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A Light Introduction to Wicked Problems, Public Deliberation and Facilitation 101: Running an Effective Meeting

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National 4-H Culture of Health Training
Wednesday, December 6th, 2017

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Reality Check – questions to consider

- How do you reach those who are not represented?
- How do you approach a new community that may not trust you?
- How do you talk to someone you have never met?
- How do you actually give Youth decision making authority?
- How can you utilize existing groups and organizations?
- What levers do we pull to get to long term solutions?
- How do we think more upstream to address the root causes of issues?
- How do you have tough conversations and feel safe and comfortable?
- Where do you look for existing resources to help through this process?

This is a unique opportunity for Extension to gain new relevance and re-cast its vision in communities across the county! Civic discourse and healthy communities are national ECOP priorities.



Goals for the Session

- Understand if a problem is “Wicked”
- Grasp that Public Deliberation is a process, not a means to an end
- Gain practical tools to run a great meeting
- Build trust and connect with new audiences, youth, and/or the disenfranchised
- Answer questions, provide examples, reflect on the good and bad



Primary References and Bibliography

- Boyd, Sally, Hipkins, Rose, Bolstad, Rachel and McDowall, Sue. **Key Competencies for the Future.**
- Carcasson, Martin. **Tackling Wicked Problems Through Deliberative Engagement**, *Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation*, First published: March 2016.
- International Association for Public Participation. **IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.**
- Kaner, Sam. **Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making.** Jossey-Bass Business and Management Series, 3rd Edition.
- Solomon, Stephanie, and Abelson, Julia. **Why and When Should We Use Public Deliberation?**



My Wicked Experience

- Martin Carcasson, CSU Specialist, training for 2 years
- Denver 2030 Food Vision - 10 meetings
- Denver Parks Permitting – 8 meetings
- Colorado Bark Beetle – 2 years
- Colorado Watershed and Wildfire – 2 years
- Colorado Water Conservation Districts – 1 year

FOOD RECREATION NATURAL RESOURCES WATER



IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.



“Wicked Problems”

- They are “highly complex, uncertain, and value-laden”
- They span multiple domains: social, economic, political, environmental, legal and moral.
- These are not the kinds of problems that schooling has traditionally set us up to be able to solve

Examples...

CLIMATE CHANGE

FOSSIL FUEL DEPENDENCE

FOOD SECURITY

BIODIVERSITY LOSS

PERSISTENT INEQUALITIES

PERSISTENT EDUCATIONAL FAILURE

INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT

FOOD AS A WICKED PROBLEM

WE WANT OUR FOOD TO BE:

Affordable

Accessible

Safe

Nutritious

Delicious

Fresh

Convenient
(Accessible, Easy to prepare)

Our choice

Locally
Sourced

Supportive of a local
community

Ethically grown
(labor/animal welfare)

Grown and delivered in an
environmentally responsible manner

- Which are most important to you?
- Which of these do you have solid information for when making decisions?
- What tensions between these do you struggle with?
- How can you better negotiate these tensions?
- What is the appropriate role of government in assuring the various attributes? (i.e. ensuring food is safe, inexpensive, ethically grown, etc.)
- What is the appropriate role of government and community organizations in helping individuals better negotiate the tensions? (i.e. requiring labeling, supporting educational efforts, incentivizing behavior, etc.)

Water in Northern Colorado as a Wicked Problem

Some things we care about:

**Healthy river with
healthy ecosystems**

**Recreational
opportunities**

Economic vitality

**Water for homes &
lawns**

**Open space and
wildlife habitat**

Low cost of living

**Water for local
farms**

**Local food
economy**

**Freedom of choice
of where to live**



Wicked Problems in-short...

- Wicked problems inherently **involve competing underlying values**, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that can be *informed*, but cannot be *resolved* by science.
- Any proposed solution to a wicked problem tends to **create new problems**.
- Optimal solutions to wicked problems often **require adaptive changes** rather than simply technical ones. The public must be a part of any solution.
- Addressing wicked problems thus **necessitates effective collaboration and communication** across multiple perspectives.
- Wicked problems often require **creativity, innovation, and imagination**. They can't be adequately addressed through the accumulation and application of knowledge, but call for the cultivation of collective wisdom and application of sound judgment.



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Determining if an Issue Ripe for Public Deliberation...



