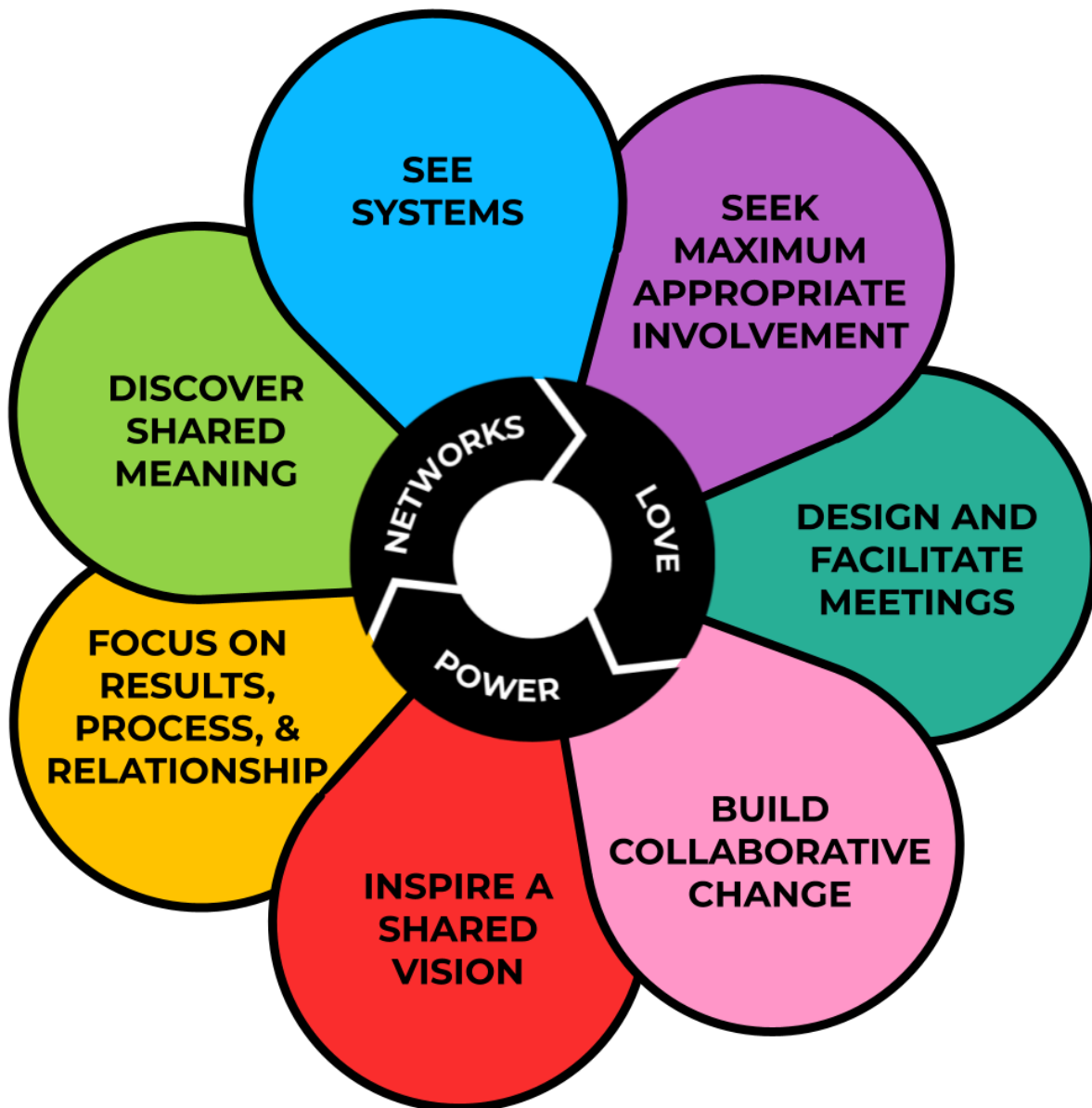Interaction Institute
for Social Change

Excerpts from …

FACILITATIVE LEADERSHIP™ FOR SOCIAL CHANGE
PARTICIPANT RESOURCE PACKET

SEE SYSTEMS

SEEK MAXIMUM APPROPRIATE INVOLVEMENT

DISCOVER SHARED MEANING

DESIGN AND FACILITATE MEETINGS

FOCUS ON RESULTS, PROCESS, & RELATIONSHIP

BUILD COLLABORATIVE CHANGE

INSPIRE A SHARED VISION

NETWORKS

LOVE

POWER

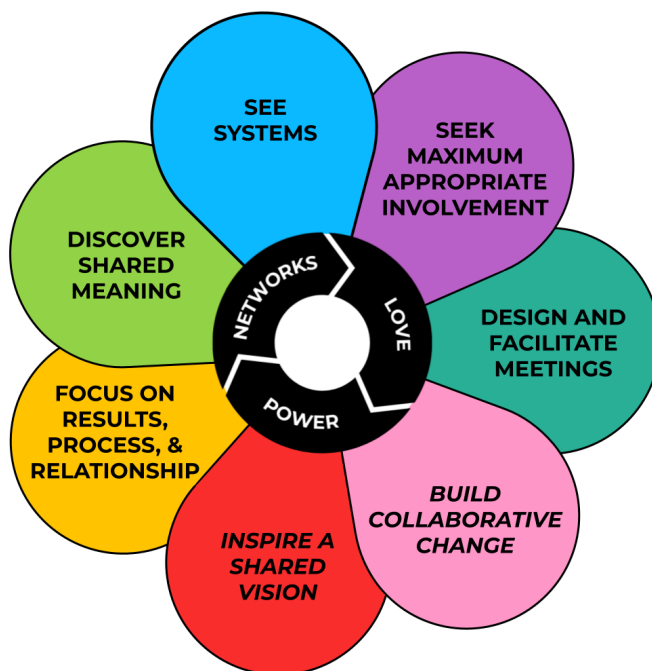© 2024 Interaction Institute for Social Change

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FACILITATIVE LEADERSHIP™ FOR SOCIAL CHANGE OVERVIEW

What Facilitative Leaders Do: Seven Practices of Facilitative Leaders

Facilitative Leaders model seven practices that enable them to co-create the conditions for self-empowerment among the people they are leading.

FOCUS ON RESULTS, PROCESS, AND RELATIONSHIP

Facilitative Leaders build a framework for performance and satisfaction by balancing their focus among results, process, and relationship. Rather than focusing exclusively on outcomes (results), Facilitative Leaders also encourage continuous improvement in how the work gets done (process) and how people connect with and treat one another (relationship). Balancing their focus across these three dimensions of success enables leaders to produce results, sustain effective, collaborative processes, and build a supportive work environment for their teams and networks.

DISCOVER SHARED MEANING

Facilitative Leaders realize that all of the core practices are carried out in conversations. Through open, honest, and direct communication, people can understand each other, build shared meaning, and work together to make informed decisions that lead to concerted action and significant results. The ladder of inference helps Facilitative Leaders understand how they and others select data, make meaning of that data, make assumptions, draw conclusions, and then act on those conclusions. By inquiring into other people's meaning-making and making explicit their

own sense-making, Facilitative Leaders are able to discover shared meaning that can lead to understanding or action.

SEE SYSTEMS

Facilitative Leaders recognize their work exists within a broader, whole-systems context. There is much to be understood that is hidden beneath the immediate, visible surface, and leaders cannot make sense of the complexity of the whole alone. They must involve others in understanding events that are often parts of patterns, supported by underlying structures, informed by people's mental models, and perpetuated by cultural and institutional values. Understanding these levels of complexity and how they are connected leads to more innovative and creative leverage for change and, therefore, greater potential for long lasting, systemic change.

SEEK MAXIMUM APPROPRIATE INVOLVEMENT

Facilitative Leaders make conscious choices about when and how people can best participate in making decisions that affect their lives. They leverage the interest and talent of those around them by including them appropriately in the decision-making process. Seeking maximum appropriate involvement pays several dividends: better communication, more informed decisions, increased commitment to action, and higher levels of trust.

DESIGN AND FACILITATE MEETINGS

Facilitative Leaders thoughtfully design meetings for successful collaboration. They create agendas that include the key elements of meeting planning and design. When facilitating, they model behaviors that create a safe environment for participation and teamwork. They encourage diversity of opinion while helping team members stay focused on the task at hand. By facilitating understanding and agreement, leaders demonstrate the power of teamwork to produce clear decisions and quality results.

BUILD COLLABORATIVE CHANGE

Facilitative Leaders know that intentional planning increases the likelihood of successful implementation. Facilitative Leaders design roadmaps for their teams and networks that clarify how stakeholders are involved and how critical conversations are sequenced over time. By providing process direction, leaders build confidence that the goal is attainable.

INSPIRE A SHARED VISION

Facilitative Leaders inspire the creation of a shared image of the future and enroll others in its pursuit. People work with greater commitment when they are guided by a vision and believe their efforts can make a difference. Often, the pressures of daily work distracts people, narrowing their focus and restricting their view of what is possible. By inspiring and communicating shared vision and values, leaders keep a beacon out in front of them, motivating people toward greater achievement.

A GROUNDING UNDERSTANDING

Building "Power With" through Facilitative Leadership™

Throughout the workshop series, we will share tools and frameworks for practicing Facilitative Leadership™, a leadership model oriented to sharing power -- and particularly to intervening in systems that concentrate power and resources in the hands of very few people.

In her book *The Purpose of Power*, Alicia Garza defines power as "the ability to make decisions that affect your own life and the lives of others, the freedom to shape and determine the story of who we are. Power also means having the ability to reward and punish and decide how resources are distributed." So often when people talk about collaboration, and making their work and organizations more just and equitable, they don't even attempt to redistribute power. Or, they think of power as inherently negative, something to shun or deny.

At IISC, we believe that everyone has a role and responsibility to build collective power and to intervene in the systems that profit a tiny minority of people by extracting and exploiting life, labor, and land from the vast majority. All of our futures depend on it, even those of us who carry privileged identities.

Facilitative Leaders understand that we all have power, and that to counter the oppressive systems and forms of power that prevent so many from thriving or even surviving, we need to build positive, collective power. In practical terms, building this kind of "power with" means focusing on who gets to make decisions, who gets rewarded and who gets punished or carries the burdens, and who gets to distribute resources. Facilitative Leaders co-create the conditions for self-empowerment so that people can work together to achieve a common goal. They make it easier for people to:

➔ Contribute their ideas & expertise

➔ Speak up when they have problems

➔ Take initiative

➔ Work with others

➔ Make decisions

➔ Share responsibility for success

A Note on How Identity Carries Power

We understand white supremacy and racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, classism, Christian supremacy, and other systems of power and oppression are designed to concentrate power in the hands of very few people, most of whom are white, heterosexual, currently-abled, Christian men. The point is not to blame individuals for our social systems, but to understand how they function so that we can intervene effectively. Tema Okun's "What is White Supremacy Culture?" offers a helpful explanation and expansion of this understanding.

