COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

by

RESOURCE SOLUTIONS
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
University of Alaska Anchorage

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(revised 2/2008)
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INTRODUCTION
TO THE WORKSHOP
PURPOSE

To review the steps in the collaborative problem solving process and design a collaborative process for a work related project.

OBJECTIVES

Participants will learn:

• A working definition of alternative dispute resolution terms.
• When and where collaboration is appropriate and the role of the facilitator in designing and leading the process.
• How the steps in the collaborative process relate to a successfully completed Alaskan case study.
• To design a collaborative process for a community, public, or natural resource project on which they are currently working.
• To apply the four competencies of leadership, as described by Chrislip and Larson, to their roles as facilitative leaders.
OUTLINE

Day One

Welcome and Introductions

Introduction to the Workshop

Collaborative Projects: A Small Group Exercise

The Context for Collaborative Problem Solving
  • Principles of Collaborative Leadership
  • Definition of Terms
  • When to Use (or Not Use) a Collaborative Process
  • Characteristics of a Collaborative Process

Phases in the Collaborative Process
  • An Overview: Phases and Steps
  • Where's the Beef? A Small Group Exercise

A Case Study in Collaborative Problem Solving
  • Case Study Presentation
  • Question and Answer Session
  • Other Case Examples

Phase I: Situation Assessment
  • A Situation Assessment/Mapping Exercise
  • Reporting Back
Day Two

Phase II: Designing a Collaborative Process
- A Planning Exercise
- Reporting Back
- Lessons Learned

Phase III: Facilitating the Collaborative Process
- Ground Rules
- Developing Criteria: What Are They and How Are They Used?
- Moving from Positions to Interests: How Do We Do It?
- Problem Solving: What Techniques Do We Use?
- Getting Agreement: What Does Agreement Mean?
- Implementation: How Do We Maintain Momentum?

Closing and Evaluation
THE CONTEXT FOR
COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM
SOLVING
PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Chrislip & Larson (1994) investigated fifty-two successful collaborative initiatives, all of which had strong process leadership. They found that “the primary role of collaborative leaders is to promote and safeguard the process” (p. 138). They also identified four principles that characterize what is referred by a number of authors (Burns, 1978; Greenleaf, 1977; Kotter, 1990; Chrislip & Larson, 1994) as transforming, servant, facilitative, or collaborative leadership.

Principle 1: Inspire Commitment and Action
According to Chrislip & Larson (1994), “What makes collaborative leaders unique is that they catalyze, convene, energize, and facilitate others to create visions and solve problems” (p. 138). The action they undertake is to “bring people to the table, help them work constructively, and keep them at the table” (p. 139). They must be committed to a collaborative process against those who are cynical, don’t trust collaboration, or are convinced that nothing will work in a particular situation.

Principle 2: Lead as Peer Problem Solver
Collaborative leaders work with stakeholders to develop a process that is effective and credible. Ownership of the process is shared among members of the group and the leader facilitates the problem solving process as a peer. The leader’s energy “is invested in the people—building relationships—and the process. Instead of relying on a position of power or using command and control tactics, a collaborative leader relies on his/her “credibility, integrity, and ability to focus on the process” (p. 140).

Principle 3: Build Broad-Based Involvement
Collaborative leaders have to make an effort to build a broad-based involvement of affected stakeholders. This means a conscious and disciplined approach to identifying stakeholders and making sure they have a place at the table and a voice in the process. Failure to make the process inclusive can contribute to the failure of collaboration.

Principle 4: Sustain Hope and Participation
When the inevitable frustrations and difficulties in the collaborative process occur, collaborative leaders make a difference by:

- Convincing participants that each person’s input is valued;
- Helping to set incremental and obtainable goals;
- Encouraging celebrations of achievement along the way;
- Sustaining confidence by promoting and protecting a process in which participants believe;
- Sustaining commitment to the process at times when quick solutions are offered or when power and influence assert themselves;
- Keeping people at the table when more traditional, but destructive ways of doing business seem tempting (Chrislip and Larson, 1984, pp. 140–141).

Chrislip and Larson (1994) stress that collaborative leadership “requires leaders to drop their concern for a particular content outcome and rely on the group” (p. 141).
PROCESS TERMS

ALTERNATIVE (OR APPROPRIATE) DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR)

“The generic name given to a variety of techniques for resolving disputes outside of the courtroom” (Sekuler, 1990).

ARBITRATION

A private, voluntary process where a neutral third party hears a dispute and renders a decision for the parties. Arbitration may be binding or non-binding.

Arbitration is “the closest parallel to an actual trial. The parties present evidence at a hearing presided over by an arbitrator or panel. The proceeding is generally less formal than a court proceeding, but the arbitrator, like a judge, makes a decision that is generally binding e.g. the parties sign a contract to be bound. The decision may be an award alone or it may include an opinion that explains the arbitrator’s reasoning” (Sekuler, 1990).

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

“Parties work together to define problems and generate options and objective criteria to reach decisions by consensus. A third party may provide facilitation for the group” (Policy Consensus Initiative, 1998, p. 2).

CONSENSUS

“All people who have a stake in an issue or conflict work together toward common understanding and agreement that satisfies all their interests. Consensus is not compromise” (Policy Consensus Initiative, 1998, p. 2).

“Consensus is reaching a decision that all members of the group can support to some extent. Consensus means ‘to consent’, not necessarily agree” (Lawson, 1980).

CONSENSUS BUILDING

“Developing agreement on issues where parties bring different perspectives and interests to the table before the issues have crystallized into a dispute. Inclusive participation, full exploration of issues, and agreements based upon substantial majorities or even unanimity are characteristics of consensus building efforts” (Dukes, 1996, p. 189).

The consensus building process often requires a minimum of several months, and can take several years to reach agreement on complex issues. A key component of a consensus building process is conducting meetings where those who frequently disagree have opportunities, in a structured environment, to sort through issues using collaborative problem solving techniques. Good facilitation skills are essential if a consensus building process is to be successful.
**COMPROMISE**

“Compromise involves a resolution of differences in which each side makes concessions or agrees to settle for something in the middle” (Policy Consensus Initiative, 1998, p. 2).

**CONVENING**

The first phase in a consensus-building or collaborative process which includes:

- Assessing the situation to determine whether or not a collaborative approach is feasible;
- Engaging participants to ensure that the process is representative and inclusive;
- Locating the necessary resources to help convene, conduct and support the process;
- Planning and organizing the process with participants or working with an outside convener to do so (Susskind, McKearman, Thomas-Larmer, 1999).

**CONVENER**

The person or group that carries out the steps for convening a meeting. The convener may be the organizational representative (sponsor) or a professional neutral (outside convener) whose experience and impartiality will enable him/her to carry out the convening steps more effectively and efficiently (Susskind, McKearman, Thomas-Larmer, 1999).

“A convener identifies the scope of issues and parties to a dispute and determines (what process) will be feasible” (Dukes, 1996, p. 189).

**FACILITATION**

Facilitation is a means of connecting and coordinating to accomplish an end result. Meeting facilitation is a skill used by a neutral party who provides procedural assistance to a group to keep them focused, help them exchange information, and deal effectively with conflict to accomplish an end goal by the time the meeting process is completed.

**NEGOTIATION**

“Negotiation is a dispute resolution process whereby the parties to a dispute attempt to resolve their dispute without the assistance of an outside person” (Source unknown).

“Disputing parties engage in discussions to explore their interests and needs in an effort to reach agreement” (Policy Consensus Initiative, 1998, p. 2).

“A bargaining relationship in which parties use either hard line bargaining (trade-offs, splitting the difference) over positions or a collaborative problem solving approach to reaching an agreement” (Kindler, 1981).
**MEDIATION**

“Mediation is a structured process in which the mediator guides the disputants through a discussion of their mutual problems and concerns, organizes the parties' presentations of alternatives for resolving the problem, and aids the parties in arriving at a resolution of their dispute” (Mitchell and Dewhirst, 1990).

