Potential Sources of Conflict

Different Goals

*It’s time to finally get the prison this county needs!*  
*Keeping taxes down is our primary job!*  

Value Differences

*Fully funding ATI is the most responsible approach.*  
*There’s no proof that ATI programs work at all.*  

Scarcity of Resources

*It’s foolish to give our money to the neighbor county.*  
*So you’d rather take prime real estate off the tax roles?*  

Political Ideologies

*More police on the street will solve the problem.*  
*Enlightened government supports ATI first.*  

Role Conflicts

*As committee chair I want an immediate solution.*  
*My constituents demand more community dialogue.*  

Status Differences

*As Chair of Finances, I just won’t allow another bond.*  
*I was recently elected to solve issues just like this one.*  

Behavioral Styles

*I’m gonna get the new prison, or else…*  
*There is no good solution. I’ll just go with the majority.*
How Do People Deal with Conflict?

Avoidance  Ignoring or smoothing over

Defusion  Postponing dealing with a conflict until anger or frustration subsides

Power  Using position or status to force a decision to end a conflict

Appeal to Authority  Calling on someone higher in the organization to solve a conflict

Roll-over  Giving in to the other party for the sake of peace

Compromise  Dividing the pie, making trade-offs

Confrontation  Facing a conflict, expressing opinions, frustrations, desired outcomes

Collaboration  Using negotiation and problem-solving techniques to find a solution
In a conversation, when you disagree with someone, have you ever found yourself . . .

- Arguing
- Being defensive & making them defensive
- Jumping to premature solutions
- Challenging their intentions
- Matching stereotype for stereotype
- Giving “the answer”
- Giving “the facts” before they’re ready to listen
Choices That Make Things Better, Not Worse

- Recognize that there is always more than one point of view.

- Know yourself. Recognize your own biases, assumptions, attitudes, likes, dislikes, interests, values and style.

- Learn about the different perspectives & values of others.

- Include other voices in decision-making.

- Take time for understanding. Ask questions for clarification.

- Encourage feedback and allow for corrections and adjustments.

Strive to build working relationships, even when you disagree.
Conflict Choice: Opportunity

Opportunity: for learning
- People pay attention to conflict
- Levels of alertness increase
- Look for “teachable moments”
- Difficult but often possible to channel negative energy to constructive ends

When conflict becomes constructive, it leads to
- Greater understanding of self and others
- Mutual respect
- Improved communication
- Improved relationships
- Creative problem solving
- More stable resolutions

Opportunity: To move from positions to interests
- A Position: a specific proposed answer or solution to a problem, one which the other party frequently cannot accept.
- Interests: motivate position taking - needs, concerns, desires, fears, hopes
  - Unlike positions, interests may be satisfied by a variety of solutions, some of which may be acceptable to all parties
Probing for the interests behind a position can open the door to discussion of shared interests or values and produce alternative solutions which often meet the needs of more than one person or group.

**Examples**

- **Position**
  - Change the meeting time from 8 pm to 4 pm
  - Stick to the Administrator’s budget target!
  - Appoint me chair of the budget committee!
  - Join the shared services agreement!

- **Interest**
  - Need to take new night job, don’t want to resign committee
    - Concerned about family financial stress (spouse lost job)
    - Concern about losing house
    - Don’t want to have to move out of district altogether
  - Concern for safety, transit options for self/constituents at end of night meetings
    - etc
  - Clarity over uncertainty preferred
    - etc
  - Department chair with too much power more likely to be restrained
    - etc.

**Types of Interests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substantive</strong></td>
<td>Tangible resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedural</strong></td>
<td>The manner in which a dispute is resolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological</strong></td>
<td>Emotional &amp; relationship needs</td>
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Understanding the interests behind a position can help to identify shared interests or values and produce alternative solutions which often meet the needs of more than one person or group. When trying to identify interests it is helpful to remember the following:

**Ask “Why?”**
Put yourself in the shoes of others. Examine each position they take and ask yourself “Why?” Why, for instance, is your fellow legislator opposed to building a new jail downtown? The answer you come up with, to maintain the existing commercial tax base, is probably one of their interests.

