

**ENRD Pilot Network Support Unit (NSU) Peer-to-Peer Training
Programme**

**PILOT MODULE 2:
Practicing the RICA Method / Increasing Stakeholder
Involvement**

14 March 2013, Åre, Sweden



Notes and Observations from Pilot Module 2

With thanks to the Swedish Rural Network for their hospitality and generous support of this training event

Getting Started - the RICA Method



Welcome to the Notes and Observations from the second module of the ENRD pilot network support unit (NSU) 'peer-to-peer' training programme. The training day was kindly hosted by the Swedish Rural Network and the chairman of the network, Mr Peter Melin, welcomed around 50 people to the training from 19 networks, including the ENRD, 15 national networks and 3 regional networks (see **Annex 1** – List of Participants).

The theme of Module 2 was 'Increasing Stakeholder Involvement' and the entire training day was organised and run within the framework of a methodology known as the **RICA method**.

The RICA method is a guided participatory process that makes it possible to involve many people in solving a clearly defined challenge through a process of innovation, change and development. The process is based on an interactive dialogue where all participants contribute equally and outputs are real

solutions to the common challenge. It has been successfully applied by its developers (www.rika.se) to many businesses and governmental agencies in Sweden and further afield.

The Swedish NSU started using the RICA method in 2011 as a new and active way of supporting rural entrepreneurs and it has been extensively used since then to engage a broad range of stakeholders in building creative solutions to important rural development challenges identified through the Swedish Rural Network. Further information about how the Swedish NSU has been using the method can be found [here](#).

It was decided that the most effective way to introduce the method to other networks was to actually take participants in the training module through the four main stages of the methodology - **Research, Ideas, Concepts and Action**. In order to do this it was necessary to begin with a question or a "challenge" for applying the RICA Method. In keeping with the overall theme of the training module the challenge was proposed as:

"How to increase the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development?"

This challenge was based upon the first aim for national rural networks that is listed in paragraph 2 of Article 55 of the [legislative proposals](#) on support for rural development by the EAFRD in 2014-2020.

At the end of module 2 it was therefore hoped that all participants would have acquired both:

- new knowledge about an alternative methodology for hosting participatory and result-orientated discussions with rural stakeholders, **and**;
- some ideas about how to increase the involvement of these stakeholders in the implementation of rural development policy.

The Powerpoint slides used for guiding participants through the RICA process can be viewed [here](#).

A video of the final results in the form of a series of short role plays on the theme of "How to increase the involvement of stakeholders in rural development?" can be viewed [here](#).

Reflections on the RICA Method



The RICA method is a very interesting technique that has been used to great effect – and with good results – by the Swedish NSU. The RICA method was developed originally for a more "entrepreneurial" rather than a "policy environment", so the use of the method during training module was an interesting exploration of its transferability.

Below we have collected some reflections from the facilitators, and some participants, on i) what worked well, and less well, with the method, and; ii) how the method might be adapted for future use in a more policy-orientated context.

Further useful comments can be found in **Annex 2** – Results of Feedback on Training Module 2.

