

Deliberative Public Engagement Handbook



www.mn.gov/admin/ocdr

The State of Minnesota **Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution (OCDR)** assists state and local government in designing and delivering meaningful public engagement.

Meaningful public engagement is “the intentional effort of government to facilitate meaningful dialogue with all members of the public in its work and the development of policy. Meaningful engagement means that relationships and conversations are reciprocal, authentic, and intentional to create opportunities for all communities to participate in the process.” (State of Minnesota 2016 Civic Engagement Plan).

OCDR’s Deliberative Public Engagement Model has been successful in many settings. It has worked well for both state and local government. It has also worked well many public engagement purposes from gathering initial feedback to deliberating on well-developed options. The key element of this model is placing the participants into small groups and facilitating discussions where all voices are heard, high quality deliberation is fostered, and integrative solutions are generated.

This handbook contains templates and resources to help those interested in learning more about deliberative public engagement and about how to prepare for and implement a project.

In addition to this handbook, the OCDR has other resources available, including a roster of trained table facilitators who may be available for your event. For more information, please visit www.mn.gov/admin/ocdr

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The lead facilitator is the person in charge of leading the group through the agenda for the event and for supporting the table facilitators. The lead facilitator can be a staff person of the government entity who is hosting the event or a contracted professional facilitator. This document is a checklist of the tasks of the lead facilitator.

Table Facilitator Handbook (Template and Sample)

A key element of this model is providing each table facilitator with a handbook. Included are two versions. A template that can be used for your event by putting your information in the yellow highlighted areas and a completed sample to show you what it looks like when it is finished. Also included is 'What should go in a Group Agreement'.

Group Agreement

Guidance on how to create an effective group agreement.

Notetaking Guide Template

Capturing the discussion at each table is another key element of this model. Enclosed is a template for your use.

Table Facilitator Training Power Point

Table facilitators are central to this model. While anyone can be trained to be a table facilitator, we find it works best if table facilitators already have some relevant background such as training in facilitation, mediation, or other participatory methodologies. This power point provides table facilitators with a review of key skills and responsibilities.

Deliberative Public Engagement 101

What is Deliberative Public Engagement and how does it work?

Many public meetings, especially the ones on contentious issues, leave both participants and the sponsoring government agency disappointed. Participants neither feel heard nor that their presence has made a difference. Government agencies gain little insight on how to meet the diverse needs of their stakeholders. Through extensive experience designing and facilitating public engagement activities for state and local government, OCDR has developed an approach which reliably leads to better results.

We call our model Deliberative Public Engagement. Deliberative Public Engagement:

- ✓ Enables more voices and ideas to be heard
- ✓ Fosters problem solving over position demanding
- ✓ Builds trust and relationships between government and citizens

A successful public engagement activity requires A LOT of planning and the deliberative approach must be adapted to each activity. Consider these key elements when designing your engagement:

- ✓ **Education.** Provide participants with the information that they need to participate but without lecturing to them. Email and post information ahead of time, have handouts, consider an open-house before the formal program begins, and above all, keep the initial presentation short and to the point.
- ✓ **Conversation guidelines.** Use conversation guidelines to foster deliberation (See Group Agreement below).
- ✓ **Deliberation.** After the initial presentation, break the participants up into groups of about 8-10 people. Government representatives should participate in the small groups. Next, trained, volunteer table facilitators use a circle-based process to have participants answer a customized version of the following questions:
 - Please share your name, why you came out tonight and what concerns you have about (insert topic).
 - Please share what you think may be potential opportunities regarding (insert topic)
 - Based on everything you have heard today, including the background information and the concerns of the group, what ideas do you have for how to best address the diverse needs and concerns voiced here today?

An agency staff person takes notes on participants' responses. Ideally, the staff person can provide answers to any subject-area questions that arise. If enough staff are not available, volunteer table facilitators can also serve as note-takers.

If time allows, the structured dialogue should be followed by 10-20 minutes of open dialogue in the small group.

Finally, if possible, the table facilitator from each group should share some brief highlights from the discussion.

Conclude the evening with government agency staff or officials:

- ✓ Sharing some reflections
 - ✓ Clearly identifying next steps such as where a meeting summary can be found, how the agency will use the input, and/or when a decision will be made.
 - ✓ Expressing gratitude that participants took time out of their busy lives to help improve their communities.
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- **Input.** Include multiple ways for participants to share their input. Options include small group discussion, comment cards on tables, staff available to take comments and/or listen, online or paper survey, etc.

