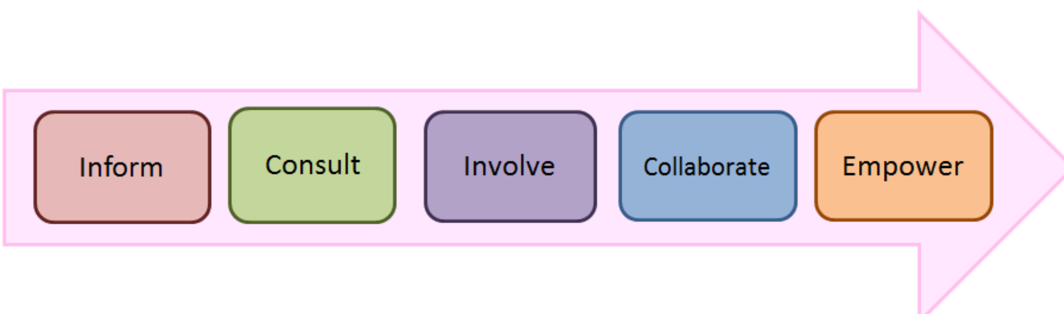
BEST PRACTICE GUIDE & TOOLKIT

FACILITATION SKILLS TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



This publication was authored by Brian Benn, Martin Krogh and John Elliott

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Part A - Ontario School Boards and Community Engagement

How to Use this Guide

This guide is written to support school board staff that have an active role in designing, planning and facilitating public meetings. School boards engage parents, guardians and their local community in some form of problem-solving or information-sharing when the decision or outcome will have a significant impact on those parties. School boards often engage parents, guardians and the community on topics such as pupil accommodation reviews, boundary reviews, community use of schools planning and curriculum changes. School boards may also work directly with parents and guardians on school consolidation transition committees and parent councils.

This guide describes internationally recognized principles of public engagement, and provides a set of tools to prepare school board staff to plan and design their community consultation processes. The principles and tools provided are to be customized to best suit the topic and meet the needs of both the school board and of community participants.

Some of the principles described in this manual will be more highly applicable in certain situations than others. In preparing for a specific community consultation, school board staff are encouraged to discuss the tools and principles in this guide with their colleagues, in order to collectively identify the most appropriate strategy.

Pupil Accommodation Reviews

School boards are responsible for providing their students with the best possible educational experience. As communities' age, population demographics shift, and patterns of settlement change, school board officials are faced with challenging decisions:

- Should investments in aging school infrastructure be considered when the demographics indicate that enrollment will decline?
- Should schools with declining enrollment be closed and plans for consolidation be developed? Should new schools be built to meet projected enrollment increases?
- Which communities should have their schools closed and other communities receive investments to renovate or build new schools?
- How will programs that we offer our children be affected or changed?

These are difficult questions and challenging responsibilities for school board officials and elected school trustees.

For school boards faced with these challenging responsibilities, they must also deal with another set of difficult questions:

- What role do students and citizens of communities affected by these situations have in the final decision to invest in or close their schools?
- What level of involvement or participation should the affected students and citizens have in the deliberation and final decision?
- What approaches and processes are reasonable and effective in planning for community engagement?

Once again, these are difficult questions to answer and respond to with effective strategies.
This intent of this guide is to provide a practical planning framework and effective process tools to respond to the second set of questions regarding community/stakeholder engagement. While there is no one "best approach or process tool" to use for all community engagement sessions, there are well research and documented "best practices."

Planning for a Pupil Accommodation Review

When school boards develop long-term plans they normally take into consideration such things as; community expansion and development, demographics, school enrolment history and projections, facility condition.

Through this process, boards may determine issues that may affect their service delivery and the public in significant ways. These could include but are not limited to; the number of new schools required in certain areas, where these new schools may be required, expansions of some schools, introduction of new programs, and the reduction of pupil places through school closures or consolidations.

Community Engagement

In commonwealth countries around the world, where government agencies may need to change the services they deliver to the public, conventional thinking is to consult with various public stakeholders long before final recommendations or announcements are made. Public consultation is a process by which the public's input, on matters affecting them, is sought.
There are effective consultations and ineffective consultations Ineffective consultations are considered to be held more due to obligation and not as mechanisms that support true participatory decision making. Effective consultations on the other hand are processes that permits and promotes the genuine two-way flow of information between clients of government services and the government.
An accommodation review is the final public process before a Board of Trustees makes its decision to close or consolidate a school or schools.

Things to consider in this process are:

- There may be opportunities to engage stakeholders, such as during long-term planning, before an accommodation review is initiated.

- If people are consulted during the process they are more likely to accept the final recommendations even when the recommendations may impact them in a negative way.

- Developing overarching principles that guide the process and that will be adhered to by all, may be debated and agreed up by a board and its stakeholders (See CORE Principles below).

- Each situation is unique. In regards to a consultative approach, one size does not fit all; meaning that various groups may be consulted at various times, and in various ways, during the process.

- Consultations should be done strategically by deciding who needs to be present and who doesn't.

- Creative facilitation methodologies are key and should be used; methodologies that will increase the likelihood of all participants having an opportunity to share their ideas in an orderly, open, non- threatening and productive way.

- Need to understand Group Development Theory (Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing) and adjust accordingly to size of group and type of consultation you are engaging in (i.e. a public meeting vs. ARC working committee).

- Learn how to develop the critical questions to ask stakeholders during the consultation process.

- Outcomes of on-going meetings and events should be communicated to the public in affective ways so they can be kept up-to-date on the issues being discussed.

- If the process is open and transparent throughout, there should be fewer surprises at the time when final recommendations are made and the required public consultation is held.

Part B - Community Engagement Principles

What is community engagement?

“Engagement” is a broad, inclusive term to describe the broad range of interaction and dialogue between people. It can include a variety of interactions, such as one-way communication or information presentations, consultation to gather opinions, involvement and collaboration in decision-making, and empowerment to take action. Engagement sessions can be in large or small group gatherings and be designed as informal or highly structured processes.

The word “community” is also a very broad term used to define groups of people, such as stakeholders, interest groups, citizen groups, or school community groups. A community may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest (community of practice), or a community of affiliation or identity (such as a school or district).

“Community engagement” is therefore a planned interactive process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest, or identify with a common interest (such as a school closure or consolidation, setting board policies, etc.).

A “community engagement process” broadens the scope of interaction, shifting from the individual interest to the collective interest, which can lead to more inclusive outcomes that reflect the diversity of interests that exist within any community.

Effective community engagement seeks involve the community affected by proposed school board recommendations to gain a shared understanding, allow for dialogue and discourse, and ultimately, develop support for long-term and sustainable outcomes for the community.

Effective community engagement needs to be meaningful to participants engaged in the process. They need to believe that the process is being undertaken in good faith and that their input will be heard and respected. As one participant was overheard at a community engagement session, “if they have no interest in hearing what I have to say, why bother asking me to provide my input?”

There are a number of key elements that help to make community engagement processes meaningful:

- **Clear Purpose and Objectives**: Participants must be clear about the reason(s) the engagement session is being held, what their roles are, and how their input will impact on decisions or recommendation. Participants must also know what level of impact their input and feedback will have on the final recommendation and decision.
- **Early Engagement:** The community needs to be engaged early in the process and/or know who is engaged from the beginning on their behalf.
- **Engagement of the Key People Impacted by a Decision:** All individuals or groups who may be directly or indirectly impacted by a decision needs to be informed and engaged in the process.

