

Chapter 5. Assessment and Preparation for VISION Processes

It is essential that a VISION process is based on a thorough assessment and analysis of the specific context in which it will be implemented. Pilot tests of the method, conducted within the URGE project, suggest that VISION frequently fosters an atmosphere of openness and trust amongst participants and facilitators. This dynamic necessitates careful management and raises significant ethical considerations. First and foremost, the facilitator must recognise the power inherent in their role. Specifically, they occupy a position of influence when guiding the dialogue, and this responsibility must be approached with respect for the trust participants grant them to create a safe and supportive environment. The confidentiality of the space must be emphasised from the outset, particularly in situations in which participants come from various positions of power and when the VISION process is intended for advocacy purposes, where understanding the unique dynamics and challenges of the environment can significantly influence outcomes. In situations in which open conflicts arise within a group, a mediation approach may be more appropriate rather than continuing with the VISION process. Furthermore, it is important to declare the purpose for using the method, especially if applied in mandated social work settings. Whilst both classic social work and VISION share an ethical commitment to wellbeing, they differ in their approach in one important regard: whilst social work often accompanies a set purpose, protreptic practice encourages reflection without a fixed goal. In many cases, social workers operate under specific mandates and policies, focusing on interventions aimed at improving the wellbeing and the lives of service users. By contrast, protreptic practice emphasises reflection as the primary outcome, allowing actions to organically emerge. Thus, VISION requires careful consideration of its purpose and participant needs, including assessing if a results-oriented approach is better, and in order to avoid implying openness if it is not genuine.

Assessing these elements requires using the preparation checklist below. Facilitators must tailor the VISION methodology to the target group's needs, which involves evaluating which components will best serve participants. In social work, the process begins with an analysis of needs, resources, and goals. Thus, it is important to identify meaningful objectives for participants, enticing them to personally engage with the process. Some VISION elements may be more beneficial, necessitating adjustments to foster reflection and open-mindedness. Strategic planning of a dialogue is crucial, for which the preparation schedule may inspire and guide the effective design of the dialogue.

The checklist in Table 1 is based on pilot tests of VISION conducted within the URGE project and established social work assessment criteria, such as those found in Karen Healy's (2012) *Social Work Methods and Skills* (2012).

Table 1. Preparation checklist*

Considerations	Reflections
What are the needs, resources, and barriers of participants?	
Does the diversity of the group require you to take any special precautions (e.g., power dynamics, hierarchy, language, etc.)?	
What would be a meaningful purpose about which participants could meet?	
What values in relation to this purpose are relevant to explore? Should the group choose the value freely, will you provide it to them, or will you present a few values from which they can choose?	
Is there something in your own role or the organisational framework you need to consider (e.g., power balances, reputation, value base, access to the target group, etc.)?	
To which resources do you have access (e.g., time, space, funds, knowledge, competencies, etc.)?	
Based on your analysis, would a verbal or a more creative approach work better? Or would a combination work best?	
What would be a suitable meeting place (e.g., neutral territory, good atmosphere, openness, etc.)?	
How do you safeguard the group such that they feel safe participating? How will you ensure confidentiality?	
Would it be helpful to present participants with something about which they can meet—such as a common third/ creative input?	
Can you offer something that makes them feel welcomed, appreciated, and cared for (e.g., food, drink, recognition, a story, etc.)?	
How do you invite people so that their curiousness, open-mindedness, and sense of togetherness are ignited?	

How do you introduce the method in a meaningful way and introduce your own role as a facilitator?	
What tools, exercises, and creative activities from the VISION Handbook can you use?	
How do you end the process in a positive way and how will you debrief participants and yourself?	
If used for advocacy purposes, how do you assist the group in bringing their voices forward (e.g., power mapping using the power cube, dual leadership, other ways, etc.)?	
What other things do you need to consider?	

**This checklist is also available as a cut-out sheet in Appendix A.*

Chapter 5 references

Healy, K. (2012). *Social work methods and skills: The essential foundations of practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.