Measuring the Deliberative Potential of a Project

- A. What are the goals of the intervention/event/process?
- B. What resources are available to support the process?
- C. What is the current “issue culture?”
- D. What is the potential for positive (and negative) influence?



Concerning people and organizations

- Are the main players willing to support a deliberative process?
- Will decision-makers give up control?
- Will advocates support deliberative reframing and forego mobilizing to take over the process?
- Will other relevant stakeholders participate?
- How difficult will it be to get a broad audience, to get the “middle” in the room?



Key Products of Deliberative Inquiry

1. the identification and attempted resolution of key obstacles to collaborative problem-solving,
2. the identification and building upon of common ground,
3. the identification and working through of tough choices or tradeoffs,
4. the identification and development of support for complementary and creative action from a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders.



The “Groan Zone”

When a group of decision-makers has to wrestle with a difficult problem, they will not succeed in solving it until they break out of the narrow band of familiar options.

– Sam Kaner





10 Tips to Facilitate a Great Meeting

1. Prepare and arrive an hour early
2. Have all facilitation supplies, agendas, and copies on hand - plus extras
3. Gain favor from your audience immediately
4. Stress your neutrality from the topic and that your role is to manage the process.
5. Be time and agenda driven, always refer to the clock
6. Agree on “Practical Consensus”
7. Ask for help when you need it, don’t try to appear infallible
8. Keep people moving, engaged and seek everyone’s input
9. Handle difficult personalities with grace and humor
10. End on time, get notes out within 48 hours, deliver on promises.

Host a Stakeholder Planning Meeting

1. What is the event?
2. Who is sponsoring/featuring/hosting the event and why?
3. What is the goal of the meeting?
4. Background and context
5. Event(s) logistics, time, location, indoors, outdoors, backup options for weather or contingency
6. Who is attending? Number of people expected?
7. Equipment and technology needed – projector, laptop, speakers, conference line, Zoom, recording, etc.
8. Supplies needed – sticky white paper, dots, markers, nameplates, nametags, food, etc.
9. What will the group/audience be like, what do we expect might happen?
10. Who are friends, enemies, supporters or other people expected at the meeting(s) and what is their general platform?
11. Other barriers or roadblocks anticipated from all sides of the issue
12. Consider what material to distribute and/or leave-behind for participants, and consider what and how much information goes out ahead of time.
13. Surveys or evaluation that will be utilized
14. Planned follow-up for keeping in touch, sharing info, and being transparent in the process
15. Is there a fee for service? If so, how much? What are the logistics to get it paid? Invoices, etc..



Conduct a Pre-Meeting Survey

- Allows the facilitator to vet the feelings and emotions of a challenging topic
- Saves time that is usually wasted at a meeting – like prioritizing topics, etc.
- Puts the facilitator in control of the information, versus reacting to it
- Allows facilitator to gain buy-in with your stakeholders who are planning the meeting
- Creates a statement of what the meeting will look like, sets up expectations
- Helps the facilitator to know what roadblocks or tensions may surface
- Keeps people engaged with the process and helps them feel their input is valued
- Generally is a free and available tool, 10 questions can be done in 1-2 minutes



Use Audience Polling Technology

- Creates an environment that is engaged and can be fun
- Can be customized for the group with logos, branding, using their language, etc.
- Saves time by planning the agenda and prioritizing where to spend time
- People enjoy providing input and feeling like their opinion is heard/counted
- Provides an anonymous method to voice opinion
- Keeps people moving, changes things up, and adds a new element to the meeting
- Gives people something to talk about and is remembered by participants
- Can be adapted on the fly, or throughout the day as needed/requested by the group
- Reports of the meeting data are easy to produce and are attractive, professional



Consider the Physical Space

View the room ahead of time if possible, plan for your placement at the table where you can see the whole room, everyone's face, body language, and anyone entering or leaving. Make sure you show-up early, give yourself time to arrange furniture, chairs, sticky paper pads, sign-up sheets, power point projectors, laptops, copies of materials, etc. Be the first person to arrive at the meeting!



Don't Fail to Plan

A good facilitator can manage a meeting in a seemingly effortless manner. But there is much planning that takes place behind the scenes. This includes planning for transportation, supplies, contingencies, considering the flow of the meeting and information, and having key stakeholder support. Also be sure to plan for the unexpected, and the best way to do this is to give yourself an adequate amount of time.

Nameplates are a Must!