- **Based on Credible, Balanced Information:** To have meaningful involvement, the community must have the necessary, balanced information that supports key perspectives and recommendations so they can define their perspective and engage in interactive discussion.
- **Organized and Facilitated Interactive Process:** Engagement is not a limited to passive, one-way communication. Effective engagement provides opportunities for two-way dialogue that facilitates exchange of ideas, concerns, issues, and suggestions.
- **Accessible Information:** The community must be able to access the necessary information in an accessible format.
- **Communication of Results:** The outcome of community engagement sessions and the impact this has on final decisions must be shared with the community that contributed their time and input.

Community engagement can be designed to accomplish a range of goals or outcomes[1], such as:

- **Informing** the community of a policy direction or decision;
- **Consulting** with the community to gather input or reaction as part of a process to develop a policy, strategic direction, or refine a recommendation;
- **Involving** the community through interactive engagement sessions to ensure the community issues and concerns are understood and considered as part of the decision-making process;
- **Collaborating** with the community through partnerships to construct options and provide recommendations;
- **Empowering** the community to make decisions and to implement change.

Core Values for Community Engagement Sessions

While many organizations have identified core values to guide community engagement efforts those identified by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) are perhaps the most comprehensive and widely accepted. IAP2 advocates the following core values for organizations designing and implementing community engagement sessions:

- The public has a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- The public's contribution will influence the decision.
- Recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of participants.
- Facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected.
- Seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- Provides information the public needs to participate.

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[1] Adapted from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum to demonstrate the range of engagement options with stakeholders and communities. Note: IAP2 uses the term "public" to refer to what we have called "community" in this guide.

- Communicates how the public's input affected the decision.

Core Principles for Community Engagement Sessions

Publishing core principles communicates the expectations that stakeholders can expect during a community engagement process. Through the course of the 5 facilitation training sessions held on behalf of OASBO and the Ministry of Education, **t**he following principles were proposed by school board officials for consideration by those developing consultation processes:

Accountable	Sensitive to budgetary concerns, timelines and cost-effectiveness that demonstrates that results and outcomes are consistent with expectations.
Inclusive	Engage the community in a participatory process that promotes inclusivity.
Transparent	Promote open, honest communication when engaged with the community.
Respectful	Respect participants' time and input during the engagement processes while taking into consideration the overall needs of the community.
Trust	Communicate in a transparent and respectful manner and open to feedback.
Communication	Ensure that the public has the necessary information in a timely manner they require to provide informed feedback and recommendations.
Responsive	Address participants' concerns and provide timely communications and feedback.
Commitment	Be sincere and follow through on commitments made to the public.

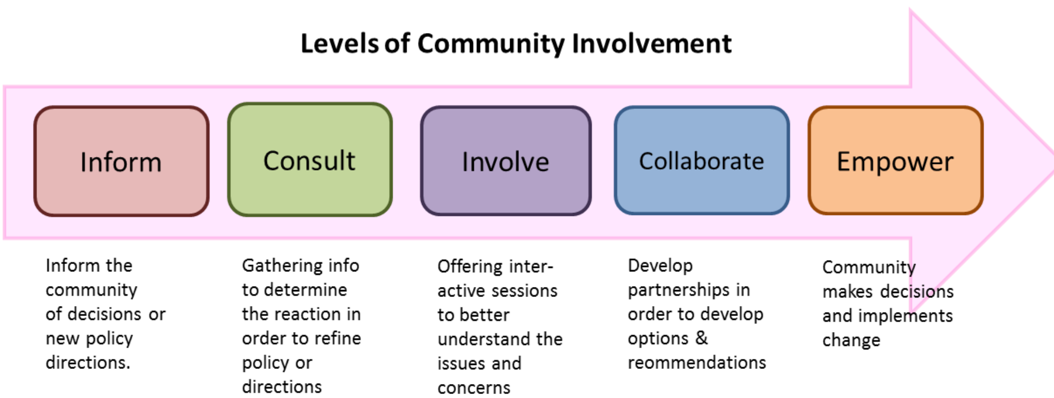
Establishing the Level of Engagement for your Meeting: IAP2 Spectrum[2]

IAP2 has defined five primary levels of engagement (or goals) that engagement planning teams will want to consider: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering. Each of these goals provides an opportunity to assess what's most important to your engagement efforts as well as the ability to develop the strategies and tools necessary to make these efforts successful with stakeholders and communities. The spectrum also shows the increasing level of public impact as you progress from "inform" through to "empower."

Below you will find the IAP2 Spectrum diagram, entitled "Levels of Community Engagement." As you move through the spectrum from left to right, inform to empower – there is an increasing expectation for community engagement and impact. On the left end of the spectrum, "inform," there is no expectation of receiving feedback, and consequently there is a low level of community impact. At the right end of the spectrum, "empowering," the community is expected to make decisions and therefore there is high level of community impact.

[2] The Level of Community Engagement Table has been adapted based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) and presented for Ontario School Board Officials to identify the appropriate level of community engagement they might plan for.

In addition to changes in the community expectations of impact on decisions, as you move through the spectrum, tasks begin to differ and the strengths of relationships increases through inform, consult, involve and finally to empower, where the focus is on having a strong, trusting relationship.



What Level of Community Engagement is Appropriate?

Engaging the community (stakeholders) rarely falls neatly into a single level on the spectrum. Instead, typical engagement processes involve a hybrid of activities across the spectrum.

You need to reflect on what level of engagement is best for your accommodation review initiative. The Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines, 2015 establish an expectation that School Boards will "consult" with school communities.

Level of Engagement	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Direction of communication	Public School Board	Public School Board	Public School Board	Public School Board	Public School Board
Commitment to the public	Provide the public with balance and objective information, recommendation and/or decision. "Informing" is the most elementary and	Obtain input and feedback on proposed recommendation or decision that is being considered. "Consulting" actively seeks input on the proposed recommendation,	Work with the public to understand their opinions and concerns with the recommendation. "Involving" means working with the community to ensure their	Work together with the public to find solutions to issues and generate a shared recommendation or decision. "Collaborate" is to partner with the community in each	Work with the public in a process where they will recommend or make a decision. "Empowered" communities share responsibility for decision-making and accountability

	simplest goal of an engagement process	you are considering	concerns are reflected in recommendation	aspect of the proposed recommendation	
Rationale	A decision or recommendation has already been made. Provide facts or results concerning an analysis. No opportunity for public to influence final outcome or decision. Goal is to create awareness.	Listen and gather information and feedback on the recommendation. Clarify issues or concerns with a recommendation. Goal is to gather ideas, reaction, and/or feedback to improve decision-making. The responsibility for the final decision remains with the school board.	Provide opportunity for multilateral information exchange. Communicate alternative perspectives, expectations and concerns. Goal is to validate and measure support for a proposed recommendation.	Public and school boards officials create alternatives to complex issues. Goal is to reach shared decision-making on a proposed recommendation.	School board shares the issues with the public and empowers a representative group to recommend or make the final decision. Goal is to implement what the public decides.
Process Tools for Engagement	• Open house • Fact sheets • Web-sites • Pamphlets • Social media • Newspaper ads or articles • News releases • News conferences	• Open house with exhibits and displays • Public meetings using round table discussions to gather reaction and feedback. Consider processes such as: Force field analysis, World Café, or Interview Matrix • Focus group sessions with selected stakeholders to obtain feedback • On-line surveys	• Stakeholder Advisory committee • Interactive Workshops to gather feedback and alternatives. Option to use processes including: Force field analysis, World Café, Interview Matrix, or Affinity Clustering • Charrette to achieve mutual agreement	• Stakeholder Advisory Committee • All consensus building processes such as the Nominal Group Technique, World Café, etc. • Charrette to achieve mutual agreement • Task force of impacted stakeholders to present options or proposed recommendations.	• Formal working group with delegated decision-making powers • Citizen juries • Polling stakeholders

Note: For more information on Facilitation Tools and Methods explore the website links and resource books provided in the Additional Resources section at the end of this Guide

Engaging the community (stakeholders) rarely falls neatly into a single level on the spectrum. Instead, typical engagement processes involve a hybrid of activities across the spectrum. You need to reflect on what level of engagement is best for your initiative.