As in all workshops, we (facilitators and participants) will be coming in with different depths and breadths of understanding of some of these concepts. Throughout the workshop, we'll try to find a balance between meeting everyone where they are at and pushing the edges of our collective understanding -- and, in particular, not catering to those who have the least education and experience around understanding injustice, whiteness, misogyny, ableism, classism, and other hierarchies. We will be in conversation and collaboration around practicing power-with.

Particularly if these concepts are new or uncomfortable for you, we encourage you to notice what comes up in your body and reflect on these questions: Do you feel resonance? Discomfort? Resistance? Where do you feel it? Is it familiar? What can you identify about the feeling, and where or when you've felt it before? If you're experiencing resistance, where is it coming from? If you're feeling a desire to integrate the presented perspectives on power, what might be causing that feeling? What support do you need to continue engaging with these feelings and concepts?

To support your understanding and discernment of our core framing of Facilitative Leadership™ for Social Change as a transformative practice, we invite you to dig into the information here: What is White Supremacy Culture? as well as the book and learning recommendations listed there.

Definition of Facilitative Leadership™

Facilitative Leaders create and inspire the conditions for self-empowerment so that people can work together to achieve a common goal. They make it easier for people to:

→ Contribute their ideas & expertise

→ Speak up when they have problems

→ Take initiative

→ Work with others

→ Make decisions

→ Share responsibility for success

Reflecting on Leadership and Shared Power

Power is central in the work of equity, justice, and liberation, and our understanding and navigation of power influences how we show up as facilitative leaders collaborating and mobilizing towards our vision of a just world/workplace.

"Three Sisters Garden"

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants (Milkweed Editions, 2013)

"The most important thing each of us can know is our unique gift and how to use it in the world. Individuality is cherished and nourished, because, in order for the whole to flourish, each of us has to be strong in who we are and carry our gifts with conviction, so they can be shared with others.

Being among the sisters provides a visible manifestation of what a community can become when its members understand and share their gifts."

Robin Wall Kimmerer
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To read the full excerpt of the subchapter "Three Sisters Garden" in Robin Wall Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, please check out the appendix.

We believe the lessons Kimmerer shares about the three sisters are ones we can learn from as Facilitative Leaders aiming to create the conditions for building collective power.

Practicing Facilitative Leadership™ requires a series of paradigm shifts:

FROM		TO
Control	➡	Adaptability
Credentials	➡	Contributions
Rock Stardom	➡	Resilience & Redundancy
Homogeneity & Convergence	➡	Diversity & Divergence
Permission & Perfection	➡	Self-organization & Emergence
Focus on the center	➡	Centering margins
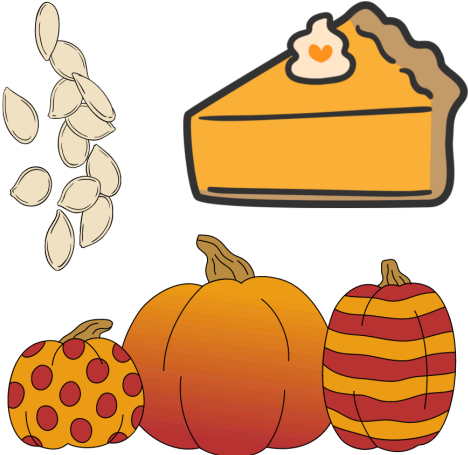
FACILITATE MEETINGS

Process-Content Distinction

The outcomes of successful collaborative efforts (e.g., decisions, plans) come from a series of content and process agreements.

Content is the subject matter or the topic being considered. *Process* is the way content is managed or treated. The nature and quality of the product differ depending upon the process.

In diagnosing and intervening in problems with meetings, Facilitative Leaders distinguish between content and process. We can use the analogy of a pumpkin – the process by which we prepare it makes all the difference in how we experience the same content.

CONTENT (WHAT)	PROCESS (HOW)
A pumpkin	➜ Roast pumpkin seeds to eat ➜ Plant pumpkin seeds for future pumpkins ➜ Make pumpkin pie to share ➜ Carve or paint pumpkins ➜ Arrange pumpkins as decoration

Facilitative Leaders are most able to make change through process. Some examples are:

PRESENTING ISSUE	POTENTIAL PROCESS CHANGE
Meeting participants come in and out of the meeting, seem to be checking email or typing other documents during the meeting, take other calls throughout the meeting, etc.	Develop working agreements around participation and presence
Meeting participants don't all have access to the necessary content or materials.	Clarify who will send which preparatory materials before the next meeting
The meeting does not seem to have a point.	Clarify the meeting purpose and desired outcomes (check out *Design & Facilitate Excellent Meetings* for more information on Purpose & Desired Outcomes)
Not all of the key stakeholders are present.	Develop a list of Stakeholders (check out *Stakeholders*) and which need to be included at each stage of the process

Stages of Discussion

Facilitative Leaders are mindful of, and support the group in locating itself within three key stages of discussion: Opening, Narrowing, and Closing.

OPEN

Ideas, opinions, or information are offered

GENERATIVE

NARROW

The information is organized for better understanding and/or is evaluated

EVALUATIVE

CLOSE

Specific proposals are refined and agreements are made

DECISIVE
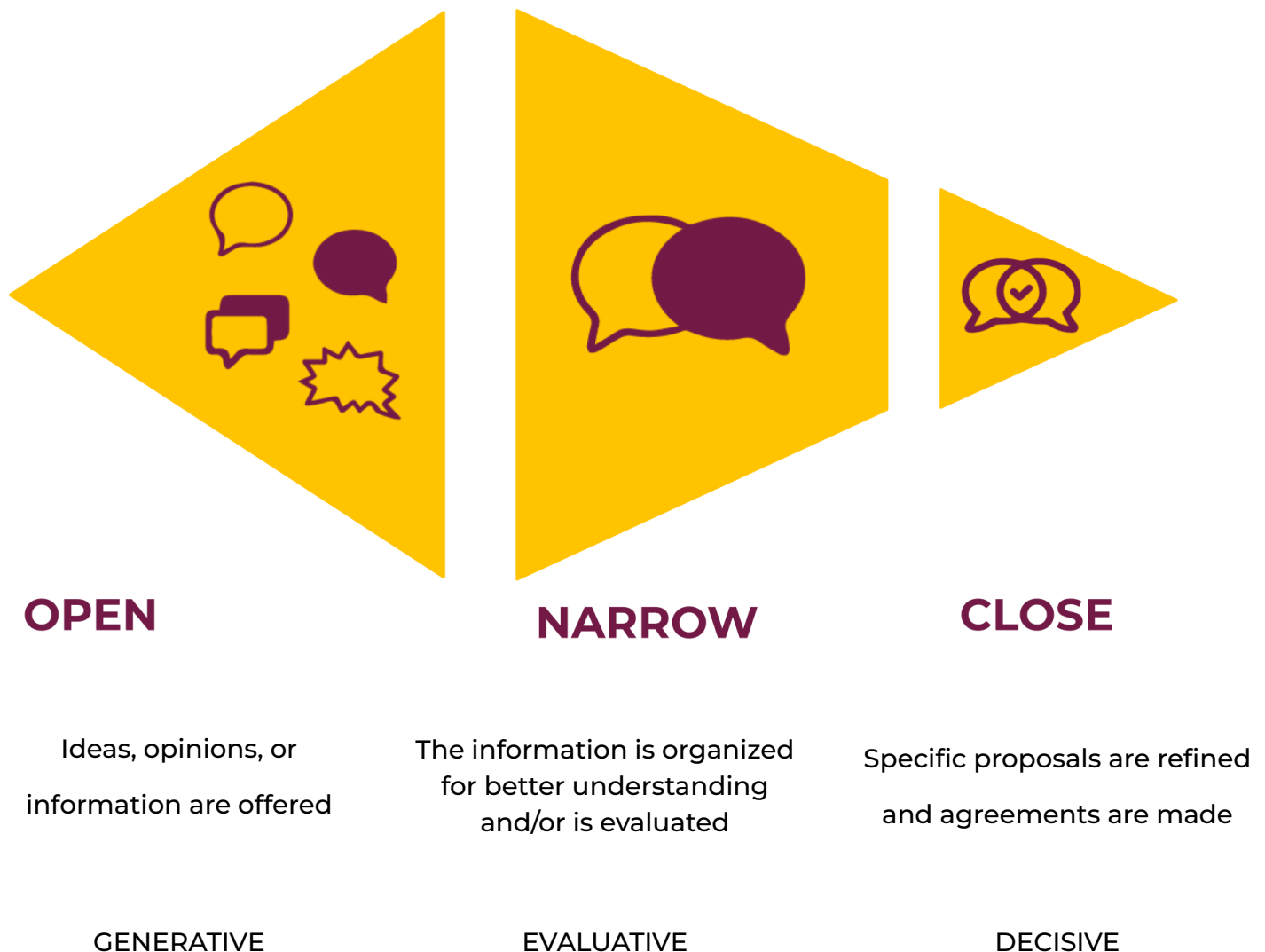
Between each stage, pause to check for understanding and agreement that the group is ready to move to the next stage. Stay open to revisiting previous stages as needed – the agenda is a roadmap from which to consciously deviate.

There are hundreds of different tools that you may use within each stage of discussion. The choice of tools depends on the topic, the group, and the desired outcomes.

Opening Tools (Generative)

In the Opening stage, the group generates options and ideas. Some tools you may use are:

→ **Proposal:** Bring or ask (a) member(s) of the group to bring a proposal for the group to respond to. This provides a relatively limited opening.

→ **Survey:** Conduct a pre-meeting survey to raise ideas or options.

→ **Think-Pair-Share:** Mix individual, pair and/or small group, and whole group discussion. This may make space for more unusual or new ideas.

→ **Dialogue Circles:** Facilitate deeper conversations to generate new understanding and options. Dialogue Circles may not move a group towards consensus, but will likely deepen understanding and relationship.

→ **Brainstorming/Heartstorming:** In a wider opening, invite as many ideas or suggestions as possible.