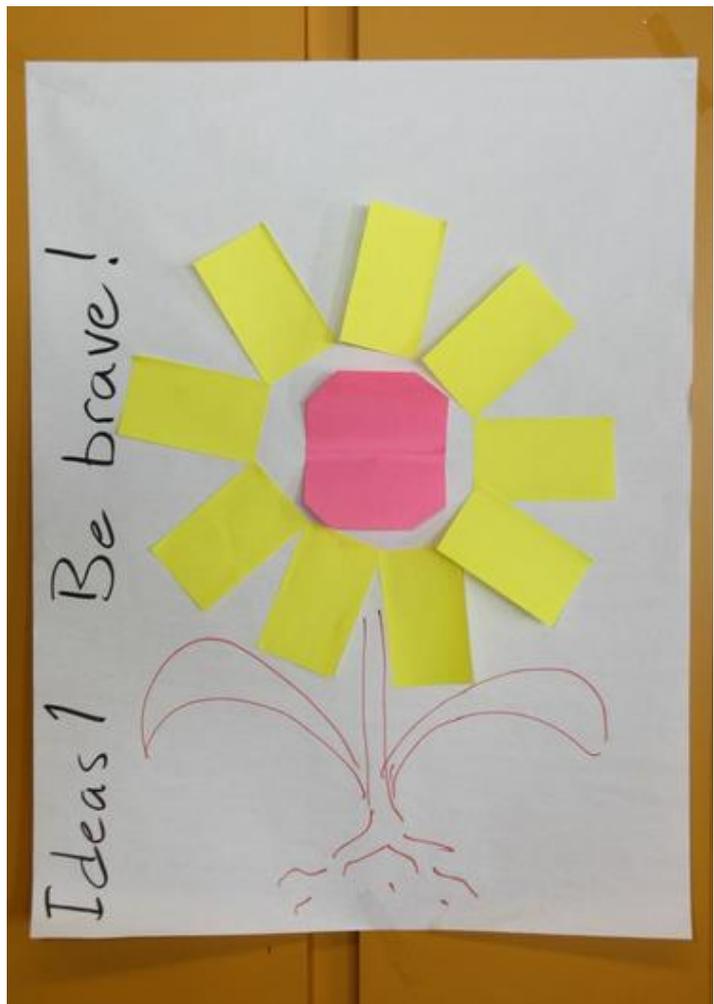
What Worked Well?

- “I liked the way our Swedish colleagues planned the whole process. I think that details such as the nice presentation, flipcharts, post-its, detailed guidance etc. for the secretaries and others involved matter a lot for this process!”
- “There were some specific steps in the process that I liked very much, including: i) Be Brave and think outside of the box! This was really interesting step to observe and there was a clear (creative) impact upon group thinking during subsequent steps, and; ii) Mixing up the groups during the concept phase - I was really amazed by the level of critical review and cross-fertilisation of ideas that occurred during this step”.
- “I liked the RICA method because it provided a nice, structured way for building-up discussions through different steps / stages. The specific tasks in each phase were useful for generating discussion and I also liked the clearly defined time-frame for each step”.
- “It was important that we worked in teams to facilitate the process - this was so much better than trying to guide this kind of process on our own!”
- “To me the level of discussions was good and interesting overall, despite a few language limitations from time-to-time. There was a real willingness / interest to learn from other NRN experiences and to build relationships on the spot”.

- “We became more productive when our facilitator encouraged us to spend a couple of minutes writing down our own ideas before discussing. This avoided the same people on each table having to take the lead, and ensured everyone had to contribute in a more organized/structured way”.
- “The final Action phase of the method was great and went well beyond my expectations. It was a good conclusion to the process and put everyone into a very positive state of mind which - I think - contributed to an outcome that we did not fully anticipate, namely, effective team-building and the bonding of a very diverse group of characters from a wide range of cultural / institutional contexts”.
- “The action phase worked very well and gave everybody a chance to get involved. Some people were a little shy, but they still contributed. And of course the final ‘videos’ were really funny and a good way to present the results of the process”.
- “I was amazed how quick some of the participants went from hesitation and reluctance to participate in the role play, to acting with energy in front of everybody!”

What Worked Less Well?

- “Overall for me the day was very positive, although I think that maybe we were too ambitious trying to incorporate both the training and the content. People were focusing more on the method and this is maybe why the content was not as deeply explored as it could have been”.
- “Sometimes we felt like we had too much time for some steps and also that some of the steps in the different phases were missing so that we were leaping over parts of the logic in the process”.
- “As a facilitator / process leader I struggled with the logic of the Concept phase. We therefore modified the process on-the-spot to create something that we felt more comfortable with - and it worked!”
- “As a general point, I still do not fully understand the function / added value of the voting undertaken within certain steps of the process - it did not work well in our group”.
- “I am hesitating about the voting system. This valuing of people and their ideas as part of a process we used to promote creative and inclusive discussion makes me uncomfortable”.
- “I think that the challenge we used was too difficult for learning about this new method for interactive discussions. I think it would have been better to use an easier topic for the challenge”.