 - **Relationships first.** The deeper goal of any public engagement activity is not the issue at hand (where to build a new road or whether police officers should wear body cameras). It is fostering trusting and collaborative relationships between citizens and government because these relationships lead to better government policy and better outcomes for citizens. So, see each engagement activity as an opportunity to build relationships. Because in the long-run these relationships are more important than the issue at hand, do what needs to be done in the moment to respond to the needs of the participants rather than adhering to your plans or agenda.

 - **Turn out.** Turn out is one of the most challenging aspects of public engagement – especially getting beyond the usual suspects. A relational approach is the best way to drive turn out. Invest in developing relationships with individuals and community institutions (schools, houses of worship, nonprofits) and use those relationships to turn out participants. Posting events online and in the media is less effective than having friends, clergy, teachers, and other community members invite each other.

For more information about public engagement or help with implementing Deliberative Public Engagement, contact us via <https://mn.gov/admin/government/ocdr/public-engagement>

Top Considerations for Public Engagement

Relationship Building Comes First and Remains at the Center

The deeper goal of any public engagement activity is not the issue at hand (where to build a new road or whether police officers should wear body cameras). It is fostering trusting and collaborative relationships between community and government because these relationships lead to better government policy and better outcomes for communities. So, see each engagement activity as an opportunity to build relationships. Because in the long-run these relationships are more important than the issue at hand, do what needs to be done in the moment to respond to the needs of the participants rather than adhering to your plans or agenda.

Turn out is one of the most challenging aspects of public engagement – especially getting beyond the usual suspects. A relational approach is the best way to drive turn out. Invest in developing relationships with individuals and community institutions (schools, houses of worship, nonprofits) and use those relationships to turn out participants. Posting events online and in the media is less effective than having friends, clergy, teachers, and other community members invite each other.

Know Your Purpose and Design Accordingly

Too often a unit of government doesn't consider the true purpose for the engagement activity – is it to inform the public about a decision already made; to get feedback on options; to work collaboratively toward a decision or something else? Know where your purpose falls on the [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#) from inform to empower. Know your specific goals for the activity. The purpose and goals for the meeting should determine every aspect of the agenda and all the plans. So first take the time to get clear about the purpose of the activity.

Plan, Plan, Plan

You simply can't over plan a good public engagement activity, whether it is preparing accessible background on the issue for attendees, identifying and inviting a broad array of attendees, creating a warm and welcoming environment, planning for displays of strong emotion (sometimes called disruptions), and so much more. The more you plan the better your outcomes will be – from participant satisfaction to quality of information gathered. Resources for better planning include [Dealing with Deeply Held Concerns and other Challenges to Public Engagement](#) and [Planning Public Engagement](#).

Consider creating a planning team made up of representatives of the audiences you hope to engage. These representatives will provide excellent insight into the most accessible venue for the event, what presentations or materials participants will need to participate in a meaningful way, what set-up will best engage participants and much more. Involving them in the planning will also likely make them highly motivated to turn out their networks for the event.

Design to Promote Problem Solving Rather Than Position Demanding

When we give each person at a public meeting three minutes at the microphone, we have inadvertently asked them to state their demands. We have not asked them to consider multiple perspectives and competing needs and we have not given them time to do so. At the end of such a meeting, the government host often ends up with a long list of everyone's demands, many of which are incompatible. The host also ends up with a frustrated and disappointed crowd. Instead there are number of meeting designs that foster problem solving instead of position demanding. These designs usually put people in small groups with a table facilitator and ask them not just what they want, but to share their concerns and ideas and most importantly to ask them to consider the concerns and ideas of the others in the small group as they put forth ideas for a path forward that could address many, if not all, of those concerns and ideas.

Follow Up

It is essential that participants know how you used their input. Often it is not easy to get this information to participants. So, utilize more than one method:

- Share updates on your website and newsletter
- Send emails to all participants
- Ask members of your planning team to share updates
- Use community partners to disseminate updates

Remember The '4 C's Of Trust': Competence, Caring, Consistency, Communication

Trust is critical to creating the dialogue needed to work together on tough issues. As an exercise the government host could identify at least one way they are demonstrating each 'C'. For example:

- **Competence** – by providing accessible background information on the topic or having governmental presenters who can share the information in plain language
- **Caring** – by providing food, childcare, and translation
- **Consistency** – by developing and maintaining relationships with participants
- **Communication** – by sharing meeting summaries and how the input was used

Set High Expectations

Human beings tend to rise to high expectations and sink to low ones. High expectations include that participants will listen to learn rather than to plan a rebuttal, presume positive intent of everyone present, and be open to changing their minds. Consider creating a list of expectations ahead of time or do it with the group. Remember to share the expectations multiple times before and during the event – post them on the wall, review them at the beginning of the meeting and again later in the meeting, put them on table tents, etc.

