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HOW TO ATTRACT VOLUNTEERS TO REFOOD'S CENTRAL STRUCTURE IN LISBON?

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A project carried out under the supervision of Professor Luis Filipe Lages and it was applied his

framework- Value Creation Wheel (VCW)

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Conteúdo

Abstract

This project applies the VCW- Value Creation Wheel- to Refood, a non-profit organization based in Portugal that aims to reduce and eliminate food waste and hunger by distributing food to the ones in need. The VCW was applied to their problem: How to recruit volunteers to Refood's central structure in Lisbon?

By applying the VCW, this project was able to find three potential ways and sources of volunteers. These ideas were selected after following the creation of diversified sources of ideas and filters. They were the ones with the highest potential and a plan of action was detailed to implement them.

This project highlights the major challenges when attracting volunteers, as well as the main challenges and procedures to be taken for the long-term sustainability of the solutions.

Keywords

Literature Review

A volunteer is "a person who offers his/her services or who is recruited to render a service at a welfare agency, usually without remuneration" (Timms & Timms, 1982-96). Furthermore, (Claassens, 2004) characterizes a volunteer as someone who earns moral credit while volunteering and that are emotionally attached to the cause they are serving.

There are also two types of volunteers: the ones that are managed, usually through NGO's, public and private organizations, and the ones that are not, where volunteering is a spontaneous and sporadic action, normally in a high emergency situation (Dingle, 2001). This work project aims to solve the problem of Refood, a NGO based in Portugal, of attracting volunteers, and therefore will only focus on the managed volunteers, as they are part of Refood.

As the problem that we propose to solve is to attract volunteers, it becomes necessary to understand their motivations. (Phillips, Little & Goodine, 2002) identify two main reasons why people volunteer: intrinsic values and personal enhancement. (Fisher & Cole, 1993) also identifies the volunteer's needs as one of the motivations of why they do it. Those needs can range from need of doing good, as identified by (Lauffer & Gorodezky, 1984), personal contact with an organization and need for fair treatment (McSweeney & Alexander, 1996). (Pell, 1972) also identifies as motivation the sense of belonging, need for recognition and sense of accomplishment.

Everyone benefits form volunteering. So, by attracting more volunteers, Refood will provide benefits for them, for the volunteers and for the people they serve. Overall, (Dingle, 2001) acknowledges two major results from volunteering: it helps to create more stable societies, since it brings people together and involves them in a sense of community, and it adds value to the services provided by the Government. With Refood, this is proven true, as the local nucleus serve the

communities helping them in their daily struggles and also makes the government's task easier, as they feed hungry people, which can be a burden to any government.

According to (Dingle, 2001), there are two main challenges for volunteering. The first one is globalization. It is feared that, as globalization increases, volunteering will decline, via the reduction of religious attachment and traditional sense of community. Also, the relation with the Government. (Ogden, Esim & Grown, 2004) suggest that volunteers are the substitutes of the absent of government. However, there is no evidence that in total absence of government volunteering will prevail. In fact, there are concerns that governments may hurt volunteering services by cutting public spending. Also, social changes, such as employment, family and retirement are drivers for volunteering.

Despite these factors, volunteering seems to be intact, as of now, since the number of volunteers is increasing, as it is the number of causes and services. In fact, even the private sector is becoming more aware of its importance, contributing more to some social projects, as part of their corporate social responsibility programs, where, they no longer only donate money, but also donate employees to volunteer.

However, the key measure is not the absolute number of volunteers, but rather the number of volunteers given the demand for their services. (Baldock, 1991:7) concluded that the increase in tasks to be performed led to the organizations to search for more volunteers. Furthermore, (O'brien, 1997:122) said "It is true that because levels of funding are never adequate we are more and more looking for volunteers (…) More and more we are saying we cannot afford to employ a staff (member) to do that so we call on a volunteer".

Another important aspect of modern volunteering is the need for specialized people. In fact, (Suggate, 1995) concluded that the increase in demand of volunteers and workload led to this seek for volunteers with higher skill levels.

Having understood the need for volunteers, their motivation and some potential changing factors, we also need to look at the way to attract volunteers. There are several proven good ways to recruit volunteers.

(Danson, 2003) and later (Charbonneau, 2006) concluded that a direct approach is the most effective way. Being asked by someone in the organization was concluded to work very well.

