Process guide | Defining stages of group development

Objectives
- Introduce participants to Bruce Tuckman's model of stages in group development
- Encourage participants to reflect on their experience of group development
- Identify and address challenges and opportunities that accompany each stage

Time needed
40 minutes to one hour

How it's done

1. Print A4 pages with the name of each of the four stages in large font. Display these on each wall of the workshop space (before or during the workshop).

2. Facilitate an initial discussion about group development:

3. Small group task

Divide the workshop group into four roughly equivalent groups. Give each group a piece of paper with the description of one of the four group development stages (but without the name of the stage). Instruct groups that their task is to:
- Read the description and briefly discuss
- Locate the name of this stage on the walls and sit or stand close.
- Discuss further: When have you been part of group/s that have experienced this stage? What was it like? What were the challenges? How did this impact on the group's achievement of your objectives? How did your group transition to the next stage? What advice would you give to group members during this stage?

4. Plenary discussion

Invite each small group to report back and share with the larger group. Lead into a plenary discussion.

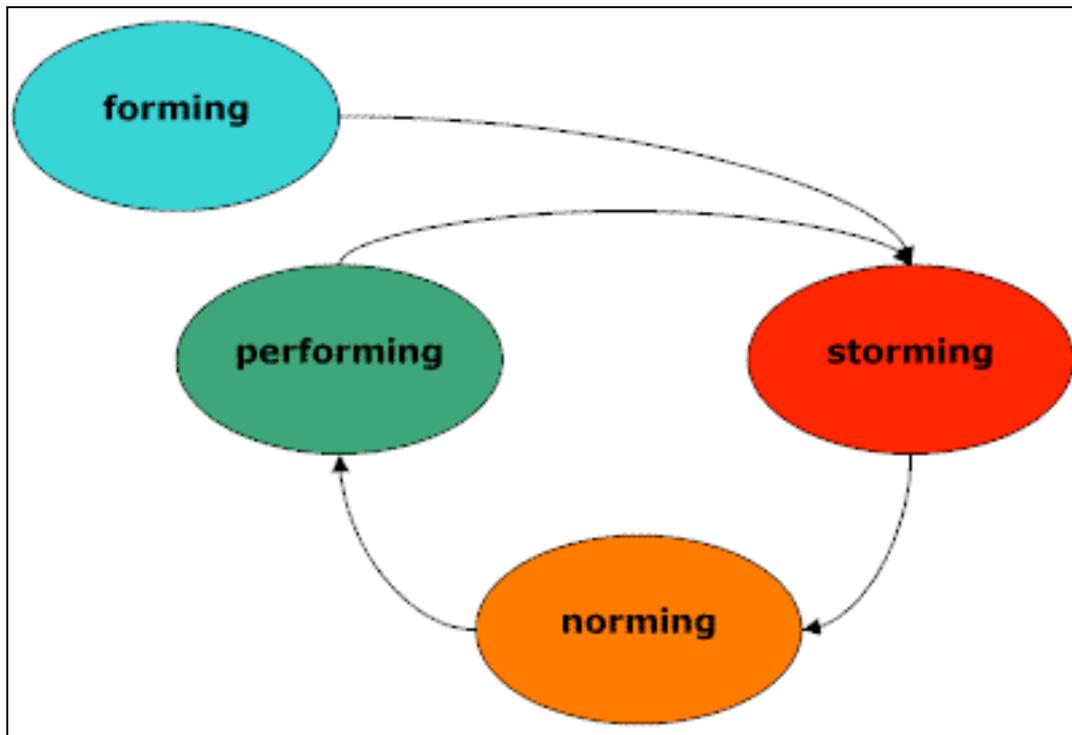5. Distribute the 'Stages in group development' handout.

6. Debrief and evaluate

Source
Jason McLeod and James Whelan, the Change Agency http://www.thechangeagency.org

Handout | Stages in group development

Forming
Groups initially concern themselves with orientation and establishing relationships with leaders, with other group members and or pre-existing standards.

Storming
The second point in the sequence is characterized by conflict and polarization around interpersonal issues, with concomitant emotional responding in the task sphere. These behaviours serve as resistance to group influence and task requirements.

Norming
Resistance is overcome in the third stage in which in-group feeling and cohesiveness develop, new standards evolve, and new roles are adopted. In the task realm, intimate, personal opinions are expressed.

Performing
Finally, the group attains the fourth stage in which interpersonal structure becomes the tool of task activities. Roles become flexible and functional, and group energy is channelled into the task. Structural issues have been resolved, and structure can now become supportive of task performance.

Adjourning / Mourning
Later Tuckman added another and final stage of group development which involves dissolution. It entails the termination of roles, the completion of tasks and reduction of dependency. Some commentators have described this stage as 'mourning' given the loss that is sometimes felt by former participants. The process can be stressful - particularly where the dissolution is unplanned.

Source
Bruce Tuckman http://www.infed.org/thinkers/tuckman.htm