Narrowing Tools (Evaluative)

In the Narrowing stage, the group organizes, analyzes, prioritizes, and evaluates the options that have been raised. Avoid removing options in the Narrowing phase, except in the case of exact duplicates. Some tools you may use are:

→ **Eliminate duplicates:** Eliminate *exact* duplicates only. This is simply a way to reduce redundancy before any kind of prioritizing. It is not categorizing. Don't work too hard at this. Be mindful of only removing exact duplicates – "Apple" and "Fruit" are not duplicates, "Apple" and "Apples, Oranges, Bananas" are not duplicates.

→ **Pros/Cons:** Invite the group to share pros and cons of each option to build shared understanding of the ideas.

→ **Prioritize aka N/3:** This is a way of determining group interest in ideas before opening up the floor for advocacy. This is not a decision-making "vote". How? 1) Count the number of options after eliminating duplicates; 2) Divide that number by 3, (e.g. 18 ideas divided by 3 = 6 selections); and 3) Invite folks to put their marker (sticker, star, +1) on that number of options to easily show where there is energy, interest, and priority.

→ **"What stands out?"** Asking this question allows the group to identify patterns or themes that are standing out.

→ **Advocate:** This is a way for group members to articulate why they feel strongly about particular ideas or to provide additional information about ideas they feel the group might want to consider before making decisions. It is a way for group members to influence each other's thinking. Anyone can advocate for any option, whether or not it has a lot of popularity from N/3.

→ **Criteria Check:** Invite the group to check each of the options against the decision-making criteria or constraints on the final decision. The group may identify options that aren't feasible.

Closing Tools (Decisive)

In the Closing stage, the group moves towards a final decision. The Closing stage can benefit from a more proscribed set of steps, with the most flexibility in how the group generates a proposal (Step 1). However, you may iterate through the steps multiple times.

0. Revisit & confirm Desired Outcomes

1. Ask for or offer a proposal to:

    - Move an idea to the final list/decision,

    - Eliminate an idea from the list, and/or

    - Combine multiple existing ideas into one new idea

2. Check for understanding of the proposal. Consider framing the question to invite clarification (e.g., "What needs to be clarified about the proposal?" as opposed to "Does this make sense?")

3. Check for agreement of the proposal. Consider using a negative poll to invite disagreement (e.g., "Who cannot agree to this proposal?" as opposed to "Do we agree on this?")

4. Zoom Out: Ask "What's missing?" and consider returning to Step 1, inviting further proposals.

Container-Building & Interventions

CONTAINER-BUILDING

used before & throughout a discussion to build the culture and ways of being that support the group's purpose and goals

INTERVENTIONS

used during a discussion to help the group get back on track from moments of confusion, stuckness, conflict, etc.

A lot of preparation goes into playing team sports, whether you've played many times or are new: you build relationships with your team, you practice together, maybe you share a meditation or a pep talk before a game, you get your gear ready, and you make sure the field or court is set up correctly. But once the game starts, even if you've rehearsed a lot of plays, the team still has to improvise and adjust, and has to be prepared to adjust intentionally.

Similarly, Facilitative Leaders both create the conditions to make meetings successful and are ready to respond to challenges that arise. We refer to the preparation we do before a meeting and the activities we offer during the meeting that are designed to help create the conditions for success as *Container-Building*. We refer to the adjustments we make during a meeting as *Interventions*.

Preparing the container for the work the group intends to do together is crucial – and often more important to the group's success than even the most nimble, skillful pivots. Facilitative Leaders remember that "an ounce of preparation is worth a pound of intervention."
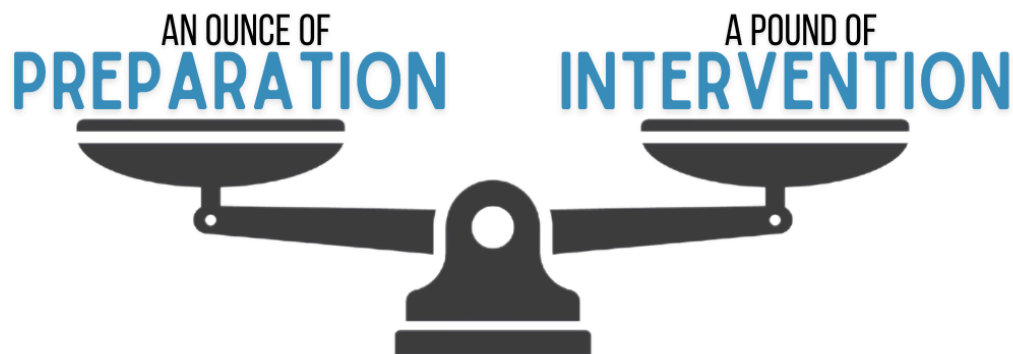
Container-Building

Use these methods before & throughout a meeting or conversation to help build the culture and ways of being that support the group's purpose and goals.

➔ Prepare yourself to serve. Know and use the practices that support your presence and skill as a Facilitative Leader. Some practices we find supportive are:

◆ Meditation

◆ Spiritual practice

◆ Holding time open before & after facilitating

◆ Reflecting on what we've learned from other facilitators

◆ Asking for observation & coaching from fellow facilitators

➔ Clarify the process. Get group agreement upfront on what we are going to do together and how. Use the *Stages of Agreement* to check for understanding and agreement.

  ◆ Define the Desired Outcomes, agenda, roles, and decision-making.

  ◆ In group decision-making processes, make the Stages of Discussion explicit and continuously refer back to where the group is at and where you expect to go over time.

➔ Establish collective practices (also called working agreements or norms) for how the group wants to work and be together. Feel free to draw on the collective practices we offered earlier in this guide as they serve you.

➔ Focus on agreement. Highlighting agreement reinforces what the group has in common and prevents the group from sliding back into issues they have already resolved. It also provides a reminder of common ground to help them address areas where there are strong disagreements.

  ◆ One caveat about this: Some groups may need and want to build their capacity for constructive disagreement. In these cases, be explicit and intentional about opportunities to disagree.

➔ Create opportunities for participation. Ask questions that have many possible answers rather than yes/no questions or questions that lend themselves to one-word answers. Be mindful of the group's dynamics that support or hinder equitable participation. For example:

  ◆ A group that tends to have a lot of silence or low participation may benefit from individual reflection time or small group sharing before whole group discussion, a random selector (like a [picker wheel](#)) to call in more voices, or more anonymous ways of sharing (e.g., time to contribute to a shared document).

  ◆ A group that tends to have imbalanced participation may benefit from processes like [progressive stack](#) (prioritizing participation as relevant to the group's existing dynamics), round robin with equal time for each person, or community practices about sharing air-time.

➔ Design for whole people. Take into account participants' physical, emotional, intellectual, relational, and spiritual needs.

  ◆ Build in breaks and pauses that enable participants to process, connect or reconnect head, heart, and spirit, and rest. (In the case of in-person delivery) Prepare the physical or virtual space, including table toys (e.g., stress balls, pipe cleaners), art supplies, an inspiration table, natural elements (flowers, stones, water), music, food, and water/refreshments.

  ◆ Build in activities to help group members see how their experiences are connected, and how they are actually more connected than they might initially have thought. Support participants to deepen their knowledge and appreciation for one another.

◆ Make the Comfort, Stretch and Panic Zones explicit: Acknowledge that learning and collaborating require us to get out of our comfort zones. Support the group in tending to their individual and collective tolerance for stretch.
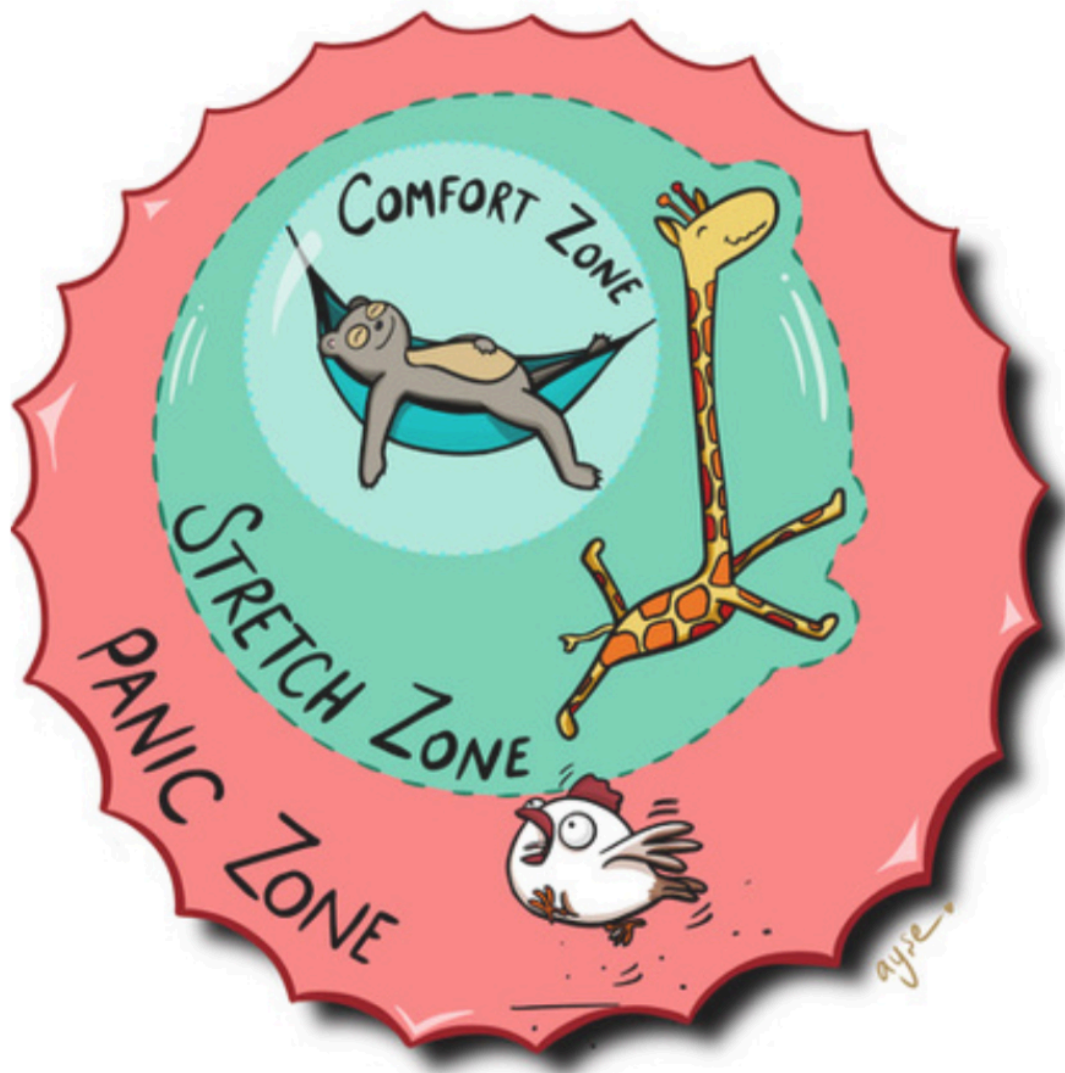
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➔ Don't neglect the content. Be ready to define terms and use definitions as teachable moments. Prepare for hot button issues.

