

CONNECTED & DIRECTED

Managing Conflict in a Public Meeting

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Introduction

Speakers



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And you!

Please contribute
your thoughts and
experiences to the
session!

Let's Get Started

- Today's gathering is a walk-through of the ***Connected & Directed*** Guide, walking you through your workbook, and then with Q&A time at the end.
- Ask questions and contribute at any time! We will also save time for Q&A and discussion at the end.

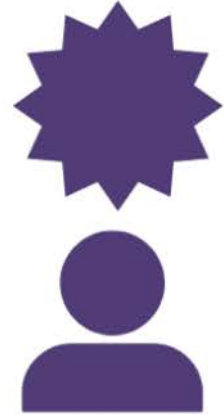
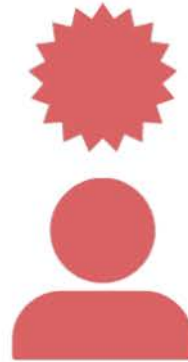
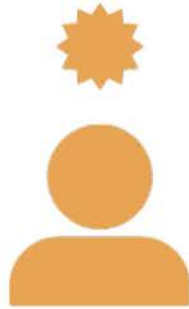
**Why do we need to manage
conflict in the participatory
process and in public
meetings?**

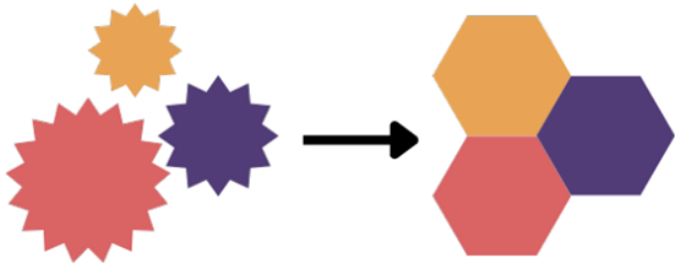




One benefit of public participation is that it brings together people with different experiences and opinions who all care about their community...

**But all our different
perspectives
can lead to conflicts
that separate us.**





As practitioners, we can find ways to smooth through the conflict and create pathways toward understanding and growth.



Weaving a community fabric that is reflective of everyone, a deeper understanding, and closer ties than ever before.

What We'll Discuss Today

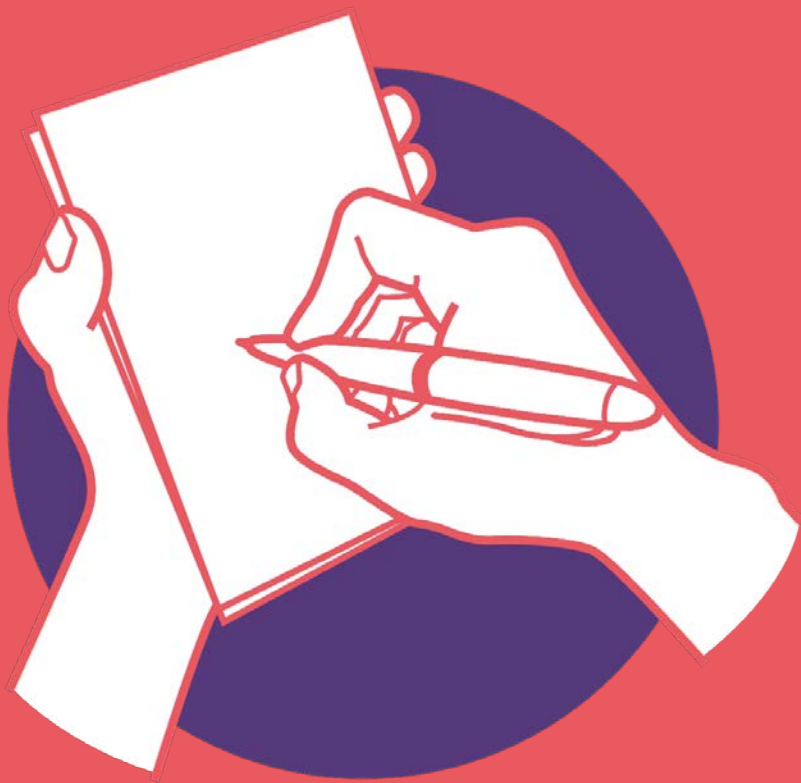
- Understanding Conflict
- Tools for You
- Planning for Public Participation
- Tools for Your Team
- Q&A



Understanding Conflict

Causes of Conflict





Workbook Break

Are there **other causes** of conflict you think are important to account for?

How have you seen these different causes of conflict **manifest** in public meetings?

How have you **prepared for conflict** in the past?

