Introduction to Facilitation Resources

During the 1990s there has been a renewed interest in citizen involvement in community decisions. While many issues are still decided by powerful and financially strong networks, the ability of the average citizen to collect relevant information, address issues with intelligence, and initiate public meetings has made the public influence greater.

Those who work with organizations have learned the need for effective facilitation skills. In the Foreword to Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision Making by Sam Kaner, Michael Doyle presents two important lessons learned. “Lesson one: if people don’t participate in and ‘own’ the solution to the problems or agree to the decision, implementation will be half-hearted at best, probably misunderstood, and, more likely than not, fail. The second lesson is that the key differentiating factor in the success of an organization is not just the products and services, not just its technology or market share, but the organization’s ability to elicit, harness, and focus the vast intellectual capital and goodwill in their members, employees, and stakeholders. When these get energized and focused, the organization becomes a powerful force for positive change in today’s business and societal environments.”

Facilitation Resources, available as a set of eight volumes, is an effort to enhance volunteers’ group facilitation techniques. The participants will be able to use the skills in facilitating nonprofit groups and organizations through important discussions vital to the organization and to the community.

Limited Permission to Photocopy Worksheets
Facilitation Resources is designed for personal use and as curriculum for educational sessions. We encourage you to make copies of the worksheets in this guide for yourself and for use by those involved in educational processes. Additional copies of Facilitation Resources can be ordered by calling (800) 876-8636 or by completing the enclosed order form.

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Please see page 3.4 for detailed copyright information.
3. Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals

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3. Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals

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3. Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals

Overview: Getting Focused—Vision/Mission/Goals

Facilitators are often asked to lead groups through planning an agenda, creating and/or revisiting mission statements, setting goals, and developing work plans. The work of strategic planning, vision development, mission statements, and goal setting is an art and a science by itself, and we cannot do it justice in this brief resource guide. There are several resources in the reference section that should be specifically helpful to facilitators. This is by far not a complete list, but will help lead you into the “literature,” should you be interested in learning more. Several outlines and worksheets are included in this section to get you started.

Vision
Facilitating the development of a shared vision is important in all groups, whether or not strategic planning is their focus. Individual goals and desires must be woven into a common focus for the group. Everyone in the group should know what the group intends to accomplish. What will success look like? At the beginning of a meeting everyone should understand and share in the vision of what the group expects to accomplish at this meeting. The expectations should be in alignment with the long-term vision of the group. Long-term group visions may take many meetings to accomplish.

Planning an Agenda
What a group expects to accomplish at a meeting must be anticipated when an agenda is developed. Many agendas are drafted prior to the meeting so it is especially important that the facilitator understand what results the group is aiming toward. Once the desired results are clear, the agenda can be further developed with time frames, specific topics to be covered, and processes planned for each topic.

Contracting
Mission, vision, and goals also need to be considered as part of the contracting process described in Volume 2. For example, a group might request your facilitation help during a budget crisis. Another common request is for a session on restructuring their organization. Often in these cases it will be obvious to you as the outside facilitator that what they need to look at are their vision and mission rather than budget or structure. People often look at the “symptoms” rather than the problem itself. No matter what the request, make sure during contracting that the group is clear about its mission.

It is important to make the distinction between the role of a facilitator and that of a planner. The lines can become fuzzy and need to be sorted out during contracting. This can be especially true if the facilitator is experienced and knowledgeable in strategic planning. Experience suggests that individuals not try to “wear both hats.”
Strategic Planning
Effective mission statements share common characteristics: they are to the point; people see how they fit in; their language is nontechnical; they provide a focus and look to the future; they indicate impacts and outcomes; they are believable; they make the group distinct and unique; they are philosophical in a practical sense.

A variety of methods can be used to help groups in the strategic planning process. Several examples are included in the resource guide. The following pages contain examples of ways to interact with a group for an effective mission statement and plan for outcomes.