“An impartial third party assists disputing parties in reaching a mutually acceptable agreement. The mediator guides the parties in developing their own resolution of issues and does not impose a decision upon them” (Policy Consensus Initiative, 1998, p. 2).

**NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING**

“The process by which multiple interests who anticipate being substantially affected by a potential agency rule negotiate the terms of the rule. The agency retains authority over the promulgation of the rule, but generally anticipates that any consensual agreement would provide the basis for the proposed rulemaking. It is also known as regulatory negotiations or reg-neg” (Dukes, 1996, p. 192).

**SITUATION ASSESSMENT**

A situation assessment includes a variety of methods used to clarify an issue and the affected parties. The length and complexity of an assessment will depend on the situation. In less complex situations, the facilitator may be able to get the necessary information from telephone interviews and written materials provided by the parties. In more complex situations, there may be a need to conduct one-on-one or focus group interviews, deliver a formal report on the parties and issues with a recommendation on whether to proceed. Whatever the scope, the situation assessment lays the groundwork for the design of a productive process.

**SITUATION MAPPING**

Situation mapping is a visual way of displaying the complex interrelationships among stakeholders involved in working on a problem, issue or project. It is based on a preliminary assessment of the situation and those involved and shows the elements of the problem (parties involved, policies or regulations that guide the decision-making, and the issues) and the relationships (which may be positive or negative). Elements are represented by circles and relationships by lines that connect the elements.
SPONSOR

“The individual, group or organization that initiates a consensus process to address or resolve some issue” (Adapted from Susskind, McKearman, Thomas-Larmer, 1999).

STAKEHOLDERS

“The key individuals, groups, and organizations that have an interest—either direct or indirect—in the issue. They need to be consulted as part of the assessment and represented as participants in the process” (Susskind, McKearman, Thomas-Larmer, 1999).

PREMISE BEHIND COLLABORATION

The premise behind collaboration—the process used to build consensus decisions are:

- A solution exists that can meet everyone's needs, even through you don't know what it is now.
- Through mutual learning, you will find fundamental shared interests on which you can work together.
- While there may be differences, people who disagree with you are essential to work with if the status quo is not desired.
- Everybody will get more of what they want if they work together.

WHEN TO USE A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Collaboration is an appropriate process to address interpersonal, organizational, community, regional or national issues when:

An issue is complex and the parties (stakeholders) are frustrated by indecision.

- Many parties (stakeholders) are involved.
- No one agency or organization has complete jurisdiction over the problem.
- The issues are workable.
- The parties (stakeholders) are willing to participate.
WHEN NOT TO USE A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Collaboration is not appropriate for all situations or issues. It may not be a good idea to bring diverse interests together when:

- The group faces an emergency requiring quick action or when public health and safety are endangered.
- National security is at risk.
- Mandated deadlines don’t allow for enough time.
- A group needs to seek a legal judgment to clarify a rule or regulation before it decides whether to proceed with collaboration.
- The group is so polarized that productive face-to-face discussions are not possible.

Adapted from the writings of James Creighton

CHARACTERISTICS OF A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

- Discuss and address interests.
- Understand the role of interpersonal dynamics in negotiations and help people move on.
- Generate a wide range of options, minimizing judgments at first.
- Agree on criteria by which to judge options for resolution.
- Seek to include all relevant interests or viewpoints.
- Designed by the participants; not predetermined by public officials.
- Participants represent constituent groups, not just themselves.
- Participants, including public officials, are partners in decision making.
- Participants seek unanimous agreement, not majority rules.
- Consensus building supplements other public involvement and public decision-making processes. It is not a replacement.

In seeking agreement, each participant:

- Has the “right” to disagree.
- Assumes a “responsibility” to offer options that seek to accommodate their interests and the interests of other people.
KEYS TO SUCCESS: THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS

- There is a constituency for change.
- Stakeholder groups are organized with clear lines of communication and procedures for decision making.
- Legitimate, credible representatives can be identified and are willing to participate. Public officials and decision makers are committed to the process.
- The process is open, credible, and designed by the participants.
- There is sufficient time to explore all the information and opinions.
- There is strong facilitative leadership.
- Members are willing to contribute their views and discuss their reasons.
- There is a commitment and effort to develop an atmosphere of honesty and openness in the group.
- There is a willingness to confront and resolve controversy and conflict.

REACHING CONSENSUS

A CONSENSUS OUTCOME IS REACHED WHEN PARTICIPANTS AGREE ON A PACKAGE OF PROPOSALS.

- May not agree on all aspects, but accept the package as a whole.
- Maintain their values and interests.
- Make a commitment to implement the agreement.

A CONSENSUS OUTCOME IS REACHED WHEN PARTICIPANTS CAN SAY:

- “I believe the group has heard me.”
- “I have had the opportunity to voice my opinions.”
- “I can actively support the group’s decision as the best possible choice at this time, even if it is not my first choice.”
PHASES IN
THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS
PHASE I: SITUATION ASSESSMENT

During this phase the project manager and team members or other conveners identify the issues and whether or not the conditions are appropriate for a collaborative, consensus building process. During this phase, the objectives are to:

**STEP 1: Assess the Situation**

Situation assessment involves initial data-gathering to determine the scope of the project and to provide a clear description of the issues. In many instances, it includes creating situation maps that show the relationships among the issues, their causes and impacts or among the various stakeholders involved in the situation.

- Identify the issues and the factors contributing to the problem.
- Identify the impacts to the resources and the community.
- Determine how acceptable the outcome(s) will be if the situation continues on its present course.
- Determine the level of controversy among stakeholders and the complexity of the issue.
- Determine if the conditions are appropriate for a collaborative, consensus-building process.
- Determine if a collaborative process will be acceptable to the stakeholders.
- Identify the decision-makers and whether or not they will be open to implementing any agreements that emerge.
- Evaluate the community’s capacity for change, if applicable.

**STEP 2: Identify Additional Stakeholders**

During this step the group identifies stakeholders, decision-makers or interest groups who are not represented at the table during the planning process and determine how they will be invited to participate.

- Determine what (or whose) relevant interests and influence are not represented.
- Contact additional stakeholders and determine their interest in and commitment to participating in a collaborative process.
- Consider the requirements for a public process which will be incorporated into the process design.

**STEP 3: Identify the Members of the Core Planning Team**

If it is determined that a collaborative process is appropriate, then a Core Planning Team is formed to design the collaborative process. The Core Planning Team members may be agency or interagency representatives and/or other stakeholders who are knowledgeable
about and committed to the issue, and willing to participate in the process from the begin-
ning. The team needs:

- A diverse representation of viewpoints.
- Members who have some experience in process planning.
- To be small enough to keep the process manageable, but inclusive. Recommended size is 3–7 members.

**PHASE II: DESIGNING A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS**

During this phase the Core Planning Team will design a process that will enable a larger stakeholder group to identify and discuss the issues or problem, develop options for solving the problem and assist them in selecting the most workable option.

**STEP 1: Creating an Interest or Vision Statement**

- Review the issues identified during the Situation Assessment and frame the problem as a joint search for resolution or as a vision for the community.
- How can we...? or, By 2015, ... (See example under the section entitled Jointly Define the Problem.)
- List the project outcomes as objectives.
- What is the scope of the project? Are there deadlines to be met throughout the process?

**STEP 2: Design the Collaborative Process**

- Review the process options (work groups, subgroups, conferences, public meetings, negotiating team, regulatory processes i.e. NEPA and their various combinations)
- Determine the most effective collaborative process structure: work groups, subgroups, conferences, etc.
- Determine how to involve the public: hearings, open houses, survey, etc.
- Develop a timeline that includes the steps in the process including any deadlines.
- Determine resource needs: process design expertise, facilitation expertise, staff support, technical expertise and support, and financial resources.

