Collaborative Leaders Network

A Community Engagement Strategy for Negotiating a Package of Community Benefits

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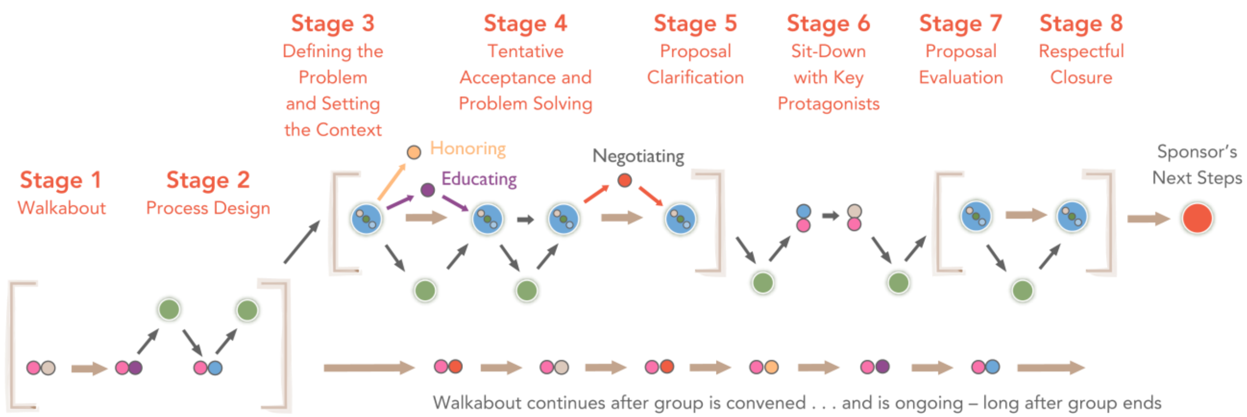

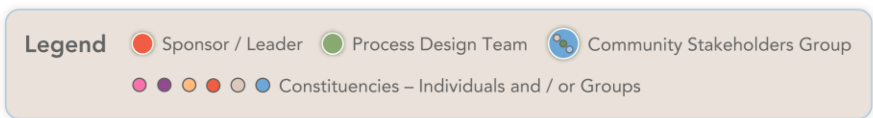

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The dual goals of this strategy are to move forward on a development project that will impact a community and build strong relationships with the affected parties.

Overview

When a company or an agency ("sponsor") wants to take an action that will significantly impact a community, working with that community to find a way forward is worth the time and effort. For this to happen, the process must be co-developed with the community.

This starts with the sponsor's efforts to discern the worldview and motivations of community stakeholders. By learning what really matters to affected individuals and groups, the sponsor can work with them to define a set of community benefits that will honor stakeholders for the adjustments they might have to make and the burdens they carry. A package of agreements is central to this strategy … whether the community approves, opposes, or is silent about the proposed project.

Critical to the success of this process is the fact that it is led by a company executive who stays fully involved. This ongoing involvement by the "sponsor/leader" can take a number of forms; the executive may serve as the group's facilitator, or may simply be present at the meetings to provide clarification on issues when asked by the group or by a third-party facilitator. The engagement of a senior level representative sends a message to the community and to the company about just how important the issue, the process, and the relationship with the community are. A good process can help to move a project forward and build a positive relationship with the community.

This strategy places control of the process in the hands of the community;
it models and encourages integrity, transparency, humility,
and the honoring of vastly differing perspectives.

Core Values

1. Integrity of every action

Engagement with the community requires that not only the process, but also every action involved, be done with integrity. This includes the initial discussions, the development of a process, and its execution.

2. Involvement of the community in the process

The objective is to have a successful process, not just a process that goes through the motions. This means that the process must almost always be co-developed with the community. As a result, the process may feel slow-moving, but in the end, will demonstrate the axiom, “Go slow to go fast.”

Once the decision is made to proceed with a community engagement process (slowly, thoughtfully, and inclusively), the community is more likely to develop a process that can move straightforwardly and quickly through the phases of community engagement and negotiation.

3. Long-term relationships

Any process should be built on the foundation of a larger, longer-term relationship between the sponsoring company and the community. The current engagement is only one part of that long-term relationship. Any decisions made and/or actions taken should contribute to the health of that relationship over time.

4. Health of the community

The overall health of a community should be a goal of all leadership, in line with the adage: “Leave places better than you find them.” In addition, as a pragmatic matter, an organization’s ability to have a long-term relationship with a community is greatly enhanced if that community is healthy.

5. Health of the corporate body

All corporations benefit from a strong and healthy character. Acting on behalf of the community’s health is also acting on behalf of the company’s internal well-being. The community recognizes this attitude in a corporation, and will give it various types of support that they won’t give to other corporations. As it is said, “What goes around comes around.”

Critical Success Factors

This process is best conducted if these three core philosophies exist and can be communicated:

1. **It is vitally important to honor individuals, groups, and communities for the realities they face**, especially if others are benefited by the burdens they carry. For example, a community allowing a power plant in its neighborhood—no matter what the community benefits look like—will not feel as if its members have "won." In reality, the concept of "win-win" has no place in these conversations. In nearly every case, if given the option, the community would pass on both the benefits and the project. This approach leads to a graceful acceptance or at least tolerance by the community. The sponsor's language, demeanor, and positioning must remain true to this sense of outcome.

2. **"Ruthless transparency" needs to the norm**. Discussions held inside and outside the meeting should be openly acknowledged; the content of those discussions should be shared with the group as quickly and as fully as possible and conflicts should be openly acknowledged. The fact that the process has a specific goal should always be part of the discussion. It's important to overcome the natural tendency to "spin" information. Any sense of hidden agendas and secret (as opposed to separate) discussions can seriously undermine this work. Find stories, metaphors, and analogies to enable even the most complex subjects to be made accessible. Participants need to walk away feeling that this entire process was "above board."

3. This process operates on the philosophy that **human beings have a "higher self"** and a "better self" that can work together on tough issues and achieve important results. There are pieces of the process that are specifically designed to call on that higher self, to honor it when it is present, and to celebrate the group's capacity to exhibit that self in a group context. Greater capacity to truly listen, to forgive, and to honor vastly different perspectives are among the behaviors of higher self applied in the process.

There is one more element that is critical to the success of the Community Engagement Strategy. The process must be led by an executive of the company who stays fully involved. This requires an executive who can handle himself/herself in a grassroots setting.