Reflecting on Container-Building

➔ What have we done in this workshop to build our learning container?

➔ What have you experienced in other spaces that helped build the learning container?

➔ What's one thing you intend to adopt into your meeting facilitation to help build strong containers?

Interventions

Use Interventions as needed to get the conversation back on track when the group is confused, spinning their wheels, or participating in counterproductive debate. Be sure to tailor the interventions to the group and the situation, always being careful to ensure the human dignity of participants.

The Questions of a Strategic Moment

It's not knowing what to do that counts.
It's knowing what to do when you don't know what to do.

Inquiry Tools

Each of the Inquiry Tools we learned in the *Discover Shared Meaning* practice can be used to support group conversation.

1. **Bracket**: Turn down the volume of your own internal chatter by reminding yourself that it is both useful and respectful to understand the speaker's words, thoughts, or feelings.

    a. Example:

    b. Speaker: "I really don't believe you are committed to working on this issue with us."

    c. Listener: Quiet the internal voice that is saying, "I'm so offended that he's questioning my commitment!" and decide that you're going to set that aside, listen to them, and do your best to understand his concerns.

2. **Reflect**: Repeat what the speaker said in their words, to confirm that you heard them correctly.
    a. Example:

    b. Speaker: "I believe that we should stop the project. Things just are not working."

    c. Facilitator: "So, you think we should stop the project because things are not working."

3. **Paraphrase**: Restate a speaker's comments, using your own words to confirm that you understand the speaker's meaning.

    a. Example:

    b. Speaker: "I believe that we should stop the project. Things are just not working."

    c. Facilitator: "So, you think the problems with the project are big enough that we should stop the project."

4. **Check Perceptions:** Stating what you perceive (e.g., a feeling or an assumption) that wasn't said explicitly to confirm your perceptions about what the speaker thinks or feels.

    a. Example:

    b. Speaker: "I believe that we should stop the project. Things are just not working." [said forcefully]

    c. Facilitator: "It sounds like you don't see any way to get things back on track and would rather we not put more effort into this project. Am I understanding where you're coming from?"

5. **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Ask open-ended questions that invite participants to make their assumptions or reasoning explicit, or that invite them to take a deeper look at what they are saying and why it's important to them.

6. **Be Mindful of Non-Verbal Communication**: Be mindful of facial expressions, body language, tone, and non-verbal cues that may send unintentional messages to the group. Recognize that people interpret body language differently, so be explicit about what you're trying to communicate with your non-verbal communication. Do not make assumptions about others' non-verbal communication.

   a. Example: When asking the group to pause and take a breath, do the same.

   b. Example: When inviting deep conversation or relationship-building between the group, move back and out of the way, or invite the whole group to get into a circle.

   c. Example: "I'm experiencing some physical pain today, so if you see me looking uncomfortable or grimacing, please know it's not about what you're saying."

Interventions

	Use Inquiry Tools	Acknowledge Emotions		
			Use Humor	Turn Up the Heat
Pause. Breathe.	Boomerang	Regain Focus	Ask People What They Need	
	Build Small Agreements	Reinforce Process Agreements		Deal with or Defer
			Ask or Say What's Going On	
	Make Process Commercials	Ask for a Proposal		

INCREASING SKILL & TRUST REQUIRED*

⟶
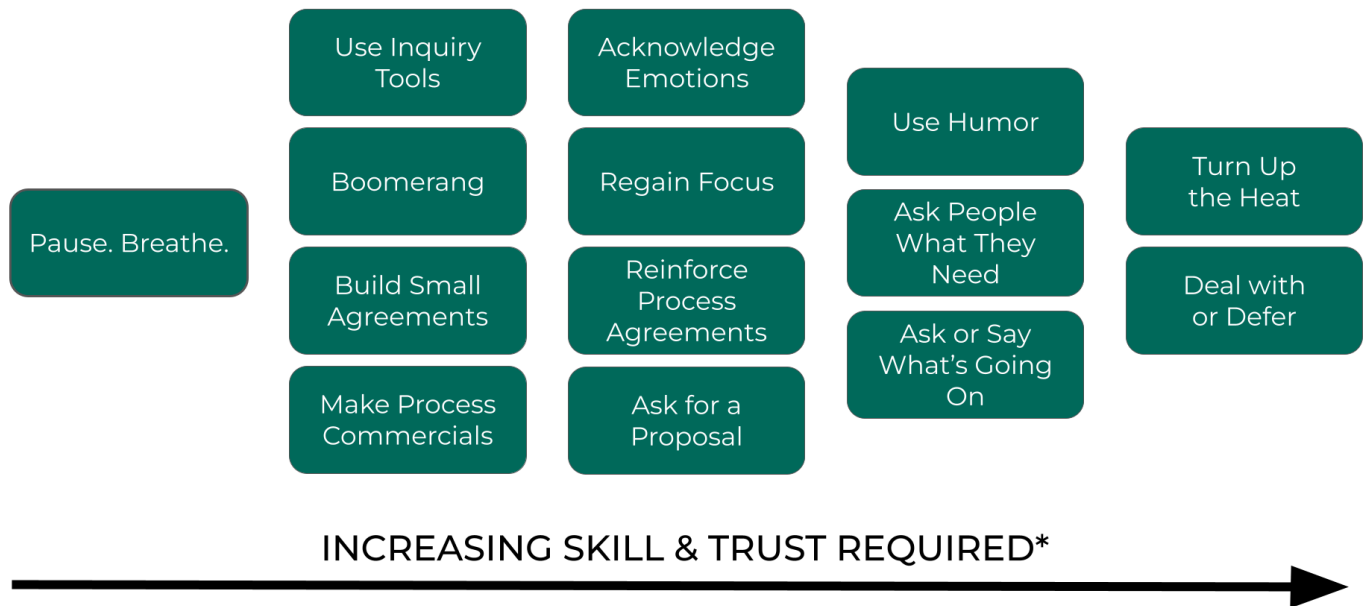
1. **Pause. Breathe.** Take a moment to pause and take a breath before moving forward with more conversation. Do this individually or invite the group to take a pause and a breath.

2. **Make Process Commercials:** Explain why you are taking the approach or using a particular process. Make the *Stages of Discussion* ("Open-Narrow-Close") explicit and continuously refer back to where the group is at and where you expect to go over time.

3. **Build Small Agreements:** Work toward a complex agreement by breaking it into smaller parts. Focus on building one agreement at a time.

    Example: "We don't seem to agree on the whole proposal. Let's see which piece we can agree on. How about section A? Great! What else can we agree on?"

4. **Boomerang:** Return a question to the person who asked it or to the group. This can help create a culture where the facilitator does not take responsibility for answering all questions. In more challenging scenarios, this can be used to invite a participant to shift away from critique and towards contribution.

    a. Example: Speaker: "What was the process like last year?"

    Facilitator to the group: "What can we share about what the process was like last year?"

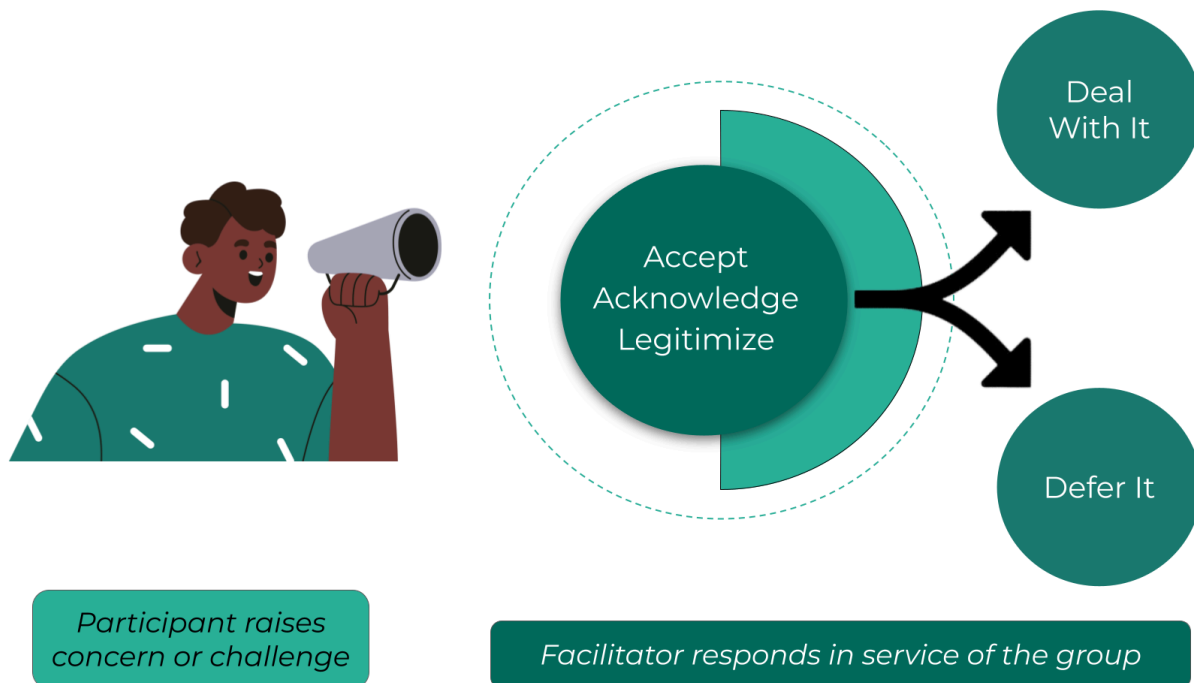   b. Example: Speaker: "How can we possibly meet that schedule?"

    Facilitator back to the first speaker: "What do you think we can shift to meet it?"

5. **Reinforce Process Agreements:** Remind the team of a previous agreement (about the flow of topics on the agenda, roles different people are playing, or norms).

    a. Example: "It sounds like we're redefining the problem here rather than generating possible solutions. Remember, we agreed to focus on solutions. Does this problem statement still work for everyone? [If the response is yes...] Good, let's continue generating alternative solutions." [If the response is no, you may need to make a process suggestion and build agreement with the group to refine the problem statement before continuing.]

    b. Example: "We're currently opening the discussion, sharing as many ideas as possible. We don't yet need to evaluate or constrain the ideas; we'll move to that evaluative stage of the discussion as soon as we've listed as many ideas as we can come up with now."