Less involvement (Inform-tell or Consult-gather input/feedback) is appropriate when:

- Legislation or regulations define the level of public involvement in the decision-making.
- The final decision requires consistency with previous school board issues and must respect established professional, financial or technical standards.
- A person in authority, such as a School Board Trustee, is acting within their legislative authority to make a final decision.
- There is an urgent need to make a decision or respond to a situation.

Greater involvement (Consult-seek alternatives, Involve-shared interests, or Collaborate-shared outcomes) is appropriate when:

- Public notification and input is required by law.
- Several groups have an interest or significant concerns in the outcome of the decision.
- The decision will affect the community's moral or emotional expectations (e.g., closing a school).
- Success of the decision relies on public support or buy-in.

Ministry of Education legislation, regulations, guidelines and board policy direct the level of community engagement to be used by school board officials involved in Pupil Accommodation Review consultations. For example, school boards cannot "empower" community groups to decide which schools remain open and which should be targeted for closure. Similarly, the Ministry's Pupil Accommodation Review framework limits the level of collaboration with the broader community, but allows for the accommodation review committee to have a higher level of involvement. As a result, the community engagement strategies most school boards would plan for range from "inform" to "consult" to "involve" on the IAP2 spectrum.

The Role and Importance of Building Trust between School Boards and School Communities[3]

Community engagement consultations are, at their essence, community group meetings. Engaging community groups in open and honest dialogue requires a purposeful and consistent effort to foster

[3] Adapted from Penn State University, Agricultural Society, Community Engagement

trust and build strong relationships. Without trust, the best-designed and thoughtful engagement processes will almost certainly either fail or fall far short of the success you seek to achieve. Unfortunately, many accommodation review consultations are in an environment of low or declining trust, which poses serious challenges to school boards seeking to engage school communities in an effective discussion and participatory process.

The Keys to Building Trust

Building trust requires attending to several inter-related elements. These elements are not complicated, but they do require consistent and meaningful effort to be successful. Essentially, they are "putting your core values and principles into action." Key elements include:

- **Communication[4].** Communicating with your communities before, throughout, and following your formal community engagement efforts. The more citizens and communities understand the goals and intended outcomes of your engagement process, have the information they need to provide informed input, understand the perspectives of each other, and their role(s) and stake in the process and issue, the more trust your engagement efforts will engender and be able to build from in the long-run. Author Nick Morgan states that every communication is two conversations: the verbal one – content – and the non-verbal one – the body language. If the two are aligned, you can be a persuasive, authentic communicator. Building trust with your audience requires being open to their feedback; being connected to their issues and concerns; being passionate and accepting feelings and emotions; and, actively listening to the community feedback.

- **Respect.** It is absolutely essential that the tone, content, and facilitation of your engagement efforts genuinely respects the input of all participants or members – even if there is strong opposition or disagreement with your proposed recommendation(s). Consultation is about gathering input and feedback, exchanging ideas and information, but does not necessarily lead to agreement.

- **Transparency of processes.** Your community engagement efforts should be clear and well-understood by all stakeholders, absent of 'hidden' agendas (personal, political, or informational), and honest about the role and level of influence citizens will have in the either the decision-making or implementation of recommendations and decisions. Clearly defining what's "in-scope" and "out-of-scope" before, during and after consultations is imperative to addressing the citizen expectations.

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[4] Trust Me: Four Steps to Authenticity and Charisma. Author and communications expert presents four key elements of communicating to build trust.

- **Sharing information openly and widely.** Building trust requires that everyone involved in a consultation is working from a common understanding of the issues, factual information, proposed recommendation, and sharing each other's perspectives. If participants or residents feel that information is only shared with some members or does not do justice to all perspectives on an issue, you are very unlikely to be able to create the trust you need for effective or sustainable engagement.

- **Engaging stakeholders in meaningful ways.** Community engagement efforts must allow for citizens to share their perspectives, be accepting of different positions and opinions, and feel welcomed to contribute.

Part C - Planning for Community Engagement at Your School Board (accommodation review meetings and other consultations)

Engaging the communities impacted by an accommodation review is a long-term process, not a one-time event. The community engagement facilitator will need to manage many inter-related challenges: generating meaningful and factual analysis of school board demographics and facility assessments; understand stakeholders' concerns, aspirations and ideas for responding to the school board issues and challenges; inform citizens and stakeholders about the proposed recommendations; and gather community input in a meaningful way. Planning your community engagement will require you to:

- Inform community stakeholders about your analysis and proposed recommendations
- Gather input from community stakeholders regarding their opinions and reactions to a proposed recommendation
- Understand and consider stakeholder concerns, aspirations and ideas for addressing the school board challenges
- Identify alternative factors to consider when deciding on the final recommendation

Step 1: Setting Clear and Achievable Objectives

Facilitated community engagement sessions require clarity of purpose and intent to prevent the process from becoming aimless and the key stakeholders becoming frustrated or disengaged.

Frame the issue or problem – The first step in developing your community engagement plan is framing the issue or recommendation in a way that the community can understand what's in-scope and out-of-scope, the meeting objectives, their role, and the process for discussing the recommendation and providing feedback and alternatives.

a. Define the **session purpose** (single sentence) of this meeting.
   - Define what is "**in-scope**" and what is "**out-of-scope**" (boundary management).

b. Describe the **desired outcomes/goals** of the meeting. Identify the appropriate **level of public participation** (on the IAP2 Spectrum) that supports your desired outcomes. Consider the following question to help you identify your goals:

   - **Inform**—Do you want to inform people about a project, or help them understand a problem, opportunity, or recommendation? Do you need more information from citizens to make a decision? What are the key things you want stakeholders to understand? What do they need to know to make this effort successful? What information is missing?

- **Consult**—Do you want to get public feedback about a project, program or recommendation? Do you want to stimulate public debate about the issue? What specific types of information do you want from your participants? Is the goal to simply gather input into a pre-developed recommendation, or is it general perceptions and values related to the issue you are seeking to address?

- **Involve**—Do you want to work directly with citizens throughout the decision-making process, drawing on their knowledge and expertise to make recommendations? If you are expecting stakeholders to make recommendations, what specifically do they have the purview over? How will their input be incorporated into the process or outcomes?

- **Collaborate**—Do you want to create long-term partnerships among stakeholders (participants and community groups) that will implement the solutions they create? What specific contributions and partnerships do you want from your stakeholders? What can they realistically contribute? What authority are you willing to relinquish if necessary?

- **Empower**—Do you want the public to take leadership for implementing actions that address the purpose? What specifically do you expect stakeholders to do on their own?

c. Describe **what success looks** like for this meeting ("begin with the end in mind").

Step 2: Develop Your Communication Plan

It is important to understand your stakeholder community; their concerns and hopes. Start by identifying your key stakeholder groups and their role and level of involvement. Develop a Stakeholder Communication Matrix (who needs to know what, when and how?). What is your communication message in advance of the session?

1. Develop Your Engagement Project Team—at this stage, it is a good idea to develop a project team or advisory group to help plan and implement your engagement process. The team's responsibilities might include:
    - Selecting tools and designing the process for citizen participation
    - Identifying and recruiting participants
    - Publicizing the effort
    - Developing background information
    - Designing benchmarks and criteria for evaluation
    - Reporting the outcomes of the process
    - Making recommendations based on the outcomes

Step 3: Develop Your Community Engagement Strategy

a. What is **your agenda**?
b. What are the **key question(s) questions that matter** that you want to gather input on from stakeholders?
c. What **facilitation process method(s)** will you use?