- It sends a message to the community that the process is important to the sponsor, and that the community is important to the sponsor.
- The executive is able to represent the company views and to make commitments on an on-going basis.
- The corporate memory/understanding is enhanced when an executive deals with the issues directly and can share them with the rest of the corporate leadership.

Stage 1: Walkabout

Through conversations with community leaders, the work of this stage is to understand community perspectives and build sufficient trust to enable a process to take place.

Overview

It has been said by some that the Australia's First People, the Aborigines, might embark on a "walkabout" to reconnect with their heritage and personal history in order to regain their spiritual and moral footing. That concept is the foundation of this first stage—building in the opportunity for the sponsor and project team to "ground" themselves by spending time in the community that will be impacted in order to learn, first-hand, from the people who live there.

Given that the convening organization has a concrete purpose—such as obtaining community support to site a new power plant, or to set up wind farms—the goal of this stage is to identify three types of issues:

- Community perceptions of its own key issues
- Community perceptions of the organization proposing the action, including initial impressions of the project
- Community relations among key stakeholders and factions

A series of conversations with community leaders helps to identify others who need to be part of the group process. Ultimately, the work of this stage is to understand community perspectives and build sufficient trust to enable such a process to take place.

The walkabout is an expression of caring and respect for the community and its views.

Stage 1: Tools

Walkabout

Rationale

- The walkabout allows a sponsor/leader to gather the information needed to enable the actual process to take place. It also explains the larger environment in which the sponsoring organization will be operating.
- The walkabout conveys to a community that the sponsoring organization has a project it needs to undertake, but first wants to understand what matters to the community—both about the project and generally.
- The walkabout also allows the sponsoring organization to understand parallel and contemporaneous events in the community that may impact the process. This can prevent the process leaders from being blindsided by changes in participants' behaviors or views that do not seem related to the process.

Process

Participants in these conversations (either one-on-one or in small groups) will raise several pointed questions that are intended to discern the rationale for the project and the underlying values of the company and the project leader. The leader should be prepared to answer openly and directly questions like these:

- Why does this project have to be done? Have other alternatives been explored?
- Why does it have to be done this way, at this time, in this place?
- Who are you (the leader) as a person?
- What is the character of the company, its culture, its goals, and its history?

To get a sense of community members' perspectives on their environment in general, and of this project specifically, questions like these can be asked:

- "What is your sense of the (particular) situation in Hawaii?"
- "How do you see the sponsoring company?"
- "What is your sense of how this area of the island is perceived and dealt with?"
- "How would you like to be worked with?"
- "How do you feel about the challenges and burdens faced by this area of the island?"

The team working on the project meets regularly to download feedback from community interactions, and to discuss other events in the community that might impact the project. The group uses the information gathered to begin to sketch out a plan for the process of engaging the community.

Stage 1: Key Tasks

- Develop a list of key elected officials, administrative officials, and local leaders to be consulted prior to any meetings.
- Take the time that is needed to hold extensive interviews/conversations with these individuals.
- Use the interactions to gather information about the key stakeholder perceptions/values and to start building trust and mutual respect.
- Develop a list of people to invite to the community engagement meetings.

Stage 1: Tips

Tip: Whenever possible, and particularly if the situation is difficult, or the entity has a troubled relationship with the community, there is real value to the sponsor/leader being a part of the walkabout. The learning from these interviews, and well as the tone with which the comments are delivered, may be critical factors in the way that the overall process goes, and first-hand knowledge beats any report, any time. It helps company executives understand the needs of the community at a cellular level.

Tip: In the interviewing process, open-ended questions allow individuals to say what is important to them. What's shared may not seem relevant to the project, but it is all relevant. They are saying what matters to them and that information may suddenly prove useful at some point in the process. As a consequence, give these interviews their own time. Do not schedule them too close together, and be prepared to spend an hour or two on key ones.

Tip: Take copious notes of these conversations (during the meeting if possible and immediately afterwards if not). If the interviewee grants permission to take notes, there will be occasions when the material being shared is so personal, or so emotional, that it is obvious there should be no note taking at that time. If unable to take notes during the meeting, the interviewer needs to do this as quickly as possible after the meeting, within minutes preferably. Even waiting a few hours will lead to losing a lot of the wisdom from the session. It is helpful to carry 3 x 5 cards to jot down all the key points, which can later be fleshed out with detail.

Tip: If it feels appropriate, one of the questions to ask about is the history of the place that will be impacted: What was its role in history? What role did the area play in the economy or social structure or religious activity of earlier days? Did certain major events occur in the area? Knowing about the history of a place may be very useful in the process at some point, and having that in a leader's memory bank offers the opportunity to cite it at the proper moment.

Stage 1: Vignette

In meeting with people, it may be appropriate to bring something to share: a small tray of *haupia*, fruits, chocolates, as you would as a guest going to someone's house. Here is an illustration of how a seemingly simple gift served as a barometer of affinity:

"I took a tray of *haupia* to someone I had never met before and who I was told was a person I needed to get to know. I met him at his house and we sat down at a table. I gave him the *haupia* tray, which he pushed as far away from us on the table as his arm could reach. We began talking. I told him something about our project and about what we were doing in other parallel work. After a while, he cut me off. He asked me to tell him who I was, who my family was, how I came to be doing what I am doing. During the course of the conversation we began to find some people we had in common. His hand reached out and drew the *haupia* about half way back to him. At one point, we talked about a man whom we both deeply admired. He went into the house and brought out an object that came from his association with that man. We spoke of the specialness of the object and then he drew the *haupia* to him, called out for his daughter, and asked her to serve it to us. We continued talking for a while longer and I have since been able to have many conversations with him. If we had not been able to find connections, things might have gone differently and the tray might never have come close to us."

Stage 2: Process Design

The goal of this stage is to decide whether to launch a community engagement process, and if so, to allow for its joint design by the group participants and process design team.

Overview

If the decision is made to go ahead with a community engagement process, the subsequent work of this stage involves designing a structure for the first meeting of the group and then establishing a framework that allows for participants and the process leaders to jointly design the process going forward.