6. **Ask for a Proposal:** This could be a proposal about content (e.g., which idea should we move forward) or about process (e.g., when would you like to take the break). When you get a proposal from an individual, be sure to check for agreement with the group before moving forward.

7. **Regain Focus:** Make sure everyone is engaged, working on the same content, and using the same process at the same time.

    a. Example: "Let's stay focused on identifying problems. I know you have some great solutions to offer. Can you hold onto your ideas for a few minutes until we finish this brainstorming?"

8. **Acknowledge Emotions:** Acknowledge your own and others' emotions and normalize that people are experiencing emotions.

    a. Example: "I'm sensing strong emotions coming up in this conversation. Let's all take a breath and notice how we're feeling." (Pause, breathe for a few seconds.) "Emotions can give us cues to things that really matter to us. Before we continue, does anyone want to share what they're feeling or what they are concerned about?"

9. **Ask People What They Need.** This could be done in the context of the group, or by calling a break to check in with individuals who seem especially challenged by the discussion.

10. **Use Humor:** Make a joke to relieve the tension. We offer this intervention with many cautions. Be careful not to joke at the expense of any people group, including your own. Be careful that your use of humor does not minimize the importance of the conversation. And, of course, only use humor intentionally if you're truly funny – and the group is likely to "get" your humor.

11. **Ask or Say What's Going On:** Name something that isn't working to get it out in the open so the group can deal with it. Or, name something that is working, so that the group can make efforts to build on its successes. Be sure to describe behaviors without ascribing meaning to them.

    a. Example: "It's very quiet here. What does the silence mean?"

12. **Accept - Legitimize - Deal with or Defer:** Create a safer environment for participation by: (1) acknowledging or responding to a speaker whose ideas may be "out of sync" with others in the group or with the topic on the agenda; (2) legitimizing the speaker's contribution without either agreeing or disagreeing; and (3) agreeing together about how to move forward.

We can be particularly impactful in co-creating the conditions for shared responsibility when, rather than deciding whether to deal with or defer the issue, we support the group to make the decision (to deal with or defer the topic) together. It's important to clarify the *process* decision before or instead of opening the *content* discussion.

a. Example of Deal With: "You're not convinced we're getting anywhere? That's OK. Thanks for raising the question. It's important for us all to accomplish what we came here to accomplish. Would you be willing to hang on for ten more minutes and see where we get? Then we can see if we need to shift the conversation. Yes? Thanks."

b. Example of Defer: "This issue you just raised sounds like an important one to you, but it's not on today's agenda. Because it's so critical for us to get through our agenda this morning, I'd like to put this issue in our parking lot for now. At the end of the meeting we can decide where and when it should be discussed. Will that work for you?"

Participant raises concern or challenge

Facilitator responds in service of the group

Accept
Acknowledge
Legitimize

Deal With It

Defer It

13. **Turn Up the Heat:** In cases where the group is avoiding a challenging conversation or conflict or missing an opportunity to face underlying issues, it may be valuable to invite the group to "turn up the heat" on the conversation.

    a. Example: "Thank you for raising that concern. It's really important for our group to recognize and address thoughtfully. Rather than jumping into solving it or moving on, I want to hold a minute or two for us to process what you said and to take note of our reactions, especially emotional and physical."

    b. Example: "I noticed that we're hearing repeatedly from the same three people, who are the most senior members of the team. We have a community practice of paying attention to power, so I'd like to propose a change to the process we had previously agreed to. Rather than open discussion, I'd like to propose a 10-minute fishbowl where our most senior team members listen to the rest of the group's conversation without responding."

    c. Example: "In our prep sessions for this conversation, some members of the staff warned me that there was unresolved conflict from last year's budgeting process. Let's make the implicit explicit. What's the elephant in the room?" When referring to previous conversations in a different group, make sure you have consent of what you're sharing and with whom.

Key Principles for Intervening

- Attune to yourself and the group

- Honor and protect each person's humanity

- Start with the lowest level of intervention

- Interventions are a service to the group

- Seek to address underlying concerns so that people can manage their own behavior

- Be mindful of power & identity. Interventions require & shift power

Reflecting on Facilitator Power

- Whose comfort, desires, and expectations am I attending to most?

- How do I respond to being challenged?

- How do my social locations inform my decisions? How do social locations inform how others are understanding the interaction?

- Who chooses the agenda / main point of the meeting?

- Who develops proposals for the group to discuss?

- How are we tending to the full ecosystem surrounding the decision, not just those closest to us organizationally, relationally, or otherwise?

DESIGN MEETINGS

Design Principles

Process design is part art and part science. Facilitative Leaders balance several complementary principles as they blend creativity with technique.

RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS

→ Remember that building relationships is central, not peripheral.

→ Conversation is central to building understanding, agreement, and relationships. Design to maximize opportunities for conversation.

DESIGN FOR THE WHOLE PERSON

→ Engage the mind, body, and spirit.

→ Acknowledge multiple learning styles. Validate multiple ways of knowing and multiple forms of expertise.

→ Cultivate magical spaces: design experiences that tap people's sense of deep inner purpose, meaning, and authenticity. Design for joy and delight!

→ Build in opportunities to engage and apply new approaches and learning. Prioritize content and practices that are relevant and applicable to the group's goals and values.

→ Ensure all participants are able to participate and are equally valued. Address common barriers that limit participation (e.g., physical, language, time, financial, etc.) and humbly check in with all participants for unforeseen needs.

PAY ATTENTION TO POWER

→ Center those closest to and most-impacted by the work and issues.

→ Interrupt norms, practices, and policies that enforce status quo power dynamics (including but not exclusively white supremacy culture). Recognize and acknowledge how meeting dynamics feed into or disrupt larger institutional and cultural systems.

→ Practice and reflect on ways of being that create the conditions for individual and collective empowerment.

→ Maximize stakeholder involvement in decision making.

PLAN WELL

➜ Design with the end in mind. Know what different processes and methods can accomplish and choose them based on how well they will help the particular group achieve its goals.

➜ Make the process educational, liberatory, and fun.

➜ Balance your and the group's focus on results, process, and relationship.

BE FLEXIBLE AND ALLOW FOR THE UNEXPECTED

➜ Remember that collaboration is a creative, flexible, nonlinear process.

➜ Use your process design and meeting agendas as roadmaps from which to deviate consciously. Allow yourself to be led by the energy or insight of the group.

➜ Cultivate your capacity to hold ambiguity, explore mystery, and remain grounded while welcoming change and disruption.

Key Elements for Planning Your Meetings

Facilitative leaders answer key at least five key questions when designing an effective agenda:

1) Why are we meeting? If you can't answer this question, you shouldn't meet! ➜ **Purpose**

2) What outcomes does the meeting aim to achieve? ➜ **Desired Outcomes**

3) Who is part of the ecosystem surrounding the decision to be made? What do we know about the relationships between them – the individuals, groups, systems, and decisions? How will we ensure the meeting is accessible to the necessary participants? ➜ **Decision Ecosystem**

4) How will decisions be made? What level of involvement is appropriate for decision-making if decisions are being made at this meeting? How do we encourage shared power? ➜ **Involvement in Decision Making**

5) Who will perform the various meeting roles (e.g. facilitator, note-taker, presenter, etc.)? ➜ **Meeting Roles**

Together, answering these questions can help us create an intentional, cohesive meeting plan and agenda:

1. Purpose

2. Desired Outcome Statement

3. Decision Ecosystem

4. Involvement in Decision Making

5. Meeting Roles

Agenda
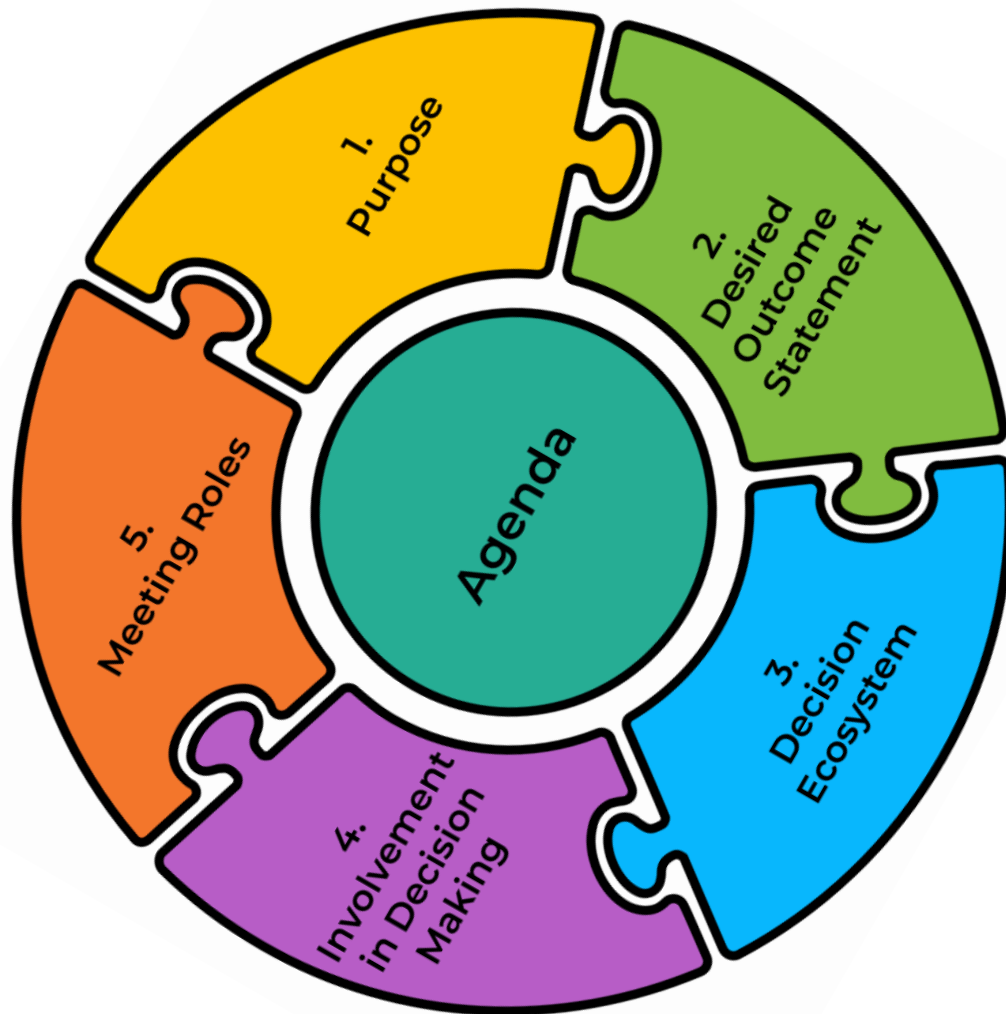
Purpose of the Meeting

The meeting purpose answers the question *"Why meet?"* Effective purpose statements tell prospective participants, in broad terms, what they will be doing at the meeting. Naming the purpose of the meeting can help focus our attention and honor our collaborators' time and energy. It can also help prevent disruptions or misalignments by clarifying for participants what they can expect from the meeting.