Consider how you will address the following key components:

- **Community Transformation:** Focus on accountability and commitment; learning from one another; bias towards the future; and, use processes to maximize citizen engagement. Plan to run a practice session with staff in advance.
- How will you **record participant feedback**?
- How will you **evaluate the effectiveness of the meeting?**

Step 4: Communicate Your Meeting Objectives and Context

What is the key message and agenda you will send to your stakeholders in advance to inform/involve them in the engagement session? How will you communicate this message?

Step 5: Implement Your Plan – Facilitate the Meeting

Facilitate the committee meeting or public engagement session and demonstrate your openness to hear different points of view. Begin the meeting by restating the key messages you have presented in your advance communication and promotion (these messages have been developed in Step 1-4 of your plan):

- Session Purpose Statement
- What's In-scope and Out-of-Scope
- Meeting Objectives/Outcomes
- Meeting Ground Rules
- Meeting Agenda and Process

Facilitate the meeting to gather participant feedback in an open and interactive process. Explain how the information will be used and when they be informed of the next steps. Conduct an evaluation of the meeting to measure if you have been successful in achieving the meeting purpose and objectives.

Step 6: Reporting and Follow-up

Prepare a report of the session discussions and participants input. Share the report with the decision-makers and post the report on a public website? Follow up with participants. Advise them of actions taken by the committee and Trustees. Inform them of the next steps.

Step 7: Evaluation of the overall Public Engagement Process

Review the feedback from participants on their experience and suggestions for improvement. Debrief with your team on what worked well, what did not work as well as you would have liked, as well as what would you do differently next time (Lessons Learned).

Part D – Techniques for Facilitating Community Engagement Meetings

Facilitation is the practice of helping people in groups get things done in the most focused and effective way possible. The root of the word facilitation is "facile," which means to "make simple or make it easy." So simply stated, a facilitator makes it easy for groups to achieve the desired outcomes of a meeting.

"Without the skilled use of processes for effective engagement and thinking together, dialogue often devolves into diatribe and solutions are owned by those with the loudest voices or the most power."
Juanita Brown and Thomas J. Hurley,
Conversational Leadership: Thinking Together for a Change, Oxford Leadership Journal

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But of course, being an effective facilitator is much more complicated than "to make easy." Facilitators of a group process must manage a variety of inter-related factors: have a fundamental belief that the community of stakeholders have the wisdom and insight to provide clear insight and future directions; be able to listen intently and be open to divergent points of view; suspend judgement and acknowledge new ideas; understand the evolving dynamics of group development and adjust to the group needs; and, keep a group focused the meeting objective(s). The facilitator's main role is to remain neutral and provide leadership to meetings without influencing outcomes or contributing content. In other words, the role of a facilitator is to design and guide the group "process" and allow the participants to generate the "content."

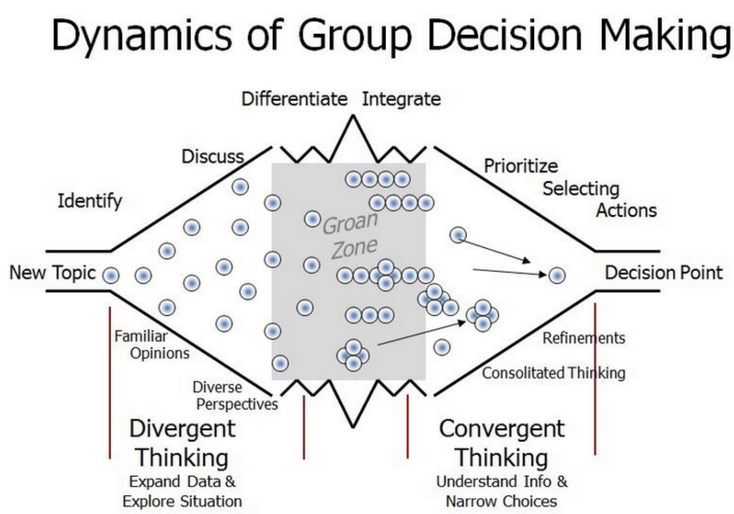
The facilitator's main task in community engagement consultations is to help the group effectiveness by designing the meeting **process** and **structure**. The facilitator designs the group process (key questions to be discussed) and guilds the structured facilitation method (group tasks and activities) to enhance a group's ability to share perspectives on issues and provide feedback on a proposed recommendation.
In summary, the key roles and tasks a community engagement facilitator must manage are:

- Articulate the session objectives and confirm understanding and acceptance
- Clarify what is "in-scope" and "out-of-scope" within the meeting objectives
- State Meeting Ground Rules (also called Rules of Engagement)
- Act as a "content neutral" resource; does not take sides; remains emotionally uninvolved
- Select and guide facilitation methods and processes that enable all participants to be engaged in the dialogue and provide input
- Keep the group focused and on track

- Records the group thoughts, feelings and recommendations
- Check with group for understanding and accuracy of input
- Clarify ideas and progress by paraphrasing, synthesizing, and confirming
- Create a safe and positive climate in which relationships become productive rather than destructive (protects group members and their ideas from attack)
- Manage group dynamics and conflict when it does arise
- Explain how the community feedback and recommendations will be published and influence the decision making

Divergence - Convergence Model of Facilitation Techniques[5]

The "Dynamics of Group Decision Making" model was developed by Dr. Sam Kaner. It helps facilitators understand the process that groups go through in gathering relevant information about an issue and making sense of it.



This model works like this: The facilitator gathers the group together and briefly informs them of the methodology that they will be involved in to address an identified question or issue.

1. **Divergence Step:**   As determined by the methodology, the group normally goes through an active discussion where "divergent" ideas and information (data) is identified and collected.
2. **Groan Zone:** At the end of the divergence step the data collected may, at first glance, seem overwhelming and unwieldy to the group. Group members may ask themselves: "What are we going to do with all this information?" Hence the term Groan Zone.

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[5] *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*, by Sam Kaner et al, presents a framework that describes the design of effective participatory facilitation methods and techniques. New Society Publishers/Canada, Twelfth printing, 2002

3. **Convergence Step:** As dictated by the methodology the group begins to organize and consolidate their thinking about the data collected, thereby understanding it so decisions and next steps can be determined.

How to Develop Powerful Questions

Most facilitators spend a considerable amount of time designing or selecting structured processes to engage meeting participants in meaningful engagement and dialogue. Determining the right questions for the right people at the right time are at the centre of effective and dynamic group facilitation processes.

> *"Without a focus on critical issues and questions, there's no reason to act."*
> *Juanita Brown*

What makes a powerful question?

Powerful question are:

- Simple and clear.
- Thought provoking; stimulates creativity; motivates fresh thinking.
- Focuses inquiry on the meeting objectives.
- Generates emotional energy and passion to respond.

Dorothy Strachan, author of the highly regarded book **Making Questions Work**[6], offers a simple guideline for determining the right question for your processes: "Questions work when they contribute to the purpose and objectives of a process." In other words, ask questions that have participants directly responding to the defined meeting objectives and purpose. Making Questions Work is a useful resource for facilitators offering more than 1,800 sample questions, organized into logical categories.
A sample of questions from Making Questions Work are provided below for your consideration and meeting planning (several questions have been modified to reflect the objectives and context of meetings).

- **Questions to Open a Session**
    - What draws you to this engagement session?

[6] Making Questions Work, Dorothy Strachan, published by Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Imprint, San Francisco, CA (2007)

- What is one key message/desire you are bringing to this meeting?
- What is one assumption you are making about this meeting that you're not sure other participants share?
- What is one question you would like answered by the end of this meeting?
- From your perspective, what is a key question that be addressed at this meeting?
- What needs to happen during this meeting to ensure you are fully committed to the outcome?