Part way through the walkabout, ideas start to form about the best ways to organize the process that is about to begin. The team working on the project meets regularly to download from any recent community interactions and to discuss other events in the community that might impact the project. Information about community attitudes (both the larger context and specific views of the sponsoring organization) can be used as a basis for planning the meetings. With later interviewees, it's possible to run process ideas by participants as they are formulated. For example, "We're hearing such-and-such about a certain issue — does that sound right to you?"

The value of a senior executive leading this process is that it sends a message to the community and to the company about just how important the issue, the process, and the relationship with the community are.

Stage 2: Key Tasks

- Make a go/no-go decision about a community engagement process.
- Develop the roster of who will be invited to participate.
- Create the agenda for the first meeting.
- Make various logistical decisions such as where, when, and whether an external third-party facilitator is needed.

Stage 2: Checklists

Before deciding whether to launch a community engagement process, the sponsor needs to ask itself some questions:

- Is this community in any condition to have a dialogue at this time?
- Will the community agree to participate in a process sponsored by us?
- Does it appear that there are early indications of a good giveback package?
- Do we believe the company's representative can sell this package of givebacks to the authorizing body and to the company's own board of directors?

Based on the answers to these questions, the process design team makes the go/no-go decision on whether a community engagement process should be launched. Once a decision has been made to go forward, subsequent decisions need to be made, including:

- Who needs to be at the table?
- Should a third-party facilitator be hired or can an executive from the sponsoring organization do it?
- Does a third-party convener (who can plan, support, and facilitate the process) need to be found because there is such distrust in the community?
- Where is the most appropriate location for the meetings?
- When is the best time for the meetings?
- What is the role of the media?
- Should the public be invited?
- What should be included in the first meeting agenda?

Stage 2: Dilemmas

Sensitivities exist around who is invited.
Individuals are usually invited into the group because their names have been repeatedly mentioned by key community leaders. The composition can include many of the expected names as well as a few who are unexpected; some known leaders may be left out. The sponsor/leader presumes there are reasons for exclusion and may not want to raise the specific exclusions with the group and possibly cause them to feel pressured to "reject" specific names. The decision is best left to the group to resolve.

Stage 2: Tools

The *pule*

The *pule* can be a powerful and positive way to open a meeting; it does not, in any way, need to be religious. An effective *pule* tends to contain certain elements:

- A call to separate from the events of the day and things that occur before and after the meeting
- A call for a focus on the event or process
- An expression of appreciation for the presence of everyone gathered to work on whatever is the subject of the meeting

Sample wording:

"Let us all take a moment to reflect on this evening's meeting. Let us put aside the worries and thoughts of our day and of what we'll do after the meeting. Let us focus on the reason why we have gathered. We are here to help our community work on the very important issue of ______. We need to gather all of our collective energies and bring all of our best thinking to bear in order to make things better for our community. As we look around, let us be very grateful that so many of us care and are willing to give up our time and energy to work together. We are part of something truly special tonight. And now let us begin."

It's a good idea to ask the eldest and/or most respected person in the room if he/she would like to offer the *pule* or designate someone to do so. In a pinch, the facilitator could do it as well.

Stage 2: Tips

Tip: One of the great challenges to this process may well come from within the corporate entity itself. This process gives so much power to the community in the process that it will undoubtedly raise fears and concerns within the corporation. The power of "letting go" is not easy for many to recognize, especially those who are used to more classic power equations. It is therefore imperative that the corporate sponsor of this process understands and willingly abides by the protocol.

Tip: The right site for the process is critical. The comfort of the group in its fullest sense is the goal. A place near or in the impacted area, a time of day that works for them, parking, air-conditioning (if during the summer months), food and drink arrangements, are all elements to take into account as part of the process design.

Stage 3: Defining the Problem and Setting the Context

In this stage, the group process is explained, the proposed project is presented, and every effort is made to put and keep control of the process in the hands of the community.

Overview

This stage covers at least the first meeting, and possibly more. The basic goals are to:

- Orient the group to the protocols that will govern the collaboration.
- Provide information about the broader context of this initiative, both by presenting and responding to questions.
- Discuss the "whys" of the project: why necessary, why now, why here?

The start of the formal meeting incorporates some fundamental elements:

- Thanks to the participants for coming
- Feedback on what was gleaned from the walkabout
- An explanation of what the sponsoring organization is trying to do
- A description of the five-part Community Engagement Protocol *(see Tools)*
- A preliminary discussion about givebacks
- A presentation on the organization's proposed project
- A commitment to obtaining answers by the next meeting to questions that could not yet be answered

Around this stage, the process design team spends time between each meeting discussing how the process is going and how it should move forward.

To put and keep control of the process in the hands of the community, the protocol—including choice of facilitator, agenda, place, and time—is reviewed and discussed at each meeting.

Stage 3: Key Tasks

- Introduce and then execute on the "Community Engagement Protocol," including asking for permission to proceed. Do <u>not</u> assume that the answer will be "yes."

Stage 3: Tools

Community engagement protocol

The community engagement process can be viewed as a series of building blocks of subjects that appear at most, if not all, meetings to different degrees at different stages of the conversation. The five-part engagement protocol follows:

1. Tell the community before anyone else.
2. Ask the community's permission.
3. Understand that the community may oppose the proposal and/or sponsor.
4. Let the community know that it is entitled to givebacks based on the intrusion into their area—whether it approves, opposes, or is silent about the proposed project.
5. Ask the community for its views on those givebacks.

For example, see: [Hawaii Energy Forum Report]

Meeting protocols

1. The context of the process in terms of other activities going on in the community is covered at each meeting.
2. The "why" questions on the project are part of every meeting: Why does the company need the project? Why does it have to be located in our neighborhood? Why now? Answers are provided as questions are raised; they often lead to more and new questions.
3. The criteria for the givebacks are discussed at every meeting. The participants want to ground specific givebacks against a set of guiding principles or criteria, which are refined during the course of the meetings.
4. The givebacks themselves are discussed at every meeting. This begins with some starting ideas at the first session and evolves into a tight set that is then costed out for discussion.
5. The evaluation of the givebacks is saved until the end by the group. They are discussed in relation to each other and as part of a larger package.

While most of these building blocks are likely to be present at each meeting, the elements that are emphasized are likely to shift over the course of the process. The table below illustrates where the focus was placed during four meetings in a case involving the siting of a power plant.

