

Lessons learned session for a project



The Lesson Learned process is an important means to periodically – at least at the end of the project – collect and evaluate experiences of activities, to learn from them and to develop activities based on the learned.

Matti Vuori



Contents

<u>Basic idea & rationale</u>	3
<u>Essential elements of the Lessons Learned process</u>	4
<u>Success factors of the meeting</u>	5
<u>Pitfalls of the meeting</u>	6
<u>Script of the meeting</u>	7
<u>Substance & agenda of the Lessons Learned meeting</u>	9
<u>Checklist for identifying successful things</u>	10
<u>Checklist for identifying things that didn't go so well</u>	11
<u>Session / process tools</u>	12



Basic idea & rationale

- When a project ends, a meeting is held to reflect on how everything went.
 - To capture the lessons learned from each participant.
- Why?
 - Project collaboration is not easy.
 - One needs to consciously learn from it and improve project by project.
 - Learning benefits from this kind of process where each party can tell their opinions and experiences.
 - The participants learn themselves and the experiences can be shared in all organisations so that the next project's personnel will benefit from them:
 - Can build on the existing strengths.
 - Will not make the same mistakes – will not disappoint other parties.
 - Can improve action.
 - Can increase knowledge on project work, which will increase agility and ability to adapt in new situations.



Essential elements of the Lessons Learned process

- Collecting the experiences during the project. Part of them are documented in various information systems
- A Lessons Learned meeting where the learned things are processed by discussing
- Documenting the learned things and communicating them to the rest of the organization
- Improvements in activities based on the learned things
- Utilizing the learned things in the next project



Success factors of the meeting

- A genuine will to learn and develop
- Preparation
- Utilizing a tried process of Lessons Learned
- An impartial and objective meeting leader
- Democracy – the project leader does not dominate
- Equal opportunity for each to present their views
- Discussing about things and facts, not persons
- Openness and honesty
- A balance between discussion and efficiency
- The meeting leads to informing and activity



Pitfalls of the meeting

- No preparation. The participants are not given an opportunity to prepare
- The project manager has analyzed things too thoroughly beforehand and utilizes the meeting to inform others of his/her view
- Too many participants
- People are afraid to speak up in the presence of some participants
- No report is made
- Report is not sent to appropriate people and thus it cannot be utilized for improving things



Script of the meeting 1/2

- Opening & presenting the meeting:
 - Goal is to learn, in order to improve things
 - We'll go through the project's problems, but we'll discuss things, not about who is guilty
 - We also identify things that went well
 - We try to find things that when taking into consideration, next projects will go through even better
 - The things discussed will not be forgotten. They are communicated to the personnel and to the management so that improvements can be planned
 - Everyone has to give their input for our shared learning
 - The nature of the meeting is interactive, aiming forwards



Script of the meeting 2/2

- Going through the item list
 - Successful things in people's minds – so that the discussion starts in a positive way
 - Then the negative ones
 - Systematically going through different areas of the project
 - A summary of learned things, most essential discoveries
- During the meeting the identifications are typed to the Lessons Learned report projected on screen



Substance & agenda of the Lessons Learned meeting

- What was good in the project? What thing succeeded particularly well?
- What was bad? Where could we have done better?
- What would we have expected from the other party (or parties)? More of something, something different, less of something?
- Systematic check: How did all the elements of project succeed.
 - Use a checklist / mindmap that suits the project type.
- What new things did we learn during the project? How are we going to utilize them in the future?
- What should we do differently in the next project? How do we ensure that the way of acting really changes?
- How do we communicate the learned things to the rest of the organization?



Checklist for identifying successful things

10(12)



- What has any interest group praised?
- Did we manage to produce positive surprises?
- Were there things that we assumed to be difficult but that turned out to be easy?
- Were there some things present that have always been problems, but to which a solution was now found?
- When things become routine and they are not even noticed, they go well. What are the things that have become routine?
- Did we manage to improve our action during the project?
- Did we create something during the project, that can be reused later?