**Ask “What will you gain?” or “What will you lose?”**
Ask people to answer the question “What will you gain or lose if you get (the stated position)?” Usually the answer to this question will reveal a party’s underlying needs or interests. For example, Legislator A states opposition to funding expanded youth services. When asked, “What will you gain if youth services are not expanded?” Legislator A might answer no additional burden on county office staff.

**Realize that a person or group can have multiple interests.**
In most instances, people have more than one interest. Some may be theirs alone; others may be shared. At times a person’s different interests may even be contradictory.

**The most powerful interests are basic human needs.**
Search for the basic motivational interest behind positions. If you can recognize and take care of basic needs – security, economic well-being, a sense of belonging, recognition and control over one’s life – you increase chances of reaching agreement. Progress is unlikely if someone feels as if their basic human needs are being threatened.

Adapted from *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury
Questioning To Uncover Interests

- What do you hope to achieve by suggesting ....?
- So, if I heard you correctly, you have a strong interest in …?
- What do you need … for?
- What are your concerns?
- Can you give me an example of why that is a concern for you?
- You must have a good reason for that suggestion. Can you help me understand what’s important to you?
- How would you do this, if you were me?
- So however this is resolved, you have a need for the solution to include ….
- What if we did … ? Would that satisfy your concern?
- What led you to that position?
- What would it take for you to support this idea?
- So you’re proposing that one possible solution is …. Are there others that you could support?
- What, in your opinion, would be a bad solution?
What Interferes with Communication?

- We need to make things fit, make sense through...
  - Recognition of patterns
  - Interpretation of confusing information
  - Learned expectations of how things work

- When we don’t hear or understand everything, we fill in the blanks by...
  - Leveling: discarding what we don’t understand
  - Heightening: exaggerating what we do understand
  - Assimilating: making up what we think is missing

- We work off assumptions and jump to conclusions

Productive Communications

- Listen (for content and feelings)
- Validate feelings
- Paraphrase to check for understanding
- Clarify what's not understood or missing
- Avoid challenging what’s being said while it’s being said
LISTEN…

- Attend closely to what is said, both verbally and non-verbally
- Acknowledge feelings as well as content
- Make sure body language reflects that you’re listening
- Information can be wrong, but feelings are not right or wrong
- Understanding is not agreeing

REFLECT…

- Restate in neutral terms what you heard to check “meaning”
- Separate content from feeling
- Invite corrections and accept them graciously.

CLARIFY…

- Question without challenging
- Use questioning to develop an understanding of what was said and confirm what you think was meant
Six Suggestions for Improving Listening Skills

1. Concentrate on what the other person is saying
2. Avoid early evaluations
3. See it from the other’s viewpoint
4. Avoid getting defensive
5. Do not express shock at what you hear
6. Practice paraphrasing
7. Avoid climbing the ladder of inference.*

*Adapted from Ross in Senge, The Fifth Discipline Field Book, 1994 & the Interface of CDRC
Responses that take the focus off the speaker (too soon, ie before they’ve finished saying what they want to say)

**Fixing their problem:**
- Giving orders
- Suggesting
- Advising
- Using logical arguments
- Cross-examining
- Providing them with information

**Evaluating them:**
- Judging
- Threatening
- Praising
- Diagnosing
- Taking sides
- Giving opinions

**Diverting them or negating concerns:**
- Reassuring
- Minimizing
- Changing the subject
- Talking about your own experiences
Active Listening

Steps to keep focus on the speaker

- Attend closely to what is said, both verbally and nonverbally
- Show understanding through nonverbal behavior
- Note feelings and intensity as well as content
- Listen for and acknowledge speaker’s basic values
- Restate the important thoughts, ideas and facts
- Invite corrections and accept them gracefully

Reflecting, restating

- Purpose – to let both the speaker and listener affirm
  - the message has been stated as intended
  - the message has been heard
  - the message has understood
- Result – when the speaker feels understood, the need to repeat or emphasize decreases, as does tension
  - It is time to move on to next phase of discussion

Statement – “Sure she delegated the responsibility to me to make the decision, but she always makes it herself anyway.”

