

Using Facilitation to Advance Planning

Part 1 – Setting the Stage & Essential Communication Skills

Part 2 – Meeting Process

Part 3 – Working with Groups

Close – Successful Outcomes

Part 1 – Setting the Stage & Essential Communication Skills

- Setting the Stage
- How can Planners Use Facilitation?
- Essential Communication Skills

Unilateral decisions are easy but lead to opposition and a lack of support for implementation. Planning should focus on collaboration and group decision making.

BACKGROUND

- **How do planners use facilitation?**
 - Types of meetings: Working Sessions, Public Workshops, Citizen Advisory Committees, Charrettes
 - Meeting roles: Project Manager, Decision Maker, Technical Leader, Third Party Neutral, Chair
- **Facilitation vs Mediation**
 - Facilitation: parties – usually groups – utilize a neutral third party to assist in working more effectively at collaboration. Mediation: a neutral third party without decision making authority takes a role in assisting the parties to negotiate a mutually agreeable settlement. Planners are more frequently working as facilitators (with technical knowledge), although mediation skills are useful.
 - Mediation: A process in which an impartial third party facilitates communication and negotiation and promotes voluntary decision making by the parties to the dispute. Mediation serves various purposes, including providing the opportunity for parties to define and clarify issues, understand different perspectives, identify interests, explore and assess possible solutions, and reach mutually satisfactory agreements, when desired. *Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators*
 - Facilitation: The use of a third party, who is impartial toward issues being discussed, to provide procedural assistance to group participants to enhance information exchange or promote effective decision making. The facilitator may or may not be a member of the group involved in the discussions.
- **What makes a good facilitator?**
 - Good Listener
 - Neutral
 - High Energy
 - Respectful
 - Understanding
 - Assertive

- **Effective Communication**

- 60 – 90% of communication is body language: facial and body movement/proximity, vocal tone/rate/pitch/loudness – consider this as a speaker, as a listener, and as a facilitator... remember that body language can be misread and is culturally influenced
- Promote dialogue with/by:
 - active listening
 - acknowledge, validate and legitimize feelings
 - remove/avoid triggers and reframe
 - build confidence and trust
- Active listening is:
 - Paying attention
 - Showing that you are listening (body language, gestures)
 - Deferring judgment
 - Acknowledging the message and responding appropriately
 - Providing feedback and asking clarifying questions (paraphrasing, open-ended questions)
 - Summarizing
 - and is NOT: interrupting, rehearsing, comparing, advising too early, judging, avoid being right, dreaming, derailing, placating, sparring
- Open-ended questions are questions that can't be answered with one or two words, promote discussion and deeper understanding, and are more likely to create a balanced exchange... “how” questions
- Framing (manner in which an issue is conceptualized or defined) – facilitator can help frame another's thoughts with ordering, grouping, or fractionalizing
- Reframing (restating what a party has said to capture the essence, remove negative overtones, and move the process forward; address emotion quickly then procedural then substantive)
- Model behavior!

Part 2 – Meeting Process

- Preparation and Planning
 - Goals, timing, agenda, etc.
- Convene
 - Setting the scene, ground rules
- Converse
 - Guide the flow, summarize, synthesize
- Conclude

BACKGROUND

Group meetings are the core of facilitation. Every meeting will be different depending on the desired outcome, the size of the group and the degree of potential controversy with the topic. As such, not all of the items below may work for your group and each meeting needs to be tailored to fit the circumstances. Involvement by the participant should be a goal for every facilitated meeting. Try to get them involved in activities or even by assisting with note taking, hand-watching, etc. Involving the participants will help create a sense of ownership among the participants.

• Preparation and Planning

- Establish Meeting Purpose/Goals/Outcomes
 - What do you want to accomplish?
 - Who needs to participate?
 - What benchmarks are you hoping to hit?
 - Do you need to walk away from the meeting with concurrence on a specific item or a number of items?
 - Do you need to reach agreement in order to move on to the next phase of the project?
 - What happens if you do not meet your desired outcome?
 - What does it mean to your project if you only meet a portion of your goals?
- Determine Timing of Meeting
 - The Right Time: In order to get the most from a group, it is important to know the right day/time to convene the meeting. It is important to understand the constraints the participants have on their time before setting up the meeting.
 - Need for Decision: Knowing when the team has the information at hand to pass on to the participants and when the decisions need to be made to achieve the overall schedule.
 - Extenuating Circumstances: Outside circumstances can affect when a meeting may be held...elections, government shut downs, cultural requirements, emergencies are a few examples
- Planning the agenda
 - Develop REALISTIC agenda
 - How much time is allotted for the meeting?
 - How much can you reasonable accomplish in your timeframe?

Think About.....

Need to be aware what you are willing to leave on the table or what your absolute bottom line is.

Do you have the right people at the table to make the decisions needed?

What will happen if the objectives are not met...can you move forward?

What is your Plan B?

