Turning lemons into lemonade

Public Conflict Resolution

How to design a collaborative process and how to use a convening document are introduced through a lecture. When to carry out this exercise is left to the discretion of the trainer.

Purpose	In order to enact interest-based problem solving it is important to understand how to design the collaborative process. The purpose of this session is to familiarize the participants with the questions and issues that establish the collaborative process.
Objectives	As a result, participants will: • Learn how to develop a process design by using a "process blueprint." • Learn how to develop a written agenda for the first meeting with a group in conflict.
Time	30 minutes
Materials Needed	Flip Chart and Easel Markers Overhead Projector
Overheads	49 Process Blueprint
Handouts	1. Typical Agenda for First Meeting 2. Process Blueprint
Directions	1. The trainer mentions that a neutral in a public conflict situation has a series of questions and issues to answer before the process of collaboration can really begin. These questions and issues lay out the structure of how the neutral will go about their role in the conflict; these questions help the neutral design a process blueprint.

Overhead 49

2. The trainer posts **Overhead 49** to discuss the crafting of a process blueprint. Read the descriptions of each issue below:

a. **Who will the participants be** — If it is premature to name names, categories of participants are necessary because they help define the group dynamics. It is also important to know who will select the participants.

b. **What the participants will be asked to do** — This includes role descriptions, scope, and depth.

c. **How decisions will be made** — If you expect consensus, you must state it.

d. **The Nature of the Final Product** — you expect an agreement, a contract, a plan, a regulation, a vision, what...?

e. **Duration** — Timeliness, milestones, and deadlines will help define the process. They should be realistic and not so abbreviated that participants immediately move to a crisis mode.

f. **The authority of the group** — Failure to be clear about the level of shared decision-making can doom a group to failure at the point conflict emerges. The end result of the process is strongly shaped by the authority of the group's that are attempting to collaborate.

g. **The stage of the policy process this group is serving** — Are they framing the problem, identifying options, developing solutions, or implementing agreements?

h. **The cost of the process** — Will staff time be used to support the process? Will a facilitator or mediator be hired (outside of state Extension offices)? What technical studies might be necessary? And who will perform needed technical studies.

i. **What are the ground rules and protocols** — The presence of these documents can provide symbolic evidence of the type of process you are using. Their detail provides an important guide to primary stakeholders. Ground rules deserve further discussion. Ground rules generally address issues such as: timing, the objectives for the day (identifying the problem, considering solutions, and making decisions), confidentiality (Will this information be shared publicly?), how information is recorded, and the rules of discussion. It is important that rules be flexible, not invariable—the actual negotiation process may reveal that certain rules don't apply to the situation after all. It is also wise on the part of those who draft the ground rules to anticipate the worst, most disruptive situations that could arise (i.e. profanity, repeated talking out of order, inflammatory language, blaming, threats, or violence).

3. The trainer asks the participants about what specific issues and questions besides those mentioned above need to be included in the layout of the process. Record these responses on the flip chart. Make it clear where their comments fit into the process if the participants raise issues that are best addressed during the actual negotiation process.

4. So that the participants have a sense for what a written agenda for the first meeting between disputing parties includes, distribute the handout "Typical Agenda for First Meeting." Point out that this type of document is produced only after the basic questions of the Process Blueprint have been addressed.

Turning lemons into lemonade

Unit 13
Building a Framework
Handouts

**Turning lemons
into lemonade**

Public Conflict Resolution

Process Blueprint

Your process is designed when you are able to describe in some detail and rationale:

Who the participants will be— If it is premature to name names, categories of participants are necessary because they help define the group dynamics. It is also important to know who will select the participants.

What the participants will be asked to do— This includes role descriptions, scope, and depth.

How decisions will be made— If you expect consensus, you must state it.

The nature of the final product— Do you expect an agreement, a contract, a plan, a regulation, a vision, what...?

Duration— Timelines, milestones, and deadlines will help define the process. They should be realistic and not so abbreviated that participants immediately move to a crisis mode.