- Content reflection - So you feel she’s going to make the decision in the end despite the fact that she told you it was your responsibility?
- Feeling reflection - It sounds like you’re feeling frustrated and disrespected by her?
  
  NOTE: If you don’t get it quite right, people will usually correct you, e.g. “Frustrated, definitely; I don’t know about disrespect. It’s just that I don’t want to waste my time.”

- Value reflection
  - I gather it’s important for you to spend your time on something that feels like it will be valued?
Human (personal) factors may be more important in reaching agreement than the terms proposed (substance). The way statements are phrased and delivered can threaten or wound others. This happens both on purpose and by accident.

- Ask questions

- Say “Yes, and my concern is . . .” instead of "No, but"

- Use only “I” statements

- Avoid "you" statements & absolutes, such as “never,” “always,” etc.

- Use constructive feedback – “When… Then…I would prefer…”
Use Questions!

Good questions are the most direct route to understanding and understanding is the best route to effective and respectful interactions.

Ask questions

- questions offer no target to strike at
- questions offer no position to attack

Frame questions

- to acknowledge their concerns
- to clarify understanding
- to facilitate problem-solving
- to encourage reality-testing discussion

So you're really concerned about not being misperceived, right?

How do you see that working? Who's going to do what?

What could we do to make this happen without doing that?

What do you think might happen if she learns of our decision through the rumor mill instead of directly from you?
The Many Ways to Ask -- WHY?

- Why do you want that?
- How did you come to that conclusion?
- What is it about that idea that’s most attractive to you?
- What do you need that for?
- So, you need a solution that will . . .
- What would it take to resolve this?
- Tell me more about . . .
- What led you to that position?
- Let me be sure I understand. Would you explain . . .
- Why is that important to you?
- What is it about that position that’s most important to you?
- What are you trying to achieve with . . .
- Can you give me an example of why this is a concern?
- Talk to me some more about . . .

Then listen. To check for understanding, paraphrase back to the speaker what you’ve just heard. Now, you’re getting information to work with.
The Yes Technique

Say  **Yes, and . . .**  instead of  **No, but . . .**

“Yes, we understand your concern for (state their interests) and wonder how we might accomplish that without causing (state your interests)?

Say “yes” and then suggest alternative solutions or reintroduce an old one for review once more. Acknowledge their concern and frame a question that facilitates mutual problem solving.

“Yes, we understand your concern for officially representing your constituents and we are concerned that we get proper recognition for what we’ve accomplished. So, let’s see how we might approach the issue without sending the wrong signals. Any ideas?”

**Advantages**

- Recasts the discussion in a positive way
- Avoids outright rejection
- Clarifies understanding of discussion point
- Recognizes the validity of the other party’s interests
- Frames my problem as your problem and visa versa
“I” messages can get the point across without threatening or causing “listener shutdown.”

“**I**” Messages

- I think we’ve talked about this point before. I want to make a different point.
- I don’t think I’m explaining myself. Let me try again.
- I’m interested in your reasons for saying that.
- I’m having trouble understanding that connection. Would you explain it to me?

Compare with…

“**You**” Attack Messages

- You don’t know what you’re talking about . . .
- You don’t get the point I’m trying to make . . .
- You won’t give an inch . . .
- You never listen to what we’re saying . . .
- You don’t care what that means to us . .
Constructive Feedback: Tell It Like You See It

- When I (see, hear, experience) . . .
  include an objective observation based on your experience, not an accusation

- Then I think . . .

- And I feel . . .
  use words that express feelings, such as angry, mad, frustrated or happy, recognized, etc.

- I would prefer . . .
  the behavior you would prefer or want to encourage

When I heard that you'd made the equipment decision before we had a chance to meet, I thought my opinion, and my knowledge of the job, didn’t matter much. I wondered whether being a part of this office made any difference at all. And, I have to admit, I felt angry and discouraged. I would prefer that the decision had waited until we’d all had a chance to meet and I could give my input.

When you asked me about the equipment before the purchase order was submitted, then I knew my input was included in the selection process and I felt like I was really a part of this operation. I'm excited about the new equipment and am really looking forward to learning how to use it.
Possible Outcomes of Conflicts

IMPASSE: No agreement
WIN-LOSE: One viewpoint over the other
COMPROMISE: Meet half-way
JOINT SATISFACTION: Maximum interests met

What’s a Good Outcome?