	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Meeting 4
Evaluations	0	0	0	40
Givebacks	10	25	50	30
Criteria	10	15	15	10
Why	40	45	20	10
Context	20	5-10	5-10	5
Protocol	20	5-10	5-10	5

Another way to look at this is to see each meeting as a stage:

	Defining the	Tentative	Proposal	Respectful

	problem and setting the context	acceptance and problem solving	clarification and evaluation	closure
Evaluations	0	0	0	**40**
Givebacks	10	**25**	**50**	**30**
Criteria	10	**15**	**15**	10
Why	**40**	**45**	20	10
Context	**20**	5-10	5-10	5
Protocol	**20**	5-10	5-10	5

While in this particular case, each meeting moved along to the next stage, this isn't always the case. A stage such as "Defining the problem" or "Tentative acceptance and problem solving" could go on for two or three meetings.

Stage 3: Dilemmas

There is a community history of feeling unacknowledged.
Many community disputes arise out of perceptions of being ignored or imposed upon by outside interests and other communities. Communities near undesirable land uses (such as waste dumps), are likely to bring feelings of anger or hopelessness into discussions about new uses. These sentiments need to be heard from the start.

There are leadership issues in disaffected groups.
The loudest, angriest person in the group might also be the most aggressive in seeking to speak for the group. A practical challenge is to help the group choose someone who is both a respected person within the group and willing to engage in problem-solving discussions.

There are challenges to creating a context for problem-solving discussions.
If the group is focusing on a general-use principle, i.e., "No new development on this site," or a process principle, i.e., "All decisions about our future should be made by the people who live here," it is difficult for some participants to shift to discussing how some amount of development might occur or how decision making might be shared. One option is to reframe an issue by asking group members to think about what would happen if things did not go their way. Participants are *not* being asked to let go of their position or the line they have drawn, but to consider "what if?" This requires great care.

Developing durable community partnerships takes significant time and attention.
Developing community agreements takes time, patience, great care in listening, and a willingness to make what might be major commitments to the community. It also requires a corporate willingness to continue to check on how agreements are being implemented, to help with problem solving and to nurture relationships over time.

The sponsor of the process has a vested interest in the outcome.
Underscoring for the group on a regular basis the inherent conflict of having the sponsor both facilitate the group and simultaneously want a specific result is very important. Any time someone in the audience points to a situational conflict, it should be directly acknowledged and addressed; this includes an offer to step down as facilitator at the end of each meeting.

Stage 3: Tips

Tip: The sponsor/leader needs to give the control and power in the conversation to the community. Participants should be asked: “Do you want to change facilitators? Do you want to change meeting logistics? Are there subjects you want to add? Are we going about this conversation the right way?” The community needs to know that they can make decisions about the process.

Tip: Trust cannot be forced or demanded. In this process, trust needs to be extended on an unconditional basis by the sponsor/leader. When the community asks at the early stages, “Why should we trust you?” the appropriate response by the sponsor should be, “Don’t.” The sponsor/leader should tell the community that anything that is promised will be put in writing and that promises will be attached to legally enforceable documents.

Tip: Because people learn in different ways, the facilitator should attempt to combine words and pictures in depicting issues and processes; this will foster greater participation.

Tip: One of the best icebreakers for a group discussion is to talk to group members about their highest hopes and greatest fears. It’s best to start with the fears. People need to get the negative off their chests before they can go ahead with a discussion of the positives.

Stage 4: Tentative Acceptance and Problem Solving

This stage moves the community toward a greater comfort with the sponsoring company's goals and with the notion of givebacks for the burden being shouldered by the community.

Overview

This stage develops the group's willingness to accept that there is "reasonable cause" for the project. The goal is not that group members endorse or support the objectives; it is enough for them to acknowledge the existence of a rationale that is driving the sponsoring company to move ahead with its project.

This stage also defines the notion of a "package of givebacks." The discussion could cover the philosophy behind the giveback approach; the criteria; and the boundaries (such as, "What is the financial maximum amount we can ask for?" "Is anything out of bounds?"). The reality is that some individuals will see this discussion as leading to what they perceive as a bribe, and this view should be acknowledged.

Substantive decisions about givebacks are usually made in negotiations between affected stakeholders and the sponsor/leader. Many of these decisions are made subsequent to holding negotiations off-line. In some cases, the negotiations are conducted in a problem-solving style with the whole group.

While the community weighs in with feedback on the project and decisions about givebacks, the process is not neutral; the sponsor is seeking a specific outcome.

Stage 4: Key Tasks

- Listen for needs that might become elements of the givebacks. Some of these needs might have first been discovered during the walkabout. Others might arise during the meetings.
- Listen for and respond to questions about: the process; other participants; the sponsoring organization; and the executive's approach to meeting facilitation. The facilitator may follow up outside the meeting to learn more about an individual's perceived discomfort.

Stage 4: Tips

Tip: The presence of elders may be very important to the process. People tend to behave better in front of elders, especially those who are revered. People also tend to listen to elders; they often bring a perspective to the discussions that others cannot. One way is to approach the *kupuna* directly, explain what is involved, why it is important for the process to succeed, and then ask for their assistance. In a multiple meeting format, their presence is most critical at the outset or at the point when the discussion needs to come back together, or both.

Tip: Remember that this process has a specific desired outcome—the pathway to a project with community acceptance or tolerance. That end should be prominent at all times so that it can be used against the process at any point. If done well, the process has the potential to lead to a long-term relationship that goes well beyond the project itself.

Stage 4: Vignette

Sometimes, a prior process on the same or similar subject has not reached a good closure, and therefore becomes part of a subsequent process. In the Wa`ahila Ridge transmission line project, the line was denied a key permit by the Board of Land and Natural Resources. Rather than appeal, the company went back to the drawing board. One year later, when the company went to the public to discuss the proposed new alignments, the reaction of some was to pick the same, earlier fight, even though an alternative was being presented.

While there is no way to prevent this, a sponsor should build in some process tolerance for this dynamic. Rather than be caught by surprise, initial scoping should include a review of unresolved sentiments that may be carried into a new process. Acknowledging this will help to prevent the new process from being hijacked by past issues.

Stage 5: Proposal Clarification

In this stage, the group develops a tentative list of givebacks.

Overview

The group becomes able to fully engage in the discussion of actual givebacks in this stage—having moved on from questions about the validity of the project. Participants are ready to talk about issues and key needs as they work to develop a tentative list of givebacks.

A need that is expressed as a possible giveback is assessed by the facilitator and project team in three ways: Is it important? Who is stating the need? Is it realistic?

