THE TRAFFIC LIGHT

LAYER TYPE: INDIVIDUAL, INTENTION, COMMUNITY, PRACTICE

Any group needs to set its boundaries in a transparent manner for members,
both new and old, to be able to navigate more smoothly within the community.
What is needed from each member? What is expected? What can be made possible?
The Traffic Light exercise zones out these aspects to set clear boundaries and level expectations.

Aims and Objectives

This method has the aims to:

- explore what is NEEDED, EXPECTED, and FOCUSED ON AS POSSIBILITIES in a community group.
- set boundaries around group commitments.

Time

Around 75 minutes.

Materials & Preparation

- Flip chart papers
- Markers
- Post it notes
- Preferably a TRAFFIC LIGHT drawn on a flip chart, with colours, for easy explanation
- Tables/chairs for a World Cafe

Target audience

Community groups with a shared task,
especially at the beginning of a project.

Number of Participants

Minimum 4 (small pioneer group) – maximum 60.
The method will vary in its design according to the size of the group.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

clips.gen-europe.org

We invite you to use our work and share it with others and credit us while doing so. You cannot change it in any way or use it commercially.

Duration	Activity
5´	INTRODUCTION – FRAMING
15´	EXPLAINING THE TRAFFIC LIGHT
25´	GROUP WORK: RED - YELLOW - GREEN
25´	PLENARY: DEFINING THE TRAFFIC LIGHT
5´	DEBRIEFING

INTRODUCTION

FRAMING
(5 MINUTES)

When forming a group and especially when attracting new members, it is crucial to be clear and specific on what members HAVE TO contribute with, are EXPECTED TO, in addition, and what CAN BE MADE POSSIBLE, in the project.

These aspects are important to discuss, clarify and describe: Then the group will be more transparent, both among its members and in the way it presents itself to others, especially in the beginning of a project.

All this can be worked within this model: The Traffic Light.

THE TRAFFIC LIGHT

INSTRUCTION 1 - INTRODUCTION
(10 MINUTES)

The Traffic light Model operates with three colors:
Red - Yellow - Green (show them on a flip chart)

THE RED FIELD
What everyone MUST contribute to the community.
What is required of everyone, as a minimum, to be part of the community; what is considered important for the running affairs of the community. Typically something like:
- participation in cooking shifts for the communal dining system to be truly operational
- cleaning duties in the common facilities
- attendance at shared working days
- meetings that are seen necessary for members to attend.

It must be clear to everyone what is placed in the RED FIELD and that this is not up for discussion by individuals, but is a result of a shared process and of shared decisions taken. Everyone should know what one has to deliver to live in the community and be part of a project.

Experience shows, that what seems to be in the RED field for some, might be in the YELLOW for others. Therefore the RED field has to be clearly defined, decided on and explained.

Decisions taken about the RED field are often noted down in contracts and in agreement with the constitution, bylaws, etc. Often organized in a visible plan — who needs to do what and when and who is responsible for organizing it.

Therefore, the RED field operates within the STRUCTURE layer of CLIPS, as well as the COMMUNITY layer.

In order to avoid playing 'police officers' to your neighbors, be careful about placing too many demands in the RED field In return, if these demands are organized properly in an easy, natural, and straightforward manner, they simply become a natural part of the community culture.

THE YELLOW FIELD
What we EXPECT from everyone. Even though there are no direct sanctions (like what could happen in the red field if you do not live up to community obligations), being a member of a community group is full of expectations. Therefore, it can be recommended to discuss these 'unwritten rules' that gives the individual a chance to better understand the inner dynamics of the community, on the expectation level.

The YELLOW field can be challenging as expectations can be different and individuals cope differently when reacting to expectations, to themselves, and to/from others.

Example: It can be a demand, meaning a RED FIELD issue, to be part of a cooking shift every 6th week. But there is no demand that you *participate* in the communal dinners. There can be an expectation, that you do so. You might feel that expectation, meaning that your absence will be noticed, or that people who attend every communal dinner seem to gain a higher rank than people who prefer to dine at home.