The authority of the group— Failure to be clear about the level of shared decision-making can doom a group to failure at the point conflict emerges.

The stage of the policy process this group is serving— Are they framing the problem, identifying options, developing solutions, or implementing agreements?

The cost of the process— Will staff time be used to support the process? Will a facilitator or mediator be hired? What technical studies might be necessary?

What are the ground rules and protocols— The presence of these documents can provide symbolic evidence of the type of process you are using. Their detail will provide important guidance to primary stakeholders.

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Public Conflict Resolution

Typical Agenda for First Meeting
Among Multi-Party Disputants

Time
Between 9 A.M. and 5 P.M.

Place
Neutral, friendly and comfortable setting—lots of food.

Neutral Discussion Leaders:

1. Introductions

2. Positive Role of Conflict in Organizations

3. Clarification of today's goals:
    Work on problems in ways that meet the needs of Group A and Group B (and local government officials) and respect ideas of all participants. How do we get there?

    a) Identify the most pressing conflicts/differences in this organization that we will address.
    b) Identify top 2-3 concerns.
    c) For each concern, we will:
        *   identify factors contributing to conflict
        *   identify the key interest in the conflict (the bottom line)
        *   brainstorm ways to resolve the conflict
        *   pick out solution(s) that meets our key interests
        *   find a way to carry out the solution(s)
        *   identify ways to measure our success (i.e., written agreements)
    d) Repeat this for other top concerns

4. Clarification of Facilitator and Scribe Roles—with an emphasis on neutrality/confidentiality/efficiency and providing a structure to solve problems.

5. Suggested Rules for Today:
   * facilitator/scribes remain neutral
   * all ideas recorded accurately
   * only one person speaks at a time
   * we respect everyone present
   * no one dominates discussion (round-robin procedure)
   * we focus on the topic at hand
   * suggestions for other rules of discussion?

6. Setting a Tone for Organization Problem-Solving—a silent period and then a round-robin discussion, opening with the introductory question "What do you value the most about living/working/doing business with this organization?"

Problem-Solving Phase

7. What are the most significant conflicts or differences that we face today? (Procedure: First, participants will reflect silently and can write ideas on their own sheets of paper. Second, each person will be allowed to present one idea in the round-robin fashion until all of the ideas are exhausted. Each idea will be summarized on the flip chart by the scribe.)

8. After all of the ideas are recorded, participants are asked to **pick out the top three conflicts/differences that we face today within the organization.** (Procedure: Each participant will be handed three sticky dots. They will be asked to get up from their chairs and place sticky dots on those items on the flip chart they believe are the most significant. They may place all three dots on one item or distribute them on two or three items. The group will focus on those items that get the most sticky dots.

9. The first conflict or issue will be identified.

   a) Participants will be asked to **identify the factors that might contribute to this conflict/difference.** (Procedure: Round-robin brainstorming; ideas recorded on the flip chart.)

   b) Then, participants will be asked to **tell us what your interests are in the outcome,** that is, **what are your bottom-line personal or organization interests in this issue — regardless of how the conflict is solved?** (Procedure: same as 9a.)

   c) Participants will be asked to identify ways to resolve this conflict. Creativity and freedom of expression will be encouraged.

   d) Participants will be asked **which solution seems to be the best.** That is, the solution that will address the contributing factors to the problem and will meet all of our interests. (Procedure: same as 9a.)

e) Participants will be asked how the solution can be carried out. **Who? What? When? Where? Other details? How will we measure success?** (Procedure: Same as 9a. A neutral scribe will type a proposed agreement at the meeting site.)

10. Procedure in #9 will be repeated for other conflicts.

11. Did we meet the goals we set today? (Open discussion)

12. Did we abide by the rules we set today for our discussion?

13. What other conflicts or differences do we need to work on? When should we meet again?

14. Conclusion—written agreements? Follow-up meetings?