- If the need seems unrealistic, the issue is addressed as soon as possible, though probably not at the same meeting. Some level of consideration is important for any idea.
- If the need seems important, and it is being expressed by a key player, and it seems potentially realistic, then the facilitator can take the negotiation off-line if it does not appear to be a large-group issue. This may turn into a basic agreement that is brought back to the group for endorsement and refinement and further work on specifics, or it may be fully negotiated off-line.

If off-line, the negotiation process is conducted and the resolution is brought back to the group as part of the larger giveback package. Some elements may be completely worked out and agreed-to; other elements may be partially agreed to and require further specifics to be ironed out.

If the process is handled well, it can lead to a long-term relationship that goes well beyond the project itself.

Stage 5: Key Tasks

- The group develops a list of possible givebacks.
- At the request of the group, further research may have to be done to determine what is involved and what the costs would be for various options.
- The list is presented to the group to ensure that it accurately reflects ideas that were raised by participants.

Stage 5: Dilemmas

There may be discomfort with the process.
Many people are actually comfortable with a formal process (even when they claim not to be). Because the givebacks process is neither formal nor standardized, it can create discomfort in some participants. One way to mitigate this is to regularly acknowledge that the current

process doesn't foreclose using others at any time (including a formal process). It may also be useful to ask the group to apply "act as if" thinking. Rather than asking group members to approve the process, the facilitator can ask them to simply "try it out" or "act as if it is OK" long enough to fully engage. That may allow people to participate without agreeing that the process is a good one.

There can be a misperception that by discussing the givebacks, the community is, in essence, approving of the project.
The protocol clearly allows the community to say "no" while the giveback process is under way, or even after the giveback process is over. This is in contrast to the traditional permitting process, which does not allow for this kind of parallel work; it is usually all or nothing, pro or con.

Stage 5: Tips

Tip: Communities need to exercise some degree of restraint in their demands. What a sponsor doesn't want to see happen is to have the process undermined by an example that allows others to dismiss it as unrealistic and/or inappropriate.

Tip: The key in all of these various communications is directness and honesty. State what is involved and what is not, what actions mean and what they don't, and what the process involves and does not involve.

Stage 5: Vignette

In the West Oahu power plant project, Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc. was able to have initial discussions with stakeholders on the project, and then to formally state "The community's ultimate position will be temporarily placed on the side, while we move to a discussion of givebacks." The formal "suspension" worked for members of the community group, allowing them to move forward without concern about having to take a position on the project itself .

On the Lanai wind farm project, there exists such a history of mistrust in process that some of the group members have struggled with the parallel work. Two things have helped in this case:

First, the group has been reminded that without a giveback package, what they were engaged in what was an "all-or-nothing" process that could result in the project being built and the community getting nothing. Coming up with a givebacks package while opposing the wind farm created the opportunity to get something--no matter the outcome of the project.

Second, the group asked for and ultimately received a written description of the role that Hawaiian Electric would play in the process. It was complex because the project involved multiple processes with multiple decision makers. What was laid out was a clear statement of what Hawaiian Electric could and could not do, and it included a specific statement that the community could still oppose the project.

See document The Wind Farm Project

Stage 6: Sit-Down with Key Protagonists

This stage arises when a breakdown occurs and meetings need to be suspended so that the leader and affected parties can sit down separately and off-line.

Overview

This stage arises when a breakdown occurs—of such major impact—that the meetings need to be suspended. Typically, two or perhaps three "camps" within the community become uneasy with one another's perspectives or demands as the process unfolds. Sometimes, historical disputes might underlie the tension; at other times, differences evolve between parties as the meetings proceed.

If the disagreement flares beyond rational discussion, someone may simply walk out. The meeting may be halted if the facilitator determines that the meeting has become too unruly for further progress. If it comes to that, it is time for the facilitator and the affected parties to sit down away from the meeting. Sometimes it is helpful to involve elders or other influential members in these small group discussions.

This may take a single meeting or several. After adequate discussion, the facilitator encourages each contending party to understand the worldview of the others—not to persuade anyone that the other party's view is "right," but rather simply to accept the other party's view as it is.

The goal is to address and sufficiently resolve the animosity between "warring camps" to bring them back to the table for further problem solving and negotiation.

Stage 6: Key Tasks

- Organize a process that allows each side to speak to the facilitator separately before resuming discussion with one another.
- In separate meetings, encourage each group to think about itself—its own needs and its own worldview.
- Apply techniques to help each party understand the other's view, so that the differing worldviews are seen as having their own integrity.

Stage 6: Tools

Finding alternatives for dealing with inappropriate remarks
Sometimes someone in the group says something that is particularly hurtful or outrageous. The tendency might be either to cut it off as violating meeting rules (assuming that things like personal attacks were agreed to be prohibited), or to object on behalf of whatever group or person is attacked. There might be another response. Consider the Hawaiian elder who, in responding to a question as to why he did not react to outrageous statements said, "In case you

hadn't noticed, the silence was deafening." The lesson for the rest of us is that sometimes it is inappropriate culturally to challenge the attacker directly, so the response is to be silent and let the offending remark "die" without support.

Knowing when to go off-line

At some meetings it becomes apparent that it would be beneficial for the facilitator to meet with a person or persons off-line, at a time and place separate from the group meetings. Below are some circumstances that might prompt this action:

- A key participant expresses a need that is both important to him or her, and seems highly relevant to the objectives of the initiative. In this case, the facilitator might want to work separately with this participant (and, perhaps, a small group) to develop specifics that might become part of the eventual package of givebacks for the entire group to consider. In the interest of ruthless transparency, it is best to acknowledge the outside conversation when presenting the idea to the larger group.
- Some people are invited to attend meetings because of their stature within a particular segment of the community; but their position may not be recognized or accepted by many participants. If the facilitator notices that the person is not being recognized or honored by other participants—and if it's unclear why the person was recommended for inclusion—the facilitator will want to get to know this person better outside the group in order to understand the individual's role and sphere of influence and impart a sense of respect and validation for him/her.
- Some people behave problematically in meetings, and the facilitator might meet with them off-line to get to know them better, to learn about the reasons for their behavior, and to signal that he or she is comfortable working with them.
- Some people initiate the request to meet with the facilitator outside the group. Depending on the subject matter, the facilitator decides whether the conversation should be brought back into the group.