Then, (Low, 2007) and (Wallace, 2009) identified word-of-mouth as one of the most used ways to recruit volunteers. They found that worked really good, as having some positive feedback from family, friends, etc. were a really good incentive for someone to volunteer. Furthermore, this also helps in the retention of those volunteers, since they have someone with personal relation, helping their motivation and engagement with the project. However, (Ockenden & Hutin, 2008) identified a potential problem with these method of recruitment, which is that it can lead to less diversified groups, as word of mouth can lead to target similar profiles of volunteers.

Another method is advertising. (Gaskin, 2004:8) proved advertising has a role in attracting volunteers and that they typically respond well to advertising. It was found that advertisement is most persuasive when it clearly states the benefit of volunteering, as well as the reason for the project existence.

Another relatively common ways to attract volunteers are: education programs, information sessions [(Birch & McLennan, 2007)], volunteer centers working as intermediaries and recruiting from the organization membership [(Martinez & McMullin, 2004)].

Given this, Refood has the option to use these ways and more to recruit volunteers. This project will find out the best ways to attract volunteers to Refood's central structure. To do so, we will use the Value Creation Wheel, which is a methodology developed by Professor Luís Lages that may be applied to every company from every sector.

(Lages, 2016) identifies the VCW as a new tool that allows people to think both inside and outside the box. This modern framework allows people to have no boxes, accounting, this way, for the uncertainty that is present in any business and in life, as well. The VCW is also very customizable, allowing for that application to a diverse sectors and companies, and liberal, not imposing solutions and relies heavily on creativity in every phase of the VCW.

Background

Refood is a Portuguese based NGO that aims to eliminate food waste and global hunger by redistributing unused food to their beneficiaries, which are local people in need (mostly unemployed parents and homeless). It is 100% volunteer based and relies on good-will of people to accomplish their mission. It is very community oriented, since the its mission is also to involve the all community in the cause. Their motto is "Stop Waste- Feed People". (see exhibit 1)

It was created in March of 2011 by Hunter Halder went around his community riding his bike asking for food from restaurants and bakeries and then distribute it to hungry people. In 2013, the first physical nucleus was created in Telheiras.

Since then the cause has been increasing and now, there are 54 nucleuses and around 5600 volunteers helping Refood to contribute to a better world. Also, Refood in now expanding outside of Portugal, starting to take the first steps in nucleus in Spain and France. Their organizational

structure is based on this local nucleus, which operate in their local communities and they report to a central structure.

Their vision is to continue expanding to every corner of the world, where everyone is fully active in resource management and no one is denied of food. To achieve that they rely on their important values of equity, respect, inclusion, sustainability and optimism.

Their business model is low cost-high efficiency local nucleus reporting to a larger center, which also provides training, accounting and compliance. They do not charge for their distributed meals. The costs they have is one of the main challenges due to their lack of funding. This way, they do not invest in anything that will not directly serve their mission. (see exhibit 2)

The stakeholders of Refood can be divided in direct and indirect. The direct are the volunteers, the beneficiaries and the partners, while the indirect are the government, the local communities and other NGO's.

One of the major features of their cause is their food partners that supply their unused food at the end of the day, making it possible to Refood to operate at lower costs.

The daily process is: volunteers have a round of pickup of food that their partners have in excess. Then, the packaging team comes in preparing all the food leaving just the delivery to be made, which is the final phase of the process, when the volunteers go to distribute that food to hundreds of families. (see exhibit 3)

Refood also have a central structure responsible for legal management, accounting, phone assistant, etc. and soon to have a larger storage center for all the nucleus. As of right now, this central structure is located in Picoas, but they are planning to move out from there. The central structure now has 7 volunteers working there.

DIANA- Theoretical Framework- Context

The kick-off meeting of the project was with Hunter in his home, where he explained the cause, his passion for it and how it all started. He also mentioned the challenges that Refood is facing and will face in the future.

This way, the main challenge that they identified as being the most predominant and important, as the project expands is: How to attract volunteers to Refood's central structure in Lisbon? This is the problem that we purpose to solve, using the VCW.

In order to achieve solutions to these problems, a deep contextual study of the company was needed, both internal and external, in which Hunter helped, as the project founder and leader and responsible for the majority of the communication with Refood.