Checklist for identifying things that didn't go so well



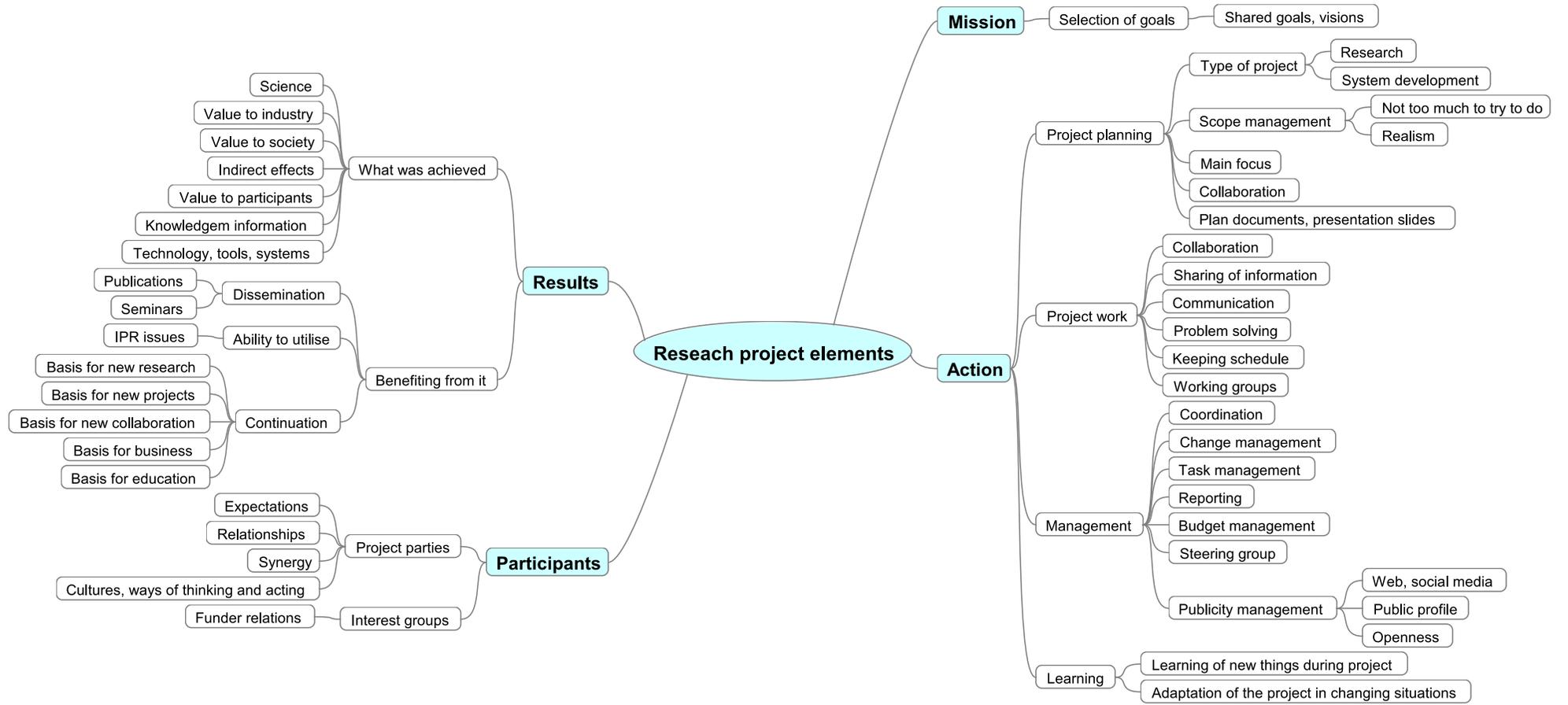
- What have any interest groups given bad feedback of?
- Has some party had to specifically / repeatedly ask for something?
- Were there any things that were assumed to be easy but turned out to be difficult?
- When one has to spend extra effort on things that are normally a routine, they are not happening well. Were there situations like that?
- Were mistakes or errors made?
- Were we late on something? Why?
- Did we do unnecessary work (incl. duplicate)?
- Was something essential not done at all?



Session / process tools

- Report template to collect discussions directly.
- Collection of items in for example:
 - Directly typing in.
 - Yellow notes.
 - Whiteboard.
 - Flip board.
 - *Anything goes – if it works for you!*





Lessons Learned report: [Project]

Author(s)		Date	
Project phase			

What was good in the project? What thing succeeded particularly well?
What was bad? Where could we have done better?
What would we have expected from the other parties? More of something, something different, less of something?
How did the project elements go (see separate list / mindmap)? List any relevant issues that supplement things already listed.
What new things did we learn during the project? How are we going to utilize them in the future?
What should we do differently in the next project? How do we ensure that the way of acting really changes?
How do we communicate the learned things to the rest of the organization?
<i>Other things?</i>