**STEP 3: Identify and Assign Roles**

- Identify leadership roles (chairperson, convener, facilitator, etc.) and recruit credible leaders who can promote and safeguard the process.
- Identify support roles (meeting coordinator, recorders, timekeeper, etc.)
- Identify technical expertise (scientific, economic, financial, environmental, etc.)
**STEP 4: Plan the Meeting Schedule**

- Review the process design and estimate how many meetings will be needed and the type of meeting (i.e. work group or subgroup meetings, public meetings, etc.)
- Determine the logistical details: meeting locations, dates, length of meetings, equipment, catering, etc.
- Create an agenda for the first meeting with clearly stated outcomes (objectives)
- Draft the meeting ground rules and protocols
- Advertise the meetings and invite participant stakeholders
- Determine strategies for working with the media.

**PHASE III: FACILITATING THE PROCESS**

Once all the stakeholders have been contacted, the first meeting is convened, the process design is agreed upon, and the participants begin to deliberate the key issues.

**STEP 1: Agree Upon Design and Procedures**

The first task of the larger stakeholder group is to come to agreement on the process design, procedures, and ground rules developed by the Core Planning Team.

- Ask for agreement on the process structure and steps as drafted by the Core Planning Team. Make changes as necessary.
- Discuss and ask for agreement from the group on the ground rules, protocols, objectives, tasks, and outcomes drafted during the Design Phase. Make changes as necessary.
**STEP 2: Identify Issues and Interests**

During this step, participants educate each other by sharing their interests, needs, and concerns related to the issue. This information is usually recorded so it can be used to begin crafting the agreement.

- Determine the stake that each participant has in the issue(s) and the reasons for that agency’s, group’s, or individual’s participation.
- Identify what is given and what is understood. Identify sub-issues.
- As the process unfolds, assist group members in reframing their stated positions as interests. This requires them to move from a pre-determined idea of how the conflict can be settled to the underlying values, needs, and concerns that have to be satisfied in order for a satisfactory agreement to be reached. Breaking people away from their positions gets them to confront the fundamentals. It opens up a new range of possibilities one of which could meet all the participants’ interests.

**Table 1: Example of a Position vs. an Interest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 3: Jointly Define the Problem**

Stakeholders need a clear description of the problem they want to address. The way the problem is defined affects how the process will unfold and the level of conflict that will be generated.

- State the problem in the form of a collaborative question that all parties can agree with and will work to resolve. The question needs to inspire or energize the group. Problems should not be stated in terms that can be answered yes or no because that will create polarization. Avoid talking about outcomes until the problem definition has been agreed upon.
Table 2: Problem Statement Examples

| Non-collaborative statement (position) | ✓ We must save our fisheries.  
| | ✓ We must develop our oil resources.  
| Yes or no question | ✓ Are fisheries more important than new economic opportunities?  
| Collaborative question | ✓ How can we protect our rich fisheries while providing new economic opportunities in oil?  

Once the problem has been defined and agreed upon, the group can begin to gather information to define the desired future outcome.

**STEP 4: Gather Data for Decision Making**

Data includes scientific, economic, financial, environmental, and other technical information related to the issue as well as input from stakeholders and interest groups.

- Identify background or technical information that is pertinent to the issue.
- Identify information that is available and information that is needed.
- Determine who will be responsible for collecting the required information.
- Arrange for public participation i.e. open houses, email, direct mail or telephone contacts, public testimony, educational meetings.

**STEP 5: Establish Objective Criteria for an Acceptable Solution**

It is important for the group to agree on the criteria which measure the appropriateness and acceptability of each option or alternative before they begin to generate the options. They need to review their list of interests and propose other factors that should be considered when the options are evaluated. Criteria can be general or specific. They may include the solution’s feasibility, its cost-effectiveness, the timeframe involved, specific conditions to be met, the quality to be achieved, etc.

- List and discuss possible criteria. Measure them against the desired, future outcome.
- Select 4–5 of the most important and appropriate criteria and prioritize them in order of importance as evaluation measures.
- Each criterion can be weighted numerically to correspond to its relative importance in the priority order.
**STEP 6: Jointly Identify Ideas and Options**

- Select a simple method for identifying and prioritizing options and reporting back to the larger group.
- Divide large groups into smaller teams to generate options.
- Once the list is completed, discuss the pros and cons of each option and prioritize.
- Report back to the larger group and repeat the process.

**STEP 7: Evaluate Options and Reach Agreement**

- Apply the criteria to each option. This helps identify which options the group is ready to accept, which ones require further discussion, and which should be eliminated.
- The group can also review the list of options by identifying their advantages and disadvantages or their costs and benefits.
- Prioritize the options.
- Select the best option or combination of options.

**STEP 8: Develop a Written Agreement Which Includes an Action Plan**

- Document the areas of agreement to ensure a common understanding of the agreement.
- Develop a draft action plan: what, how, when, where, who.
- Action plans can take different forms as follows:

  * **Building block approach**: Participants assess and agree on solutions issue by issue. This is often used when task groups have proposed solutions to specific issues. Each issue becomes a separate section of the action plan.
  
  * **Comprehensive proposals**: Participants review a series of proposals and then blend desirable features into one acceptable plan.
  
  * **Single text**: An individual or small group drafts an agreement based on the group's input and then circulates copies to the participants or a team to revise. Drafts continue to be circulated and revisions made until all participants can accept the agreement.
  
  * **Agreements in principle**: The group lays out the general direction for action and delegates to an implementation committee the task of working out the details.
PHASE IV: IMPLEMENTING THE AGREEMENT

Once the draft agreement/action plan has been completed, it must be officially approved.

STEP 1: Ratify the Agreement

- Get support for the draft agreement/plan from organizations that have a role in carrying it out.
- Each organization follows its own internal procedures as it reviews and adopts the plan.
- Present the draft agreement/plan to constituency groups and the public for review and approval.
- Revise the draft agreement/plan based on input.
- Parties to the agreement sign the final document.

STEP 2: Integrate the Agreement into the Public Decision-making Process

- Keep governing bodies and agencies not directly involved in the process informed during all phases of the process.
- The relevant agencies and governing bodies implement the action plan.
- Establish a monitoring system that will provide a central point where all parties can direct their concerns and suggestions.

STEP 3: Implement the Agreement

- Maintain communication and collaboration as the plan is carried out. This can be done by periodic meetings, teleconferences, and emails to keep everyone informed.
- Monitor results using the system established above.
- Modify activities and renegotiate, if necessary.
- Celebrate the successful completion of the process/project.

STEP 4: Evaluate the Process

- Evaluate the results against the desired outcome(s).
- Document the lessons learned.
- Prepare the summary reports and documents.