- **Questions for Enabling Action**
  - Based on the opening presentation, what stood out for you?
  - What parts of the opening presentation did you relate to the most?
  - After hearing the opening presentation, has your opinion changed about this proposed recommendation?
  - What do you like / dislike about the proposed recommendation?
    - Follow-up prompt: What alternatives do you have to offer?
  - What is one change you would make to the proposed recommendation that would have a significant, positive effect on the outcome of the final decision?
  - What would it take to address the challenges presented and solve this problem?

- **Questions for Thinking Critically**

  - What would this problem look like if it were managed differently?
  - Imagine that it is three years from now and this issue has been completely resolved. What is going on that is different from today?
  - What's missing from this discussion so far? What is it we're not seeing? What do we need more clarity about?

- **Questions for Addressing Issues**

  - If you could make one change to improve the proposed recommendation, what would it be?
  - What suggestions do you have for improving this proposed recommendation?
  - What actions can be taken to lessen the impact of implementing this proposed recommendation?
  - What are your personal views on this challenge and proposed recommendation?
  - What are the benefits of getting this issue resolved?

    - What are the risks of doing nothing?
- What are the most obvious solutions to this problem?
- What are the criteria for an effective solution to this challenge?
- What basic changes to the proposed recommendations do you want considered?
- What are the most obvious solutions to this problem?

- **Questions for Closing a Session**
    - Based on your insights from today's meeting, what is one key message that should guide deliberations going forward?
    - What has been your major learning, insights, or discovery so far?
    - If there is one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding, what would that be?
    - What needs our immediate attention going forward?

Part E - Valuing People: Cognitive Empathy Skills for Facilitation

This is all about your ability and willingness to take notice of and be sensitive to other people's needs and feelings. Understanding someone's perspective and effectively listening to their thoughts, feelings and beliefs can often mitigate conflict during facilitation. Owning someone's emotional state during facilitation can often backfire. In creating cohesion in a group, the neutrality of the facilitator is what sets the tone on how groups function. In facilitating your meetings the best facilitators were good at perspective-taking and able to move the group to give their best efforts.
When you are demonstrating empathy during facilitation:

- You are aware of, and can appreciate the feelings of others.
- You are caring and compassionate.
- You take others into consideration before acting.
- You read people well.
- Honest and show integrity.
- Willing to explore your own personal beliefs system.

Strategies for Developing Empathy

1. Explore your personality, communication and problem-solving style with feedback from someone you trust, or try a style assessment such as the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator).
2. You can enhance your understanding of your empathy skills by showing concern and understanding for others by asking them what they are feeling and pay attention to the reply.
3. Observe your non-verbal communication style while interacting with others. Also, observe the non-verbal cues in others when communicating. Pick up on eye contact, gestures, posture and tone of voice.
4. Within a trusting relationship, initiate a personal disclosure, open up and share a hope, a goal, a disappointment or something else that show some trust of the person whom you are talking and some personal vulnerability.   This kind of disclosure models the behaviour you would like in return. (See YouTube clip from Dr. Brene Brown on Vulnerability)

Questions You Should Consider in Developing Your Empathy Skills:

1. When was there a time when it really mattered that you were able to understand the way someone else felt?
2. Describe a situation where you were not as sensitive to some ones feelings as you should have been.
3. How do you ensure that you have really understood how another person is feeling?

4. In your point of view, what is the difference between sympathy and empathy? How do you ensure that you display these differently? (Remember cognitive empathy)

Five Active Listening Skills for Facilitators

1. Being Attentive
   - Pay attention to what is being said and how things are said
   - Listen for changes in the group members voice, tone, emphasis, pitch, and speed
   - Pay attention to the speaker's intention
   - Listen for and differentiate between ideas, opinions, feelings and facts
2. Bridging
   - Demonstrate to the speaker that you understand and are following their thought process by using linking words such as: "I see", "Go on", "Tell me more", "Uh-hum", "and then", "yes".
   - Use non-verbal gestures, such as nodding, smiling, eye and mouth expressions
3. Paraphrasing
   - Put your understanding into your own words
   - Listen for confirmation from the speaker that you have heard and understand the message as it was intended
4. Restating
   - Restate steps in a process or procedure to ensure accuracy/understanding
   - Repeat statements, phrases and words used by the speaker in situations where language is critical to the actions needed to be taken
5. Asking Questions
   - Ask questions to clarify points and/or to gather more information, critical details
   - Use when probing may be required if circumstances seem to be one sided viewpoint.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT BEHAVIOURS	
PRODUCTIVE FACILITATION	UNPRODUCTIVE FACILITATION
✓ Stay totally neutral	× Joining the argument or discord
✓ Insist that people listen politely – have rules and explain the value of the rules	× Let people be rude – set no norms
✓ Ask group member to paraphrase each other's ideas	× Ignore the fact that no one is really hearing anyone else
✓ Ask for concerns	× Side step hot issues
✓ Make people focus on facts	× Let people get personal
✓ Problem-solve concerns	× Get defensive
✓ Invite and face feedback	× Squash dissents
✓ Facilitate assertively	× Stand by passively

HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY DIALOGUE

HEALTHY DEBATES	UNHEALTHY ARGUMENTS
People are open to hearing other's ideas.	People assume they are right.
People listen and respond to ideas even if they don't agree with them.	People wait until others have finished talking, then state their ideas without responding to the ideas of the other person.

HEALTHY DEBATES	UNHEALTHY ARGUMENTS
Everyone tries to understand the views of the other person.	No one is interested in how the other person sees the situation.
People stay objective and focus on the facts.	People get personally attacked and blamed.
There's a systematic approach to analyzing the situation and looking for solutions.	Hot topics get thrashed out in an unstructured way.

RESPOND, DON'T REACT DURING FACILITATIONS	
RESPONDING	REACTING
✓ dealing with facts not personalities	× talking excessively & loudly
✓ listening — twice as much as talking	× bullying
✓ paraphrasing	× direct or implied insults
✓ reflecting feelings	× refusal to express feelings
✓ summarizing	× putting self-down
✓ clarifying	× excessive worrying
✓ following up in an appropriate manner	× defensiveness

Ten Tips for Dealing with Conflict

Excerpt from – <u>How to Manage Conflict: Turn Conflicts into Win-Win Outcomes, Peg Pickering</u>

1. Share the responsibility. It's hard to be combative with someone who's on your side.
2. Encourage listening; be informed. It's amazing how much you can discover it you tend to the words of others.
3. Pay attention to excessive self-interest. The facilitation process is for everyone.
4. A title or position within an organization my grant some control over group members, but true authority involves respect.   In a facilitation role this must be earned by both the facilitator and the group members. Dictatorial leadership is not conducive to positive outcomes.
5. Anger is short-lived for most aggressive people. There are individuals, however, who don't forget. Better to temper the anger in the individual at the point of upset than to ignore it.
6. Deal with the situation immediately – not later in the meeting or session. Many disagreements will reach crisis proportions if the facilitator ignores the dissent in the room.
7. Allow others to talk. Listen. Don't interrupt.   They want to be heard. Before you chime in as a facilitator, be sure you understand.
8. If anger is expressed in a meeting, ask the angry individual if he/she would like to discuss it now or later. Let them call the shots.
9. Deal with individual's feelings first. Then address the underlying issue. "I can tell you are really annoyed. I'd like to hear what you have to say." When the discussion is concluded, check the feelings again to be sure they've been addressed. Ask them if they are satisfied or feel better. Be alert to tone of voice and non-verbal cues as you may not get a completely honest reply. If the person is still upset, move on and let it pass for now. Staying upset a bit longer may allow them time to save face and justify their initial angry response.
10. If the individual declines to discuss what's troubling them, say, "I understand you're hesitation to discuss this, but you now have an opportunity to get it out in the open."