Different tracks for off-line discussions

1. The "Honoring" track

When the facilitator meets with individuals because of their stature, or because they are behaving awkwardly in a meeting, the main objective is to honor the person(s) by getting to know them and seeking to understand who they are and what's important to them. Often this conversation does not lead to a negotiation. Rather, it results in the person(s) feeling honored.

At times, the company executive, in the capacity of facilitator, might decide to provide some assistance — whether financial or other—that supports the individual(s) in their pursuit of a community goal; this occurs when the support would be important to demonstrate the sponsor's respect for the individual(s) and their group's work. At other times, the facilitator may conclude that a sincere effort to converse with the person(s) and understand them is all that is needed.

2. The “Group Education” track

Occasionally, someone raises a subject—whether in the meeting or away from the meeting—that the facilitator wants to understand better because it might influence the group’s problem solving. The facilitator might then proceed to meet with the person(s) off-line to gain a better sense of the issue— after which, the facilitator and the individual(s) would bring the issue back to the meeting, where it would be discussed in a clearer way.

3. The “Negotiation” track

This track can go in one of three ways:

- Negotiation is done off-line, decisions are made off-line, and the group hears the results. (This is not common, because it can undermine the group.)
- Negotiation is done off-line—leading to an agreement about a foundational principle, or a core element of the giveback, or a framework. The basic idea is brought back to the group, where there is further discussion—led by the proponents of that idea—so that the group comes to endorse it. The specifics are then negotiated off-line. (The group might propose some specifics during the large-group discussion which may be accepted or taken under advisement.)
- An offer is made off-line, responsive to some part of the whole-group discussion.

Process considerations for resolving differences

The first objective is to figure out what really caused the breakdown, and what is impeding further progress: Is it substantive? Is it about relationships? Is it about process? Is it the sense of being dishonored and disrespected? Is it a difference in worldview? Once the facilitator understands what the problem is (or problems are), the second objective is to organize the protagonists in a way that allows them to discuss and resolve their differences.

The decisions being made by the facilitator and process design team involve how to go about reaching the above objectives: Who should the facilitator talk to? How often? In what order? Is it time to bring the key parties together? Is it better to let things cool for a while? The facilitator and process design team are the decision-makers for all of these questions.

Ultimately, it is up to the protagonists to accept the process that is being proposed to them by the facilitator. More important, the protagonists are the ones who decide whether their substantive dispute has been adequately resolved—at least enough to warrant the resumption of the whole-group meetings. Each contending party has to figure out for itself who is authorized to make decisions. The protagonist may be a single person who is also the decision-maker, or he/she may need to obtain a decision from a broader constituency. In some cases, the protagonists may be a group of people, or elders might be seen as the key decision-makers. Whatever the situation at hand, a judgment must be made about who has the authority to make the decision on behalf of that position.

If protagonists have to go back to their community, the facilitator and process designers can offer assistance in a number of ways:

- Have the facilitator (company executive) share information at a meeting with the larger-constituency group
- Advocate with the larger-constituency group to find a solution
- Assist the larger-constituency group with their own deliberations, if they need and want help with their own internal process. (If this stage can be kept short in duration, the rest of the group probably does not need to receive any updates. If, however, this stage takes a considerable period of time or is unsuccessful, the facilitator will need to provide some report to the rest of the group.)

Mediating long-term and short-term views

One common difference is in perspective between those with long-term views/goals and those with short-term views/goals. If this is the case, the path most likely to achieve success is to get the people with the long-term view to accept the validity of the short-term view as well.

It's usually easier for people with a short-term view to accept a long-term perspective, because they just view the long-term remedies as "add-ons" to their views. Presumably, these add-ons won't disturb the short-term view as long as the short-term needs are being addressed.

However, people with long-term views have a more difficult time accepting the validity of short-term remedies, which they perceive as substitutes rather than additional elements of a package. Short-term remedies often involve financial payments to individuals or groups of individuals, and are seen as selfish, and for personal benefit. Long-term remedies, by contrast, tend to be strategic and/or environmental. The implementation takes much longer, and the impacts take longer to be seen. In this case, the benefits accrue to the entire community and not to specific individuals.

Understanding the worldviews of others

Various techniques can be used to help each party understand the other's view. For example, visual display—a cartoon, or a chart, or a picture—can be helpful. Another method is to bring influential and respected parties to the table—elders or other key community leaders—whose opinion might help open the minds of the protagonists. Whatever the technique, the goal is to have one side see the other side's worldview as having been arrived at honestly—either based on logic, or passion, or faith, or some other force. The objective is to accept that the other's worldview is different, but it still has its own integrity.

When the facilitator perceives that it was a communication problem that impeded the larger process, resolution may involve a certain amount of shuttle diplomacy. Sometimes, the parties never meet together. When the protagonists have achieved sufficient understanding of each other's perspectives, the facilitator may communicate this to both sides separately, and group meetings can resume. With the permission of the protagonists, the larger group is now notified of a date for the next meeting.

Stage 6: Tips

Tip: Typically there is no ritual handshake, or apology, or expression of agreement with the other side. In community engagement processes, too much baggage is sometimes associated with those types of ritual. No joint session or formal declaration of understanding is necessary either.

Tip: In this divided process, there might be a temptation for the protagonists to strike a deal. It's best to bring the dispute back to the larger group (hopefully, with substantially improved communication). The purpose for doing this work with the group as a whole rather than off-line is to avoid subverting the larger goal of developing the giveback package as a group. Most off-line negotiations involve making refinements in an element of a package—not in deciding whether an element becomes an accepted part of the package.

Tip: At the point when meeting summaries are sent out, if the process has been suspended, all participants are notified that no further meetings have yet been scheduled. It is important to be thoughtful about how to characterize the break so that undue embarrassment is not brought upon the protagonists. In general, it is better to be vague in print and allow clarification to be made informally. Rather than classic process minutes (noting the time the meeting was called to order and adjourned), meeting summaries can include a description of the meeting (organized by subject) without mention of the drama or group dynamics of the meeting.

Tip: With each transmittal of minutes (sent both to those who were and were not present) often goes an invitation to all participants to correct anything in the minutes that appears to be inaccurate. Often, no corrections are received. As meetings proceed, participants have to consolidate and compare for themselves the information and progress from one meeting to the next. A better format is to combine minutes of all meetings into one set so that they become cumulative and easier to follow.