Other Resources
There are a number of organizational assessment tools you might recommend in these situations. Leadership: Sustaining Action in Community and Organizational Issues, co-authored by Donna Rae Scheffert and published by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, is a publication/process that will help the facilitator and organization work through this common dilemma. John Bryson, professor at the Humphrey Institute, has published two nationally recognized resources on strategic planning. Refer to the section on Finding More Resources.
Facilitating the Development of a Shared Vision

Have you ever been part of a group in which every member was clear and in agreement on what they were working to create (a shared vision)? Think back to that experience. How does a shared focus or vision come about?

Peter Senge, in *The Fifth Discipline*, says, “If any one idea about leadership has inspired organizations for thousands of years, it’s the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create. One is hard pressed to think of any organization that has sustained some measure of greatness in the absence of goals, values, and missions that become deeply shared throughout the organization. When there is a genuine vision (as opposed to the all-too-familiar ‘vision statement’), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to. But many leaders have personal visions that never get translated into shared visions that galvanize an organization.”

Facilitating a shared vision is the discipline of weaving individual visions into a common focus or vision. When this happens, the vision is thought to be a genuine vision, it is deeply shared throughout the group, and the group holds a shared picture of the future they seek to create.

How can we, as facilitators, help groups develop a shared vision?

Use the following questions to help the group you are facilitating discuss and come to some consensus about the product or vision for their work together.

- What are we building?
- What do we want to accomplish?
- What will it look like if we are successful?

Peter Drucker, in *The Executive in Action*, reminds us of the importance of this shared focus: “Because the modern organization is composed of specialists, each with his or her own narrow area of expertise, its mission must be crystal clear. The organization must be single-minded, or its members will become confused. They will follow their own specialty and impose its values on the organization. Only a focused and common mission will hold the organization together and enable it to produce.”

It may be helpful to remind yourself as a facilitator that a shared vision is a common caring.

- It is rooted in a deep purpose that expresses the group’s reason for existence.
- It is a collective sense of what is important and why.
- It is not simply an idea or statement; it is a force in people’s hearts.
- It needs to be consistent with the values people live by day-to-day.

A shared vision embraces what is important; therefore, helping a group create a shared vision or focus is helping them build shared meaning and express a collective sense of what is important to the group and why.
3. Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals

To keep a group focused it can be helpful to
- Agree to produce a useful result.
- Define the results you want.
- Use agendas.
- Keep a record of your work including agreements and actions.
- Remind people of the time they have to complete their work.

These resources are key for developing a shared vision.
- Time.
- Skills—to unearth shared aspirations for the future.
- Information.
- Commitment—90 percent of what passes for commitment is compliance.
- People—each person must have his or her own vision before a shared vision can exist.
- Safe environment—for people to say what they want.

Asking the group the following questions may be of help as you facilitate the development of a shared vision.

Building shared visions requires building relationships. How are your relationships with each other?
- Are people open in sharing their personal visions?
- Do people listen and hear each other?
- Do people reflect on and talk about what it is they really want to create?
- Do people have open and honest conversations?
- Do people have the freedom of choice to enroll or commit?

Is your agreed-upon vision inspirational?
- Does it focus on a better future?
- Does it appeal to common or shared values in the group?
- Does it emphasize strengths and hopes of the group?
- Does it use pictures, images, metaphors, and words so that everyone can understand it?
- Does it communicate enthusiasm and kindle excitement?

Is the process working?
- Have you allowed time on an on-going basis? Remember, shared visions are always evolving.
- Do you design and use processes that allow people to speak from the heart?
- Have you been successful in co-creating the vision throughout the group?

Sources:
Peter Drucker, The Executive in Action, 1996.
Planning an Agenda

**Ahead of Time**

If you are leading a meeting, it is your responsibility to plan the agenda. If you have been asked to facilitate someone else’s meeting, meet with the leader ahead of time to help plan it. If you are a group member, judge whether it would be appropriate to offer to help set up an agenda beforehand.

Here’s the sequence of steps to take to plan your agenda:

1. **Define results.**
   What is the result you want by the end of this meeting? Write it down. It should be specific enough to allow people at the meeting to answer these questions:
   - Are we done?
   - Did we accomplish what we set out to do?

2. **Identify the time frame for the meeting.**
   What is allowable for this group, for this purpose, considering everything going on in the organization at this time? The time frame may have been arbitrarily defined by you or by someone else.

