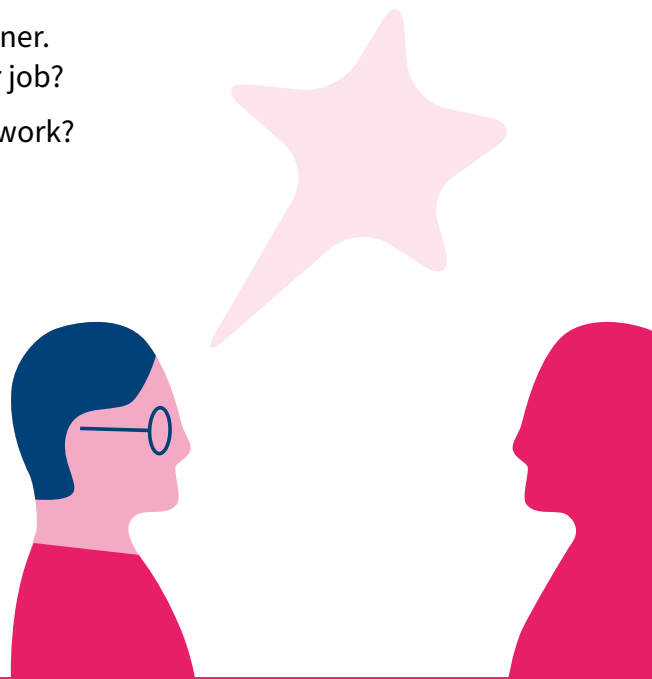
Every group has a beginning and an end. Actively ending a group closes the shared process and helps with separation. Ending allows for the group to examine and reflect on the issues shared, both individually and collectively. It provides an opportunity to show gratitude to both the process and peers.



TASK 1. APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEW

Time: 30–45 min

- Describe your own professional skills to your partner. What factors and qualities make you good at your job?
- What do you value most about yourself and your work? Don't be modest!
- Describe a highlight of your career. What made it significant to you?
- What do you dream of doing professionally?



OPENING 2. **EVALUATION OF THE GROUP PROCESS**

- Evaluation is an important part of the group process. It is used to examine shared successes and development needs for future activities. Giving and receiving constructive feedback are essential skills in all human interactions. Feedback given in a respectful manner can be a lifelong resource and opportunity for development.

TASK 2. EVALUATION OF THE GROUP PROCESS

Time: 30–45 min

Reflect on your shared peer group process.

- What was successful?
- What was challenging?
- What will you take away from the overall process?
- What would you like to say to your peers at the end?



THANK YOU!

**Thank yourself and the group.
You have worked together to
strengthen your wellbeing.**

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