♦ Will it work for us and for them?
♦ Does it satisfy the interests and needs of those affected?
♦ Will everyone go along with it?
♦ Can it be efficiently implemented? (time, money, stress?)
♦ Will it improve relationships between the parties?
Points to Consider

WHAT: What’s at issue - what are we trying to resolve?
WHEN: By when does the decision have to be made?
WHO: Who needs to be involved to ensure the outcome is well-considered & supported?

A Problem-Solving Approach

1. Define Issue
2. Gather Information
3. Set Criteria
4. Consider Options
5. Choose
6. Implement
7. Evaluate
Decision Making Process

1. ISSUE
   What’s the issue/situation that needs action?

2. INFORMATION
   Do I/we have all the info needed?

3. CRITERIA
   How will I/we know it’s a good decision?
   ✓ Interests/needs are satisfied
   ✓ Cost, safety, schedule accommodated
   ✓ Outcome will be accepted/supported

4. OPTIONS
   What are the various options that will satisfy the identified criteria?

5. CHOOSE
   Option that maximizes criteria satisfaction

6. IMPLEMENT
   Explain, inform, reinforce

7. EVALUATE
   Did the decision create the desired/required effect when announced & once implemented?
What Kind of Agreement is Needed?

- Unanimous Agreement
- Consensus
- Majority Vote
- Person-in-Charge Decides without Discussion
- "Flip a Coin"
- Delegation
- Person-in-Charge Decides after Discussion
Consensus is a form of group decision making that...

- Respects difference of opinion.
- Pushes a group to consider all aspects of an issue and possible courses of action for solving it.
- Gives each person an equal chance to influence the outcome.
- Integrates many points of view into a unified outcome.
- Creates a better solution than one made by a single individual or voting by respecting and utilizing the information and experiences of each person in the group.
- Promotes unity rather than winners and losers.

Consensus is reached when...

- Everyone agrees that she or he has had sufficient opportunity to influence the group’s opinion.
- All members agree to support the final decision even though it may not be everyone’s first choice.
- Everyone is committed to supporting the decision.

Consensus is reached when each person can honestly say:

“*My point of view has been fully heard and considered by the group. I have also listened to and understand the points of view of other group members. Even though the final decision may not be exactly what I personally want, I can see the merit in what most of us think is best to do. Therefore, I can accept the group’s decision and will support it because it was arrived at in a fair and open manner.*”
Levels of Consensus

ENDORSE: Supports the decision

AGREE, WITH RESERVATION: Some concern, but will support the decision

DON’T LIKE, NEEDS MORE DISCUSSION: Blocks pending more information and/or discussion before a decision is made

VETO: Blocks because of serious opposition to the proposal

EIGHT STEPS TO A CONSENSUS DECISION

STEP 1: Group agrees on the type of decision to be made

STEP 2: Everyone presents his or her view clearly but without excessive advocacy.

STEP 3: All relevant information and evidence is reviewed, including minority opinions. Develop solution criteria acceptable to all.

STEP 4: Possible decision alternatives or options are identified.

STEP 5: The pros and cons of each alternative are examined.

STEP 6: Differences of opinion are fully explored in an effort to resolve disagreements.

STEP 7: Group discussion leads to the selection of the decision with the most positive and least negative features.

STEP 8: Everyone agrees to endorse and/or not block the final decision.
Suggestions to Support Consensus

1. **Create an open and trusting climate.** Group members should feel free to express differing ideas and opinions without the fear of attack or ridicule.

2. **Explore differences of opinion.** This helps members to gain additional information, to clarify issues, and to seek better alternatives. The group’s final idea will usually be superior to the initial suggestion of any one member.

3. **Support one another’s ideas.** Group members must be open to and respect opinions different from their own.

4. **Temporarily suspend judgment.** Wait until all ideas have been presented and discussed before beginning to evaluate them.

5. **Evaluate ideas objectively.** Evaluate each idea based on its merits. Confine disagreements to the issues and away from personalities.