- Do you need to consider scaling back or adding to the agenda?
- Have you built in breaks into your agenda?
- Ensure time at end for recap/summary of meeting and to assign follow up items.
- Topics, Presenters, Time:
 - Balance the difficult agenda topics with easier topics.
 - When possible, engage the participants as presenters.
 - Leave time for participation and follow up.
 - Large groups work best in breakout sessions, have the groups elect a speaker to report back on their findings.
- Other Preparations –
 - Determine means of recordation
 - Created “issues bin” or “parking lot”
 - Determine room arrangements/layout
 - Determine information/materials to be sent out prior to meeting
 - Determine supplies needed during meeting
 - Any other meeting logistics (name tags? food?)

What makes a good agenda?

- Amount of material and number of topics are realistic for the time allotted
- Topics are described succinctly and clearly
- Discussion time is ample
- Heavy discussion items are balanced with briefer pieces
- Topics and tasks are in an order that increases chance for accomplishing something

ALL materials should be sent to participants in at least one week before the meeting!

• **Convene**

- Set Scene
 - Be warm, friendly and outgoing, make people feel comfortable. Maintain eye contact and use a calm, affirming voice.
 - Sample checklist for start of meeting:
 - Welcome and Introductions
 - Describe Role of Facilitator/Scribe/Other Helpers
 - Describe Role of Participants
 - Provide Overview of Process
 - Describe Context, Purpose, and Outcome of Meeting
 - Review Ground Rules/Operating Principles

Roles for Helpers

- Scribe
- Hand Watcher
- Vibe Watcher
- Time Keeper

- Establish Ground Rules
 - Often used for groups that will meet more than one time, like focus groups or advisory groups.
 - Participants as a group should develop and agree to ground rules and/or operating principles.
 - May include:
 - Purpose of Group
 - Membership Requirements
 - When/Where/Frequency of Meetings
 - Definitions of Terminology
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - Operating Principles

Example Operating Principles

- Treat each member with courtesy and respect
- Disagree with ideas, not with people
- Listen and consider the opinions of others
- Be brief and clear in your comments
- Focus on the topic at hand
- Concentrate on problem-solving, not fault finding
- Try not to repeat what has already been said

• **Converse**

- Guide Flow of Meeting
 - Go through agenda item by item
 - Try to limit/end side bar conversations
 - Be flexible with time and balance participation with available time

- Regulate flow of discussion.
- Help everyone participate. Look for cause if there is a lock of participation, what can be done to bring them into the conversation?
- Use humor and games to lighten the mood and invigorate tired participants.
- Record discussion and action items (be sure to identify the 5 W's – Who, What, Were, When, and How)
- Summarize
 - Wait until speaker has finished
 - Offer the summary and ask for clarification, corrections....
“what I hear you saying is, is that correct?”
 - Summarize succinctly and concisely
 - Rephrase do not parrot
 - Use flip chart or white board to record summary of discussion
- Synthesize
 - Bringing together different ideas/solutions and trying to find a mutually acceptable solution
 - Used to map out the common ground
 - Look for minor points of agreement and build from there
 - Use flip charts or white boards to record results from break-out groups and look for connections
- **Conclude**
 - Review Issues Bin or Parking Lot
 - Check for consensus – not everyone may agree but they should know their voices has been heard
 - Establish anticipated follow ups/action items (who, what, when, where and how those actions will be completed.)
 - Allow for evaluation of meeting
 - Set a time/place for next meeting

- Facilitator’s Tasks During Meeting**
- Listen attentively
 - Model respectful behavior
 - Ask probing or clarifying questions
 - Paraphrase issues and interests
 - Reframe positional or rude comments
 - Identify and restate conciliatory comments
 - Enforce Operating Principles
 - Make eye contact and give assurance to participants

- Tips for Facilitators**
1. Design a good agenda. Be realistic about what the meeting can achieve. Set time limits and tackle all points.
 2. Be aware of both content and process. Focus on critical content to enhance the processing of information.
 3. Keep the group moving towards its objectives or goals.
 4. Use a variety of facilitation tools to keep everyone interested. Vary method of instruction to allow for different types of learning to take place (visual, auditory, kinesthetic)
 5. Create a safe and empowering atmosphere to get the best contribution from everyone.
 6. Put a stop to domineering, interrupting, or generally disruptive behaviors.