(Pages 19–25 are adapted from Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987; Carpenter, 1990; Chrislip & Larson, 1994)
WHERE’S THE BEEF?: A SMALL GROUP EXERCISE

We’ve borrowed a phrase from the Wendy’s commercial in which Clara Peller pounded on the counters of hamburger competitors and demanded, “Where’s the beef?” In this exercise, we want to know “Where are the products?” Each stage of the collaborative problem solving process has certain products or deliverables which contribute to the success of the process. You will be working in one of four small groups, each of which will be assigned a different phase of the Collaborative Problem Solving Process described on pp. 19–25 as follows:

Group 1: Phase I: Situation Assessment, Steps 1–3

Group 2: Phase II: Designing a Collaborative Process, Steps 1-4

Group 3: Phase III: Facilitating the Process, Steps 1–4

Group 4: Phase III: Facilitating the Process, Steps 5-8

Group 5: Phase IV: Implementing the Agreement, Steps 1–4

Take a few minutes to individually review the checklist as a whole. Then, in your small group, discuss and list on flip chart paper, the tangible and intangible products or outcomes that will be produced during your assigned phase of the collaborative process.
CASE STUDY
PHASE I: SITUATION ASSESSMENT
SITUATION ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Conducting a situation assessment is the first step in determining whether or not a collaborative process is appropriate for making a decision on a particular issue. During this step, the project manager and others begin to formulate answers to some of the basic questions about the scope of the project and the issues involved. Outcomes of the situation assessment include:

- A list of issues and factors that contribute to the issue or impacts that may result from actions to be taken. Issues, factors and impacts may be mapped on paper to show their relationships.
- A list of stakeholders and their current relationships, which may also be mapped on paper to show their interconnectivity.
- An assessment of the level of controversy, the complexity of the issue, and whether or not conditions are appropriate for a collaborative, consensus building process.

SITUATION MAPPING

Situation mapping is a visual way of displaying interrelationships in an issue or conflict situation. A map might display the various issues, factors that contribute to the issues and the impacts to the environment, economy, community, etc. showing how they are interrelated. Or a map might show the various stakeholders and their relationships as a way of displaying the level of controversy and willingness to collaborate.

Situation mapping isn’t about developing a product that will be shared with others. In fact, in some cases, sharing a situation map could have negative repercussions. The real value of situation mapping is in the process of mapping. The process encourages the map maker to think about the situation systematically. Mapping helps move people beyond linear thinking to better understand the relationships and/or complexity of the situation. Consequently, situation mapping is a learning activity that involves systems thinking. By using a situation map as a group discussion tool, we learn how others understand the situation.

INDIVIDUAL TASK (30–40 MINUTES)

Write the answers to the following questions and draw the corresponding maps on a piece of flip chart paper as a way to assess a current project or issue on which you are working. Note: These questions are based on the steps described in Phase I: Situation Assessment on pp. 19–20.
ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Write a 1–2 sentence definition/description of the problem or situation at the top of your flip chart paper. Turn the paper sideways so you’ll have room to draw a map below the situation statement.

2. Create a map to show the issues and factors that either contribute to the situation, or in some way impact the environment, the economy, the community, etc. Begin by drawing a circle in the middle of the paper. Write a word or phrase in this circle to describe the primary problem/issue. Then draw additional circles for other concerns, factors and impacts. Connect the circles with lines to show the direction of influence/impact and the relationships among various factors. Use nouns in the circles to convey the elements of the system you are mapping and verbs on the connecting lines to convey the dynamics of the relationships.

3. Create a second map to show the stakeholders and their relationships. Use circles to represent the stakeholders (individuals, agencies, groups, processes). Draw connecting lines between circles to represent the relationships among the stakeholders. Describe the nature of the relationship by writing a few words or a phrase above or below the line (e.g. openly hostile and uncooperative, upset and frustrated, positive and willing to work together).

4. Are there any stakeholders who are not represented on your second map? If so, add them.

5. What is the level of controversy around this issue and how complex is it? (Use the Index of Complexity handout.)

6. Will a collaborative process be acceptable to the stakeholders? Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Will the decision makers be open to a collaborative process and implementing any agreements that emerge? Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Based on the answers to Questions 5–7, are the conditions in this situation appropriate for a collaborative approach to decision making? Yes ☐ No ☐

9. Who will be the members of your Core Planning Team? List them on the flip chart.

SMALL GROUP TASK (30 MINUTES)

In small groups of 3–4, use the situation maps to briefly explain your projects. Select one map from the group as an example of a project that has conditions appropriate for collaboration.

REPORTING BACK (30 MINUTES)

Each group will have 5–7 minutes to talk about one of their situation maps and report back on what they learned during the exercise.
# INDEX OF COMPLEXITY FOR PUBLIC ISSUES

For each factor, assign one to four points using the scales below. Total the points to assess the difficulty of resolution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Parties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rate**
- 1 2 or less
- 2 3 to 5
- 3 6 to 10
- 4 Over 10

- 1 1 (or less)
- 2 2 to 3
- 3 4 to 7
- 4 Over 7

- Fresh: Arose in the week
- Recent: Arose in the last three months
- Aging: Four months to a year or two
- Old: More than a political generation

- Low for All
- Low for most, high for a few
- High for most, low for a few
- High for all

- Issues/parties are distinct and easily separable
- Issues/parties are not obvious, but sortable
- Issues/parties muddy, intertwined
- Issues/parties very murky, separation and representation hard to distinguish

- Good in the past, expectation/desire of good in the future
- Fair in the past, positive expectations
- Weak in the past, poor expectations
- Poor in the past, poor expectations

- Not deeply rooted
- Few deeply rooted
- Most deeply rooted
- All deeply rooted

- Issue(s) isolated
- Issue(s) in the public eye
- Issue(s) in controversy
- Issue(s) explosive

**Rate**
- 8–12 No sweat
- 13–20 Challenging
- 21–27 Tough
- 27–32 World Class

---

*Adapted from George Mason University, Virginia*
PHASE II: DESIGNING THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS
PROCESS DESIGN WORKSHEET

This is the planning or design phase of creating a collaborative process for decision making. During this phase the Core Planning Team will design a process that will enable a larger stakeholder group to identify and discuss the issues, problem or vision, develop solutions or options, and assist them in selecting the most workable options.

The outcomes of the process design phase include:

- A collaborative problem or vision statement
- A list of outcomes stated as objectives
- A process structure that includes the groups and subgroups that will be formed and the types of public involvement events.
- A timeline that includes the steps in the process, a meeting schedule, and deadlines to be met.
- A list of resource needs and how those needs will be met i.e. through assigned leadership and staff support roles, etc.
- An agenda for the first meeting with objectives, ground rules, protocols, and tasks to be accomplished
- A checklist of logistical considerations for the stakeholder meetings.
- A list of stakeholders to contact and a plan for advertising and working with the media

SMALL GROUP TASK (2 HOURS)

You will be working in a small group with 4–5 other participants. Think of your group as a Core Planning Team. Your responsibility as a team is to design a collaborative process for one of the projects selected by the small groups as workable classroom case studies.

Begin by reviewing the situation maps, the level of controversy and complexity and what conditions make this project appropriate for collaboration. Then answer the following questions as they relate to the project you have selected. Note: These questions are based on the steps described in Phase II: Designing a Collaborative Process on pp. 20–21.

1. Write a purpose/vision statement or a collaborative question for your project that you think all parties will work to resolve.

   **Purpose Statement**: To promote a healthy ecosystem and sound economy in and around the Pribilof Islands while maintaining viable commercial fisheries and subsistence harvests in the central Bering Sea.

   **Collaborative Question**: How can we promote the fur seals while maintaining a viable fishing industry in the central Bering Sea?
PROCESS DESIGN QUESTIONS

1. Problem or Vision Statement

2. List the outcomes for the project as objectives.

3. What is the scope of the project? Are there deadlines to be met throughout the process?
4. Review the Process Options on pp. 39–41 and determine the most effective process structure.
   - How will you involve the public i.e. hearings, open houses, survey, etc.?

   - Estimate how many meetings you will need for each group.

   - Draw a process map to illustrate which option or combination of options you have selected or created and where public involvement will occur.
5. Develop a timeline that includes the steps in the process including any deadlines.

6. Determine your resource needs i.e., process design expertise, leadership, facilitation expertise, staff support, technical expertise and support, financial resources, etc.
7. If you have time, create a draft agenda for your first meeting of the larger stakeholder group.
REPORTING BACK (40 MINUTES)

Components of the Process Design: Each small group will have 7–10 minutes to report back to the larger group some of the components of your process design. The facilitators will ask for different components from each group.