Create Space And Time To Acknowledge Missteps, Anger, Fear, Difference

Given that it is challenging to productively acknowledge missteps, anger, fear and difference, government tends to try to avoid doing so. However, in the long run avoiding these issues is harder as they will manifest as unwillingness to work together on a path forward and activism against decisions made by the unit of government. View anger as a passionate commitment to the issue and conflicting points of view as a resource for good decision making. For tips on working through particularly a divisive issue and with strong emotions see the [OCDR website](#) or the [Community Mediation Minnesota website](#) or consider using a [professional facilitator](#) with experience with high conflict situations.

Lead Facilitator Tasks

The lead facilitator is the person who is responsible for leading the group through the agenda for the event and for supporting the table facilitators. The lead facilitator can be a staff person of the government entity who is hosting the event or a contracted professional facilitator. If neither of these options is available, the host agency may choose to use a volunteer lead facilitator, but that person should have relevant training and experience.

- A. **Before the event:** read the Handbook; verify event location and cell phone # of sponsor

- B. **Arrive one hour early** at the location
 - a. If you are not a staff member of the agency, introduce yourself to the event hosts as the Lead Facilitator
 - b. Review the agenda, plan and room layout with host (be helpful); ensure you know who is available to answer 'content' questions during or AFTER the meeting.
 - c. Help prepare space as needed;
 - d. Greet table facilitators as they arrive; provide them with a copy of Guidelines and Notes sheet if they need it; have pens/paper available as needed, etc.

- C. **45 minutes prior** to start of event: Overview the day's plan with your table facilitators
 - a. Share and walk through the Guidelines and Agenda timing
 - b. Divide up by table, pairing table facilitators with agency note-takers if possible or in pairs of table facilitators
 - c. Remind them to type and email in their notes by due date;
 - d. Answer any questions they may have about event, their role, etc.
 - e. Observe crowd arrival – determine if you have too many or too few table facilitators (prefer facilitator and note taker at each group). Adjust as needed.

- D. **During event;** monitor tables (unless you are needed as a table facilitator)
 - a. Be available if any table facilitator has questions, etc.
 - b. Help table facilitators and agency staff to handle conflicts if needed
 - c. Trouble-shoot with sponsoring agency staff on any issues (content facts, etc.)

- E. **Wrap up;**
 - a. Thank table facilitators as they leave
 - b. Remind them to email in notes by deadline (usually a few days after event)
 - c. You (and table facilitators) may need to help with room cleanup
 - d. Thank sponsors for allowing us to serve them

OCDR would love to learn about and from your experience so that we can continue to improve these materials. Please send us a brief email to ocdr@state.mn.us about how the event went; any troubles or lessons learned?

Enter the Title of Your Event

Table Facilitator Handbook

Contact

Enter Your Name

Your Office of Employment or Position

Your Department of Employment

Your Office Number

Your Cell Number

Your Email

Thank you for helping to facilitate the enter title of your event.
We really appreciate your time and effort!

BACKGROUND

- Enter 2-4 paragraphs here about the purpose of the meeting, history, and context.

LOGISTICS

- This meeting will take place from (enter time) on (enter date of meeting) at:
 - Enter address of meeting
 - Enter any other logistical information that table facilitators will need to know

AGENDA

- Enter breakdown of each activity and timeframe
- Enter, if applicable, additional notes regarding what is needed during each activity
- Enter, for example, the following:
 - Welcome, review agenda, and share purpose 7:00-7:15
 - Conversation guidelines 7:15-7:20
 - Background on issue 7:20-7:50
 - Etc.

Small Group Discussions

Participants will be seated in a circle of approximately 8-10 individuals. We will use a circle-based process. In a circle, each individual is given a chance to share or pass as the group moves around the circle. No one speaks out of turn nor responds to comments made by other participants. The circle process facilitates listening and reflection.

The goal is to have a (enter name of government agency) staff person take notes and a community facilitator lead the conversation, however the pairings will depend on turnout and (enter name of government agency) staff or community facilitators may need to fulfill both functions.

Begin the discussion by introducing yourself and sharing that you are a community facilitator and your role is to foster a constructive conversation. Ask the (enter name of government agency) staff person to introduce him or herself and explain that his or her role is to take notes and to listen. Then say something like:

We will be going around the circle and responding to three questions. Afterwards we hope to have time for an open discussion. I would like each of you to share your name, why you came tonight, and any concerns you have this project. Please follow the Conversation Guidelines that are posted, and do not interrupt. You have (enter number) minutes (do a quick calculation based on the number of participants, the time, and the agenda).

Then ask what potential opportunities do you see regarding (insert issue, for example dam removal)? You have (enter number) minutes.