Tip: When meetings are to resume, a message should be sent to all group members with a date and time for the next session. The communication does not refer to anything that happened between the protagonists; it simply indicates that "We will pick up where we left off." Wording is something like, "Since our last meeting we have been working hard researching and gathering information on the various proposals. This information will be presented at a meeting on May xx."

The message can also contain a summary of the status of each proposal — that is, each proposed giveback—and an indication of which proposals will most likely be discussed at the next meeting. This gives the reader a sense of what will happen at the next meeting.

Stage 6: Vignette

In one process, the planning team was surprised by the level of anger that arose. Two camps, representing different geographic sub-regions of the community, developed serious animosity toward one another. The primary energy was voiced through two individuals who stood up, pointed fingers, and made accusations. In reality, each was representing several other people who also attended but who spoke less.

Previously, both had been fine participants, engaged and appropriate, and yet one evening the tension rose and rose until their interactions escalated into a shouting match. The facilitator called an end to the meeting and suggested that the process be put "on pause" until further thinking could be done. At this point, no future meeting dates were set up; the process had come to a standstill. To move forward, the planning team set itself an initial goal of assessing what was really going on with the key protagonists. This led to the development of a hypothesis that the two camps had very different basic views of the world and they had two different senses of what was important to them.

One camp saw the world holistically and multi-generationally. Most residents had lived in their neighborhoods for generations. For them, long-term environmental benefits were the key to any agreement. The other camp was caught up in the day-to-day discomfort of their community living situation. (They were in a construction zone, living in urban sprawl, dealing with poor urban planning decisions.) Most of this group had only recently moved into this area. They needed discussions with the sponsor that addressed, "What can you do for my community today?" As the planning team saw it, the two camps' very different worldviews had apparently hardened into deepening animosity as the meetings proceeded.

When the planning team proposed the sit-down with the group with the longer view, they contacted the elders of the group, not only the individual who had been so outspoken that evening. In this way, they achieved the support and understanding of the whole group behind the vocal participant.

The objective for resolving this standstill was to get the camp with the longer view to become more tolerant of the folks who had the urgent stresses on their lives. They did not initially see the validity of the other perspective, because they did not understand the deeper worldview of the group reacting to short-term stresses. Their initial reaction was that signing an agreement that had short-term remedies was offensive to them. To get them to understand the other worldview, the planning team sketched out two cartoons to illustrate the differences between perspectives. The facilitator then sat down, two or three times, with the key members of the group with the long-term view, and described "the picture" to them. This group gradually became willing to accept that the ultimate agreement would need to include short-term remedies as well as long-term remedies; the package had to include both.

The planning team then went to the second group, who threatened never to come back to the meetings. The planning team communicated to the second group that their worldview was now understood by the first group, that their views would be treated respectfully in future meetings, and that their needs would be addressed in the final agreement.

At the end of these conversations, the elders met with the other members of their own group and gained their support for what took place in the sit-down. Members of the planning team then also spoke directly with the most vocal participant to explain the rationale and reinforce the plan going forward.

Stage 7: Proposal Evaluation

A package of givebacks is evaluated for its value to the community and agreed to in this stage.

Overview

The goal of this stage is to finalize the package of givebacks. The process is arrived at in three steps:

- Project staff is assigned to research the costs and answer the question of who will pay.
- This information is shared with the group.
- The group responds to this information with careful deliberations to determine which items to omit and which to preserve for the final package.

The process usually involves some gentle questioning by the facilitator, sometimes asked off-line, to each proponent of a particular giveback. For example, "If we do X, Y, Z, are we getting close?" Or, "If we end up with X, Y, Z, how does that feel?"

The facilitator needs to consider everything that has been said and assess whether all the participants (especially those who have not met with the facilitator off-line) can see something of value to them in the final package.

During the meetings, the facilitator (from the sponsoring organization) takes responsibility for pointing out the various risks and realities associated with each proposal that the group is taking seriously. Most community groups will pay attention to those external pressures and make efforts to incorporate those deadlines and demands into the substance of their recommendations.

If the project goes forward—even without community endorsement—
so too should the givebacks.

Key tasks:

- List all potential givebacks at the meeting or meetings.
- Between sessions, have professional staff attach price tags to potential givebacks.
- Between sessions, have professional staff review the feasibility of implementing potential givebacks.

Stage 7: Dilemmas

Unreasonable givebacks need to be dealt with reasonably.
In the course of discussing givebacks, participants may raise unrealistic, even ridiculous demands. The key is not simply to reject an idea for a giveback, but to handle it honestly. Offer reasons for why it might be a stretch, or reasons for why it might otherwise be

unsuccessful. The facilitator should also make this offer to the group: “If that’s what you want me to push for, I will.” It’s critical that the facilitator actually be willing to do this, because giving the community as much control of the process as possible allows it to maintain its integrity.

The group needs to be reminded that givebacks are not tied to support for the project.
It is critical to keep reminding the group that the givebacks are not in return for saying “yes” to the project; they are to address the burden that the community is being asked to bear. Givebacks are not a payoff. If they were, few communities would engage in the process. Givebacks are a way for communities to have a say in their own future.

Stage 7: Vignettes

When the community was initially asked what kind of givebacks should be considered on the Campbell Industrial Park power plant project, the initial list included everything from a reliever road for the Waianae Coast, to a new hospital, a rate discount for area residents, photovoltaic panels on every school roof, and an education program on sustainable living practices. Each of these was researched and priced out and then brought back to the group.

Some were dismissed by the group as inappropriate to these discussions (the reliever road, for example); some as unnecessary (the new hospital, given the existence of Waianae Coast Comprehensive Center); or appropriate, but too expensive (photovoltaic panels at each school). Other proposed givebacks remained as possibilities and became the foundation for the final package of givebacks.

Stage 8: Respectful Closure

In this stage, it is between the company and the community to see if they can jointly wind up at the same place.

Overview

The goals of this stage are to:

- Complete the development of the giveback package.
- Answer any lingering questions about the project and gain acceptance of (or at least tolerance for) it. Endorsement of the large project is not required.
- Leave the working relationship between the company and the community members in good shape.

These goals have both the immediate need to move forward on the project and the long-term need to build strong relationships with the affected parties. Coming out of the process without both of these goals met would not be acceptable.