Some meeting topics (e.g., scheduling project activities) are action-oriented. They require a decision or a series of discussions. Others (e.g., how to operate the new copier) are information-oriented. No decisions are required, but the information may be used for future action. Most meetings combine aspects of both.

Examples

The purpose of this meeting is to:

➜ Celebrate the accomplishments of the human resources team

➜ Decide which questions to include in our member survey

➜ Reflect on the successes and challenges of the year-end fundraising campaign

ACTION-ORIENTED	INFORMATION-ORIENTED
➜ Make decisions ➜ Analyze ➜ Plan ➜ Build teams ➜ Solve problems ➜ Evaluation performance ➜ Reconcile	➜ Socialize ➜ Inform ➜ Affiliate ➜ Track progress ➜ Celebrate ➜ Report ➜ Learn

Desired Outcome Statements

A desired outcome is a complement to the meeting purpose, clarifying what your meeting aims to achieve—the expected result. A desired outcome statement answers the question: "What will we walk out of the meeting with?"

Two Kinds of Outcomes

PRODUCTS	KNOWLEDGE
➔ Lists ➔ Plans ➔ Decisions ➔ Agreements	➔ Awareness of... so that... ➔ Shared understanding of... so that... *We add "so that..." to knowledge-oriented outcomes to help us focus our attention on key takeaways.*

What They Look Like

➔ Nouns, not verbs

➔ Brief, written statements

➔ Specific and measurable

➔ From the perspective of the participant

Examples

By the end of this meeting, we will have:

➔ Agreement on key problems with current invoicing systems and a list of recommended solutions.

➔ A decision and action plan on how to reduce spending by 10%.

➔ A shared understanding of the revised work schedule so that we ensure full coverage on the shift this week.

Decision Ecosystem

Refer back to the Decision Ecosystem from *Seek Maximum Appropriate Engagement*. Once you know who the stakeholders are:

➜ Identify the "wins" or WIIFMs (What's In It For Me) for each stakeholder. A "win" means what they value or care about with respect to the decision; i.e., what would a good decision result in from their point of view?

➜ Select attendees for the meeting who can represent all points of view. Be mindful of potentially tokenizing stakeholders who have been excluded in the past; refer back to Seek Maximum Appropriate Engagement for some tips on avoiding tokenization.

➜ Consider likely barriers that might prevent each stakeholder's participation, and potential solutions or supports to resolve those barriers. Consider, at least, physical, financial, logistical, technological, and language barriers. Prioritize investing in accessibility tools and learning from disability justice organizers about making your spaces more accessible.

Levels of Involvement in Decision-Making

Refer back to Levels of Involvement in Decision-Making and Factors to Consider in Choosing a Level of Involvement from *Seek Maximum Appropriate Engagement*. Based on the Purpose and Desired Outcomes for your meeting, determine what decisions will be made and which level(s) of involvement you'll use. Selecting the appropriate decision-making method is a conscious choice made by the person accountable for the outcome of the decision. Communicate both the decision-making process and your rationale for choosing the process to the stakeholders.

Meeting Roles

All meetings require many different roles and different types of labor. Make the implicit explicit. Notice patterns in who takes on which roles in meetings. (For example, it's overwhelmingly common for women to be the notetaker or recorder.) Name which roles are needed and ask the group to share responsibility for all of the labor needed to support the group. Discuss how sharing roles might help share power and grow more leaders.

Notice which role(s) you tend to take on or not. If you tend to hold multiple roles within your meetings, reflect on your motivations for doing so, and the impacts on your colleagues and comrades. How do perfectionism, one right way, power hoarding, and saviorism/martyrdom play into it? How might sharing roles help share power?

THE FACILITATOR

→ Is a process advocate — makes suggestions and gets agreement about how to proceed, supports changes to the agenda or plan as needed

→ Helps participants focus energy on the task and stay on track

→ Attends to differences in participation and validation (e.g., whose comments are affirmed, whose are ignored or not attributed)

→ Ensures that time is monitored and information recorded

→ Makes sure everyone is doing the same thing, in the same way, at the same time -- or that there are deliberate decisions to invite different approaches and how to come back together

→ Does not contribute ideas or evaluate group members' ideas

How to define your role:

"I'm here to help you work through your agenda. I won't contribute my ideas. I will make process suggestions. If anything I do gets in your way, please let me know. This is your meeting, and I want to help make it work for you."

THE LEADER

→ Identifies meeting purpose and desired outcomes

→ Identifies constraints

→ Contributes ideas

→ Listens to others' ideas

→ Does not dominate discussion

How to define your role:

"I've called this meeting to… (state the purpose and desired outcomes). Today, (name of facilitator) will facilitate our meeting. I'll be participating in the conversation along with everyone else." NOTE: If you are also the facilitator for this meeting, tell the group that you will play both roles.

Note:

In many cases, the leader should **not** be the facilitator. This requires ongoing investment to build facilitation capacity across teams and roles. It also requires humility from the leader to accept the facilitator's leadership and guidance.

PARTICIPANT

→ Contribute ideas and state concerns openly

→ Listen to others' ideas

→ Make commitments (states agreement, carries out action steps when agreed upon)

→ Use facilitative behaviors to help the group stay on track

→ Assist with recording and time keeping as needed

How to define the role:

Leader says, "I'd like to see everyone participate and listen to one another. This is our meeting. It'll take all of us to make it worthwhile."

RECORDER OR NOTETAKER

→ Captures group members' ideas as accurately as possible, using their key words or phrases

→ Tries not to paraphrase or interpret

→ Works in partnership with the facilitator to best serve the group

→ Participates as appropriate with support from the facilitator (e.g., the facilitator may pause the group discussion to make sure the recorder has opportunities to contribute.)

→ After the meeting, updates team documents based on the meeting agreements and distributes group memory to participants

How to define your role:

"I'm here to record the content of your meeting. If I miss something important or write something incorrectly, please ask the facilitator to stop the conversation so I can correct it."

Note:

In some cases, a group may need multiple recorders or a lead and back-up recorder, especially when all meeting attendees should participate in the discussion. Consider different forms of recording as well, such as visual records, short summaries rather than transcript notes, recordings in addition to notes, etc.

When the pace of conversation is too fast for one recorder to keep up, it probably indicates that the pace is too fast for all participants to keep up as well. Ask speakers to slow their pace of speaking, pause between speakers, take time for participants to reflect or process in pairs or small groups, and encourage other ways of slowing down.

OTHER ROLES YOU MAY CONSIDER:

→ Vibes checker: If & when the space feels closed, painful, in-conflict, or like we're avoiding facing something, this person is especially responsible for naming (though not solving!) the vibes. (This doesn't mean that other participants are discouraged from naming vibes.)

→ Linker(s): You may ask present participants to check in with other participants who missed the meeting to connect and help them feel like they're still part of the group, answer any questions they may have, offer a more nuanced take on how the meeting went, etc.

→ You may ask people to hold different parts of the agenda, like an opening, energy boost, closing, or other exercise.

The Agenda Sandwich

One way to think about the flow of an agenda is as a sandwich:

Start Ups

- Welcome
- Purpose
- Decision-making methods
- Review +/Δ from last meeting
- Contemplative or grounding practice
- Introductions
- Desired outcomes
- Roles
- Agenda
- Check in on next steps from last meeting
- Ground rules
- Check in
- Icebreaker

What (content)	How (process)	Who	Time

Closing

- Reiterate what we hoped to accomplish, clarify where we got
- +/Δ for the meeting
- Check outs
- Appreciations
- Agree on next steps, including prep & roles for next meeting

START UPS

Some components you may consider incorporating into start-ups are:

- ➔ Welcome
- ➔ Purpose
- ➔ Decision-making methods
- ➔ Review feedback or pluses & deltas from last meeting
- ➔ Contemplative or grounding practice
- ➔ Introductions
- ➔ Desired Outcomes
- ➔ Roles
- ➔ Check in on next steps from last meeting Context
- ➔ Agenda
- ➔ Ground rules
- ➔ Check in
- ➔ Icebreaker

CORE CONTENT

The Core Content of the meeting is when we try to reach (most of) the Desired Outcomes for the meeting. (In what cases might we work on a Desired Outcome outside the Core Content part of the agenda? If we have a Desired Outcome to build stronger relationships, for example, most of the time spent on that Desired Outcome might be in the Opening.) For the Core Content, clarify the content (the what), the process (the how), who will be facilitating and/or presenting each section, and how long each section is expected to take:

What (content)	How (process)	Who	Time
A pumpkin	Carve it	JJ	3 min
Budget cuts	Present Clarify/Q&A	CC - present budget TK - facilitate Q&A	10 min 15 min
Budget cuts	Brainstorm ways to cut expenses - Individual reflection - Pair discussion - Shared doc to drop ideas - Open discussion to understand & expand ideas	TK - facilitate JJ - tech support on shared doc	3 min 10 min 3 min 15 min

CLOSING

Some components you may consider incorporating into closing are:

➔ Reiterate what we hoped to accomplish, clarify where we got

➔ Agree on next steps, including prep & roles for next meeting

➔ Feedback / pluses & deltas for the meeting

➔ Check outs

➔ Appreciations

Worksheet: Agenda Template

Example (Check out the appendix for an example on team meetings and community gatherings)

Meeting Date and Time:

Purpose:

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this meeting, we will have:

1...... (topic 1): Built relationship by engaging in a challenging conversation.

2......(topic 2): A shared understanding of our year to date budget to actuals

3......(topic 3): A brainstormed list of possible ways to cut expenses

CORE CONTENT

The Core Content of the meeting is when we try to reach (most of) the Desired Outcomes for the meeting. (In what cases might we work on a Desired Outcome outside the Core Content part of the agenda? If we have a Desired Outcome to build stronger relationships, for example, most of the time spent on that Desired Outcome might be in the Opening.) For the Core Content, clarify the content (the what), the process (the how), who will be facilitating and/or presenting each section, and how long each section is expected to take:

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Budget cuts	Brainstorm ways to cut expenses - Individual reflection - Pair discussion - Shared doc to drop ideas - Open discussion to understand & expand ideas	TK - facilitate JJ - tech support on shared doc	3 min 10 min 3 min 15 min

Now fill out the template for your own meeting.

