

Writershops

Introduction

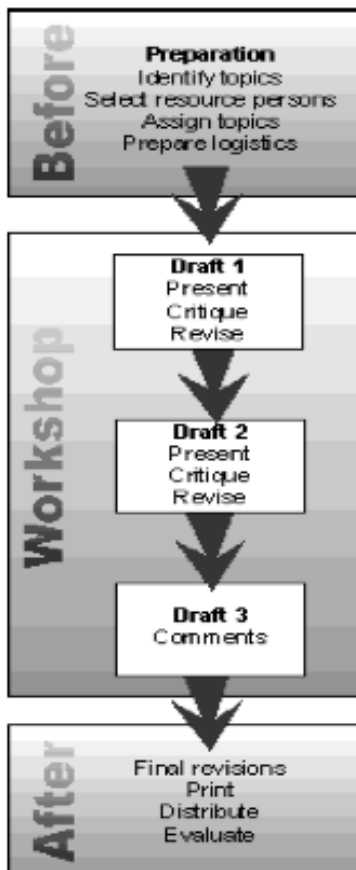
A Writershop is a very intensive process aimed at bringing together a range of relevant stakeholders – along with desktop publishing specialists – to produce a publication in a very short time.

Writershops are an excellent way of bringing together different groups (scientists, extension personnel, NGO staff, policymakers, farmers) with different perspectives on the subject. Written materials can be produced in a very short time by people who do not have the time to write extensively. With suitable preparation, it is possible to produce material ready for the printer within a few days of the end of the Writershop itself. The process enables comments and revisions from other participants (analogous to the peer review in conferences). Writershops are not useful for lengthy literature reviews or the presentation of detailed information.

The subject area must be divided into topics and assigned to individual participants. Several authors can contribute to each section of the material.

Writershops

Detailed Outline of Process



Preparation

Before the Writershop, a steering committee lists potential topics and invites resource persons to develop first drafts on each topic, using guidelines provided. These participants bring the drafts and various reference materials with them to the Writershop.

Draft 1

During the Writershop itself, each participant presents their draft paper, using overhead transparencies of each page. Copies of each draft are also given to all the other participants, who critique the draft and suggest revisions. After the presentation, an editor helps the author revise the draft. An artist can draw illustrations to accompany the text. The edited draft and artwork are then desktop-published to produce a second draft. Meanwhile, other participants also present papers they have prepared. Each, in turn, works with the team of editors and artists to revise and illustrate the materials.

Draft 2

Each participant then presents their revised second draft to the group, also using transparencies. Again, the audience critiques the work and suggests revisions. After the presentation, the editor (and artist) again helps revise the paper and develop a third draft.

Draft 3

Towards the end of the Writeshop, the third draft is made available to participants for final comments and revisions.

Finalising

The final version can be completed, printed and distributed soon after the Writeshop.

A Good Example

The International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in the Philippines has produced around 20 information materials on various topics relating to agriculture, the environment and health. The Writeshop process was pioneered at IIRR.

The GDN Bridging Research and Policy project in 2004 and 2005 will finance a series of regional Writeshops, bringing together researchers, policymakers, NGOs and the media to discuss and synthesise experience from various case studies and commissioned research. The main outputs will include synthesised and edited regional case studies, and the participants' conclusions about factors which strengthened or weakened their impact on regional policies.

Further Information and resources

- For a good overview and range of examples see: www.mamud.com/writeshop.htm