3. **List the content.**
   List the content or topics that will have to be covered to accomplish the result. Look for “unspoken” content needs, like how will the group get the information it needs?

4. **Allot time frames by topic.**
   Looking at the total meeting time, how much can or should you allot for this part of the agenda?

5. **Plan processes for each topic.**
   What tools would help accomplish this, and which have time frames that will fit? Can you modify a tool so it would take less time, or do part of the work in advance?

   Example: You’ve allotted twenty minutes for a panel of three experts to update your group on some changing technology. Use e-mail to ask participants what they want to know, organize the topics yourself, and send the outline to panel members letting them know this is what you want them to address.

6. **Do a sanity check.**
   Is this doable in the allotted time? Do you need to schedule two or more meetings to get this result? Or is it more practical to scale down your expectations to fit the time available, considering organization constraints?

   Example: You have a one-hour time slot. The result you wanted was: Agreement on a solution to the overtime problem

   After planning the agenda, you realize this will probably take at least
three two-hour meetings. You scale down the result to:
A prioritized list of the top five causes of overtime.

Or, you may be able to schedule and plan three two-hour meetings.

On the Spot
Sometimes you will show up at a meeting where no agenda has been prepared. You may be a member, a facilitator who has had no opportunity to communicate with the leader (even via e-mail or phone), or a leader caught unprepared. As a member, you will have to judge when it would be appropriate to offer to help build an agenda.

To build an agenda on the spot, stand at a flipchart and write large on blank paper so the group can follow and work with you. This helps people trust your motives too. Never take more than five to ten minutes to do this unless it’s a long meeting and people already understand the value of having a detailed agenda.

Here are the sequence steps:

1. Define results. Ask:
   
   What do we need to accomplish by the end of this meeting?
   What can we deliver?
   How will we know that we’re done?
   How will we know we succeeded?
   Write answers down at the top of the flipchart.

2. Identify time frame for total meeting. Ask:
   
   How long do we have?
   Write it down.

3. List topics (content). Ask:
   
   What topics will we have to cover to get to this result?
   What information will we need?
   Who will make decisions: us?
   Will we need to make an action plan?
   Write them down with bullets and lots of white space between them.

4. Allot time frames for topics. Ask:
   
   Considering we have an hour and a half, how much time shall we allot for Jim’s update?
   How much for listing problems? For prioritizing them?
   Write them by the topics.

5. Suggest processes. Say:
   
   First, Jim will present a market update. We could then brainstorm a list of risks and opportunities. Does anyone object to that?
   (Caution: Don’t be too obsessive about thinking up and listing a process for every topic. Just hit the big ones.)
6. Do a sanity check. Ask:

*Do you think we can do this in this time frame?*
*Should we scale down our expectations?*
*Should we schedule another meeting so we can accomplish it all?*

Most people will appreciate your doing this and will see the value right away. This is a good time to find someone to act as timekeeper. You might ask (playfully), “Is there anyone here who is absolutely ruthless?” and try to identify someone who won't be too polite to speak up when it's necessary.

If you are the facilitator or leader, this is also a good time to ask if people are willing to abide by the agenda and time frames? This is a “process agreement.” Then ask their permission to enforce (or maintain) the agreement.

You might say:

*Do we agree to abide by these time frames?*
*If we start running over, do I have your permission to break in and move us along?*

Whether the agenda was prepared in advance or on the spot, it will do more than almost anything else to keep the group on time, focused and productive.
3. Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals

Meeting Agenda Worksheet

Name of Group ________________________________________

Date ____________________ Time: Start ____________________ End ________________

Location ________________________________________________

Pre-meeting Preparation (What to read, research, or prepare):
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Main Objective</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(What group is to know/discuss/create as a result)</td>
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</table>

Worksheet: Make copies for use at future meetings.
**Meeting Summary**

Meeting ______________________________________

Date _____________________ Time: Start _____________________ End _____________________

Recorder ______________________________________

Chair ______________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action to Be Taken</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
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Key points ______________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________ List of attendees attached

Next meeting date: ________________ Tentative length: ________________

Worksheet: Make copies for use at future meetings.
Creating Effective Mission and Vision Statements

An effective mission statement ...
- Is to the point, but not a slogan.
- Lets people in the community see how they fit into it.
- Is nontechnical.
- Provides a focus.
- Looks to the future.
- Indicates impacts and outcomes.
- Is believable.
- Makes the group distinct and unique.
- Is philosophical in a practical sense.
- Includes key descriptive words unique to our organization.

