

ACTION LEARNING FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Fred Edwards Trust Action Learning Programme

Background

The [Fred Edwards Trust](#) is a new Scottish charity which aims to promote active citizenship in Scotland. Fred Edwards, who died in 2008, was one of Scotland's most inspiring activists for a sustainable future and a fairer society. Following an extraordinary career driving radical reform in social work, he spent the last 16 years of his life not in self-indulgent retirement, but as a passionate, full time volunteer working for international development and the environment, in the tireless promotion of causes and dogged pursuit of practical solutions. His shining example and his supportive and affirming manner left other people with an enhanced feeling of capability, and a belief in themselves and their capacity to make a difference.

The Fred Edwards Trust (FET) has been set up to try to capture and replicate some of this magic. Our work is based on combining the following four principles, all of which were key to Fred's way of doing:

- **social justice** - giving all people equal rights and respect as human beings and eliminating discrimination;
- **ecological integrity** - recognising the wholeness of nature in all its complex interactions which help to maintain its beauty, diversity, stability and productivity;
- **economic literacy** - understanding the practical application of economic theory and its implications for human endeavour;
- **a global view** - taking account of the widest implications of our actions, and the needs and interests of all peoples and environments in all countries.

The Fred Edwards Trust Action Learning Programme

The FET Action Learning Programme is a voluntary co-mentoring programme to provide people in Scotland with the power and motivation to take action and to address issues within their professional, community or individual lives. It aims to promote the development of self-belief, active citizenship, and a sense of empowered potential to help shape the future. The FET Action Learning Programme will incorporate the four principles above.

The Programme is now open to applicants who would like to participate in an Action Learning Group.

How does Action Learning work?

Action Learning is a simple but powerful process where groups of individuals, guided by a trained facilitator, meet on a regular basis to address challenges in a supportive but enquiring environment. Action Learning is a long-established and internationally recognised development method which has proven effectiveness in supporting beneficial change. Key features include:

- Working on real problems
- Learning by doing
- Sharing perspectives
- Implementing solutions - not 'just talking'

- Encouraging questions and reflection.

As peers, participants work together to support each other in taking action to address real life problems. **Facilitators**, who contribute voluntarily within the framework of the FET, provide advice, encouragement and guidance to the groups. As appropriate, they help participants to incorporate the four principles into their discussions.

What's involved?

- Small groups (5-9 participants) meet every 4-6 weeks over a 6 month period, meetings lasting approximately 3½ hours.
- During meetings, participants have the opportunity to outline a real life- or work-based issue, and are supported by the group to decide on a course of action.
- Between meetings, participants apply their actions and learning in the workplace or wider environment, then report progress at the next meeting.

What do participants gain from the process?

The FET Action Learning Programme is a personal development opportunity designed for those who want to engage in active citizenship whilst benefitting from peer-to-peer mentoring. Participants gain the following:

- A supportive environment that encourages action;
- A space for reflection and learning, including understanding of how we learn;
- A safe place to address issues in new ways, and to learn more effective handling of difficult situations;
- A chance to test beliefs and assumptions;
- A chance to more fully integrate the four principles of social justice, ecological integrity, economic literacy and a world view into their lives;
- Insight into how others approach problems;
- The opportunity to help others with issues that they want to address.

Who can take part?

- Anyone over the age of 18 who wishes to develop a leadership role in active citizenship - in a professional, community or individual capacity.
- Groups are cross-sectoral, mixing members from the public, private and voluntary sectors across a wide range of interests and points of view.
- Participation is free of charge, but participants must sign an agreement with the Fred Edwards Trust, including a commitment to attend meetings over a 6 month period.

Current Programme

The first five Action Learning Groups will run from April till October 2011. Venues will be arranged to suit, but could include Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling, Inverness and Perthshire. It is intended to extend the programme more widely across Scotland with subsequent groups commencing in the autumn.

How to apply

If you are interested in taking part in a group, or would simply like to know more about the FET Action Learning Programme, go to

www.frededwardstrust.org.uk/actionlearning, or contact the Coordinator, Ruth Anderson, by email at actionlearning@frededwardstrust.org.uk, or telephone 07880 763948. **Applications for the initial groups (April - October 2011) must be received by 24th March 2011.**