6. **Avoid trying to “win” during group discussions.** Discussions should not turn into a personal contest between members. Becoming too strongly attached to a particular idea can cause you to lose sight of the idea’s objective merits and drawbacks.

7. **Discuss ideas until sufficient agreement exists.** Deliberate with a view toward reaching consensus, mindful that striving for 100% agreement, while desirable, may be unrealistic.

   **Avoid voting.** Voting forces member to choose sides and could split your group into “winners” and “losers.”
Dealing with Difficult People

♦ Don’t react. Step Back and Be an Observer.
Don’t let them get your goat! Take a break. Buy yourself time to think. Be aware of your own hot buttons and defuse their tactics by recognizing what’s going on. Keep focused on getting what you want, not getting even or getting back.

♦ Step to Their Side.
Don’t argue with them. Instead listen to what they’re saying, acknowledge their point of view and agree with them whenever possible. Try to dissuade the anger, fear, hostility and suspicion on the other side.

♦ Change the Game.
Reframe what they’ve said as an attempt to deal with the problem. Ask problem-solving questions, like “What if we were to . . .” Use the “Yes, and” technique, for example: “Yes, I understand your concern with legislative protocols, and I wonder how we might address those and still allow our constituents the voice they desire. Any ideas?”

♦ Make It Easy for Them to Say YES.
Address their interests. Help them save face. Involve them in the process. Think of yourself as a mediator and problem solver.

♦ Help Them See the Consequences of Saying NO.
Make it hard for them to say NO. Ask reality-testing questions. Warn, don’t threaten. Clarify the negative consequences of not addressing your side of the issue.

Adapted from William Ury, GETTING PAST NO, 1991.
Managing Problem Behaviors

As the chair of the meeting you can…

♦ Wait. Be sure that intervention is necessary.

♦ Be transparent
  o Name what is going on
  o State what you are trying to do and why

♦ Refer to procedure and behavioral guidelines

♦ Encourage parties to attack the problem not the people

♦ Use communication skills
  o Question for clarity about what was said
  o Diffuse attacks by reframing to identify interests
  o Translate value-laden or judgmental language into less emotionally charged terms
  o Question to get at interests

♦ Give as much positive reinforcement as possible
  o Project caring and respect
  o Accept and validate the expression of feelings
  o Acknowledge and affirm clear descriptions or statements
  o Look for and state shared concerns and areas of agreement

♦ Intervene to prevent escalation
  o Use humor, carefully, to reduce tension
  o Take a break and deal one-on-one
  o Change the format of the meeting or the mode of communication

♦ Whenever possible, build a relationship

Adapted from Interface CDRC 1998
I DECIDE: Unilateral executive decision making

I CONSULT WITH INDIVIDUALS AND DECIDE:
Public hearings, polls and focus groups

I CONSULT WITH A GROUP AND DECIDE:
Advisory boards, blue-ribbon panels, working groups

WE DECIDE: Collaborative problem-solving

YOU DECIDE: Fully delegate authority

Visit www.iap2.org
Why Involve the Public?

- To educate people about the situation and the options
- To test the legitimacy of proposals
- To improve the quality of decisions
- To build relationships (and social capital)
- To create support and/or understanding for implementation
- To build trust
How Involved Should the Public Be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarity of Problem</th>
<th>LESS Involvement</th>
<th>MORE Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of Problem</td>
<td>Well defined</td>
<td>Not well defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Level</td>
<td>Little public concern</td>
<td>Significant public concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of Parties</td>
<td>Well organized &amp; represented</td>
<td>Little or uneven organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>Speed is of the essence</td>
<td>Minimal time pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contentiousness</td>
<td>Basic consensus</td>
<td>Significant disagreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of Solution</td>
<td>Few options available</td>
<td>Options unclear or varied</td>
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A higher level of public involvement is warranted when:

- An issue is complex
- Many parties are involved
- No one agency or organization can resolve the situation itself
- The issue is negotiable
- Parties are willing to participate

A lower level of public involvement is advisable when:

- There is an emergency or crisis
- There is not enough time
- Legal clarification is necessary
- The community is too polarized
- There are few options

Adapted from Managing Ongoing Public Involvement; The Conflict Clinic; 1989
The Challenges of Involving the Public

- Getting people to the table/generating participation
- Defining the table
- Establishing representation
- Who represents the public interest?
- Power imbalances
- Negotiating consensus
- Culture and values
- Accountability
- Costs and risks
- Level of knowledge
- Issues too broad to deal with
- Time
- Uncertainty of benefits
- Finding achievable objective

Adapted from: Fisher, Russell, and Robertson (1994)
Goals for Constructive Public Involvement

For issues that require ongoing deliberation...