Characteristics of Passive, Aggressive & Assertive Behaviour during Facilitation

	PASSIVE	AGGRESSIVE	ASSERTIVE
VOICE	• Weak, hesitant, soft, wavering, mumbling	• Tense, shrill, loud, shaky, cold, demanding superior, authoritarian	• Firm, warm, well-modulated, relaxed • Often friendly
STANCE AND POSTURE	• Leaning for support • Stooped, excessive head nodding	• Hands on hips, feet apart, stiff and rigid	• Well balanced, straight on, erect, relaxed
EYES	• Averted, downcast, teary, pleading	• Expressionless, narrowed, cold, staring, not really seeing you	• Open, frank, direct eye contact but not staring
HANDS	• Fidgety, fluttery, clammy, limp	• Clenched, abrupt, gestures, finger pointing, fist pounding	• Relaxed motion, firm handshake
VERBAL	• Apologetic words • Hedging, excessive qualification • Rambling, disconnected phrases • At a loss for words • Failing to say what you really mean • Use of phrases like "you know"	• Accusations • "You" messages that blame or label • "Loaded" words that incite	• Direct statement of wants • Honest statements of feelings • "I" messages
NON-VERBAL	• Hoping someone will guess what you want • Looking as if you don't mean what you say	• Exaggerated show of strength • Sarcastic style • Air of superiority • Dominating	• Attentive listening behaviour • General assured manner • Communicative, caring, strength

Facilitator Role During Conflict — A Practical Guide

Practical things you can do to help a group work through the conflict resolution process.

STEPS	FACILITATOR ACTION	FACILITATOR QUESTIONS
EXPRESSION of Differences	Observe the verbal and nonverbal communication in the group.	*What expressions of differences do you observe?*
AWARENESS of Conflict	Identify the conflict situation to the group and give the group an opportunity to use the rest of the conflict resolution steps.	*What is the issue or problem?* How the issue or problem is stated often determines the outcome.
CLARIFICATION of Differences	Help the group gather information about either the bargaining points or the essences of what it needs for a win-win solution.	*Where do we not agree?* Areas of disagreement must be identified so they can be dealt with as separate issues or problems to be resolved.
AGREEMENT on Commonality	Assist the group to identify points at which it is in agreement.	*Where can we agree?* Areas of agreement are identified as a way of establishing a good foundation for the eventual solution.
RESOLUTION of Conflict	Keep the discussion focused on reaching agreement and help the group recognize when it has achieved agreement.	*Can we develop options that take advantage of the areas where we agree, and bring us closer in the areas where we disagree?* Options are developed to take advantage of where there had been disagreement. *What will each party do as a result of the discussion:* *What by Whom by When?*

Part F - Facilitation Methods

Facilitation Method One: Interview Matrix

Why Use This Method?

The Interview Matrix is one of the most powerful ways to get the whole group engaged in dialogue with equal airtime, focus, and consensus building as the main elements. It quickly brings a working group to consensus without everyone making mini-speeches at each other. It is particularly effective in preventing anyone from monopolizing the available airtime. This method is most effective with groups from 8 to 60; however, with the assistance of additional group facilitators this method can work with much larger groups. The primary outcomes include dialogue from all participants, energetic group dynamics, simplified consensus building and focussed problem solving.

What Equipment Is Needed?

A large room that allows for ease of movement (generally twice the size of a room that would have table groups only), wall space for posting results, four flipcharts, and a stopwatch.

Pre-Session

This method gathers input, information, opinions or ideas equally from each participant on specific issues, proposals or questions. The core of the method are four basic questions – four questions that matter. Questions can be pre-determined by the facilitator or worked up by the group itself, e.g., create a *challenge wall* of questions to address. Your questions should focus on the areas you need to address.

Session Process Design

Four flipcharts are set-up, one in each corner of the room. Once the four questions have been determined by the group or if they are pre-determined by the facilitator, write one question on each of the four flipcharts.

Part A: The Journalist Interviews (20-30 minutes)

Participants form groups of four or have participants number off to create maximum number of groups of four (total group size divide by four). Provide participants with a template to write down their interview notes. Within the group of four, each member selects one of the four questions that they will be responsible for when interviewing the other members of their group. Before the interview matrix process begins, have the participants quietly and individually answer the four questions (I call this the "mental warm-up" time). To keep the interviews organized, each member of the group of four is assigned a number (1-4) and they write their number and question at the top of the Interview Template for recording notes. Explain that during Part A, they are acting as journalists to interview the other three members of their group in order to capture everyone's responses to their question (and write these responses down). During the interview process, they will only ask their question and respond to the questions others ask them.

The interviews are based on a matrix sequence where they partner off in two and ask each other their assigned question. The process requires six rounds or three to four minute interviews: (1-2, 3-4) (2-1, 4-3) (2-3, 1-4) (3-2, 4-1) (2-4, 3-1) (4-2, 1-3)

Part B: The Editorial Board Meeting (15-20 minutes)

All participants now have a template full of rough notes based on the responses to from the people they interviewed. Editorial Boards are formed where all participants who asked question #1 get together at the assigned flipchart, question #2 interviewers get together at the assigned flipchart, and so on. Participants compare notes and find common themes and unique inputs. During this discussion, the participants can add in their own ideas and responses to the question they asked. The "best consensus" ideas are recorded on the flipchart and posted on the wall.

Part C: The Report Back or Paper Route Review (15-20 minutes)

A member (or two) of each editorial board report to the whole group on the common "consensus themes" they have gathered through the interview and editorial board process. Alternatively, participants can be asked to walk around to view all posted flipcharts (the paper route). The facilitator asks participants:

- Do they have questions or need clarification about any of the consensus points?
- Do they have anything to add?
- Do they see how their ideas are represented in the consensus statements?

If there is agreement with the key points presented, then consensus has been achieved.

Facilitation Method Two: Focused Conversations

Why Use this Method?

The focussed conversation is a method that guides participants through four phases of reflection, enabling them to process their experience as a group. Participants "reflect together" on a series of structured questions posed by the by the facilitator. The questions move from a general reaction to the issue or challenge at stake to deeper levels of the implications the issue poses for the participants at a personal level. This four-stage method moves the conversation through a natural process of perception, response, judgement, and decision.

What Equipment Is Needed?

A large room that allows for round tables of six to eight participants per table and adequate space between the tables so that hearing others at their table does not become a challenge. The room should have adequate open wall space for posting results on flipcharts.

Pre-Session

This method, similar to the interview matrix, gathers input, information, opinions or ideas equally from each participant on specific issues, proposals or questions. The core of the method are four basic questions – four questions that delve deeper into personal perspective and interpretation on an issue or proposal. Questions can be pre-determined by the facilitator or worked up by the group itself, e.g., create a *challenge wall* of questions to address. Your questions should focus on the areas you need to address.

Session Process Design

The focus conversation asks questions at four levels:

1. *The objective level* - questions about facts and external reality. Example questions at this level:
    - What precisely does this recommendation propose?
    - What does it not propose?
    - What are the facts and data saying?
    - What stands out for you from the presentation?

2. *The reflective level* – questions to call forth immediate personal reaction to the data, an internal response, sometimes emotions or feelings that are associated with the facts. Whenever we encounter an external reality (data, objectives) we experience an internal response. Example

questions at this level:

- ➢ What are initial responses to the recommendation(s)?
- ➢ What parts of the recommendation make you feel pleased?
- ➢ What parts of the recommendation make you upset?
- ➢ What surprised you during the presentation or recommendation?