Next ask participants to go-around again answering the question:

Based on everything you have heard tonight, including the background information and the concerns of your neighbors, what ideas do you have for how to best address the diverse needs and concerns voiced here tonight?

Remind participants of the guidelines and they have (enter number) minutes to speak.

Conversation Guidelines

- **Edit this list based on the needs of the group. See Group Agreement below for ideas.**

1. Listen to learn not to prepare a response
2. Share the air: keep comments to **(enter number)** minutes
3. Speak from the heart: share **why** something is important to you not just what is important to you
4. Presume positive intent
5. Suspend certainty: what don't you know? Look for surprises.

Table Facilitator Roles and Responsibilities

- **Insert any additional roles and responsibilities that would be useful for your event**

- ✓ Your number one role is to promote constructive conversation and capture the input given by the participants.
- ✓ Meet at sign-in table by **(enter time)** for a brief orientation.
- ✓ Help the meeting organizers set up and clean up.
- ✓ Facilitate small group conversations
 - Manage the time to ensure that every participant has the opportunity to answer all questions.
 - **The note taker should attempt to capture each speaker's central concern or desire. Do not attempt to take word for word notes.**
 - Ensure that all participants have an equal opportunity to and are encouraged to participate. Speakers may pass but should be given the opportunity to speak. You should give a time parameter at the beginning of each go around (i.e. each participant will have about 2-3 minutes to answer the following question). If a participant is dominating the conversation you will need to remind him or her of the time parameter and the goal of hearing from everyone.
 - Manage conflict or strong emotions by using active listening, reflecting, and reframing. Strive to identify the underlying concern or desire of the speaker and let him or her know that you have captured it for the record. Additionally, participants can be directed to leave feedback for the **(enter name of government agency)** at the comment table **(delete if not using a comment table).**
 - If you are having trouble managing conflict or time, send someone to the sign-in table and you will be provided with facilitation support.

- Important issues such as (enter relevant examples, for example equity) are likely to come up. Be aware of your own biases and strive to facilitate and take notes in an omnipartial manner – meaning that you are not favoring any one person or perspective and are supportive of everyone in the room.
- ✓ Submit notes to (enter government agency contact person and email address) within 72 hours. Following the meeting, your job is to synthesize the notes you took into a concise list of the themes that emerged from the conversation and submit those themes along with your detailed notes. Salient themes may be a) things that multiple people expressed; b) there was a sense of consensus in the group for a statement made; c) there was a high level of emotion attached to the statement; or d) it is an integration of several statements made by members of the group. Please note, **you are to provide both your detailed notes and your list of themes**. Submit your detailed notes and list of themes for each question, rather than one list of themes. Please take the time to do a thoughtful analysis of the themes that you submit.

Questions and Answers

- **Insert any additional Q + A that would be useful for your event**
- 1. What do I need to bring?
Please bring a notepad and pen for taking notes and a talking piece if you would like to (delete or replace this need if you will be providing note pads and pens).
- 2. What if I have an emergency and can't make it at the last minute?
Call (enter government agency contact person and cell phone number).
- 3. What should I wear?
Dress is business casual. Please be mindful to wear clothing that does not indicate your personal beliefs, politics, philosophy, etc.
- 4. What if the weather is bad?
If the (enter name of government agency) cancels the event due to weather conditions you will be notified by email.

THANK YOU!

(Note: This is a completed sample)

Grindstone River Dam Public Informational Meeting

Table Facilitator Handbook

Contact:

Mariah Levison
Office for Collaboration and Dispute Resolution
ocdr@state.mn.us

Thank you for helping to staff the Grindstone River Dam Public Informational Meeting.
We really appreciate your time and effort!

Background

The current dam on the Grindstone River in Hinckley was constructed by the Department of Game and Fish (the Department of Natural Resources' [DNR] predecessor) in 1931 to supply water to fish rearing ponds. Due to periodic high-water conditions, overtopping events, and other stressors over the decades, the dam has been the subject of many costly repairs of varying magnitude. The dam is currently considered to be in 'poor' condition by DNR Dam Safety Engineers.

There have been previous dams located in close proximity to the current one, dating back to the late 1800s. As a result, there is a long-standing history of a reservoir being present in the town of Hinckley. The City is concerned that the dam's removal would result in a lost connection to the community's history and would prefer that the structure be repaired or replaced.

It is the Department's intent to hold this informational meeting to provide an opportunity for the public to gain information about the dam's status, its ecological impacts and public safety issues, ask questions of DNR staff, and provide input on additional issues the DNR should consider. In DNR's initial review of known ecological impacts, safety concerns, costs, effects on recreation, historical significance and infrastructure issues surrounding the dam, the DNR's current preferred alternative is to remove it and restore the river. However, the Department is aware that the local community may have significant concerns with this plan of action, and that DNR may be missing information that should be considered. This public engagement opportunity will allow for the potential identification of alternatives and/or additional issues that need to be considered in a final decision regarding the future of the Grindstone dam. The Department is committed to addressing the concerns identified by the community in any way that preserves our ability to address the dam's issues (recreation, safety, infrastructure, ecology, cost, history).

