TOOL | START, STOP, CONTINUE

Do you or your team feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of things that need to be done? Particularly for opportunistic organizations who are simply trying to keep the lights on, this can lead to burnout and a fragmented team that are all chasing different objectives. The simple framework of Stop, Start, Continue, can help you build clarity and alignment, and identify activities that might not be contributing to your overall mission.

USING THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU:
- Build group alignment around change
- Encourage a group to think about what they need to **stop** doing in order to **start** doing something new
- Explicitly connect your group's actions to your goals

OVERVIEW

This tool is one that can apply to a broad range of situations, but it is particularly helpful in facilitating conversations that align a group's activities or when a change is being initiated (e.g., we want to take more time to invest in testing new services to provide to the community). The tool is a simple framework that can help guide a group through the process of stating a shared goal and then identifying activities that the group should **stop doing, start doing, and continue doing** to work towards that goal. It is most helpful when:

- **Initiating change:** Whenever groups are being asked to change, it can often feel that new activities are being added to everyone's plate without taking any off. If that tension isn't resolved, teams can burn out or the change may not take root. This tool provides a clear way for group members to discuss the tradeoffs that are needed to make change.

- **Aligning team efforts:** When it feels like a group is fragmented in its work and people are fighting over resources or questioning where each other is investing their time, this tool is a good way to have a grounding conversation that helps everyone connect to how their actions support a common goal.

THE TOOL

This tool is quite straightforward to use, and you can feel free to improvise with how to apply it best to your context. Here, we've provided an explicit way to connect the **Start, Stop, Continue** actions to a common goal. This tool is best used on a whiteboard or flipchart so that everyone can see and contribute to what is being captured.

STEP ONE: *Write your team's common goal, mission, or the change that you are working towards here. If you don't have one developed, you can proceed through the activity with a draft. We recommend that you spend the time to help your group align on a common goal, and this exercise can help group members think through the implications of different goals.*

OUR GOAL IS…

STEP TWO: *Lead the group through brainstorming activities to **stop, start, and continue.** This is best done by focusing on one column at a time until all ideas are exhausted, and then moving onto the next column.*

START	**STOP**	**CONTINUE**
What are we not doing that we should be doing to achieve our goal?	What are we doing that is not helping us achieve our goal?	What are we doing already that is valuable in achieving our goal?

STEP THREE: *Revisit each of the sections. Sometimes what has been discussed will spark new ideas or additions. As well, if it feels like any one column has too few or too many items in it, this is a good opportunity to challenge the group to think more deeply about that area.*

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PRINCIPLES FOR USING THIS TOOL

- You can work through the columns in whichever order you choose. We find it most helpful to begin with the column that the group has the most energy around (e.g., if the group is overwhelmed by tasks, beginning with **STOP** will allow them to voice their concerns first).
- Use this opportunity to challenge a group's thinking. If it feels that everyone is eager to suggest ideas to **START** doing, ask them where they will find the time for all those activities or to prioritize the activities that have the greatest value for the shared goal.
- If a group is struggling to come up with activities, ask them to write down the things that they have been a part of within the last month. This usually generates a long list of activities.
- Help facilitate alignment. Using this tool will surface tensions and disagreements. A clearly articulated and agreed-upon goal is important, as well as careful facilitation.

THE TOOL IN PRACTICE

Consider the following example of a community recreation centre – the goals of these types of centres vary greatly, as do the types of services and activities that they focus on. In this example, this centre decided that they wanted to focus on helping residents feel included and valued, leading to some interesting decisions about what they would and wouldn't do.

> OUR GOAL IS…
> All members feel included, welcomed, and valued for exactly who they are today.

START	STOP	CONTINUE
What are we not doing that we should be doing to achieve our goal?	What are we doing that is not helping us achieve our goal?	What are we doing already that is valuable in achieving our goal?
• Engaging members to co-design the programs and services we offer • Supporting members in suggesting or facilitating programming • Finding volunteers who represent our diverse and marginalized community members	• Running costly educational and training programs that our members do not feel are helpful or make them feel inadequate • Making sobriety a requirement for participation • Running programs that are facilitated by people from outside our community	• Outreach and promoting our programming • Providing staff and volunteers to welcome members at the door

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This example is not intended to be a prescription for building inclusion, rather it should demonstrate how focusing **Start, Stop, Continue** around a clear goal can help frame the conversation, and help us have challenging conversations about work that we may be invested in (e.g., training programs that our members do not value) that is not supporting our goal.

DIVING DEEPER
[1]Learn more about how to build a common agenda in this [5-step guide](#) by Paul Born
[2]Explore a great [survey resource](#) that uses this framework to solicit community feedback

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