Currently, Refood is operating under the governmental recognized NGO status. They base all of their operations in the good-will of people, as it is 100% volunteer based.

The central structure's tasks are very diverse: finance and treasury, administration, beneficiaries, volunteers, community support, operations, legal, IT, communication, support and development and food sources. It now has 7 volunteers there, but the plan is to increase to 60, creating several teams to handle these tasks.

The communication between central structure and local nucleus is very transparent, with multiple reports. Also, Refood's resources can only be used to expand directly the cause.This way, the central structure mission is to guarantee the sustainability of the project.

Having analyzed the reality inside the company, it was also important to analyze the macro scenario, with an external context, as well.

We see that volunteering has been increasing in Portugal over the years. In 2001, only 12.7% of the population were engaging in volunteering activities.[1] Almost 57% were women. Also, social services, where Refood is included now, represented the biggest portion of volunteers with 45%, in 2012, as we can see in the graph below. (see exhibit 4) In 2012, Caritas reported that almost 20% of the Portuguese population volunteers.
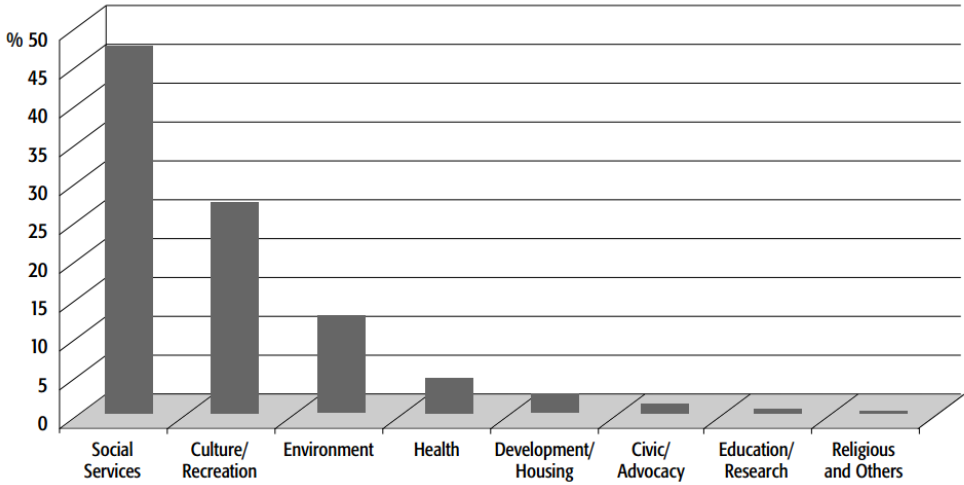
Source: Employment and Vocational Training Observatory: *Study on Volunteering*

Therefore, we see that volunteering is trending, the number of people now volunteering is higher and it is still increasing. There are several reasons that explain that, such as the importance of extra-curricular activities for people's professional lives, the increase of NGO's, etc.

Also, in 2004, there were also reported that 45% of volunteers prefer and only donate 1-4 hours per week to volunteer causes, which is exactly what Refood does, since the volunteers only donate 2 hours per week.[1]

This way, Refood has now a bigger pool of volunteers to choose from and willing to be attracted.

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[1] According to the Study on Volunteering in the European Union- Country Report Portugal

Also, due to the economic condition of Portugal, where inequality and hunger are increasing, that also highlights Refood's cause and creates more awareness towards the project. In 2015, the Portuguese Gini Coefficient was 0.34, while the average for UE27 was 0.31.[2]

This way, as these are high, the need for Refood also increases, which leads to more creation of local nucleus and, with that, the importance of Refood's central structure gets higher, as well.

Another important aspect is the fact that companies now have more corporate social responsibilities, which increases their donations. However, donations by companies are not just monetary, as it used to be. Several companies now have programs of volunteers for their employees, which is also a segment that Refood can explore when attracting volunteers.

But, if he number of volunteers is increasing, companies are also more involved with social projects, why is this a problem? Why does Refood has difficulty attracting volunteers to their central structure in Lisbon?

There is no clear reason that directly links to this difficulty. However, there are some particularities that may lead to that.

First of all, the increase of NGO's. With more causes and projects, the volunteer diversification increases as they may have a project with which they align more with or simply because of the location of that project is more convenient for them.