- “I agree that the challenge we used was a little bit too complicated or maybe not tangible enough for us to have an easy way of applying the RICA method. But on the other hand I cannot see so many tangible and simple challenges that we could have discussed without having to deal with an imaginary project”.
- “In our group we lost the energy in the process after lunch. I don't know why, but I can guess that the complexity of the task confused people”.
- “The phase when participants should think outside the box and make a symbol was difficult in our group. They needed a lot more time than originally given to them, although the final result was OK”.
- “The main logic of the process didn't work that well for me and I found that the links between the outcomes from one phase / step to another was often not clear. In other words, the phases were a bit disconnected”.
- “To me not all the steps were equally relevant. Maybe more emphasis should have been put on the ‘out-of-the-box’ step since the following steps were clearly linked to the concepts developed during this activity”.
- “For me the RICA process logic was a bit confusing at some point and led to some quite basic conversations to differentiate actions from objectives. This was not because we had a lack of understanding about the difference between them, but because of the way the questions / steps were constructed. We lost a lot of time breaking down and re-defining the same objective with different words when I don't really think it was needed”.
- “I personally didn't find that the outcomes - in terms of specific actions to the proposed challenge - were relevant or innovative enough to justify the amount of time that was expended. On the other hand, it was a great opportunity for the participants to share and reflect upon some issues in their everyday work and to focus on the need to work-out / improve relations / build trust and clarify functions from different roles, levels and perspectives”.

- “Whilst some of the participants were clearly struggling to understand the logic of the process, for others it seemed to work perfectly well. I’m wondering if this is related to the different work environments that people were coming from. Unfortunately, this made us lose time, and in some cases, also the focus. Although overall we managed to find a good balance and I think we also came up with good ideas. We did not discover anything new, but we were concrete and specific”.
- “The RICA method appeared very time consuming and costly. Not many groups would have that time available. I wonder if it is possible to divide the process in a sequence of shorter meetings”.

Some Responses and Points of Clarification from the Swedish NSU

Selection of an appropriate ‘challenge’

As many people identified, the selection of an appropriate ‘challenge’ is important for the success of the RICA method. In our experience, the more focussed and tangible the challenge is then the easier it is to have a good process. The more abstract the challenge is, then the more difficult it is to have a good process. However, this does not mean that we should avoid using the method for more abstract challenges since they might actually benefit greatly from the process!

Why voting?

Voting encourages everyone to actively listen to, and reflect upon, what the other groups have come up with. This process of active listening and reflection can bring inspiration and new perspectives to the processes within the smaller discussion group. However, the voting process should only be used when it is meaningful.

Is it a time consuming and expensive process?

Several people commented that the way we set-up and managed the RICA method appeared very time consuming and costly. Our experience is that it always takes time to create common understanding, common solutions and a platform for actions. Most methods of this kind require a dedicated and cohesive time span to take a group all the way from problem formulation through conceptualization to action plan. Normally you can shorten the various RICA stages, however in the case of this training module it was necessary to extend the every moment to take account of potential language barriers and different meeting traditions.

The method's strength is that the participants can leave the process with their own basis for an action plan, which seldom is achieved in one day with other methods.

Not so qualified ideas

Normally, the method flows with many more questions in the idea phase. However, for the purpose of the training we missed some steps. If we would have had more steps in this phase, the groups would probably have come up with a greater number of more innovative solutions.