An effective vision statement ...
- Considers ideals to strive for.
- Is simple.
- Builds on a realistic sense of purpose.
- Provides a sense of becoming, versus a sense of being.
- Sees an evolving future.
- Cites relevant images and metaphors to describe the vision.
Worksheet: Brainstorming a Mission Statement

Use the space below to brainstorm a mission statement.

Key words:

Mission statement:
3. Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals

Example:

The Hartland Citizens Task Force
Community Survey Follow-Up Worksheet

A Short Description of the Project/Problem/Issue/Opportunity

Rewritten as a Goal

If We Were to Start Tomorrow; The Who, What, and When Question (Our First 3 Steps)

1) 

2) 

3) 

Best Possible Outcome (Both “blue sky” and more realistic outcomes accepted.)

“When in Doubt, Talk” – Hubert Humphrey
Example:

**Fillmore County Government Planning Session**
Harmony Community Center
June 5, 1997    8:30–11:30 AM

OBJECTIVES FOR THE DAY:
1) Identify both challenges and opportunities facing Fillmore County government over the next five years.
2) Give department heads and commissioners an opportunity to work together to identify future goals for county government.
3) Put together work groups (if needed) to achieve these goals.
4) Draft a mission statement for Fillmore County.

AGENDA:
8:30–8:40    PURPOSE/GOALS FOR THE DAY   Helen & Karen

8:40–9:20    AN ASSESSMENT OF OUR WORK TODAY AS A COUNTY GOVERNMENT   Roger & Marian
    • What are we doing well?
    • Are there areas we could improve?

9:20–9:50    THE CHANGING ROLE OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT   Roger & Marian
    • How will we look different in the future?

9:50–10:00    BREAK

10:00–10:40    IDENTIFYING SOME GOALS   Roger & Marian
    • What have our discussions before break “told” us?

10:40–11:10    DRAFTING A MISSION STATEMENT   Small Groups

11:10–11:20    REPORT BACK FROM SMALL GROUPS   Roger & Marian

11:20–11:25    TIME FOR INDIVIDUAL WRITTEN RESPONSES
    • The Question: If an outside observer would be asked in the year 2007 to identify the “legacy” left by this board and its departments, what would you like that “legacy” to be?

11:25–11:30    WRAPUP AND NEXT STEPS   Helen & Karen

11:30    ADJOURN
3. Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals

Example:

Zumbrota Chamber of Commerce Planning Worksheet

1) What is the purpose (meaning) of the Zumbrota Chamber?

2) What is our mission?

3) What goals do you want the Chamber to achieve in 1997?

4) What goals do you want the Chamber to achieve over the next 6 years?

5) If an outside observer would be asked in the year 2007 to identify the “legacy” left by this organization, what would you desire that “legacy” to be? What accomplishments would you most like to be remembered for?
3. **Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals**

**Example:**

**Strategic Planning Process Scenario**

Here is a scenario for facilitating the strategic planning process, using a vision of the future (in year 2020 or any other year significant to the group). Small groups use the worksheets that follow to define their goals.

**Agenda**

1. Mixer activity.

2. Distribute the organization’s mission statement, value statement, and any other information appropriate for background information. If there are articles or other information that would be expected to impact the future of the organization, they can be distributed now. (Limit number of handouts.)

3. Have participants individually write “A letter to a significant child” (see worksheet). This is a personal statement to the child that expresses the participant’s deepest hopes, dreams, and desires for them in the selected future year. In groups of two or three, share the content of the letters.

4. Break into groups of five to eight people. Using the next worksheet, have each group design “Newsletter headlines” for the organization’s newsletter for the selected future year. What would the headlines say? Be as creative as possible in putting together the headlines. What are the issues? How are things going? What has the impact on people been?