Example: There may be an expectation that all adults participate in 1-2 working groups according to interest (shared facilities/garden group/animal rearing/economy group etc.) But you will not be excluded according to the constitution if you fail to engage and live up to expectation. The YELLOW feel is more the one of social control.

Members tend to be able to contribute different levels of energy and interest for community tasks. We are not all in the same phases of life, do not all have an equal amount of time, the needed skills, and interests. Expectations in the YELLOW can thus be personalized, as they can vary to different people, depending on their specific life situations.

Note that lots of needed jobs as growing vegetables etc. will be done in a voluntary and joyful way, in the YELLOW field.

CLIPS
COMMUNITY LEARNING INCUBATOR

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

clips.gen-europe.org

We invite you to use our work and share it with others and credit us while doing so. You cannot change it in any way or use it commercially.

THE TRAFFIC LIGHT

Community life is about well-being and balance between the individual and the community, not least reducing conflicts and make room for differences. But it is also about knowing that issues of rank and privilege form an inherent part of our shared life.

The YELLOW field is characterized by either outspoken expectations and processes around these - or something that can be hidden and potentially risky and conflict-prone.

THE GREEN FIELD
This is the space of opportunities. What is DEMANDED is in the RED field, EXPECTED in the YELLOW field, The GREEN FIELD has its focus to be aware of POSSIBILITIES.

GREEN is about how the community or project is open to the unplanned, welcomes innovation, and embraces new ideas. How the group can nurture a focus on possibilities rather than limitations. How we as individuals can find satisfaction (or just accept) in what other people can do for, with, and in the community, which can be different from one's own ambitions and dreams. How we can create communities that offer strength and support to ideas that can thrive, even with only an individual or a small group engaged in it, but with backing from the community.

To be aware of, want and prioritize such a green field YES culture both a positive mind, will and money is required. Structurally it can be made visible in the annual budget, where a lump sum can be allocated to a pool available for new ideas, testing, and innovation, for things not thought of and not yet outspoken.

The GREEN FIELD strengthens a culture that makes life worth living in a community where lots of limits exists, because many people have to agree and decide.
It is about making dreams come true, making impossible possible and the willingness to take risks, accept mistakes and 'failed' projects. Unfortunately it is most often not attended to much, in the beginning.

FACILITATOR TIP:
Use your own examples from community life, when facilitating the Traffic Light exercise with a group.
It often helps to hear how others have done it and how the Traffic Light can change over time. Like having a lot of things in the RED field in the beginning, transiting to a more relaxed YELLOW field focus as the community culture develops and mature.

INSTRUCTION 3 - GROUP WORK (25 MINUTES)

After this comprehensive facilitators input several options for working with the Traffic Light are available:

A) Hang three flip charts with the three colors.
Tell the participants to go to the flip chart that calls them the most, but make sure at least some people are standing at each of the three flipcharts. Ask them to work on how they see this area to be like in the specific project. How will it be communicated, dealt with, and integrated into community structures? You can start with post-its, individually, and then discuss in the group.

B) Arrange a 'World Cafe' session. Ask for three hosts to stay at the three tables and other group members to walk around the three tables, staying around 6 minutes at each 'station'. The host will then present the collective input afterward.

C) Give each group of 4-5 people a sheet to fill in, with the traffic light and some keywords about all the three fields. Have them fill in for all the three colours.

In any case, inform the small groups that this a preparatory step for the real work: Defining the traffic light for the project.

INSTRUCTION 4 - DEFINING YOUR TRAFFIC LIGHT (25 MINUTES)

Depending on the method used for the prepatory group work, share the results of the group work in plenary. It is now important to transition from GROUP to PLENARY mode, to enhance the shared ownership to the process. As a facilitator, thank the groups for their inputs and take over facilitation.

Then hang three posters on the wall, with the three colours. Ask for input from first the group who worked on that field and then ask for additional comments.