The final decision concerning the fate of the Grindstone River dam will be made by Department leaders during the winter of 2017-18, and comments and concerns expressed during this public meeting will be considered in that decision. The DNR may also consider additional dialogue with the City of other parties if that seems useful in reaching a final decision.

Logistics

The meeting will take place from 7-9 pm on September 26th at:

Hinckley Community Center

102 Dunn Ave. N.
Hinckley, MN 55037

Agenda

7:00-7:05	Welcome, Purpose Statement, Agenda, Introduction of Facilitator
7:05-7:10	Communication Guidelines
7:10-7:20	History of Project and Important Background
7:20-7:30	Dam Status – Current Situation and Costs
7:30-8:00	Dam Related Issues and Alternatives
8:00-8:10	Preliminary Assessment of Alternatives and Challenges
8:10-8:30	Questions and Discussion with the Audience
8:30-8:55	Small Group Discussions
8:55-9:00	Closing – Thank You and Next Steps

- ❖ Two community facilitators will be needed to take notes on flip charts during the large group discussion.
- ❖ Two community facilitators will be needed to pass the microphone to speakers during the large group discussion. Speakers will be selected at random.
- ❖ One DNR staff will be needed to sit at the comment card table.
- ❖ Agenda will be shown as part of power point.
- ❖ Information shared will be distributed in a handout(s).

Small Group Discussions

Participants will be seated in a circle of approximately 8-10 individuals. We will use a circle-based process. In a circle everyone is given a chance to share or pass as the group moves around the circle. No one speaks out of turn nor responds to comments made by other participants. The circle process facilitates listening and reflection.

The goal is to have a DNR staff person take notes and a community facilitator lead the conversation, however the pairings will depend on turnout and DNR staff or community facilitators may need to fulfill both functions.

Introduce yourself and share that you are a community facilitator and your role is foster a constructive conversation. Ask the DNR staff person to introduce him or herself and explain that his or her role is to take notes and to listen. Then say something like:

We will be going around the circle. I would like each of you to share your name, why you came tonight, and any concerns you have this project. Please follow the Conversation Guidelines that are posted. You have 3 minutes (do a quick calculation based on the number of participants, the time, and the agenda).

Next ask participants to go-around again answering the question:

Based on everything you have heard tonight, including the background information and the concerns of your neighbors, what ideas do you have for how to best address the diverse needs and concerns voiced here tonight?

Remind participants of the guidelines and amount of time allotted to speak.

Conversation Guidelines

1. Listen to learn not to prepare a response
2. Share the air: keep comments to 3 minutes
3. Speak from the heart: share why something is important to you not just what is important to you
4. Presume positive intent
5. Suspend certainty: what don't you know? Look for surprises.

Table Facilitator Roles and Responsibilities

- ✓ Your number one role is to promote constructive conversation and capture the input given by the participants.
- ✓ Meet at sign-in table by 6:30 pm for a brief orientation.
- ✓ Facilitate small group conversations
 - Manage the time to ensure that every participant has the opportunity to answer both questions.
 - **The note taker should attempt to capture each speaker's central concern or desire. Do not attempt to take word for word notes.**
 - Ensure that all participants have an equal opportunity to and are encouraged to participate. Speakers may pass but should be given the opportunity to speak. You should give a time parameter at the beginning of each go around (i.e. each participant will have about 2-3 minutes to answer the following question). If a participant is dominating the conversation you will need to remind him or her of the time parameter and the goal of hearing from everyone.
 - Manage conflict or strong emotions by using active listening, reflecting, and reframing. Strive to identify the underlying concern or desire of the speaker and let him or her know that you have captured it for the record. Additionally, participants can be directed to leave feedback for the DNR at the comment table.

- If you are having trouble managing conflict or time, send someone to the sign-in table and you will be provided with facilitation support.
 - Important issues such as the environment and local history are likely to come up. Be aware of your own biases and strive to facilitate and take notes in an omni partial manner – meaning that you are not favoring any one person or perspective and are supportive of everyone in the room.
- ✓ Help to set up and clean up.
 - ✓ Submit notes to ocdr@state.mn.us within 48 hours. Following the meeting, your job is to synthesize the notes you took into a concise list of the themes that emerged from the conversation and submit those themes along with your detailed notes. Salient themes may be a) things that multiple people expressed; b) there was a sense of consensus in the group for a statement made; c) there was a high level of emotion attached to the statement; or d) it is an integration of several statements made by members of the group. Please note, **you are to provide both your detailed notes and your list of themes**. Submit your detailed notes and list of themes for each question, rather than one list of themes. Please take the time to do a thoughtful analysis of the themes that you submit.