Lessons Learned: At the end of your report, summarize what each member of the group learned about the collaborative process.
COMMITTEE AND TASK GROUPS

The most commonly used model for structuring a public/community consensus process is a committee, combined with task groups or subcommittees.

- The committee may have anywhere from 10 to 60 members, who represent the different interest groups concerned about a problem.
- The committee agrees on procedures, identifies issues, gathers information, generates options and develops recommendations or reaches agreements.

Task groups are established by the committee to:

- Gather information on specific issues,
- Identify related concerns, or
- Develop alternative strategies to solve a problem.

Task groups are usually organized around substantive topics identified by the larger committee. Often members of task groups include those from different interests and others who have different roles, and are therefore knowledgeable about the issues from a variety of perspectives, such as decision makers, technical resource people, those who will need to implement the decisions, and the general public.

Individuals invited to join a task group can then contribute their expertise and experience on a specific topic without also having to invest the time to participate in the larger process. Task groups report their results to the committee.

The committee may use one set of task groups to help it research information and identify issues to be addressed, and then establish a new set to help it generate solutions, or it may retain the same task forces through an entire program. A committee should be large enough to permit the representation of different interests and small enough to make decisions.
NEGOTIATING TEAMS

Representatives in a consensus process can be organized into teams. Each team decides on its goals and interests, and functions as a unit during problem-solving sessions. Negotiating teams work well when the number of teams is small—three to five is a reasonable number—and when each team has well-defined and compatible interests.

Team members need time between sessions to talk among themselves about how to proceed and time to go back to their respective constituents to discuss the progress of the discussion and seek input from other people not at the table.

Negotiating teams can also choose to use smaller working groups to explore an issue in depth, develop and reframe options and iron out differences. Working groups may consist of representatives from the teams, or their membership may be expanded to include non-team individuals.

Figure 2. Negotiating Teams and Task Groups Model.
Conference and Task Groups

A third model features a conference that convenes interested citizens around a public/community problem, followed by task group work and later by additional conferences.

A conference may be open to anyone or may be attended only by those invited. The advantage of a conference model is that it enables many more people to become involved face-to-face in collaboration. Conferences are a good forum for providing information, identifying issues and concerns, and gathering suggestions for alternative solutions.

Conferences are not a good format for reaching consensus agreements. Generally conferences identify issues that become the basis for organizing working groups. The composition of working groups can be by self-selection or groups can be formed by a steering committee or in some other manner.

Working groups report their results to a second conference usually held six to twelve months later. Conference participants discuss working group reports and proposals and then suggest future directions for the program, including the tasks of the same or new working groups. Additional conferences are held as needed.

Figure 3. Conference and task groups model.

Information adapted from and figures provided by Solving Community Problems by Consensus, Program for Community Problem Solving, 1990.
PHASE III: FACILITATING THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS
GROUND RULES

Ground rules are the principles that group members agree to adopt in order to have an effective meeting. They come from the group members and the facilitator and are written where everyone can see them during the meeting. They usually address the process problems that occur in groups. They also set a standard against which the facilitator and the group can measure their behavior. The facilitator uses the ground rules as a guide for knowing when to intervene in the group process (Schwarz, 1994). Ground rules may include any of the following (Schwarz, 1994; Oakley, 1998):

- Maintain confidentiality.
- Agree on what important words mean.
- Give everyone a chance to participate.
- Test assumptions and inferences.
- Share all relevant information.
- Be specific; use examples.
- Be willing to discuss sensitive issues that are relevant.
- Be honest and direct without putting others on the defensive.
- Commit to the start/finish times.
- Avoid interruptions.
- Explain the reason behind suggestions and statements.
- Avoid sidebar conversations.
- Keep discussion focused.
- Avoid put-downs.
- Make decisions by consensus.
- Listen reflectively (i.e., questioning, paraphrasing, empathy statements).
- Jointly design ways to test disagreements and solutions.
ESTABLISHING CRITERIA:
WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW ARE THEY USED?

We set criteria often in our daily lives especially when we are making a purchase, deciding whether or not to relocate or accept a new job. Establishing criteria involves setting standards against which to evaluate alternative solutions. Criteria describe the characteristics that make the solution acceptable to all the stakeholders. They may include the solution's feasibility, the cost, the timeframe involved, specific conditions to be met, the quality to be achieved, etc.

Working in a small group of 4–5 participants, answer the following questions:

1. What were the criteria used in the Deep Creek Access Case Study?

2. What are some of the obvious criteria you might use for the project you worked on during the session?
MOVING FROM POSITIONS TO INTERESTS: HOW DO WE DO IT?

PURPOSE OF REFRAMING

As parties in a dispute discuss a problem or issue, they take different positions based on their individual viewpoints or frames of reference. Each person defines or frames the issue, situation or problem with his or her own interpretation of reality which then excludes the other parties' interpretations of reality. To avoid deadlock, disputants need to discover a mutually agreeable definition of the problem or issues that will allow them to cooperate (Moore, 1996).

The facilitator/mediator can provide assistance in helping the parties reframe the issue before they restrict themselves with a particular definition that will result in an impasse. The purpose of reframing is to make the problem definition acceptable to all the disputants. In doing this, the facilitator/mediator should consider 1) the differences in reframing interest-related issues as opposed to reframing value-related issues; 2) when to expand or narrow a problem definition, and 3) the appropriate language or syntax to use in redefining or reframing a problem or issue (Moore, 1996).

REFRAMING: EXPANDING OR NARROWING ISSUES

Moving from positions to interests is usually easier than reframing conflicts that are deep-seated, closely-held beliefs, more commonly referred to as values. One way to reframe is to expand the issues to provide more bargaining power (Moore, 1996). For example, in a labor-management dispute where parties are deadlocked over a wage increase, the parties may be able to find other benefits beside wages that will meet the needs of union members and satisfy both sides in the dispute. “Reframing interest disputes requires a careful analysis of position statements put forth by the parties and the interests represented by those positions. Shifting from specific interests to more general ones may widen the number of settlement options available” (Moore, 1996, p. 219).

It may, at times, be advantageous to reframe issues in narrower terms. Moore (1996) describes a situation in which several people agreed to purchase a piece of property together. Later one person decided to withdraw and wanted his money back. The others felt they couldn’t provide reimbursement without selling the property, which they didn’t want to do. From this either/or situation, the parties reframed the issue into smaller, more manageable sub issues. How much money? When? In what form? With interest? The parties were then able to reach agreement on trade-offs for the sub issues (p. 220).
Reframing value-related issues is particularly difficult because the conflict is already polarized by the deep-seated nature of the viewpoints which are often characterized in the form of absolutes (i.e. right and wrong, environmentally sound or environmentally unsound; healthy or unhealthy). Facilitator/mediators who work with value disputes often try to translate values into interests so that the parties have a common means to work out differences. Moore (1996) describes a situation in which single-family homeowners were confronted with the construction of multi-family dwellings on the edge of their neighborhood. They complained to the city planning department that the new construction would change the neighborhood’s ambiance and would impact the lifestyle that they valued (p. 221).

In this case, “lifestyle values were translated into interests—limited noise, no abrupt transitions from single-family to multifamily homes, a height limit for new construction to preserve views, maintaining privacy by avoiding building in areas that overlooked single-family backyards” (Moore, 1996, p. 221). In this instance, a mutually satisfactory development plan was negotiated that met most of the needs of the developers and the single-family homeowners.

Another approach to reframing value disputes is to identify larger, superordinate goals to which the parties can agree. For example, in a dispute over the location of a dam, there may be disagreement over damage to pristine wilderness as opposed to a mandate to provide water to a nearby city. If the parties can state the issue as a question, “How can the city obtain the water it needs and still protect the wilderness?” they can begin to search for potential sources of water that will meet the stakeholders’ needs (Moore, 1996, p. 221).