About the concept phase

This was a difficult phase in the context of the specific challenge used (“How to increase stakeholders involvement in rural development?”) and the fact that many people had in mind some different logical frameworks from their own day-to-day work. There was discussion in some groups about what kind of objectives we had in mind for the changes we expected and wanted for addressing the challenge. The questions asked –and the discussions that followed - helped the process and made it easier to understand, but also took some extra time.

Where can we learn more about the RICA method?

The innovator and owner of the RICA method is Lisa Renander at Go Enterprise (lisa@goenterprise.se). Go Enterprise offers a two days training course (with certification) for RICA facilitators / process managers that includes all tools, templates and manuals required to independently lead the RICA process.

ANNEX 1: List of Participants in Training Module 2

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ANNEX 2: Results of Feedback on Training Module 2

1. How would you rate the organization of the event

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
Pre-event organization and preparation		1 (3%)	16 (50%)	15 (47%)	32
Format, content and structure promoted participation and discussion			15 (47%)	17 (53%)	32
Suitability of the venue	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	17 (53%)	11 (34%)	32
Opportunities for networking and making new contacts		2 (6%)	12 (38%)	18 (56%)	32

Observations:

- Although nice to pick a rural venue, it was hard to access it
- The training method of keeping participants in the same group helped to make deeper contacts
- The organization was good, but some more information about the training itself was missed
- The last information sent by email was provided a bit too late

2. How would you rate the training in terms of achieving the following objectives?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
Sharing knowledge and experiences amongst yourselves		2 (6%)	16 (50%)	14 (44%)	32
Facilitating development of deeper insights and group learning		4 (13%)	14 (44%)	14 (44%)	32
Practicing together some participatory techniques		1 (3%)	14 (44%)	17 (53%)	32

Observations:

- The method is not completely suitable for people used to old standard approaches
- It was needed more facilitation at the tables during the group work
- Useful experience of being on the receiving end of RICA but now is needed more insight about how to lead the process
- Switch the steps Research to Ideas-method logic is difficult to follow
- It would be useful to get the power point slides
- Willingness to see the videos
- Could probably reduce the time facilitators spent summarizing the output at different points through the day (e.g. after lunch): no need to go through all the details
- There is a need for more games/methods on applying information
- Need to learn more about RICA
- Appreciate RICA methodology but concerns on how would it work without the right facilitation-SE NRN and CP were excellent

What are the most important lessons that you have learnt from this training?

- The method allow people to discover how creative they are
- Rica Method
- It's important to be able to reflect about daily work and try to define it
- The importance of timing
- The need to plan NRN actions and needs, such as a stakeholder involvement.
- There are different ways to get their participation.
- A new useful tool / process that can be used
- Important are processes leading to get success using this method
- Some good practice examples from others
- To actively work in team
- Word clouds seem a useful tool worth to be used
- The importance of networking
- Quality is more important than quantity
- Increased my understanding about networking

How can we improve future training modules?

- Consider to give e-learning lessons after presence meetings in order to organize and absorb the new information and knowledge. E-learning lessons would help people to not forget the information and then being able to show it to others.
- Provide more information about trainings to participants in advance to prepare themselves
- Give more information about the process and / or the topic covered by the training, about the method's background
- Some more focus/discussions on the application of the techniques
- Continue to promote innovative methods tasted in the field and by local actors
- Provide a little theoretical written introduction before the training module
- More accessible location to allow everyone to participate in the future
- Nothing! The schedule and the time planning was very good
- Difficult to improve the trainings: they were excellent.

Thoughts about the general concept / outline of the training:

- Support with accessible online guidance point or resources to for a range of techniques and skills
- Use practical cases to illustrate the training
- Keep the good organization
- The training was great, I will try to test this method it in my country
- Provide follow-up tools, like in this case, templates slides to minimize the planning required to use this approach
- It could be good if NRNs can exchange more experience, problems and solutions, approaches etc.
- Some more new methods
- More information about RICA: it was good to know the method but need for more information and tools to be able to apply it