Tools for You

Developing Skills: CLARA Method



Create a focused and present mindset.



Give full attention to participants' concerns.



Acknowledge the participants' viewpoints.



Provide a thoughtful and respectful response.



Contribute additional information and insights.

Calming a Storm

- **Pour the person a glass of water.**
 - We have begun bringing a pitcher and cups to all our meetings, because this is so much easier to transport and more sustainable than bottled water.
- **Offer to sit down with them to write and record all their concerns.**
 - Providing notecards for individuals to also write their own concerns out themselves is also a helpful exercise to help someone organize their thoughts.
- **Ask questions, trying to understand their needs and perspective based on the exercises you've seen in this Guide.**
 - What is the source of conflict? Is the Fear of Change involved? How can CLARA or the SELF exercise help you?
- **Get contact information and provide a clear time for follow up for any questions that can't be answered in the moment.**
 - If someone can't be calmed down, ask to take a walk with them so that others can continue to provide input. Some people need to vent their anger before they are calm enough to listen.



Workbook Break

Are there any other **tips or tricks** you can share to calm highly emotional participants at public events?

Personal Safety Plan

Questions to help develop your Personal Safety Plan:

- How do you know when you are so upset that you have lost control of your feelings?
- What do you do when your emotions get too intense?
- What usually helps when you feel this way?
- What will be your plan for coping in a safe way when you become extremely angry or upset?

Plan actions to perform if you become stressed:

1 Something simple and low-key that won't require outside resources or attract any attention from participants to perform the activity.

2 Something that requires another person, place, or thing to complete. This may include removing yourself from the situation or talking to someone else.



Workbook Break

Think through what happens when you are confronted with conflict.

What are **your physical and emotional reactions** to it?

What helps when you are in this situation?

What is a way you can **adapt your natural coping mechanisms** to something that is appropriate for a work situation?

Planning for Public Participation

Setting Ground Rules

DO

- **Allow for a public discussion.** Everyone has a chance to talk.
- **Seek first to understand, not to be understood.** Ask questions to seek clarification when you don't understand the meaning of someone's comments.
- **Participate.** You may be asked to share what you think, or we may ask for comments from those who haven't spoken. It is always OK to "pass" when you are asked to share a comment.
- **Listen to and respect other points of view.**
- **Do your best to understand the pros and cons of every option,** not just those you prefer. Be as objective and fair-minded as you can be.
- **State your name and where you live.** In a public meeting, it is helpful to know who is speaking as well as where they live in the community.

DON'T

- **Turn this into debate.** The purpose is not to win an argument, but to hear many points of view and explore many options and solutions.
- **Dominate a discussion.** If you have already voiced your ideas, let others have an opportunity. When you speak, be brief and to the point.
- **Don't have side conversations.** Pay attention to the person speaking. If you think you will forget an idea that comes to mind, write it down.

Source: University of Minnesota Extension
Graphics by Connect the Dots
www.connectthedots.us



Workbook Break

What is important to you from the **Ground Rules**? Are there other Ground Rules you think are important to be included?

During the Meeting

- Create a Parking Lot, Redirect, and Reorient
- Adding Emotional Check-ins
- Designate a Local Facilitator
- Try a New Meeting Format



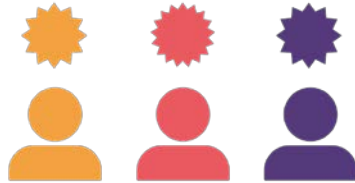
Before Public Participation

Pre-Event Checklist

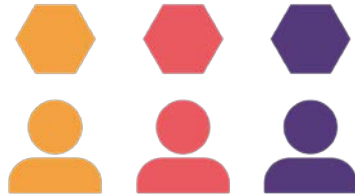
- ⬡ Create a meeting agenda that allows for the two-way sharing of information and meaningful participant inputs, and the meeting's goals and objectives are clearly stated.
- ⬡ Ensure meeting communications are in plain language and understandable at an 8th grade level or lower. Visuals are accompanied by text descriptions for the visually impaired.
- ⬡ Ground Rules are clearly stated and displayed at the entry point and/or beginning of the presentation.
- ⬡ Design a staffing plan to allow for team members to work in pairs and watch for potential issues.
- ⬡ Provide a visible parking lot of ideas and someone designated to speak with highly engaged and concerned citizens in a more private setting if the need arises.

Tools for Your Team

Cultivating a Shared Mindset



How you enter a space will affect how you perceive the interactions within it.



Setting expectations for all team members creates **unity around a shared goal**.