Every person in the room should have a nameplate. This enables the facilitator to use first names and address people directly, plus it is a crutch if you cannot remember everyone's name. Use a sheet of 8.5" x 11" paper and fold it in half. Colored sheets are preferred, then you can differentiate members versus non members, if applicable. Card stock is best so that they stand nicely in a folded tent. Save the nameplates, so that at the next meeting people can grab their own when they enter the room. This gives people a sense of connection and personalizes the work. Allow people to write their own names, in their own handwriting.



Have All Possible Supplies On-Hand

Having the correct tools and supplies on-hand is essential to conducting a good meeting. You may not always need all of the supplies, but it is better to have them and not need them, than vice-versa. These include multiple white sticky pads, a bundle of colored, thick markers, sticky dots, white board dry erase markers, masking tape, your laptop, the nameplates from the last meeting, copies of everything you think you could need.



Gaining Favor Starts with Recognizing Every Person in the Room

It is important to recognize every person that enters the room. Since you are there early, welcome each person as they enter, make eye contact, shake their hand, or walk around and engage with them briefly. Once the meeting starts, as late attendees arrive, don't humiliate them. Rather, smile, nod, and make sure they know they are welcomed. Also, discretely help them by bringing them their nameplate, or copy of the agenda. You can usually do this while conversation is occurring during the meeting.



Have Adequate Copies

Make sure you have adequate copies of the agenda, minutes, handouts, and any other relevant information. Place these piles near the entrance along with the nameplates, so people will naturally grab what they need as they enter. You don't want to be in a meeting and need copies made!



Use “Thumbs and Fists” for Quick Group Consensus

A strategy to gain consensus, approve minutes without unnecessary deliberation, and move through decisions, is to train the group to use Thumbs Up for a “yes” and showing Fists for a “no.” It becomes the group’s preferred method to make decisions because there is not a Thumbs Down, and it can be done in a fun and positive manner.



**Ask Permission for Changes to the Agenda, and
ask for Help from the Group When Help is Needed**

Make sure and ask their permission several times throughout the meeting. For example, “do you feel like we have adequately addressed this issue, and can we proceed to the next item on the agenda?” or “do you think we are ready for a Thumbs and Fists vote?” Also, let them know that although you are facilitating, you want and value the support and help from the group as the meeting goes along.



Constantly Provide Context and Always Refer Back to the Clock

In the beginning of the meeting, provide an overview of the goals and agenda, like “we will be covering three large items today, and will have two breakout groups that will report back to accomplish this.” Also, give them timeframes for context, like “we have 25 minutes to finish this conversation so that you can all be out of here at 5:00.”



Lead – but be Humble and Genuine

Most people do not respond well to arrogant leaders. Rather, use humor, humility, be humble, and most importantly, come across as genuine and engaging!

Use a lot of “WE” statements, like “we need to finish up goal #1 by 1:15 in order to move on to goal #2.”

Understand and appreciate that you are not the smartest person in the room. This will create relationships and loyalty that will benefit you and the processes down the road!



Manage *Group Dialogue* vs. *Group Feedback!*

This will depend on the type of outcome that you are seeking. But the two processes are delivered differently. Dialogue runs the risk of going over time and getting emotional. Feedback can be conducted efficiently without the risk of agitated dialogue.



Run a Successful Conference Call or Zoom!

- It is your job to run the call! This means managing the flow of conversation and transitioning the topics. A bad call is generally the fault of the person in charge.
- Start on-time and end on-time (if not early), but never late. Allow people to join a call late that is already in progress, but do not embarrass or humiliate late-comers.
- Be considerate and conscious of time zones.
- Make sure to introduce (and re-introduce) all people on the phone, remind people who is on the call as new people join, and direct them for input, versus allowing people to just chime-in. Avoid people talking at the same time. Give people place-holders if needed for their comments.
- Have documents to share or explain ready to go, whether that is for screen-sharing, or sending information out ahead of time.



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Managing Difficult Personalities





Pessimist Paul...

...finds fault with every idea. Paul uses words like “never” and “always” to support his core belief that nothing works and nothing ever will.

It's important not to try to dispute Paul's points, but instead try to turn Paul's complaints into a mandate for action.

Try asking "Considering that we still have this goal to be reached, ***what do you suggest?***"





Sidebar Sally . . .



...holds side conversations with the people around her, often distracting the group from the main speaker.

Making direct eye contact with her may be enough to get her to stop. You can also move physically closer to those who are having the side conversation.