The group has the power to conclude the session or not. If participants are not satisfied with the results or need more information, or want to keep talking, there is no closure and the process continues. If, on the other hand, the group agrees to the givebacks (verbally or in writing, but not through silence or acquiescence), the process achieves closure.

When the facilitator can see a result that would satisfy each key player, it's time to move to the stage of respectful closure.

Stage 8: Key Tasks

- Complete the formulation of a set of givebacks.
- Obtain group support for them.
- Close the group process with a strong relationship between the community and the company.

Stage 8: Tools

The Final Meeting

1. The facilitator begins the final meeting with this frame: "This isn't final unless you want it to be. We have a set of givebacks that we have heard from you, both during the session and in conversations outside the sessions, could form the basis on an agreement. We want to run through the set and see how this feels to you." The

facilitator follows this with an acknowledgment that, if the group chooses to endorse this set, then the process will come to closure.

2. The facilitator then asks for permission to present the draft set. This is a way of reinforcing that the authority is in the room.
3. The givebacks are summarized in a paragraph or two: What each is; what it will cost; who will pay for it. (For example, the company or the ratepayer.)
4. At the end of the summary the facilitator asks the group if this feels like the right set.
5. Initially, whoever wants to speak, speaks. When that phase is complete, the facilitator has a go-around—making eye contact with each person and encouraging that person to speak. Again, silence is not assent and it is dangerous to consider it as "yes" or agreement. If consent is not achieved, the facilitator has options: Go off-line to try and work it out or stay in the room and wait it out. (It may be necessary to go back to Stage 3.)
6. When everyone has spoken, the facilitator might say something like, "Is there anything left unsaid? Is there anything else we need to discuss?" It's important to allow for 2-3 minutes of silence so that everyone sees and knows that people have the opportunity to speak. In addition, the silence lets everyone calm themselves and settle more deeply into the awareness that a substantial decision is being reached.
7. After adequate silence, the facilitator breaks the silence by announcing, "It appears that we have agreement." The facilitator then reviews the next steps that s/he will take responsibility for.
8. The facilitator may request a *pule* to close the evening, and celebrate the fact that the group and the company were able to do this together.
9. The formal meeting is closed.
10. The participants may want to discuss their own next steps—especially how will they communicate to their constituencies what they supported, and why.

Stage 8: Dilemmas

Off-line progress needs to be brought back to group.

If the off-line research demonstrates that the costs of a given proposal are inordinate, why waste the whole group's time on reviewing that proposal? Why not just remove it from consideration and tell the group the reasons? The answer is based on preserving the integrity of the relationship between the company and the other participants. It is not the role of the company to make the judgment for the community. Community members have to weigh the costs and benefits of their recommendations, and decide for themselves. They have the option to go ahead and recommend a proposal despite its costs, and despite the risk of undermining their credibility in the larger, public context. If they were to make that choice, the company would still pass along the recommendation to the powers-that-be — the Public Utilities Commission, or a legislative committee, etc. The probability that the recommendation would be accepted would be extremely low, and the fallout could be significant; nonetheless, the community has to make that judgment for itself.

Non-participating stakeholders need to be brought up to speed.
At the end, with all the weeks and months of hard work together, the group has probably reached a state of mutual trust. However, the broader constituencies being represented have not had the benefit of developing shared understanding, and their trust remains low in all regards: the company, the giveback agreement, and the process in general. Therefore, key leaders who participated in the process may be asked if they'd like have the first word about what happened. They may want the opportunity to convene their constituencies first and explain what happened and why, before the story is publicized through media.

There's a need for good closure even without agreement.
Sometimes it simply is not possible to reach an agreement. If this is the case, it is critical to end the process on a strong and positive note. The facilitator could say something like, "Thank you so much for your work on this issue. While we could not reach agreement, there is a great deal that we have learned through this work." The goal, in part, is to make sure that the company is in a position to bring people together again, which means that the process should not end with a sour taste in people's mouths.

Stage 8: Tips

Tip: An important, but intangible risk associated with making bold and/or costly recommendations is this: The first time a giveback process is being held in a given locale, the entire process inevitably sets precedents for future activities. If the process is successful, it is more likely to be emulated. If a process is viewed as a failure—because, for example, the recommendations were vastly unrealistic—the process is likely NOT to be repeated in the future. This awareness on all sides of the significance of the process acts as a restraint on the temptation to be excessive.

Tip: There is no formula for the number of meetings that should occur before the final meeting is scheduled. The message from the sponsor is that they will keep working on this as long as needed; the deadline is open-ended. At the same time, there are concurrent activities underway—activities by the company, by the legislature, etc.—that have their own pace and deadline. For example, a project can obtain federal stimulus money, but only if the filing is completed by certain date. In cases like this, the group has to be informed of the other deadlines or processes that allow them to make the calculation on the optimal number of meetings to schedule given the surrounding circumstances.

Tip: While it should have been made clear upfront that specific action steps (for example, permitting) would be undertaken by the sponsor, not by the group, this stage may include a discussion about further involvement by participants in subsequent processes.

Tip: The company executive who is serving as facilitator could go into the final session either with the authority to agree to a final settlement or with the caveat that he/she needs to go back to the company's executive team or board of directors for ultimate approval. The former is vastly preferable as it allows the process to conclude with a strong ending, rather than leaving it open for later closing.

Tip: A key objective in this stage is to ensure that the working relationship between the company and the community is left in good shape. However, sometimes an agreement on givebacks cannot be reached. When this is the case, an effort should be made to let all parties get comfortable about being able to respect each other in spite of not having reached agreement. The facilitator can reframe success as having the process result in mutual respect, if not in givebacks.

Tip: Because givebacks acknowledge the burdens of a project on a community, once the process is completed, it may be appropriate for the group to end with a *pule* or acknowledgment of completion of the joint work and not “high fives” or a sense of celebration.

Stage 8: Vignette

At the end of the process of working with the West Oahu community on the placement of a new power plant in the Campbell Industrial Park area, the package of givebacks that the community would receive was reviewed and each member of the audience was given an opportunity to reflect on whether the package was complete and acceptable. After that, the facilitator asked if there was anything else that anyone wanted to say … and then let the silence go on for at least two minutes. It served to let the result of the process settle on the group members and remove any sense of a rush to conclusion. At the end of the silence, one of the participants led the group in a *pule* to acknowledge the work that had been done together.