Cultivating a Shared Mindset

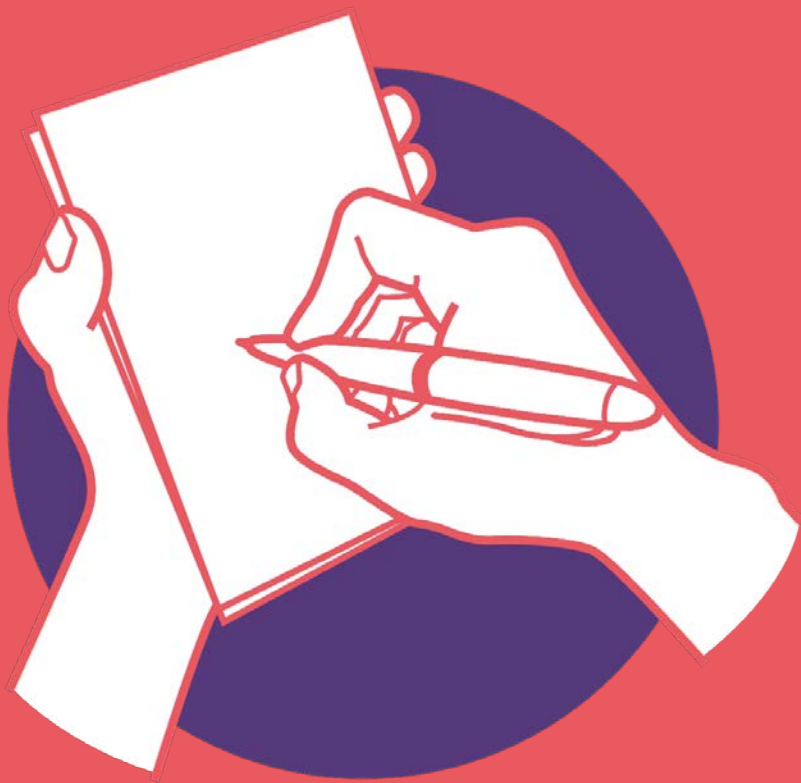
Some things to remember:

- We are entering with an **open mind, empathy, and a willingness to listen.**
- There is **something to be learned from every interaction.**
- **Opinions shared about the work are not opinions about you,** your worth, or the value of your contributions to the project.
- We cannot always answer every question or solve every problem in the moment, but **recording and hearing all concerns and sharing how and when participants will receive answers is our responsibility.**
- Some conversations may be uncomfortable, but **discomfort is temporary and finite.**

Cultivating a Shared Mindset

Some things to remember:

- Remember that for many community members, there are not a lot of places where they are seen and heard. Many people just need the **space to share their frustrations and feelings**.
- When speaking with an escalated or emotionally-charged participant, **remain calm** and resist the natural tendency to mirror behavior and emotions, such as our overall body language and tone of voice.
- **We are a team and here to back each other**. If a participant is emotionally charged or escalated, a moderator or another facilitator may need to step in to reset the interaction.
- If you need to take a break, **take a break**.



Workbook Break

What calls out to you from the **shared mindset**? Are there items you should remind yourself of before every meeting?

Taking Care of Your Team

- **Working Together in the Field**
 - **Engagement and outreach should not be a solo effort.** Sometimes the only solution to reset an interaction is for a new staff member to step in and redirect the conversation.
 - Ensure team members are aware of each others' safety plans and **are prepared to help each other.**
 - Add an agenda item for an **emotional check-in** to the team's prep meeting.

Taking Care of Your Team cont.

- **Supporting Your Team Long-Term**

- **Openness and transparency** are key factors in creating an atmosphere where team members feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, concerns, and ideas.
- **Encouraging peer support and collaboration** promotes a sense of camaraderie and shared responsibility, allowing team members to learn from one another and collectively problem-solve.
- Recognizing **the need to pivot and adapt** to changing circumstances demonstrates organizational agility, not failure, and ensures the team remains resilient and responsive to evolving challenges.
- Embracing **a culture of tolerance for mistakes** and failures not only encourages innovation and risk-taking but also provides opportunities for growth and improvement.

Q&A

Next Steps

1. Download the digital version of Connected & Directed and watch the webinar with contributors at connectthedots.us/conflictguide
2. **Visit** our website connectthedots.us to learn more about the work we do!
3. **Send** additional questions to hello@connectthedots.us or rosanne@connectthedots.us

THANK YOU!

Handling the Fear of Change: SELF

As humans, we have a natural **fear of change** that can lead to closed-minded reactions and conflict in the participatory process. The SELF exercise can help people see the positives.



Safety

What are the emotions surrounding safety or sense of security brought on by the change?



Emotion

How do they feel surrounding the adoption of the change?



Loss

What do they lose around the adoption of the change?



Future

What does the situation look like once the change is adopted?