Questions and Answers

1. What do I need to bring?
Please bring a notepad and pen for taking notes and a talking piece if you would like to.
2. What if I have an emergency and can't make it at the last minute?
Call Mariah Levison at (cell #)
3. What should I wear?
Dress is business casual. Please be mindful to wear clothing that does not indicate your personal beliefs, politics, philosophy, etc.
4. What if the weather is bad?
If the DNR cancels the event due to weather conditions you will be notified by email.

THANK YOU!

What Should Go Into a Group Agreement?

It can be called Group Agreement, Ground Rules or Guiding Principles. Whatever it is called, thoughtful agreements do help groups effectively communicate and develop good solutions. Some groups generate the list together while others work from a draft list or use a list created by the host. Below is a list of effective sample agreements to get your group started. For most groups, a list should not be longer than 10 items.

General Principles

- Build trust. Nothing can be accomplished if those at the table don't believe each other.
- Commit to creative resolution of differences that integrate the needs of all participants.
- Demonstrate respect. Speak and listen with respect. Even the strongest objections or points of view can be delivered and received respectfully.
- Commit to develop a shared understanding of the issues.
- Adopt the Chatham House Rule: The conversations stay in the room; but the learning gets shared.
- Allow space for differences.
- Be open to changing your mind and don't make assumptions – instead, ask questions.
- Look for areas of common interest.
- Remember to attack the problems, not the people.
- Give credit where credit is due.
- Focus on the future rather than the past.

Listening

- Listen to learn rather than to plan a response or rebuttal.
- Accept that what each person says is his or her sincere belief.

Speaking

- Speak from the heart and to the heart of the matter. Share *why* something is important to you and not just what you want.
- Be mindful of how long you speak for the purpose of ensuring that all voices are heard.
- Lean into challenging conversations by bravely raising concerns.
- Slow down the conversation, allowing pauses between speakers.
- Refrain from using stereotypic language.
- Help everyone understand acronyms and technical language.

[This is a Template: Access an Editable Version in MS Word](#)

(Enter Title of Your Event)

Notetaking Guide

(Enter Date)

Enter Your Name:

Enter Your Co-Facilitator's Name:

Enter Your Contact Information (for questions):

Please use the pages below to capture the conversations that take place at your table. This format provides a guide with prompts for notetaking and helps to ensure we can uniformly collect as much of the information participants share tonight as possible.

For each question, the note taker should attempt to capture each speaker's central concern or message. Do not attempt to take word for word notes.

In the theme boxes, synthesize the notes you took into a concise list of the themes that emerged from the conversation. Salient themes may be a) things that multiple people expressed; b) there was a sense of consensus in the group for a statement made; c) there was a high level of emotion attached to the statement; or d) it is an integration of several statements made by members of the group. Please provide both your detailed notes and your list of themes.

Typed notes are due by **(enter date and time)**. Please send notes to **(enter staff email)**

First Question – Example: Go around the circle asking each participant to share their name, why they came, and any concerns they have.

Enter Themes Here:

Second Question – Example: Go around the circle asking each participant to share what they think may be potential opportunities regarding **(insert topic)**

Enter Themes Here:

Third Question – (Example: Based on everything you have heard today, including the background information and the concerns of the group, what ideas do you have for how to best address the diverse needs and concerns voiced here today?)

Enter Themes Here:

A Brief Training on Table Facilitation



Introduction

Community conversations often end up being more about demanding a particular position than they are about coming together to problem solve.

This model is designed to help participants identify their needs and jointly develop solutions that address the most important needs of everyone involved. It is about working together to understand different perspectives and using dialogue to generate better solutions.

The key to this model is using table facilitators to foster dialogue and deliberation and using governmental agency staff or table facilitators to capture the conversation and solutions for the decision making unit of government.

What is Table Facilitation?