Try saying, "***There seems to be a great deal of interest in this issue. Could we have just one speaker at a time please?***" or "***Is there something you'd like to share with the group?***"



Off Topic Olivia...

...brings up points or issues that seem unrelated to the topic at hand.



Create a list (a “***parking lot***”) for items to be discussed at another time (flipchart or sheet of paper taped to a wall). *Don’t end the meeting without discussing or otherwise disposing of these topics.*

You can also try using statements like, “We’ve gotten off track. ***Let’s refocus and get back to the topic at hand.*** We were talking about”



Rambling Ruth...

...has trouble knowing when to take a breath and let others into the discussion.

When a Rambling Ruth starts to throw a meeting off track, you may need to interrupt her by **summarizing** what you've heard and moving on.

You can also try something like, "You've brought up a lot of great points that will keep us busy for a long time. Would anyone like to add to these?"

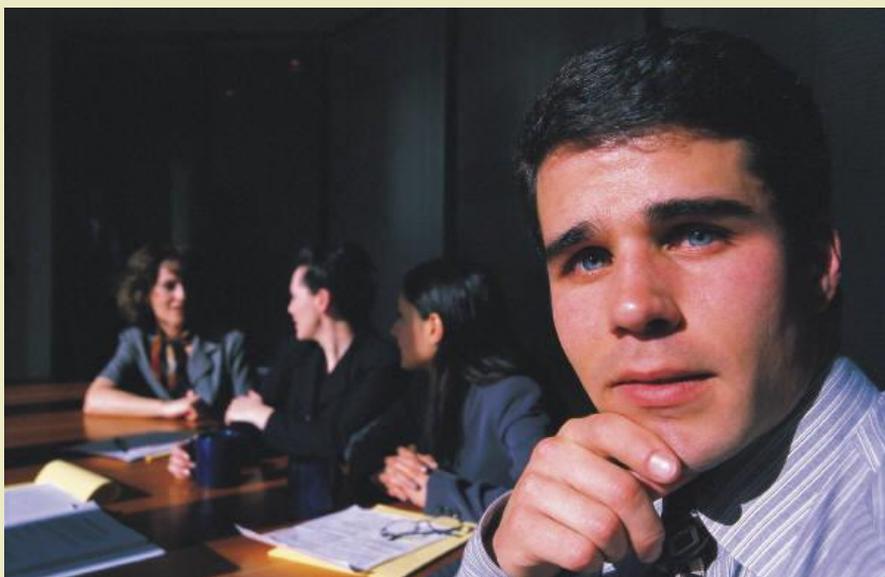
and

"I'd really *like to hear from the rest of the group.*"





Agitator Andrew



...is usually unhappy with either the direction the group is going or decisions that are made. He may not have the skills to express himself appropriately, or he may be trying to distract the group.

You can use reflective listening by saying, “Let ***me summarize your concerns to be sure that I heard*** you right...” and acknowledge his emotion by saying, “I can ***see that you’re pretty upset*** about this issue.”

Make sure you stay calm and speak slowly when dealing with Agitator Andrew.



CEO Charlie . . .

...is a participant whose position of power in the organization or community may make it difficult for others to feel comfortable.

If Charlie isn't aware of his affect on the group, it may be helpful to pull him aside to give him some ***gentle guidance***.

Try a reminder like: “Because of your leadership role in the community/group/organization, I wonder what would happen if you ***take a bit of a backseat*** in the process for the next hour?”



Rude Ralph . . .

...may combine negativity with personal attacks, making him the bully of any group.

Sadly, Ralph may not even be self-aware enough to know he's attacking.

Try re-framing Ralph's attacks in language that is impersonal but still reflects Ralph's concerns. ***Avoid taking an adversarial approach*** with Ralph, but don't hesitate to firmly remind the group that the process will only work within a safe environment.

Sometimes a firm, "Let's not go there" is all it takes to curb a Rude Ralph.





Reality Check – questions to consider

- How do you reach those who are not represented?
- How do you approach a new community that may not trust you?
- How do you talk to someone you have never met?
- How do you actually give youth decision making authority?
- How can you utilize existing groups and organizations?
- What levers do we pull to get to long term solutions?
- How do we think more upstream to address the root causes of issues?
- Ask friends, peer support groups, neighbors, groups, and engage!
- How do you have those tough conversations in a manner that is safe and comfortable?
- Where do you look for existing resources to help through this process?

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Questions and Feedback



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Thank You!

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