The key to successfully moving the parties in a dispute from positions to interests is to initiate a thorough “process of discussion and mutual education so that parties can jointly define and make explicit the concrete issues underlying the dispute” (Moore, 1996, p. 222). Groups may experience several rounds of proposal rejections and exploration before they are able to agree and sometimes they may come back to an earlier proposal with a new readiness to accept it. The facilitator/mediator has to exercise patience in helping group members work through the process of refining and restating their ideas.
USING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

“Disputants use language that is judgmental, positional, and biased toward their subjective view.” It is the facilitator/mediator's role to “try to translate the language of the disputants into neutral terms to remove bias, positions, and judgment ... to depersonalize issues and put them outside the relationship between the disputants”. This means “avoiding adversarial language by referring to conflicts as problems, positions as viewpoints, parties as the group, and negotiations as discussion in order to depolarize and neutralize value-laden and conflict-oriented terminology” (Moore, 1996, pp. 222–223).

STEPS IN REFRAming

- Listen attentively to how each party describes and defines the problem or issue.
- Reflect back what you have heard by asking open-ended questions and paraphrasing.

**Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Paraphrasing (Restating)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why is this important to you?</td>
<td>What is important to you is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your concerns?</td>
<td>You're concerned that ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if you were able to ...?</td>
<td>So, you'd be willing to ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would make this fair?</td>
<td>To make this fair, you need ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you see as the next step?</td>
<td>So, you think the next step is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can we ...?</td>
<td>So, you think we should ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can be done to ...?</td>
<td>The options you favor are ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What timeframe is acceptable to you?</td>
<td>This situation needs to be resolved by ... because ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Eliminate the adversarial language and define the problem or issue according to interests rather than positions. Use objective, neutral language and frame the issue:

  ✓ In terms of the problem rather than personalities.
  ✓ So it is a joint problem statement.
  ✓ So it is more specific.
  ✓ So that multiple solutions are possible.
  ✓ Within areas where people have the authority and resources to make the decision and implement it.
  ✓ In terms of future action rather than past blame.

- Get agreement from both parties that the problem or issue statement accurately describes their joint interests.
COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

SMALL GROUP EXERCISE:
MOVING FROM POSITIONS TO INTERESTS

Working in small groups of 4–5 participants, answer the following questions:

1. How did the members of the Deep Creek Access Case move from positions to interests?

2. Select an issue from those that members of your group are working on. Speculate on 2–3 stakeholder positions for each to see how difficult it will be to move from positions to interests. Write a position statement for each desired outcome. Then write a common interest statement.

3. How difficult do you think moving from positions to interest will be in real life?

4. How can the leadership principles and collaborative process be used to move from positions to interest?
Problem Solving: What Techniques Do We Use?

Once the problem statement has been defined in a mutually acceptable way to all the members of the stakeholder group, then the group can move on to identifying and prioritizing causes and solutions. There are a number of techniques that can be used to identify, categorize and prioritize different aspects of a problem or issue. A detailed description of the methods listed below can be found in Appendix A.

- Fishbone Diagram: Identification of Causes
- Desired Outcomes Technique: Identifying Outcomes and Implications
- Brainstorming: Idea Generation
- Clustering or Mind Mapping: Idea Generation
- Nominal Group Technique: Idea Generation
- Post-It Note Process: Idea Generation
- Paired Comparison Analysis: Prioritizing Options
- Grid Analysis: Prioritizing Options
- Consensus Ranking: Determining Group Agreement
- Force Field Analysis: Weighing Pros and Cons of a Decision

Worksheet for Problem Solving Techniques

1. Which techniques listed above were used by the Deep Creek stakeholder group?

2. Which techniques have we used during this workshop? Where?
GETTING AGREEMENT:
WHAT DOES AGREEMENT MEAN?

Getting agreement using consensus involves a range of options from endorsement on one end of the continuum to unanimous agreement on the other. As shown by the continuum below, agreement, when it is collaborative, includes a variety of definitions each of which is slightly different than the one next to it.

CONSENSUS OPTION 1: A CONTINUUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endorse</th>
<th>Endorse with a minor point of contention</th>
<th>Agree with reservations</th>
<th>Abstain</th>
<th>Stand aside</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Block</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I like it.”</td>
<td>“Basically I like it.”</td>
<td>“I can live with it.”</td>
<td>“I have no opinion.”</td>
<td>“I don’t like this, but I don’t want to hold up the process.”</td>
<td>“I want my disagreement to be noted in writing but I’ll support the decision.”</td>
<td>“I veto this proposal.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making 1996.) This definition has been used by many watershed efforts in Oregon and Washington.

The last (shaded) column on the right side of the continuum is not considered “consensus” in this process. Anything in the other six columns, however, could be considered “agreement by consensus.”

CONSENSUS OPTION 2: OVERWHELMING AGREEMENT

This definition of consensus means overwhelming agreement. And, it is important that consensus be the product of a good-faith effort to meet the interests of all stakeholders. The key indicator whether or not a consensus has been reached is that everyone agrees they can live with the final proposal; that is, after every effort has been made to meet any outstanding interests. Thus, consensus requires that someone frame a proposal after listening carefully to everyone’s interests. Interests, by the way, are not the same as positions or demands. Demands and positions are what people say they must have, but interests are the underlying needs or reasons that explain why they take the positions they do.

Benefits of Using this Definition

Most consensus building efforts set out to achieve unanimity. Along the way, however, it often becomes clear that there are holdouts—people who believe that their interests will be better served by remaining outside the emerging agreement. Should the rest of the group throw in the towel? No, this would invite blackmail (i.e., outrageous demands that have
nothing to do with the issues under discussion). Most public dispute resolution profession- als believe that groups or assemblies should seek unanimity, but settle for overwhelming agreement that goes as far as possible toward meeting the interests of all stakeholders. It is absolutely critical that this definition of success be clear at the outset.

**Consensus Option 3: Unanimous Agreement**

This definition of consensus means “agreement among all stakeholders.” A consensus agreement is one that all stakeholders can accept and are willing to implement. As a practical matter, we strongly recommend that consensus-building groups declare that they will seek consensus, but accept overwhelming agreement as an outcome of their deliberations if consensus is not possible. There is an important distinction here between a consensus-seeking “process” and a consensus “outcome.” It’s important to not confuse the two.

**Other Definitions**

- Aim for the maximum agreement among people while drawing on as much of everyone’s ideas as possible.

- Consensus is different from other kinds of decision making because it stresses the cooperative development of a decision with group members working together rather than competing against each other. The goal of consensus is a decision that is consented to by all group members. Of course, full consent does not mean that everyone must be completely satisfied with the final outcome – in fact, total satisfaction is rare. The decision must be acceptable enough, however, that all will agree to support the group in choosing it. *(Building United Judgment by the Center for Conflict Resolution)*

- A generally shared agreement.

- A large majority, without strong dissent.

- Consensus is a process used to find the highest level of agreement without dividing the participants into factions. Everyone is the group supports, agrees to, or can accept a particular decision.

- Everyone must be at least 70% comfortable with the decision and 100% committed to its implementation.
**TYPES OF AGREEMENT**

Agreement may take many different forms as shown by the Table 3 below (Godschalk, et al, 1984, pp. 87–88).