Meeting Date and Time:

Purpose:

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this meeting, we will have:

1:

2:

3:

What (content)	How (process)	Who	Time
Opening			

Topic 1:			

Topic 2			

Topic 3			

Closing			

Tips for Virtual Meetings

Virtual meeting platforms have increased accessibility and access for participants who cannot gather in person. At the same time, technology introduces different dynamics and challenges into the facilitation equation.

If you're convening a meeting or facilitating a virtual gathering, the following tips will significantly increase your group's chances of success.

1. **Create a team display.** Create a graphic that depicts the physical layout of the group, including names of all the individuals and where they're geographically located.

2. **Use participants' names.** When you are addressing group members specifically, use their names. The use of names is a key contributor to feelings of inclusion. Ask participants to say their name each time they speak during the meeting as well. It can be hard to distinguish voices otherwise!

3. **Poll the group.** At critical junctures in the meeting, when a team agreement is being reached or when input is required, a facilitator may choose to poll the group. Some platforms have built-in poll features that allow facilitators to build a poll and launch it during the meeting. Participants can also use reactions to respond to a verbal poll. Meeting leaders may say "If this makes sense, give me a thumbs up" and invite questions or feedback from specific participants who didn't give a thumbs up.

4. **Create appropriate ground rules for virtual meetings or conference calls.** Ground rules are a mainstay for managing effective group interaction, but they need to be tailored to meet the needs of groups meeting virtually. Common ground rules for distributed groups may include:

   - No sidebar conversations

   - No multitasking (e.g., checking email while participating)

   - Participants must identify themselves when they speak

   - Participants "mute" themselves when not speaking

5. **Create a common visual focus.** Of the three common intake modes (visual, auditory, and kinetic), the majority of people are visual learners. If you are going to increase meeting participants' ability to follow the content of the meeting, it is important to provide mechanisms for visually documenting the flow of ideas and keeping people on track during the discussion. If possible, use an online tool such as Google Docs, which allow all participants to view notes as they are typed live during the meeting.

6. **Designate a "technology champion."** Experience shows that technology glitches are likely when participants gather virtually. It is helpful to have a "tech champion" to support participants and facilitators. Involvement can vary– at minimum they are aware of the meeting beforehand and available for ad-hoc support during the meeting time. A more involved tech champion may participate in a prep meeting with facilitators and be present in the virtual meeting room to manage slides and small groups. Dedicated tech support helps prevent time-consuming breakdowns and delays.

7. **Set up the room in advance.** Advance preparation is a key to success in any meeting, but leaders/facilitators of a virtual meeting need to make sure that the room or the appropriate technology is set up in advance. If you have a co-facilitator, try to connect in the virtual meeting space at least 10 minutes prior to participants arriving. If conference call lines will be used, have the numbers and password codes set up well before they are needed.

Bonus Tips for Hybrid Meetings

8. **Use remote facilitators.** Your virtual collaboration may involve working with different groups of remote participants who are all gathered around a common speakerphone. For example, if there are meeting participants gathered in two locations—San Francisco and Charlotte—it is useful for the meeting leader to appoint a remote facilitator in the remote location. During a Q&A process, for instance, the facilitator in the remote location can manage the process of calling on participants with questions and making sure their questions are answered. They can also enforce the ground rules onsite in the remote location.

9. **Provide color commentary.** When there is some kind of activity going on at the leader's location, it is helpful for him/her to describe to remote listeners what is happening. For instance, "We're waiting a moment while Mimi gets out the notes." Or "Everyone in Phoenix appears to agree with the points that are being made. Let's check with Salt Lake." These verbal descriptions of activity make the meeting more "real" to virtual participants and increase feelings of inclusion and openness.

Agenda and Notes Templates

Team Meeting Agenda

<u>Desired Outcomes</u>
By the end of this meeting, we will have:
- ★

<u>Decisions on Deck</u>
- ★

<u>Agenda</u>

Time	Topic	Roles
3:00	Opening	
	A little buffer time	
	Attunement practice	
	Note-takers:	
	Agenda, DOs, decisions on deck	
	BREAK (10 mins)	
4:45	Closing - Decisions Made & Next Steps - Knowledge capture: What are we learning?	

<u>Notes</u>
Opening

Other agenda items

Decisions Made

Next Steps

What	Who	When

Learnings Capture

Community Gathering Agenda

<u>Desired Outcomes</u>
By the end of this gathering, we will have:
   ★

<u>Attendees / Stakeholders</u>

Who	Accessibility Needs

<u>Precious Details</u>
   ★ When:
   ★ Where (physical location, remote link, hybrid, …):
   ★ Accessibility prep:
   ★ Hospitality:
   ★ Other:

<u>Window Agenda</u>
(high-level agenda to share with participants)

Time	Topic
	Opening
	Content section
	BREAK (10 mins)
	Content section
	End

<u>Detailed Agenda</u>

Time	Topic	Roles
	Opening	
	Welcome, introductions, etc	
	Purpose, Desired Outcomes, Agenda	
	Group Agreements	
	BREAK (10 mins)	
4:45	Closing	

SEEK MAXIMUM APPROPRIATE INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS IN DECISION MAKING

Engagement Dilemma

Increasing involvement in decision-making requires sharing more information, authority, and responsibility. There are benefits and risks to increasing stakeholder involvement in decision-making. Reflect on a few benefits and risks:

Benefits	Risks
→ You get good, creative ideas	→ People may not know enough to participate effectively
→	→
→	→
→	→
→	→
→	→

Facilitative Leaders don't try to engage every single person we know in every decision, or even make every decision the same way. To try to balance the benefits and risks of engaging others, we aim for the *maximum appropriate involvement* of our stakeholders. To this end, and to create the conditions for shared responsibility for success, we try to be intentional, inclusive, and transparent in our decision-making processes.

Decision-Making Ecosystem

Every decision is made within living systems. When acting within living systems, we can't pull a lever and know exactly what's going to happen; the effects of any change are cumulative and complex. (Refer back to *See Systems* for more on living systems.) We must consider the decision to be made within the living systems it will impact and be impacted by. Considering the ecosystem around a decision puts us into practice of considering our interconnectedness, interdependence, and shared responsibility.

Some questions we can consider to better understand a decision ecosystem are:

➔ Who is part of the ecosystem surrounding the decision to be made?

➔ What do we know about the relationships between them – the individuals, groups, systems, and decisions?

Within the ecosystem, we'll have stakeholders who we can engage closely in the decision-making process, and others who we must consider but may not be able to engage with directly. Any individual or group of stakeholders may be engaged or considered for different components of a decision.
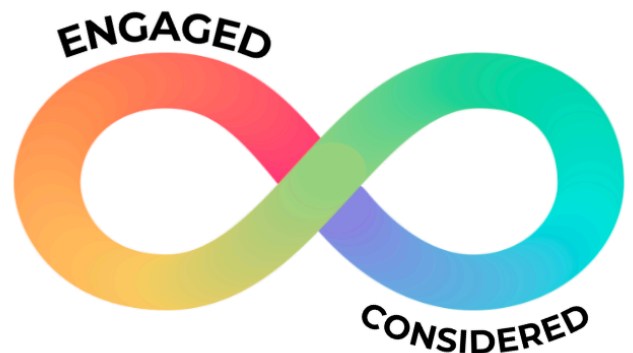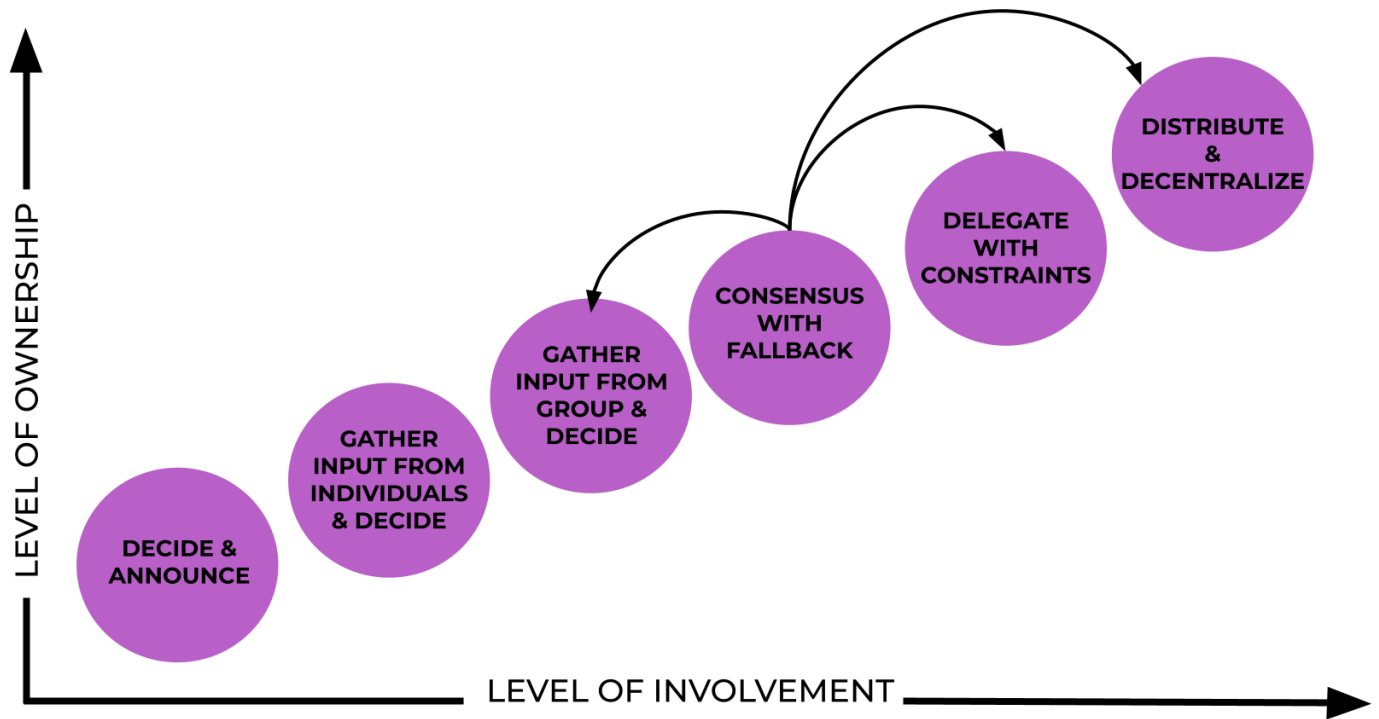
Stakeholders include individuals and groups:

→ Impacted by the outcome of the decision

→ In a position to implement the decision

→ In a position to prevent the decision from being implemented

→ With informal influence without authority

→ Responsible for the final decision

→ Who have relevant expertise, lived experience, and/or informal study

→ Typically unheard, excluded, or marginalized in decisions like this

→ Whose labor built this place and system

→ Functioning as a connector in or across the organization(s) or field(s)

→ Who have multigenerational relationship with the land

→ Who came before us and come after us

→ Other beings & Earth

Tips to Avoid Tokenization

1. Critical Mass: Don't act like one person from a stakeholder group or identity group can speak for that group.

2. Intentionality: Know why you are engaging a particular stakeholder. What expertise do they bring? What might they learn from the experience? Why are they interested in being a decision-maker? What do they need to fully engage?