Participation Is Inclusive and Balanced

♦ The diversity of community perspectives is represented
♦ The demographics and geography of the community are reflected
♦ Provide multiple forums to allow different levels of participation

Responsibility Is Shared

♦ Decision-makers define the parameters of acceptable outcomes
♦ Technical advisors share necessary information in accessible ways
♦ Participants share responsibility for the success of the process with decision makers, facilitators, and technical advisors
♦ Decision-makers agree to work toward implementation of group recommendations

Communication Is On-going

♦ Participants and decision-makers have ongoing interaction throughout
♦ Information is shared with the wider public through media, public meetings, focus groups, etc.

Constructive Problem Solving is Promoted

♦ Participants educate each other through the process
♦ Opportunity is provided for defining common and differing interests and goals
♦ Participants identify and test multiple options
♦ Participants strive for consensus-based decision making, even though ultimate decisions are enacted by local government

Adapted from CDRC Interface, 1998
Techniques for Involving the Public

Polls and Surveys

♦ “Paper and Pencil” techniques used to gauge public sentiment
♦ Reliable results requires design experience/expertise

Hotlines

♦ Telephone or other technologies adapted to allow any number of citizens to “call in” and register their opinion

Web Sites and E-Mail Lists

♦ Up-to-date information on a project or process available to all citizens
♦ Often includes option of proving input on issues

Interviews

♦ Used to quickly gather detailed information from a diversity of perspectives on an issue
♦ Information generally kept confidential or distributed without attributing source

Focus Groups

♦ Small group of people brought together for a facilitated discussion
♦ Sometimes taped for detailed analysis of information

Retreats

♦ Fixed group brought together for an extended meeting for a variety of purposes
♦ Best scheduled in non-work environment
Techniques for Involving the Public (cont’d)

Charettes

♦ Intensive session with stakeholders and decision-makers
♦ Often used for physical planning and design issues requiring creative thinking and assessment

Advisory Groups

♦ Fixed membership groups which bring together a representative subset of citizens or interests
♦ Useful when long-term involvement is needed or when complex information must be processed

Public/Community Meetings

♦ Open meetings used to educate the public, seek general input and/or “test the waters”
♦ Communication often two-way between decision-makers and public

Public Hearings

♦ Formal meetings with specific notification requirements where the public is asked to provide input or react to proposals
♦ Generally involving one-way communication, with decision-makers listening to comments but not responding
What Kind of Meeting Are You Running?

Reporting and Presenting
Providing information to interested parties…
♦ Provide specifics on existing circumstances
♦ Clarify any known plans or anticipated actions

Responding and Evaluating
Decision-makers receive information…
♦ Clarify that the decision will be made elsewhere
♦ Define what you are seeking responses to
♦ Clarify how responses and evaluations will be communicated to decision-makers

Problem-Solving or Decision-Making
Using group knowledge to solve a problem…
♦ Agree on the definition of problem or decision needed
♦ Clarify the decision making process to be used
♦ Consider criteria for acceptable solutions before discussing solutions
♦ Gather necessary data and technical information
♦ Generate a range of options before agreeing on a solution

Adapted from Interface CDRC 1998
Structure Your Meeting

- Establish clear meeting objectives together with participants
- Clarify how this meeting fits in the overall deliberation/decision-making process
- Clarify government official, technical advisor, and participant roles and responsibilities
- Use an agenda to manage expectations and progress
- Establish ground rules and/or interaction expectations
- Establish and adhere to timing for ending the meeting
- Ensure the keeping of accurate records