Part 3 – Working with Groups

- Interests vs Positions
- Group Decision Making – Option Generation and Evaluation
- Conflict Resolution (Responding Effectively)

BACKGROUND

- **Interests vs Positions**

- Positions: one party's solution to a conflict (and which addresses only their own needs; is a historical pattern of reacting to conflict)
- Interests: underlying wants, needs, concerns (reflect and are shaped by values and priorities; discovering and stating interests allow mutual understanding in creating a resolution)
- Example: *Two men were quarreling in a library. One wants the window open and the other wants it closed. They bicker back and forth about how much to leave it open: a crack, halfway, three quarters of the way. No solution satisfies them both. Enter the librarian. She asks one why he wants the window open. To get some fresh air. She ask the other why he wants it closed. To avoid the draft. After thinking a minute she opens wide a window in the next room, bringing in fresh air without a draft. (Lancaster Mediation Center)*
- Interest vs position exercise:
 - *I oppose planning and zoning because I am worried that it means Big Brother will be telling me what I can or can't do with my property. I am worried that zoning will devalue the land I want to sell. Position? Oppose planning and zoning. Interests? Maintain control over land use and land value.*
 - *As a newcomer to this county I demand zoning now! I don't want strange new people with mobile homes moving into my nice neighborhood. I want to maintain my property values and high standard of living. Position? Demand for zoning now. Interest? Maintain land value and homogenous land use.*

- **Convergent vs divergent thinking**

- Convergent: moving together, narrowing differences, getting to closure
- Divergent: individual expression of viewpoint

Divergent	Convergent
Generating alternatives	Evaluating alternatives
Free for all discussion	Summarizing key points
Gathering diverse points of view	Sorting ideas into categories

Group breakthroughs are often preceded by a period of struggle between divergent and convergent thinking

- **Group Decision Making - Option Generation and Evaluation**

- Brainstorming (key is to not evaluate during generations)
- Crystal ball – describe a preferred future
- Snowball – build on a core concept
- Yes-Able Proposals – each side to draft a proposal, exchange and combine
- Single-Text Negotiating Document – drafted by subcommittee/facilitator and negotiated
- Take a break
- Flip chart (of points of agreement - evidence of progress, thoughts)

- Silent generation – ask everyone to take two minutes to write down ideas, then call on select people to engage participants who are hesitant/not public speakers
- Dot voting
- Post-its
- Eliminate items with fatal flaws

● **Conflict Resolution**

- Basic Approaches: competing, collaborating, accommodating, avoiding, compromise; there is a time and place for each
- Strategies to diffuse strong emotions: EAR statements
 - I can **emphasize** with you; I see how important this is to you.
 - Don't worry, I'll pay **attention** to your concerns; tell me more.
 - I **respect** that you are making an effort to get this resolved.
- As the facilitator: listen for key issues, common interests, and hidden offers to reframe
- Disruptive behavior: continuum response
 - Ignore
 - Address with body language
 - Enforce ground rules
 - Be direct (at a certain point)
 - Potentially take it outside the group meeting
 - Caucus: private meeting between a facilitator and a party. Goals are to promote positive communication and create movement toward settlement. Note the possibility of caucus during the process opening. Create equal caucus time for parties. Should not be overused.
- Model behavior!
- Challenge/Response Exercise

Challenge	Response
Only a couple of participants are contributing to the meeting.	Check with other participants for additional ideas; check for agreement on what is currently being discussed. Silent generation; post-it exercise.
Discussion begins to go into much greater detail about one agenda item than appropriate for the group assembled. Only one or two can participate.	Note the topic is worth discussing and suggest convening a smaller meeting to continue the discussion. Parking lot. Summarize. Directly discuss timing and agenda.
Discussion is becoming disjointed with new ideas emerging but no resolution.	Summarize the discussion up to that point and refocus the group on its goal. Break.
One participant is becoming adamant about a point of discussion and taking an unyielding position.	Ask questions to determine the participant's interests and then encourage discussion of alternate ways to meet that interest. Move out of meeting/parking lot.
The time allotted for the meeting will expire before all agenda items can be discussed.	Ask the group if it is comfortable extending the meeting time to cover all agenda items, reprioritizing the remaining items and possibly carrying some items forward for future discussion.

Close – Successful Outcomes

Successful Outcomes

- ✓ Purpose of the meeting is clear to everyone from start to finish
 - Purpose clearly identified on agenda and advance materials; facilitators explain the purpose of the meeting while reviewing the agenda and restates as the meeting progresses when necessary
- ✓ Everyone participates and no one dominates
 - Facilitators encourage the quiet and hesitant and balances participation of the articulate and outspoken
- ✓ Lots of ideas emerge that are appropriate to the purpose
 - Facilitators keep creative channels open and refer to purpose and task as needed to keep ideas relevant
- ✓ There is energy in the room
 - Pace should be lively with no one bored or frustrated; facilitators model receptiveness and involvement and inject a spirit of excitement if energies flag.
- ✓ Things start on time, stay on track, and end on time
 - Facilitators develop a realistic agenda in advance, watch the timing of each segment, and enlist the cooperation of the group to move through the agenda
- ✓ Difficult people are managed firmly and professionally
 - Facilitators develop working rules in advance, respond quickly to prickly or disruptive participants
- ✓ Meeting goals are achieved
 - Facilitators spotlight group accomplishments and identify next steps and thank participants
- ✓ Participants leave feeling time was well spent

Resources

Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR)	www.acrnet.org
Pennsylvania Council of Mediators (PCM)	www.pamediation.org
Lancaster Mediation Center (LMC)	www.lanamed.org
Mediate.com	www.mediate.com
CDR Associates	www.mediate.org

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