Check if the group is mature enough to consent to the most obvious parts that form the RED field for the project. You can use constellation - a vote with your feet exersize (see tools).

Check how the YELLOW and the GREEN fields are finding their forms. Suggest ways and ask the groups for ways of how to work with these fields, in the future.

Arrange a follow-up process, after maybe a month, with a facilitator or advise the group to continue their own process, if they have had enough input.

CLIPS
COMMUNITY LIVING INCUBATOR

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

clips.gen-europe.org

We invite you to use our work and share it with others and credit us while doing so. You cannot change it in any way or use it commercially.

THE TRAFFIC LIGHT

INSTRUCTION 5 - DEBRIEFING (5 MINUTES)

Check out in a circle and ask how and if the Traffic Light is now alive in the group as a tool and a shared reference.

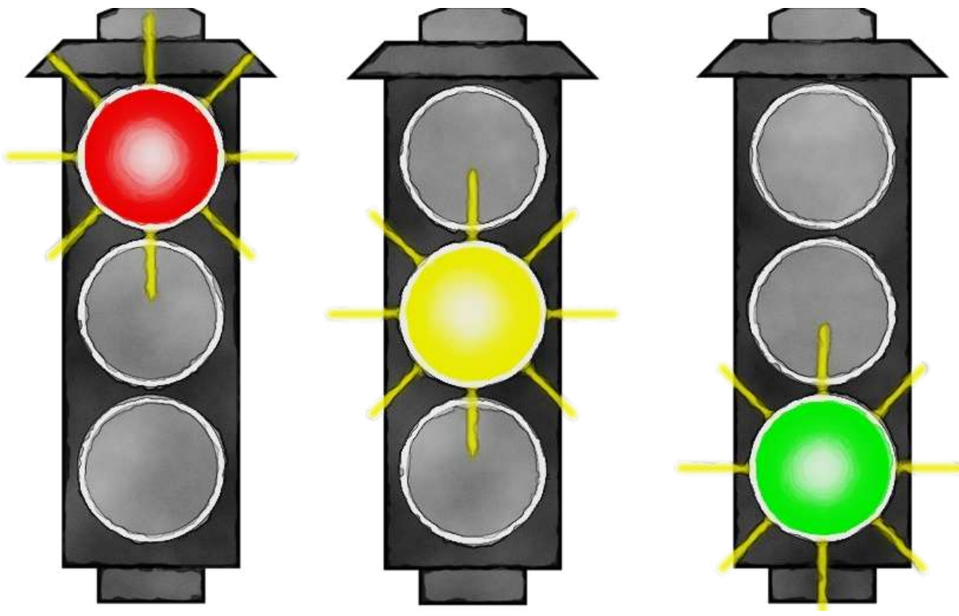
Ask about the usefulness of the exercise and capture on a flip chart the next steps.

FACILITATOR TIP:
It is important that the group leaves with a feeling of accomplishment: Yes, we did it! We made the next step in defining our community culture. We now know more about what we stand for, as a group, and how we can attract followers. As such, the Traffic Light exercise can be run with a pioneer group, which is not too big, in order to define what followers buy in to and can influence. As such, the Traffic Light also gives an indication of INCLUSION and EXCLUSION - who feels attracted to this project, or not.

RELATION TO THE CLIPS MODEL

In CLIPS we can use the Traffic Light exercise in working with both the INTENTION of the project, how to form the COMMUNITY culture, and also the STRUCTURE level, - what is put in the community structures as DEMANDS (RED FIELD) and how will the community sanction if these demands are not adhered to.

At the PRACTISE level, the Traffic Light exercise is easy to trace in the way a project is being presented to new members - what community members do together define much of the intention and structures behind it.



CLIPS
COMMUNITY LEARNING INCUBATOR

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

clips.gen-europe.org

We invite you to use our work and share it with others and credit us while doing so. You cannot change it in any way or use it commercially.

CLIPS METHODS