TOOL

TIMELINES

79

WHY

Time Lines are useful for recording and talking about the history of a project or a partnership. It is a good tool for identifying key events, critical decision points and the effects of events on a project and its participants.

Timelines help teams learn from the past and is a good way of introducing new team members to what happened in the project and partnership before they got into the team.

Time lines are also useful for recording and analyzing external influences on the project.
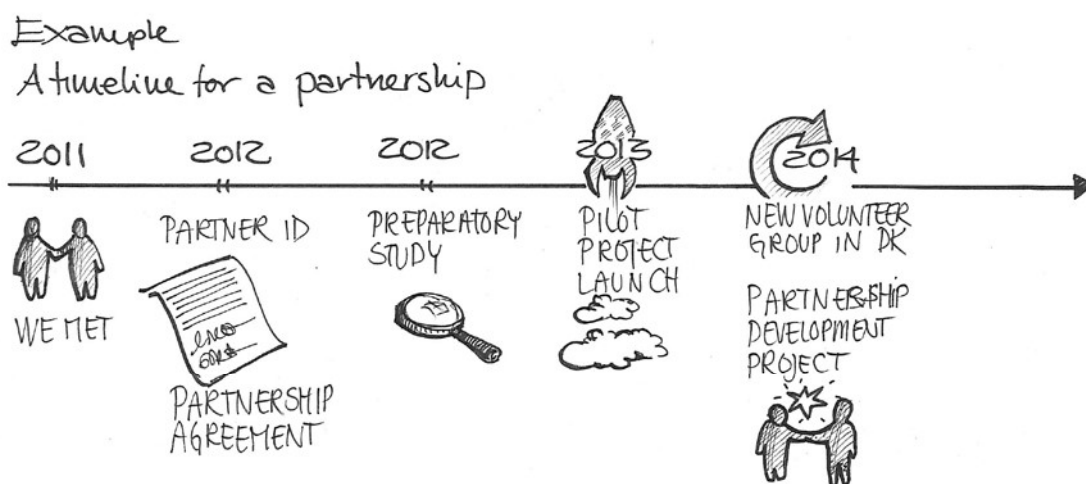
WHEN

A time line can be used at the start of a project to track events in the partnership and previous projects as a background to the new project.

Time lines can be used during the project to track progress regularly – and they can also be used midway or at the end of a project to track the changes that have occurred during the project.

HOW

The time line is a tool for dialogue and should be done as a team discussion process.

Pin one or more large pieces of paper onto a wall and draw a horizontal line – or use a piece of tape to indicate a horizontal line on the wall. The first date marked on the timeline is usually the projects start but can be an earlier date if important events occurred that affected the project before the start date.

Example
A timeline for a partnership

2011 — 2012 — 2012 — 2013 — 2014

WE MET — PARTNER ID / PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT — PREPARATORY STUDY — PILOT PROJECT LAUNCH — NEW VOLUNTEER GROUP IN DK / PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

» You can also use images of roads or rivers to draw up important moments, challenges and successes during the life of a project, partnership or a person. A river is changing its width, current, direction and different features such as whirlpools, islands, rapids and forks, can represent changes and events in their histories.
A road map can show different challenges, detours, short cuts and opportunities that have happened along the way of a journey.

The team discusses the events that occurred during the previous months – their activities and results and marks the most important events on the time line.

They can also record any external factors that had a negative or positive effect on carrying out the project. This is especially useful when you are discussing to what extent the project has produced or contributed to the observed changes – or if any outside factors have also contributed.

The time line can be kept as a big drawing that can be used for review meetings and added to during dis-cussions – and an electronic version, that can help in reporting.