Finally, the fact that the role of a volunteer in the central structure is mostly office work, such as accounting, legal and phone calls. This way, for a person that is willing to volunteer a couple of hours to a cause, it may be less gratifying for them to volunteer in an office rather than volunteer

on the field, where they can also interact with the food partners and the beneficiaries and see and feel more that they are making a difference.

Another important aspect is that, even with the current volunteers and tasks, their work is not being optimal. They have experienced some difficulties in productivity, as the volunteers only work a couple of hours, making it difficult their coordination. For example, it is not optimal nor productive for a volunteer to start working based on what the previous volunteer did, where he needs to first see what the other did, in order to continue based on that.

After analyzing all this, we were ready to start applying the VCW to Refood.

The 5 Phases of the VCW:

Having analyzed the background and the context of the company, we move to the 5 stages of the VCW, TIAGO. (see exhibit 5) The framework TIAGO is illustrated bellow:
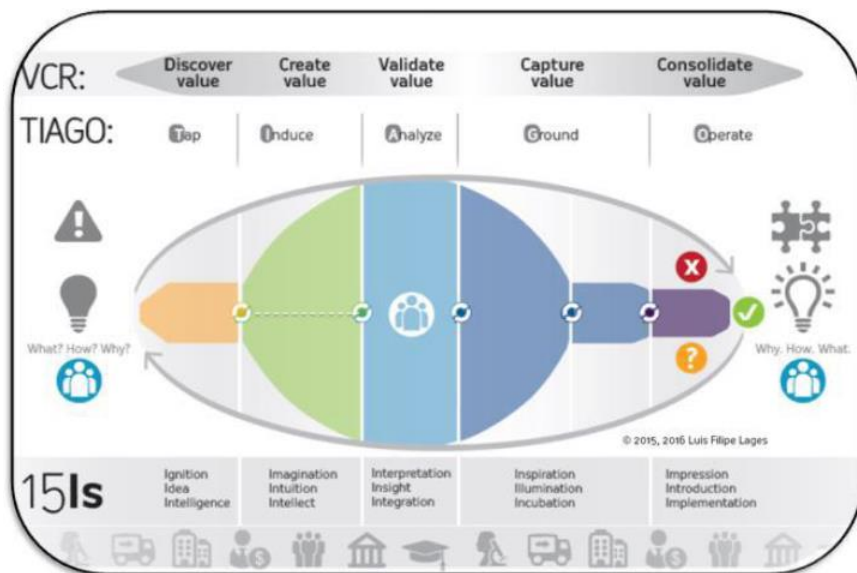
Source: **Lages, Luis F.** 2016. "VCW – Value Creation Wheel: Innovation, technology, business, and society", *Journal of Business Research*, DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.042.

In the 1st stage, TAP, the research question was clearly defined, as well as the market space to that questions apply. The 2nd stage, Induce, is characterized by the creation of as many ideas and filters as we can possibly get.

Next, we proceed to the 3rd phase, Analyze, of analyzing its ideas and filters. Together with the board, we assessed the potential of each solution and filter and then rank the filters. This ranking of the filters will be the base of the 4th phase, Ground, in which the Value Creation Funnel is applied, which is the method of applying the filters to the solutions in search of the final optimal ideas.

Finally, the 5th and final stage, Implement, it's the elaboration of a business model and a plan of action to implement the suggested optimal solutions.

1st Phase: TAP

 After the meeting with Hunter the clear research question that we propose to solve using the VCW is: **How to attract volunteers to Refood's central structure in Lisbon?**

The market space for this question is relatively broad, since it is every person willing to volunteer.

As Refood, gets bigger, the importance for a central structure increases, since there is a need to centralize operations and supervise the work of the nucleus and assist them in training, reminders, etc.

2nd Phase: INDUCE

The objective of this stage was to create as many ideas and filters as possible. To do that, we thought that was necessary to diversify the type of people involved in this phase. This way, both in the creation of ideas and filters, we asked people from Refood, beneficiaries, volunteers and

coordinators, outside Refood, as well as people with knowledge about VCW and no knowledge about it.

First, several solutions were derived from a market pull and a technology push analysis (see exhibit 6 and 7). In the market pull, we analyzed the needs for the volunteers in the central structure, while in the technology push, we studied how volunteers in the central structure can be positive and valuable to the stakeholders.