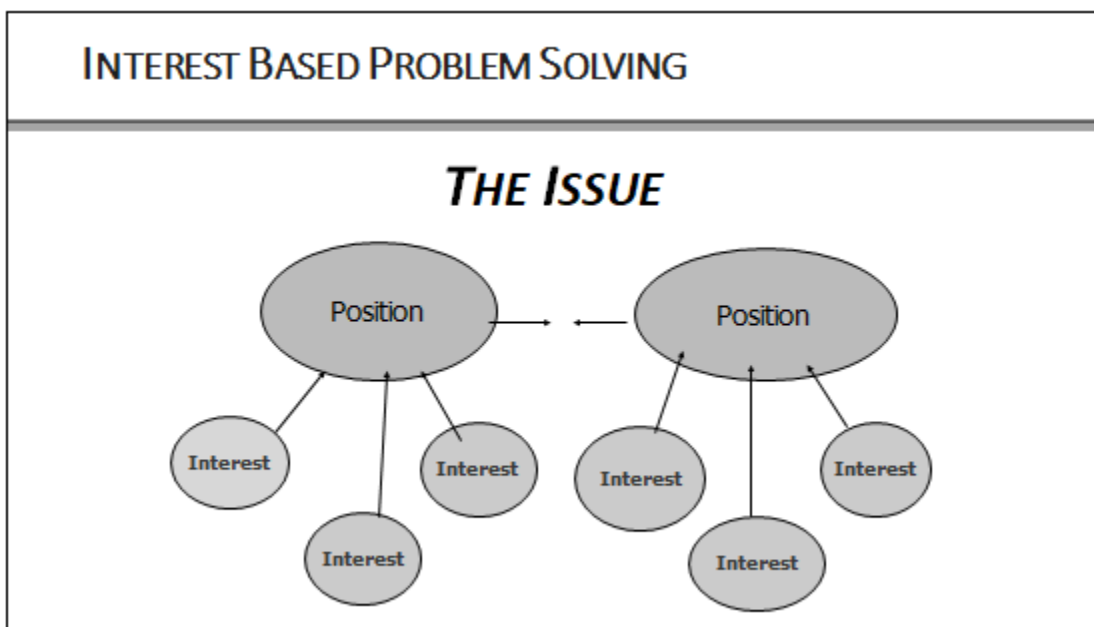
- A way of fostering dialogue and deliberation in small groups
- “Tables” are often smaller groups within a larger facilitated effort
- Empowers people to listen to each other and work together
- Encourages participation and responsibility for outcomes
- Facilitator ensures individuals in the group are recognized, acknowledged and responded to
- Facilitator demonstrates care for participants and issues without injecting his or her own beliefs

Interest Based Problem Solving

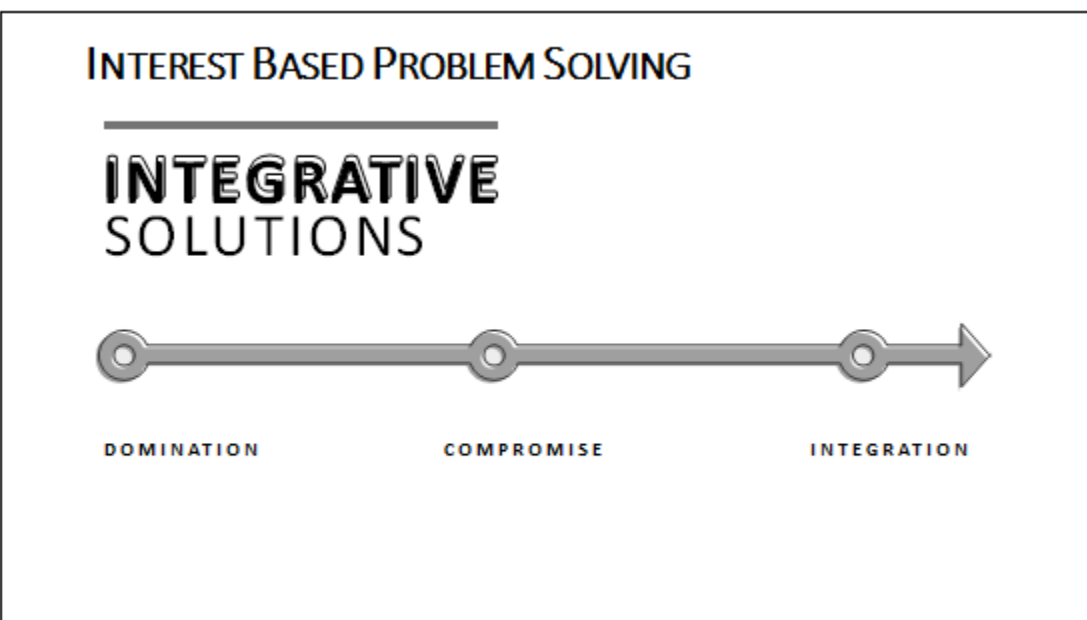
People often are 'for' or 'against' an issue and start the discussion from their Position (a fixed proposed solution to resolve the negotiation of an issue). With positions one side wins and the other side loses, or there is a compromise which satisfies no one.

One of the central goals of deliberative public engagement is to help participants identify the Interests that underly positions. Interests are the 'why' behind the position.