**TABLE 3: TYPES OF AGREEMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stronger Types of Agreement</th>
<th>Weaker Types of Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Substantive Agreement</em>: Focuses on specific, tangible outcomes that are agreed upon.</td>
<td><em>Procedural Agreement</em>: Defines the process to be used in making the decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Non-conditional Agreement</em>: Defines how the dispute will be resolved without the</td>
<td><em>Contingent Agreement</em>: Agreement involving a conditional sequence of actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requirement of any future conditions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Binding Agreement</em>: Requires the parties to uphold the terms of the agreement and</td>
<td><em>Non-binding Agreement</em>: Agreement constitutes a set of recommendations or requests to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often specifies consequences for not following through.</td>
<td>which the parties need not adhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Permanent Agreement</em>: A lasting agreement that is unalterable.</td>
<td><em>Provisional Agreement</em>: A temporary agreement that may be subject to future change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Comprehensive Agreement</em>: Agreement that covers all disputed issues.</td>
<td><em>Partial Agreement</em>: Agreement on only a portion of the issues under dispute.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

**HOW DO WE MAINTAIN MOMENTUM?**

The key elements for successfully carrying out agreements is to have a monitoring system in place, to have a written plan for working out the details of the agreement, a system for renegotiating parts of the agreement, and procedures for dealing with noncompliance (Carpenter, 1988). It is important to know who will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the plan and how progress will be monitored. Oversight may be managed by agency representatives or an appointed advisory group or steering committee that has more diverse representation. Monitoring and communicating then becomes the responsibility of these individuals or groups. Periodic meetings will help to keep stakeholders informed.

Changes will occur during implementation that will impact the plan. There may be policy or personnel changes within agencies that will require renegotiating parts of the agreement or shifting assignments. Momentum can be maintained by staying on top of changes and following through to make sure that all the action steps are being completed on time and people are being kept informed. Progress on accomplishing actions steps builds momentum so these smaller successes must be shared throughout implementation. Once results are achieved, the group can hold a final meeting to celebrate completion and close out the project.
PROBLEM SOLVING TECHNIQUES
IDENTIFICATION OF CAUSES

FISH BONE DIAGRAM
(Hart, 1992, pp. 6.4–6.6; Schwarz, 1994, pp. 163–164)

The fishbone diagram is used to identify causes behind a stated problem or effect.

**STEP 1**: Draw a large arrow on the flip chart with the pointed end to the left of the page. Write the effect/problem statement in a box at the pointed end of the arrow. See sample on page 44.

**STEP 2**: Identify four or five categories of causes such as the ones listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manpower</th>
<th>Machines</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 3**: List each category of potential causes on a diagonal line off the horizontal line of the arrow. Usually there are two lines above and three lines below the horizontal line.

**STEP 4**: Brainstorm the potential causes within each category by writing them on lines coming off the category lines. From there, the group can brainstorm causes of the causes.

**STEP 5**: Once the listing is complete, the categories can be prioritized and solutions generated.
Example of Fishbone Diagram

Drivers Speeding in School Zones

Drivers don’t see signs.
Drivers not deterred by consequences.

Warning signs
Too small
Too close to school
Does not identify drivers

Photo radar

Photo radar fines
Too high
Contested in court

Regular fines

Too low for school zone

Policies
No other deterrents for repeat offenders

Manpower

Lack of police officers for consistent monitoring
IDEA GENERATION

BRAINSTORMING

A technique for generating ideas in a short amount of time.

- All ideas are recorded
- Generate as many ideas as possible
- Combine and build on ideas already listed
- Avoid evaluating or judging ideas
- Once brainstorming is completed, the group can discuss and prioritize the list

MIND MAPPING OR CLUSTERING

PURPOSE

Mind mapping (clustering) is a visual technique for individual or group brainstorming on different categories, summarizing information, or thinking through a complex problem. As a form of note taking, a mind map can help in assimilating and connecting facts. Because they are visual, they are easy to review at a glance.

**STEP 1**: Write the title of the subject in the center of a page of paper, and draw a circle around it. Usually one or two words will suffice.

**STEP 2**: For the major subject subheadings, draw lines out from the circle. Label the subheading lines.

**STEP 3**: If you have another level of information belong to the subheadings, draw these off the subheading line and label them.

**STEP 4**: You can continue to break headings down into different levels until you have exhausted the possibilities.

- Use single words or simple phrases for information
- Print words so they are easy to read.
- Use color to separate different ideas.
- Use symbols and images.
- Use cross linkages to show interconnections from one part of the map to another.
A complete Mind Map may have main topic lines radiating in all directions from the center. Sub-topics and facts branch off these, like branches and twigs from the trunk of a tree. You do not need to worry about the structure produced, as this will evolve on its own.

**POST-IT NOTE PROCESS**  
(Source: Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute Participant Manual, 2001)

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this technique is to brainstorm and organize large numbers of discrete suggestions or ideas. The outcome of the exercise will be a large number of self-adhesive notes grouped on a wall or on flip chart paper under a heading or category. The number of groupings can range from 8-20.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- The facilitator poses and explains the question or problem statement to be answered.
- Participants are asked to write their answers on Post-It Notes (at least 2 7/8 x 2 7/8 inches), one answer per Post-It. They may write as many answers as the facilitator determines based on the number of people and potential amount of data that could be generated.
- The facilitator and/or an assistant collects the Post-Its.
- The facilitator reads the first Post-It and tapes it to the wall or a piece of flip chart paper.
- The facilitator then reads the second Post-It and asks the group, Does this belong with the first item or is it a separate category? If it is a separate category, then the group tapes to the wall some distance away from the first item or on a separate piece of flip chart paper. If it is the same or closely related, the facilitator tapes it adjacent to the first note.
- The facilitator then reads and posts each subsequent item in turn, creating categories of answers with the group. Headings can be added to the flip chart paper as categories become apparent.

Note: Collecting and reading the Post-Its maintains the confidentiality of the writer, which may be important with some issues. A variation is to have the writer read the Post-It and place it in the correct category. This allows participants to be more involved. Posting duplications will give you an idea of trends in thinking if there are any. Or you can ask for only new ideas to avoid duplications and keep the process simple. People will have an opportunity to prioritize within each category and that will weight those ideas that were common to the group.
DESIRED OUTCOMES TECHNIQUE
(Source: Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute Participant Manual, 2001)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this technique is to identify the desired outcomes of each party to an issue or dispute. The exercise identifies the outcomes that are held in common, those that are in conflict or are unique to one party. This technique has three steps.

STEP 1: Identification of Desired Outcomes

This exercise can be completed by individuals or in representative interest groups (e.g. environmental, governmental, or business interests) using worksheets. Begin by clarifying the nature and scope of the problem or challenge the group is going to address. Then ask them to list the outcomes they want from the meeting or process they are engaged in. If they are meeting in representative groups, it may be helpful to refine the brainstormed list and rank the importance of the outcomes so they can be reported out in order of importance. Note: You may also want to explore criteria as well. How will they evaluate and select the best outcome?

STEP 2: List the Desired Outcomes by Interest Group

When individuals have completed their lists, identify the first interest group, (e.g. business owners) and ask each representative of that group to offer one desired outcome. Keep going until all the desired outcomes for each interest group are listed. Ask the group to clarify and combine items as needed. Don’t modify or combine items unless the person who suggested the change agrees. If time permits, ask each interest group to rank order their list. If you used representative interest groups, have someone from the group present the results and describe the group’s discussion and the ranking of the outcomes.

STEP 3: Discuss the Implications of the Lists of Desired Options

Ask the group to identify the outcomes that are common across most or all of the interest groups. These can be starred or coded by underlining them with a colored pen.

Ask the group to identify outcomes that may be in conflict—solutions which are mutually exclusive or for which there are inadequate resources. These can be numbered or coded. Ask the group to identify items that are on one group’s list that others can accept.

Ask the group to review the results and summarize what they think the challenge is for the group (i.e., We need to work together to find the best way to achieve our common desires and find the best way to balance our conflicting interests so we can shape a solution we can all support).
**FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS**  
*(Hart, 1992, pp. 6.1–6.13)*

Force field analysis can be used to analyze the forces working for and against the solution to a problem.