In the process of creation of ideas, it was also conducted an online survey to people that never heard of the VCW, as well as a brainstorming in a class in Universidade Europeia, which were not familiar with VCW, and in a class in Universidade Nova de Lisboa, which were familiar with the VCW. It was also personally interviewed a PHD student in Social Entrepreneurship, which had experience applying the VCW. This way, diversification was assured.

From all these sources, we obtained a total of 55 ideas. (exhibit 8)

For the filters, the sources were relatively the same. However, instead of the online survey, we interviewed two people with experience in managing a NGO, which were also not familiar with the VCW. From these we obtained 27 filters. (exhibit 9)

3rd Phase: Analyze

In this stage it was important to analyze the ideas and filters and to do so, in a meeting with Hunter, the Poker Method was used. (see exhibit 10)

Using this method to the 55 ideas, the list was shortened to 8 ideas. (see exhibit 11)

Additionally, the Poker Method was also used on the filters, deciding which applied and which did not. The list of filters had 5 filters. (see exhibit 12).

After a first analysis of the filters, Hunter was also asked to rate them in order of importance, from 1 to 5, which will be important in the next stage of applying them to the solutions. (see exhibit 12)

4th Phase: Ground

After having analyzed the ideas and the filters, it was time to apply the filters to the ideas through the Value Creation Funnel (VCF). (see exhibit 13)

From those eight potential ideas, three of them passed through all the filters. This way, we decided to apply all three to Refood. The final optimal ideas were: internal recruitment, local events and meetings and partner with associations, foundations and online platforms.

After having this set, it was time to determine a plan of action for their implementation.

5th Phase: Operate

After applying the VCF, we reached three optimal ideas to be implemented. These ideas were: local events and meetings, partner with associations and online platforms and internal recruitment. Ideally, these ideas enable Refood to get the needed 60 volunteers.

The internal recruitment will simply consist in forwarding an e-mail to Refood's mailing list, letting their volunteers, coordinators, etc. know the open vacancies in the central structure roles. This e-mail should welcome everyone that wants to transition or accumulate responsibilities to the central structure.

Next, the local events will be big local events that will take place for several matters. One of those matters will be attracting volunteers to the central structure. These events, starting this year, will be yearly or twice a year and focus on spreading Refood's project. This way, this will be the perfect way to attract potential volunteers to Refood. The first meeting is schedule to be on December 10th,

in Cinema São Jorge, which coincides with the Human Rights Day, which will help Refood's cause to get a better impact. Another meeting is planned to May.

These meetings will need some marketing push. This will be a big Lisbon local meeting, so the marketing will consist in e-mailing people already connected with Refood or connected in the past, incentivize them to share the meeting with their families and friends, using, this way, word of mouth. There will also be Facebook posts in every nucleus' page and in the main Refood page, as well, as in Refood's website. Finally, the marketing campaign will have distribution of fliers around Lisbon, as well as fliers in bus stops and strategic points of the city.

The final idea is to partner with associations and online platforms to place ads there and instantly be in front of people already interested in volunteering. Also, this will allow to search for volunteers with specific skills necessary for some of the roles, such as accounting, legal services and IT services.

The online platforms where Refood will ad are: Portal da Juventude, Bolsa do Voluntariado, voluntariado.pt, DGES and Confederação Portuguesa do Voluntariado.

The Associations that Refood will contact order to establish a partnership are: EDP: Bolsa de Voluntários, Entrajuda, APRe, Murpi, ANAC and Fundaçao Eugénio de Almeida.

To better illustrate these ideas we also developed a new business model with the implementation of these ideas (see exhibit 14) and the 3M's framework- Men, Minute and Money (see exhibit 15).

The Men will be composed by several teams. First of all, Hunter, which will forward the internal e-mails, letting the volunteers know the open positions for the central structure for everyone interested in volunteering there. Then, the local meetings will demand a marketing team to divulgate the meeting and make people interest in attending it. Also, another round of e-mails need

to be sent to the nucleus, so that they can also spread the word on the meeting. There will also have the need to assign an IT team to place the ads online and a PR team to contact the associations in order to establish partnerships with them. Finally, once Refood start to have people interested in volunteer to their central structure, 1 person should also be assigned to welcome them, assign a team and train them properly for the area they choose to volunteer.