3. *The interpretive level* – questions to draw out meaning, values, significance, and implications. Example questions at this level:
    - ➢ Will this recommendation work?
    - ➢ What changes do we think are necessary to the recommend?
    - ➢ What issues does this dialogue bring up for you?
    - ➢ What are some of the deeper questions we could ask the presenter or explore ourselves?

4. *The decisional level* – questions to elicit resolution, bring the conversation to a close, and enable the group to make a resolve about the future. Example questions at this level:
    - ➢ What are the decisions we have reached as a table group?
    - ➢ What can we do here about these issues and concerns?
    - ➢ What are the main areas we want to see more research or work done on?
    - ➢ What do we need clarified?

What are your questions?

Level of Focus	Questions you would ask at your Public Meetings
Objective	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Reflective	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Interpretive	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Decisional	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Facilitation Method Three: Café Conversations[7]

Why Use this Method?

Café Conversations are an easy-to-use method for creating a living network of dialogue around questions that matter in response to your presentation of information or recommendations. The method can be used with groups from 20 to 200 people.

What Equipment Is Needed?

The Café format is flexible and adapts to many circumstances. A large room that allows for round tables of four to six participants per table and adequate space between the tables so that hearing others at their table does not become a challenge. Participants will also be moving from their starting table to different tables as the process proceeds. The room should have adequate open wall space for posting results on flipcharts.

Pre-Session

Based on the research you have done and the environment you will be facilitating your public meeting, you will need to pre-plan the key questions you know will matter to your audience.

Session Process Design

- Arrange for tables (round tables are preferable) to seat four to six people in "conversational clusters." Participants need to be able to hear and see one another.
- Cover the table tops with flipchart paper and have sufficient markers (multiply colours are best) for every participant to have their own marker or even two markers.
- The method involves progressive rounds of conversation (usually three) of approximately 10-15 minutes each. For very challenging questions or difficult issues longer rounds of 20-30 minutes may be more effective to allow for everyone's voice to be heard.
- While planning your Café session keep in mind the following Café Guidelines:
- Pose questions that genuinely matter to your audience or community. A common question can be presented to the whole audience to respond to at their table groups or different able groups can discuss different questions or focus on different issues.
- The method begins with participants discussing the key question at their table and writing, doodling and drawing ideas onto the table top flipchart paper. Encourage everyone to write or

[7] This outline has been adapted based on the reference guide named Café to Go! http://theworldcafe.com

draw all ideas as they are discussed – ideas not written down do not become part of the conversation going forward.

- Upon completion of the initial round of conversation, ask that one of the participants remain at the table to be the "host" while the other participants serve as travelers or "ambassadors of meaning." The travelers carry their ideas and themes from the first table discussion to the next table conversation. Participants from the first table group should go to different tables in the second round.
- At the start of round two, the table host welcomes the new arrivals and briefly shares the main ideas, themes and images that were written down during the first round. After the brief introduction to the themes, participants start to share ideas and link and connect ideas from the previous table conversation. Participants are encouraged to listen carefully and build on each other's contributions. At the end of the second round, all of the table conversations in the room will be cross-pollinated with insights from prior conversations.
- In the third round of conversation, people can return to their original tables to synthesize their discoveries, or they may continue travelling to new tables. The host for round two can choose to remain at their table or move on to a new table. Should the host chose to move on, a member of round two volunteers to remain and act as the host for round three. Often, a new question that deepens the exploration of the issue is posed for the third round of conversation.
- Facilitators Note: Round one and two generally focus on the primary question and encourage continued exploration (divergence) of points of view. Starting with round three, it is reasonable to introduce a new question that asks participants to synthesize key themes that have emerged through the first two rounds (convergence) or to move to recommendations.
- After three rounds of conversation, initiate a period of sharing discoveries and insights in the whole group (plenary) conversation. The plenary sharing of themes and discoveries often lead to new opportunities or recommendations for further analysis and discussion.
- The Café Ground Rules (or Etiquette) outlined below should be posted on a flipchart or handout placed on each table top and reviewed by the facilitator before the first round of the café conversation.
- Options to Finish the Café: After you have finished the café, have the table hosts share what their tables groups have discovered or decided as the next steps or recommendations. This presentation of host summaries can be presented in a "fish bowl" or "Talk Show" format hosted by the facilitator.

Conversation Ground Rules
(to be posted)

- Focus on what matters
- Contribute your thinking
- Speak your mind and heart
- Listen to understand
- Link and connect ideas
- Listen together for insights and deeper questions.
- Play, Doodle, Draw – writing on the table flipcharts is encouraged!
- Have fun!

Facilitation Method Four: Affinity Clustering

Why Use this Method?

The Affinity Clustering method uses sticky notes (post-it notes) and brainstorming to consolidate the variety of ideas. This method allows for everyone's ideas to be seen and heard and for similar (affinity) ideas to be clustered together. This method is useful when the audience have a number of diverse points of view and you want everyone to have their ideas presented in a meaningful way.

What Equipment Is Needed?

Very little equipment, other than sticky notes and markers are required. Depending on the size of your audience, a large room is required to allow for round tables of six to eight participants per table and adequate space between the tables so that hearing others at their table does not become a challenge. The room should have a large amount of open wall space for posting the sticky notes (post-it notes).

Pre-Session

Based on the research you have done and understanding the concerns of your audience, you will need to pre-plan the key question(s) you will pose to the generate responses that matter to your audience.

Session Process Design

<u>Process for groups from 10-30 people</u>:

- Participants may be seated at tables or in theatre style.

- On each chair or table, there are sticky notes (8-10 sheets) and a marker for each participant.

- Following the introductions and outline of the session purpose, pose the first critical question.

- Participants reflect on the question and write their ideas or responses to the question on the sticky notes (one idea per sticky note only).

- Ask the participants to sort their sticky note ideas into priority order, i.e., if they could only present one of their responses (ideas) which idea would be their number one, then their number two, and so on.

- Participants are next invited to post their sticky notes, randomly on the open space wall. The smaller the overall group, the more sticky notes each participant can post.

- For a group of 20-30, posting 2-3 sticky notes results in 60-90 notes overall.
- For smaller groups of 10-19, participants might be asked to post up to their top 3-4 ideas, resulting in 40-80 notes overall.

- Posted along the top of the open space wall, have “placeholder” sticky notes (with a unrelated symbol on each sticky note, e.g., triangle, square, checkmark, etc.)

- When all of the ideas are posted on the open space wall, invite the group members to reorder the ideas into groups of similar ideas under each of the placeholder symbols.

- When all ideas have been “clustered” into similar groups, ask the participants to recommend a name or label that reflects the meaning of the clustered ideas. When the group agrees with the name, replace the placeholder symbol with a new sticky note having the identified label.

- From this point in the process, the facilitator can guide the process in a number of different directions, e.g., each table group or small groups of participants can take one of the clustered labelled ideas and further explore options and actions related to this idea. Or, the ideas can be collected and recorded for sharing and discussion at a future meeting.

<u>Process for groups greater than 30 people</u>:

- The process is similar as above, except, ideas to be posted are generated by each table group of six-eight participants after discussion and agreement (consensus) on the ideas generated at the table group level. Essentially, each table group facilitates a mini Affinity Clustering process at their table group and offers the agreed upon top 3-5 ideas to be posted on the open space wall.

- The more participants in total, the fewer the number of ideas collected from each table group.

- The whole group continues to participate in the overall clustering and labelling of the posted ideas.

Facilitation Method Five: Force Field Analysis

Force-field analysis is derived from Kurt Lewin's work (1947) with field theory to explain social change. Lewin was a German social psychologist born in 1890, who created force field diagrams to test hypotheses. Force-field analysis (FFA) is a simple yet effective decision-making process used to get a whole view of all the forces for or against a plan so a decision can be made which takes into account all interests. In effect, this is a specialized method of weighing pros and cons.