**STEP 1**: State the problem in a box at the top of the page. Directly below it, in another box, state the desired change or outcome.

**STEP 2**: Divide the paper into two columns and label the first one Driving Forces and the second one Restraining Forces.

**STEP 3**: List the forces that restrain change and those that facilitate change.

**STEP 4**: Rank the driving and restraining forces so that you can capitalize on the strengths and determine how to reduce or eliminate the restraining forces.
ANALYZING AND SELECTING OPTIONS

NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE
(Hart, 1992, pp. 6.2–6.3)

Nominal group technique: A process used to generate solutions after a problem has been identified.

Materials/Personnel: Two (2) flip charts and someone to act as recorder.

**STEP 1: Silent Generation of Ideas**
- Write the problem statement on the flip chart.
- Ask everyone to silently think about the problem and write words or short phrases that describe ideas, options or solutions.

**STEP 2: Round Robin Reporting**
- Ask one person to contribute an idea and write it on the flip chart. This continues as long as people have new ideas to contribute. No discussion of ideas is allowed during this step.
- When all the ideas are recorded, label each with a number or letter of the alphabet.

**STEP 3: Clarification and Refinement of Ideas**
- During this step, members of the group can question each other for clarification of their ideas. No evaluation of ideas is allowed.
- Consider ways to refine and combine ideas so there are unique items to compare and rank. Keep discussion at a minimum.

**STEP 4: Ranking the Acceptability of Importance of Ideas**
- Discuss the criteria for ranking the ideas e.g. effectiveness, feasibility, resource impacts, political support, cast, etc.
- Give each group member five 3 x 5 cards. Ask each person to select 3–5 items that have the highest priority to them and write the code letter or the idea on the card.
- When this is completed, ask each person to rank their five cards in the order of importance by numbering their cards from 5 to 1. The number 5 will be the most important and number 1 the least important.
- Collect the cards and tally the rankings on the flip chart. The item(s) with the largest number(s) is ranked as the most important for the group to address. There can be as many as 2–3 rounds of voting each time, reducing the number of votes each round.
- A variation of this technique is to give each person 3–5 self-adhesive dots to use to rank ideas. They write the ranking number from 5 to 1 on the dot and place it next to the idea they want to prioritize.
**STEP 5: Discussion of the Process**

- How did you feel about having to select preferences?
- Are we going to focus on the top idea or several of them?
- Are there ways to incorporate characteristics of items not selected into those that were selected?

**GRID ANALYSIS**

Grid Analysis is a useful tool for making a decision. It is most effective where you have a number of good options and many factors to take into account.

**STEP 1**: List your options and then the factors that are important for making the decision. Lay these out in a table, with options as the row labels, and factors as the column headings.

**STEP 2**: Determine the relative importance of the factors in your decision and indicate the importance as numbers. These values will be used to weight your preferences.

**STEP 3**: Work your way across the table, scoring each option for each of the important factors in the decision. Score each option from 0 (poor) to 3 (very good). You do not have to have a different score for each option. If none of the options are good for a particular factor, then all options should be scored as 0.

**STEP 4**: Now allocate a weight to each factor to show its importance in relationship to the other factors. Then multiply each of the scores by the weight of the factor to show its contribution to the overall selection for the relative importance. This will give them the correct overall weight for the decision.

**STEP 5**: Add up the weighted scores for your options. Rank order the options from the highest score to the lowest. The option with the highest score will be the #1 option.

**Example**: A windsurfing enthusiast is about to replace his car. He needs one that not only carries a board and sails but will also be good for business travel. He has always loved convertible sports cars. No car he can find will meet all his needs.

His options are:
- A four-wheel drive, hard topped vehicle
- A comfortable sedan
- A station wagon
- A sports car
Criteria he wants to consider are:
- Cost
- Ability to carry a sailboat at normal driving speed
- Ability to store sails and equipment securely
- Comfort over long distance
- Fun
- Nice look and build quality to the car

This table shows the scores for each option on a scale from 0 (poor) to 3 (very good)

*Table 1: Example Grid Analysis Showing Unweighted Assessment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Board</th>
<th>Storage</th>
<th>Comfort</th>
<th>Fun</th>
<th>Look</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Car</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Wheel Drive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station Wagon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table shows the relative weights for each option (See Weights). The score for each option in Table 1 has been multiplied by the weight for that factor and then totaled for each option (See Totals).

*Table 2: Example Grid Analysis Showing Weighted Assessment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Board</th>
<th>Storage</th>
<th>Comfort</th>
<th>Fun</th>
<th>Look</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Car</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Wheel Drive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station Wagon</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the example above, the station wagon appears to be the best option. If the wind-surfer is uncomfortable with this decision perhaps he has underestimated the importance of one of the factors.
CONSENSUS RANKING
(Source: Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute Participant Manual, 2001)

PURPOSE

Consensus ranking can quickly assess the level of agreement in a group. It can help focus discussions on how to improve options or solutions and avoid time spent talking about items that everyone agrees on or for which there is little support.

STEP 1: Establish the Criteria for Ranking

Discuss and establish the criteria for ranking ideas, e.g., cost-effectiveness, feasibility, resource impacts, political support, etc.

STEP 2: Rank the Items

Ask participants to rank order each item on a worksheet, scratch paper or computer scoreable forms using the following scale:

5 = Support wholeheartedly
4 = Support, could be better
3 = Neither support, nor oppose. There are pros and cons.
2 = Do not support, serious problems need to be addressed.
1 = Oppose

STEP 3: Record the Results

This can be done by a show of hands: How many 5’s for item A? How many 4’s?, etc. If there is a large group, several assistants can count sections of the room and the subtotals can be totaled. If worksheets are turned or mailed in, the results can be tabulated without taking time in a full group session. Computer scoreable forms can speed the tabulation for very large groups that are separated by geographic distances.

STEP 4: Calculate Average Consensus Scores

As the scores are being recorded, you can have an assistant calculating the averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consensus Scale</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item A (# who rank A at each level)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To find the average for Item A, multiply 5 x 5, 4 x 6, 3 x 3, 2 x 4, and 1 x 1 and add the results. The total is 67. The average is computed by dividing the total (67) by the number of participants who voted (19), resulting in an average ranking of 3.53. The index or average may be compared at a glance with those of other items ranked. Higher averages are indications of stronger support.

**Step 5: Discuss the Results**

- Consider accepting recommendations or strategies that have a 4.00 average or greater without further discussion, like Item D above. Too often time is wasted talking about ideas everyone already agrees on.

- Consider not taking time to talk about items with 2.00 or less, like Item C, because these have so much opposition that it is unlikely the group could ever reach consensus on them. Advocates for minority views can be encouraged to modify and resubmit them for group consideration.

- For each item in between, like Items A and B above, ask those who gave a 1, 2, or 3 to state their concern and suggest a way the option can be addressed and still satisfy those who support it. Seek agreement on changes.

- If consensus testing is being used to select a single option, the group can use the highest ranked item as a single text from which to work. Participants can be asked to consider what they liked about the items not selected and suggest ways those characteristics can be incorporated into the chosen option.

- It is often helpful to retest consensus on an item. If Item B goes from a 2.52 to a 3.40 then the level of consensus on that item has been enhanced as a result of the discussion and modifications. Retesting can be done after each item or at the end. Sometimes groups test, modify, and retest a set of recommendations several times.

- Consider multi-level consensus testing. A set of recommendations or a report can be broken into topics or sections. Each item, topic, section, or the document as a whole can be tested. People may oppose individual items but accept the package because there are items so important to them that they are willing accept others that they don’t support.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


King, M.J. (2004). Deep Creek Beach Access Case Study, Resource Solutions, Environment and Natural Resources Institute, University of Alaska Anchorage.


EVALUATION