The Minute assemblies a timeline for the tasks needed to implement successfully these ideas and get the desired results. These tasks are: the setting-up of the meetings, their promotion and then have the actual meetings, send the internal e-mails, contact associations, ad on the online platforms and welcome, coordinate and train the volunteers. The timeline for these tasks in detailed below (see exhibit 16).

The Final M, corresponds to the Money. Since, the implementation of these ideas will be mostly virtually, Refood will not incur in any costs. The only minor costs will be the costs of the marketing promotion of the meetings, which corresponds to the printing of the fliers.

We also developed an upgrade to the business model, accounting for the implantation of these ideas. (see exhibit 14).

With these ideas and their implementation in time, Refood should be able to get their desired 60 volunteers and then, they can start coordinating and assembling teams.

As of January 6th of 2017, the meeting of December 10th did not provide any practical result in the central structure yet. There were few interested people to volunteer in the central structure, but no volunteer came to fruition yet. The presence of the President of the Portuguese Republic Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa on the 26th of December was also good to promote the project and Refood got

more recognition, which resulted in a few more potential volunteers to the central structure. However, similar to the meeting situation, no volunteer was welcomed yet.

The other two ideas will be presented in more detail in the next Board of Directors meeting, happening in January 17[th.] In this meeting the necessary teams and workflow organization will be defined and officially starting to implement these already accepted ideas.

Next Challenge & Required Partners

After this initial recruitment of volunteers, there will be new challenges down the road, both in the short-run and in the long-run.

In the short-run it will be vital that to continue to attract volunteers. As in the local nucleus, it is expected that Refood's central structure could have a relatively high turnover of volunteers. This way, it is crucial to keep recruiting. Also, by keeping recruiting volunteers, Refood will increase its range of action and network. More volunteers, will increase teams and straighten communication with partners and reach more beneficiaries, as well as better relationship with media and online presence, etc.

Another important factor is to keep monitoring the new created relationships. Refood should follow-up with the associations and foundations and renew the ads.

Finally, another short-run challenge is to train and coordinate volunteers and, specially, to retain them.

In the medium and long-run, the IT development will be another challenge. There will be the need to create a common platform, such as Moodle, to increase communication, information and requirements between all the stakeholders.

There will be the need for renewing partners, such as another associations and foundations, so that Refood can increase and expand its network.

All these will be new challenges that Refood will face in the future and they must be prepared to tackle these in order to sustain the application of the ideas implemented and increase its impact even further.

Project Output & Implications

By applying the VCW to Refood we were able to gather and extract some key outputs that the project and its process and ideas drew and might draw when recruiting volunteers.

First of all, these solutions will help develop the central structure and, by doing so, Refood can gain more control of the key areas involving their business. Now, they can have the men power to reach more beneficiaries, recruit more food partners, create better relationships with them, as well as they now have a process to recruit more volunteers for their central structure. This will ultimately allow them to increase efficiency and range of action of their operations, since it this can also help them increasing coverage.

Also, these solutions will help Refood to be more organized, which provides for a better image, which is also a very important component of any organization, as it gives more credibility, besides more visualization of impact and increased reliability.

Finally, another major output regards the mobility of existing volunteers and the inter-organizational help. An organization should not be shy to ask for help and incentivize their volunteers to change from one location, task, etc. to another.

Major Lessons Learned from the VCW

The application of the VCW to Refood we were able to draw some major lessons that we learned, both at the VCW and Refood's levels.

First, VCW should be applied by clear open minds. It needs to be creative, flexible and not restrictive. The ideas and filters should come from different ways and sources in order to get diversification and a wider range of ideas and filters.

During the VCW process, there should be open and frequent communication between the team and the Board of Directors.

Also, there should be focus on detail and the team should share the vision of the organization.

We also learned that leveraging volunteer work will increase its impact and results. This volunteer work must be incentivized. People's willingness to help is not enough. Organizations should be pro-active and get in platforms and get the word out so that everyone are aware of its existence and then incentivize people to volunteer and make a change.

Finally, the existence of financial barriers and restrictions make the need for better and more careful planning and flexibility essential, as well as it also promotes creativity.

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