I. Facilitating Forces - Pros
Forces supporting the decision or successful implementation of a solution.

II. Inhibiting Forces - Cons
Forces working against the decision or successful implementation of a solution.

Once the forces acting upon an issue are identified, actions can be taken to decrease the major resisting forces, increase the major facilitating forces, or both. This process, then, is basically an analysis of the forces acting to keep the issue from being solved or implemented. In this process, you will be facilitating a discussion on whether the proposed "solution or recommendation" to the issue has more positive (+ve) forces contributing to a successful implementation versus negative (-ve) forces that will reduce the likelihood of a successful implementation.

The secret of good decision-making is figuring out whether the pros outweigh the cons BEFORE you take action. With force field analysis, you list and score the factors for and against a decision or recommendation, total the scores and see which comes up best.

If the analysis (total score) is very close, there is a final step to review the factors affecting the decision and create an action plan to increase the "pros" and decrease the "cons."

STEP ONE: PRESENT THE DECISION OR RECOMMENDATION TO BE ANALYZED

Present the decision, or is this case, the proposed recommendation and ensure all participants have a clear and shared understanding. Review the research and data that have lead you to this recommended.

STEP TWO: POSTING OF PROS AND CONS FACTORS

Have all participants individually and quietly write down all their pros and cons in relation to the proposed solution on a sheet of paper. Facilitate a group discussion to surface (and post on a flipchart) all the factors for (pros) and against (cons) the successful implementation of the proposed recommendation.

STEP THREE: SCORING THE FACTORS (Optional Step)

Introduce a "scoring grid" on a flipchart:

Impact on Implementation	Scoring/Rating
Low or weak impact	1
Some impact	2
Moderate impact	3
Positive impact	4
High or strong impact	5

As a group review all factors listed in the Pros (For) and the Cons (Against) and give each factor a score between 1-5, where 1 is a low or weak impact and 5 is a high or strong impact. Start with one column (pros or cons) and complete the scoring and then move to the second column.
Total the For (pros) and Against (cons) scores. Is the result what you expected? Do your head and heart agree with the result? If not, briefly review the factors listed. Are there any missing? Are less important factors overshadowing the more important factors? Are the scores realistic, and spread across the full range (1 to 5)?

STEP FOUR: STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING

It may be possible to increase the For (pros) score and decrease the Against (cons) score by taking appropriate or alternative action. Review the factors listed in each column and determine if a strategic action could be taken to:

- Enhance the positive (pros) factors
- Reduce or eliminate the negative factors

Assuming these actions take place, what would the new scores be? Alternatively, if you are not scoring, discuss if the strategic actions have significantly increased the pros and reduced the cons.

STEP FIVE:

Facilitate a group discussion to reach consensus on whether there is sufficient positive forces to successfully implement the proposed recommendation or significant negative forces to hinder or prevent successful implementation. Your analysis should present a clear, transparent and explainable decision.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO STEPS FOUR & FIVE:

Based on the pros and cons analysis, facilitate the participants through a discussion to identify:

- Amendments to the recommendation
- Alternative considerations or actions
- Alternative recommendations

Force Field Analysis – process to diagnose the forces for and against change.

Decision, Recommendation or Solution under consideration:

Identify Driving Forces (Pros)	**Identify Restraining Forces (Cons)**

Taking Strategic Action: What actions can be taken to alter the forces:

- Strengthen Positive Forces
- Weaken Negative Forces
- Create New Positive Forces.

Actions to enhance the Positive Forces	**Actions to overcome the Negative Forces**

Based on the Pros and Cons Analysis, what are your alternative suggestions or recommendations?

This publication was authored by Brian Benn, Martin Krogh and John Elliott

APPENDIX

Facilitating Meetings Assessment

For each statement, check the column that applies to you. You may only apply one check per statements.

		Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
	When I facilitate…	ALWAYS	MOST OF THE TIME	RARELY	NEVER
1	I create an atmosphere where individuals feel comfortable verbalizing their ideas and opinions.				
2	I allow the time (in new groups) for participants to get to know one another.				
3	Meetings are geared to the group's issues.				
4	I make sure everyone agrees about the vision toward which we are working.				
5	I encourage members to provide each other with positive feedback.				
6	I constantly check to see that pace; variety and individual involvement is geared to the different styles of the group members.				
7	I adapt/respond quickly if the needs of the group change.				
8	I assist the group in staying on topic.				
9	Members regularly discuss issues before making decisions.				
10	Members take responsibility for implementing the group's decisions.				
	Add up the total # of ☑ in each column.				
	TOTAL SCORE:				

Facilitating Meetings Assessment cont'd

Assessment Scoring and Results

SCORING INSTRUCTIONS

After you fill out the assessment, total the number of checks in each column. Give each check a value of 1 and total your score.

COLUMN 1	______	Multiply # of checks by 4	______
COLUMN 2	______	Multiply # of checks by 3	______
COLUMN 3	______	Multiply # of checks by 2	______
COLUMN 4	______	Multiply # of checks by 1	______
		TOTAL	______

SCORE

32 or more	Your facilitation skills are right on target.
27 – 31	Most of your skills are good so try and improve your skills in the areas you scored "rarely" and "never"
22 – 26	You could benefit from improving most of the areas.
21 or less	You are either a very hard marker on yourself or you may have been acting more like an autocratic leader than a facilitator.

Additional Resources

Resourceful website links:

http://www.theworldcafe.com/
http://www.iap2.org/
http://www.iap2.org/?page=13
http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/files/iap-006_brochure_a3_internat.pdf
http://www.iaf-methods.org/index.php?module=iafmethods_tool&type=user&func=view
http://www.iaf-methods.org/methods/
IAP2 YouTube channel
https://www.youtube.com/user/IAP2USA
http://www.psc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/art_of_focused_conversations.pdf
http://www.chriscorrigan.com/parkinglot/blog/
Blog with good reads and a lot of additional links focused on effective facilitation.
http://www.fastcompany.com/3039710/5-ways-to-increase-your-own-empathy
Short article from Fast Company – some good suggestions in building empathy skills.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdliynMQFvo
Nice clip that clarifies cognitive empathy and affective empathy – important consideration for facilitators.
http://masterfulfacilitation.com/social/
http://www.facilitationcenter.com/
http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/facts/01-039.htm
http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/com/oqm-old/Facilitation.pdf
http://www.faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk/e-learning/small-group-teaching
Great Facilitated Meetings – Blog
http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/11sa/Carson.html

Books and Articles

International Association of Facilitators
THE ART OF POWERFUL QUESTIONS: Catalyzing Insight, Innovation, and Action
by Eric E.Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs; illustrations by Nancy Margulies
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The Art of Focused Conversations -
Excerpts taken from *The Art of Focused Conversation*, from the Institute of Cultural Affairs.
Brown, Juanita and Isaacs, David, et. al. *The World Cafe: Shaping our Future through conversations that matter*
Kaner, Sam et. al. *The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making*
Designing a public conversation using the World Café method
Published in *Social Alternatives,* Volume 30, Number 1, 2011, pp. 10-14
http://www.robertsrules.com/
Overview of Roberts Rules
The Skilled Facilitator: A Comprehensive Resource for Consultants, Facilitators, Managers, Trainers, and Coaches 2nd Edition
by Roger Schwarz (Author) ISBN-13: 978-0787947231
The Secrets of Facilitation: The SMART Guide to Getting Results with Groups 2nd Edition
by Michael Wilkinson ISBN-13: 978-1118206133

Dr. Barry Johnson, Polarity Management, 1996, Amherst, Massachusetts, USA