3. Cross Training: Engage with new stakeholders early and often; make sure they have the information they need; ask for feedback many times. Work with existing members to make sure they're ready to listen and value new members as full members, especially when perspectives and cultural styles differ; prepare to change existing culture, practices, policies, and decisions.

4. Accessibility: Reduce barriers to participation. If a particular person or group isn't showing up, start with the assumption of their best intentions, and think about what you can change to ease their participation. Note: Working towards accessibility requires time and sometimes money, plan for this! Think about accessibility in terms of: access for people with disabilities, physical access, language access, financial access, logistical access...

Levels of Involvement in Decision Making

LEVEL OF OWNERSHIP

DECIDE & ANNOUNCE

GATHER INPUT FROM INDIVIDUALS & DECIDE

GATHER INPUT FROM GROUP & DECIDE

CONSENSUS WITH FALLBACK

DELEGATE WITH CONSTRAINTS

DISTRIBUTE & DECENTRALIZE

LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

DECIDE AND ANNOUNCE

How it works: The Facilitative Leader makes a decision with little or no input then announces the decision to those who will be affected by or must carry out the decision.

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
▲ The decision can be made quickly ▲ The leader is in immediate control of the decision ▲ The implementation can begin immediately	▼ It may not be the most well informed decision ▼ Those assigned to carry out the decision may balk at implementation ▼ Those affected by the decision may harbor resentment about not having been asked their opinion

Keys to Success

- Explain the context for the decision and announce the decision itself
- Explain reasons for choosing the "decide and announce" approach
- Make time to answer questions, address concerns, and identify supports needed to implement the decision

GATHER INPUT FROM INDIVIDUALS AND DECIDE

How it works: The Facilitative Leader asks selected individuals for input (ideas, suggestions, information). The leader makes a decision after gathering input from the individuals.

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
▲ There is more information with which to make a decision ▲ There is an increased likelihood that a decision will be made ▲ It doesn't require engagement with all of the stakeholders ▲ The leader can offer opportunities for stakeholders to give input without requiring input from everyone. This is especially valuable for lower-stakes decisions.	▼ Some stakeholders may feel arbitrarily excluded ▼ Stakeholders may undermine decision or be less likely to provide input the next time, especially if the decision is not aligned with the input given

Keys to Success

- Explain how people will be involved in the decision-making process and give your rationale

- Explain what considerations or criteria you'll be taking into account in order to make the decision

- Be clear about the type of input you need from individuals to make the decision

GATHER INPUT FROM GROUP & DECIDE

How it works: The Facilitative Leader asks the group members to share their ideas. The leader makes a decision after hearing from the group.

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
▲ There is more creative thinking because of group interaction ▲ There is an increased likelihood of a well-informed decision ▲ People feel included and may be committed to implementation ▲ The group may build stronger relationships and alignment through the input-gathering process	▼ It takes more time ▼ It may surface issues or conflicts unrelated to the decision to be made ▼ If the resulting decision is in conflict with the input given, people may resist or undermine implementation

Keys to Success

- Explain how people will be involved in the decision-making process and give your rationale

- Set guidelines for the type of involvement and input you want

- Set a time limit for the discussion

CONSENSUS

How it works: A consensus decision is one that every member of the team is willing to support and help implement. All key stakeholders have had an opportunity to give their opinion and to understand the implications of various options. All members, including the leader, have the same formal power to support or block proposals. Before beginning the discussion, the leader or the group collectively should establish a fallback decision-making option if consensus cannot be reached.

CONSENSUS REQUIRES THAT…	CONSENSUS IS NOT…
→ Everyone has the opportunity to be heard → You seek a win/win solution → Everyone can live with the decision and everyone is willing to actively support and help implement it	→ Majority vote → Compromise → Everyone getting their first choice → A win/lose situation

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
▲ It builds collaborative capacity in the team ▲ It provides a high level of support for the decision ▲ Implementation may be faster and smoother with more people already aware of the issues at hand and brought into the solution	▼ It may take more time ▼ Team members may not have the collaborative skills needed to reach agreement

Keys to Success

- Explain exactly what consensus means in the given situation and why you've chosen it as the appropriate level of involvement

- Clearly outline the constraints, including time and financial limitations

- *Before beginning the decision-making discussion,* identify a fallback level of involvement if consensus can't be reached within the specific time period. Fallback options could include:
    - Leader decides
    - Another person decides, such as the person with the most expertise and experience or the person responsible for implementing the decision
    - Leader designates (or group identifies) team to whom to delegate with constraints
    - Super-majority (75-80%) vote

DELEGATE DECISION WITH CONSTRAINTS

How it works: The Facilitative Leader defines the decision that needs to be made in the form of a question or questions, clarifies the constraints on the decision (e.g., budget, timeframe, quality requirements), and delegates the decision to others. The leader does not alter the decision as long as it adheres to the constraints. A fallback option should be identified in the event the group cannot make the decisions within the constraints.

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
▲ It frees up the leader to deal with other issues ▲ It minimizes undermining of the decision ▲ It develops leadership capability of others	▼ It may take more time ▼ The team may not have the time, skill, experience, or perspective to make an informed decision ▼ The team may take on issues outside the bounds of the task

Keys to Success

- Be sure that you are truly willing to accept any outcome that honors the constraints
- Explain how people will be involved in the decision-making process and give your rationale. This includes determining the decision-making process to be used by the group or individual who the decision is delegated to.
- Clearly state constraints
- Build in milestone points for process and content checks
- Be available to answer questions

DISTRIBUTE AND DECENTRALIZE

How it works: The Facilitative Leader defines the decision that needs to be made in the form of a question or questions, clarifies the constraints on the decision (e.g., budget, timeframe, quality requirements), and delegates the decision to right-sized groups (e.g., departments or teams). The leader does not alter the decision as long as it adheres to the constraints.

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
▲ It frees up the leader to deal with other issues. ▲ Smaller groups of stakeholders can make decisions relevant to their specific conditions and needs ▲ It develops leadership capability of others	▼ It may take more time ▼ The team may not have the time, skill, experience, or perspective to make an informed decision ▼ The team may take on issues outside the bounds of the task

Keys to Success

- Be sure that you are truly willing to accept any outcome that honors the constraints

- Determine the right size grouping for the decision (e.g., each team decides their remote work expectations; everyone on each floor can give input into the air conditioning temperature). In addition to deciding that the overarching decision will be distributed & decentralized, the decision-making process within the decentralized groups needs to be articulated. For example, will the decision be made by the leader of a team using Decide & Announce, or will the decision be made together using Consensus?

- Clearly state constraints

- Build in milestone points for process and content checks

- Be available to answer questions

Factors to Consider in Choosing a Level of Involvement

Facilitative Leaders make conscious choices about how much to involve others after weighing several factors. Often our unconscious practice is to make decisions more quickly and with less potential conflict. Instead, we encourage you to lean towards increased engagement and sharing power. These questions are designed to help you hold the values of inclusivity and redistribution of consolidated power. We recognize that there is no one right way to make a decision, and that when we bring a power analysis into consideration, our many priorities may conflict with one another. In these instances, we encourage you to prioritize factors that help you and your team nurture shared power, accessibility, and transparency.

SHARING POWER, DISMANTLING OPPRESSION

How can we use this decision-making process to practice sharing power? Who might benefit from this practice? What are the costs of keeping the status quo or not bringing more people into decision-making?

TIME AVAILABLE

How much time can be spent on making the decision? What factors or actors are creating the deadlines or time pressure? Are deadlines fixed or flexible? Who benefits from the time pressure?

INFORMATION ACCESS

Who has information or expertise that can contribute to making a quality decision? If information is unequally distributed, how can we use this decision-making process to expand access to information and increase transparency?

CAPABILITY

How capable and experienced are people in operating as decision-makers or as a decision-making team? How can we use this decision-making process to help our team grow, collectively and as individuals? How are we correcting for the fact that often white people, men, abled people, and people with other privileged identities are assumed to be more capable, and receive more mentorship and leadership opportunities?

IMPACT & INTEREST

Who will be affected by the decision? In what ways are the effects different for people of different identities? How important or consequential is the issue to them? Who is interested in being part of this decision-making process? Who is interested in taking on more leadership in general?

Three Key Questions for Clearer Decision Making

Remember three key questions to ask or answer with your collaborators:

- ➔ What is the decision to be made?
- ➔ How will that decision be made? (Refer to the *Levels of Involvement*)
- ➔ What is the rationale for that decision-making process? (Refer to *Factors to Consider*)

Worksheet: Maximizing Engagement in an Upcoming Decision

Instructions

➔ Choose one person to be the coachee. The coachee will share a decision that is: a real upcoming decision, something you have the authority to determine the decision-making process, and something that affects other people.

➔ Everyone else will be a Coach. Coaches will use Inquiry Tools to support the Coachee in understanding their decision-making ecosystem and determining a level of involvement. As appropriate, use Advocacy Guidelines to advocate for the Coachee to use a particular decision-making process.

1) What is the decision to be made?
   Think of a decision that:
   (1) is upcoming, not in the past or hypothetical;
   (2) you are responsible for;
   (3) affects other people.

2) Describe the ecosystem around the decision to be made. (Remember to consider all stakeholders, refer back to the *Stakeholders* list)

   ➔ Who is part of the ecosystem surrounding the decision to be made?

   ➔ What do we know about the relationships between them – the individuals, groups, systems, and decisions?

3) What level of involvement have you chosen for this decision? (Refer back to the *Levels of Involvement in Decision Making*)

4) What is your rationale? (Refer back to *Factors to Consider in Choosing a Level of Involvement*)