5. In the same groups, “Release your practical vision.” Have groups write on self-stick notes some of the tangible and recognizable conditions that need to take place now within the organization to assure they will get to the kind of future outlined in the newsletter and letters. Have discussion groups put their notes in priority order. Ask groups to share their first priority condition and post them on the board, continuing to post until all the ideas are up. As you do the reporting, use the affinity process (see Volume 5) to sort out by topics. Use headings of “meaningless words” or “symbols” to separate ideas by category. Name the categories. (Below are examples of symbols for category formation.)

   ≥ f ∅ × + ®

6. From here the plan can be revised and groups can begin to refine ideas and carry them forward.

Adapted with permission from Juan Moreno, University of Minnesota Extension Service, May 1998.
Exercise: Letter to a Significant Child

It is the year 2020 and your child, grandchild, great-grandchild, or any other significant child in your life in a future generation is about to open a letter written by you today. This letter should be a personal statement to that child that expresses your deepest hopes, dreams, and longings for the planet and its people in the future. Imagine yourself at the end of a long and fulfilling life, leaving important words to a favorite young person who is coming of age in the year 2020 and who seems to be almost a younger version of yourself. Think of their families and how important this visioning process will be to them and their future.

Today’s Date____________________

Dear: _______________________________________

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Strategic Planning Worksheet 1

2020 FORESIGHT:
The Newsletter Headlines

It is the year 2020 and you have just picked up your organization’s newsletter. As a small group, create the headlines for your organization’s newsletter as they may appear on a day like today, but in the year 2020. Write your responses on the big sheets of easel paper using the markers provided. Be as creative as possible in putting together the newsletter headlines as well as any related articles. What are the issues that are confronting your organization in 2020? How are the things you are doing or failing to do today impacting life in your organization in 2020? What are your collective hopes, dreams, and longings for your organization in the year 2020? Use this worksheet to write down your ideas before beginning the sharing process in your small group.

Adapted with permission from Juan Moreno, University of Minnesota Extension Service, May 1998.
3. Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals

Strategic Planning Worksheet 2

2020 FORESIGHT: Releasing Our Practical Vision

Given our dreams, hopes, and longings for the planet in general, and for our organization in particular, for the year 2020, what are some of the TANGIBLE and RECOGNIZABLE CONDITIONS that we want to see taking place within our organization this year that will assist us in getting there?

In BIG and BOLD letters write down those TANGIBLE and RECOGNIZABLE CONDITIONS on the sheets of paper provided, using no more than 5 or 6 words for each.

Adapted with permission from Juan Moreno, University of Minnesota Extension Service, May 1998.
3. Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals

Finding More Resources

The educational and corporate community has dozens of marvelous resources available for the motivated facilitator wishing to find more resources. Also, the practical wisdom of gifted community facilitators should be tapped. This guidebook has drawn upon several excellent resources and those are listed in the following reference list.

In the search for more resources consider human resources, written resources, technology-enhanced resources, organizational resources, and other resources. Identify excellent facilitators and interview them. Practical wisdom is often not written but accessible through stories. Utilize libraries to search for materials. Search for organizations that support facilitator growth and learning, like the National Facilitators Network (has state-based groups, too). Contact your local Cooperative Extension Service for information and coaching.

Consider searching for resources under the general heading of facilitation as well as under each of the sub-topics important to facilitation (conflict, decision-making processes, etc.). Remember that the context in which facilitation is done is important—in board rooms, in community meeting rooms, in group retreat settings, etc. Evaluate the resource to see if it is more appropriate in one context than another.

Best wishes finding more resources to build upon your skills, understanding, and expertise as a facilitator.

Reference List


Glaser, Roland, *Facilitator Behavior Questionnaire (Instrumentation)*, HRDQ, King of Prussia, PA.

3. Getting Focused: Vision/Mission/Goals

1993.


Myers, Carol, Facilitation Skills, Laptop Associates, Jacksonville, TX, 1996.


Williams, Bruce, More Than 50 Ways to Build Team Consensus, IRI/Skylight, Palatine, IL, 1993.
Order additional copies of Facilitation Resources by the individual volume, or as complete sets of all eight volumes.

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