Since interests are usually not mutually exclusive, it is often possible to develop solutions that integrate the most important underlying interests of each side. Integrative solutions are more durable and more satisfying.



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Example of Interest Based Problem Solving

Issue: where to build a new wastewater treatment plant

Position of City Council: in our city

Position of some community members: anywhere but in our city

Interests of City Council: new jobs in town; safer, modern facility; clean drinking water

Interests of community members: property values; quality of life issues (smells, sounds); safer, modern facility; clean drinking water

Integrative solution: Residents living near the plant will receive free mitigation upgrades to prevent sounds and smells from entering their homes and additional cosmetic upgrades to increase the value of their home. Additionally, a park will be built near-by to bolster property values.

Listening Well

- Being heard is a basic human need
- You cannot listen well if you are talking
- Remember to ask open-ended questions
- Encourage elaboration (“Say more about ...”)
- Acknowledge what you heard (It sounds like...)
- Active listening skills
- Pay attention to the speaker and others’ reactions, as well as to their tone, body language, etc.
- Acknowledge emotions
- Summarize the most important parts of the speaker’s message
- Other ideas?

Note Taking

- Ideally there is a Table Facilitator and a Note Taker. If you are solo, balance the needs of both roles.
- Take notes in such a way that you would be comfortable with participants reading them
- For each question, the note taker should attempt to capture each speaker’s central concern or message. Do not attempt to take word for word notes.
- If asked to identify themes, synthesize the notes you took into a concise list of the themes that emerged from the conversation.

Managing Communications

- Review guidelines or expectations (such as room for everyone to speak, timing)
- If a speaker is going on too long:
 - Remind participants of time constraints
 - Remind participants of guidelines or expectations to allow time for all voices
 - Summarize and acknowledge to help someone move on
 - Respectfully ask participant to wrap up
- Encourage participation, while allowing participants to pass
 - Ask whether anyone who hasn't spoken yet would like to add to the conversation
 - Ask whether there is anyone who wants to convey something that the group does not yet understand
- Other ideas?

Managing High Emotions (Theirs)

Remember to view strong emotions as a passionate commitment to the issue, which is a resource for problem solving!

- Be prepared for upset participants
- Follow guidelines set by host / lead facilitator
- Acknowledge deep feelings a person has about a topic
- De-escalation
 - Listen empathetically
 - Reflection and acknowledgement
 - Tone – low and slow
 - Take a break
- Be clear about behaviors which are unacceptable. Scary or “over the top” behaviors should be stopped immediately. Get help from the host or lead facilitator if necessary.
- Other ideas?

Reframing While Managing High Emotions

In contentious situations people hold passionate views. This may lead them to make statements that are unproductive.

Every strong statement contains some underlying interest or concern that prompted the strong statement.

Reframing is translating threatening or unclear statements into statements that others can respond to productively.

Steps of Reframing

1. Listen hard
2. Identify the underlying interests, needs, concerns
3. Remove the problem language
4. Paraphrase the statement using constructive language
5. Stick with it until the person lets you know you got it right, that you are saying what they meant (but in better language)

Reframing Example

During the public comment section at a School Board discussion on the budget a resident says, "You are all a bunch of bleeding heart liberals who don't care that you are going to tax us right out of our homes."

Rather than get in a discussion about liberals vs. conservatives and who cares about school children, instead reframe it and reply, "So it sounds like your concern is the impact of the proposed budget on the property tax, is that correct?"

They will likely answer "Yes" and then you can go on to discuss the impact on the average home, the other revenue sources to help with the budget that will keep taxes from rising too much, etc.

Managing High Emotions (Yours)

- Think carefully before agreeing to be a table facilitator – are you likely to run into topics which will challenge your ability to remain impartial? Facilitators should demonstrate they care about issues and participants without elaborating on their own positions.
- Monitor your own reactions because they impact others
 - Slow down automatic responses
 - Stay calm
 - Take a pause, a deep breath
 - Focus on the end of your nose
- If you are feeling triggered, change your mindset
 - Consider and accept that your reaction is a sign that something matters deeply to you. Is the conversation touching on or challenging one of your core beliefs?
 - Consider and accept that there are other possible narratives
 - Intentionally choose to help participants listen to each other's' perspectives
 - Accept all perspectives as legitimate and helpful to discussion
 - Assume the highest intentions of everyone at the table

Thank You!

For more information on:

- **Facilitation**
Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making by Sam Kaner and Lenny Lind
- **Interest based problem solving**
Getting to Yes by William Ury and Roger Fisher

Additional resources are at www.mn.gov/admin/ocdr

Thank you for your interest in serving as a table facilitator!