

CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY CLIMATE CHANGE CENTRE EMBRACES ACTION LEARNING

Action Learning constituted the core methodology in the design of an organisation-wide development programme held during January 2020 at the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) in Belize.



**Caribbean Community
Climate Change Centre**

The Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) is a CARICOM agency based in Belize, which collects and maintains the highest quality data and information relevant to *climate change compatible development* of CARICOM member countries. The CCCCC provides informed climate change policy advice to CARICOM countries and tracks how the region responds, manages and adapts to the imperatives of climate change. Since its official opening in August 2005, the CCCCC has concentrated on strengthening its scientific and analytical capabilities so that it could credibly discharge its mandate. The financial and stakeholder relations pressures, typical for such organisations, would have been further exacerbated by the increasing vulnerability of member countries, that had already been at high risk, as the impact of climate change appears to accelerate, and additional imminent threats are continually being exposed.

To better surmount these challenges, CCCCC selected the strategy of building high team effectiveness and promoting the use of collaborative approaches across the organisation and among stakeholders. The organisation agreed with Senior Action Learning Coach, Verieux Mourillon to use Action Learning to drive the programme which would focus on team building for the senior officers' team but would incorporate all employees in Action Learning groups. The new CEO, appointed in January 2020, Dr Colin Young, was highly supportive of using Action Learning since he had had prior experience with the process.



As a group, the senior officers listed the most significant and urgent problems facing the organisation. Then each officer took ownership for one of the problems for which he or she had the authority to take action. One of the listed problems seemed to be all encompassing and the group decided that the problem owner should be the CEO, and he readily agreed. Each senior officer/problem owner was coached with a diverse group of CCCCC employees in a two-hour Action Learning session. The goals that the senior officers aimed for during the Action Learning sessions included sustaining high staff morale during challenging times; effective collaboration and voluntary information sharing across multiple projects; achieving staff compliance for critical new

administrative measures and making the Centre financially sustainable. All problem owners confirmed at the end of their respective sessions that they had been helped.



Figure 1 One CCCC Action Learning Group with problem Presenter, Dr Ulric Trotz, Deputy Executive Director

Here are some specific comments made by the senior officers when they were asked to state their key learnings from the process:

"I felt most alive during my session as problem presenter, getting feedback and finding instances where my colleagues showed leadership skills."

"Getting people to restate what they thought I said."

"Active listening and participatory action with management, leads, staff and my team. Ask powerful questions."

"The Action Learning session to me is particularly important in its efficiency and effectiveness and that I will adopt for meetings."

"During the Action Learning session, it was very good to hear colleagues who would not normally provide solutions or criticisms give recommendations and feedback that are genuine and frank."

"When I realized that it was contributing (or had the potential to contribute) to my efforts to address issues I had faced in the Centre: This realization really came home during the Action Learning session with a group of colleagues drawn from different levels of the Centre."

"Being a better listener – increasing consultation with colleagues."

“This was possibly the most positive event in the eyes of staff in a very long while – one that inspired hope, and energized commitment.”

General staff expressed great appreciation for the process in which they claimed they felt involved and respected by the organisation as they worked on matters that the CCCCC leadership considered to be highly important to the organisation. The Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre is reviewing the impact of Action Learning and considering how it may continue to apply this process in future.

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