



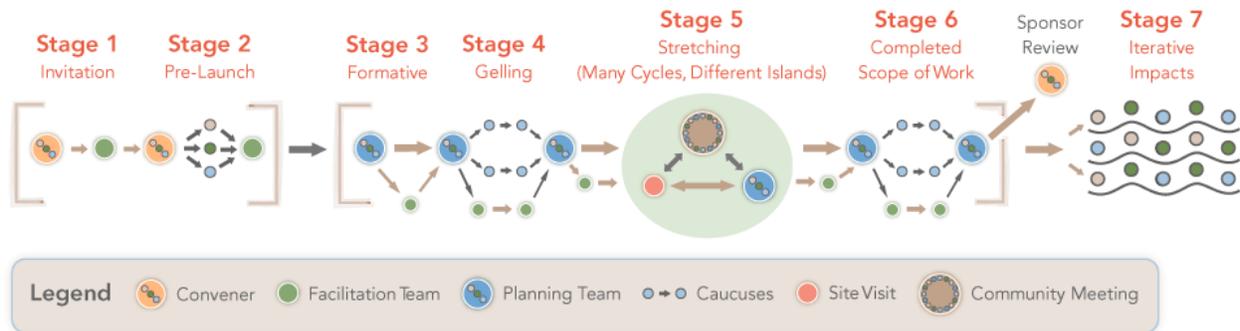
# Collaborative Leaders Network

## Community Transformation

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# Community Transformation



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This strategy enables groups to meet their stated objectives in a way that empowers the individuals in them to contribute effectively to their communities.

## Overview

This strategy enables groups to meet their stated objectives in a way that also strengthens the people in them, so they can build on the collaborative experience and bring about lasting change in their communities.

In the course of working as a group on a particular community issue, relationships are strengthened, skill levels are raised, and individuals are empowered to tap institutional resources and one another for future endeavors.

Supporting individuals in a given group to build their capacity for long-term effectiveness involves a progressive turning over of leadership to group members as they work toward the objectives they have been convened to achieve.

Once a group is functioning well, with clearly understood objectives, protocols in place, and roles in operation, participants are ready to be “stretched,” and urged to apply what they have learned to other situations. This can take the form of site visits, community meetings, and travel to interface with non-group members from the broader context.

*Stronger individuals and groups, and the resulting relationships formed, are absolutely key to long-term change at the community level.*



## Critical Success Factors

- **Pay attention to individual participant strengths, interests, needs, and thresholds** that will optimize their participation throughout the process.
- **Work through possible “deal breakers”** for various participants in order to maintain group momentum toward goals.
- **Find the best balance** between the needs, interests, and tolerances of individuals with those of the group as a whole.
- **Adjust the design process throughout** to incorporate the group’s goals and desired results.
- **Watch for the evolving status of relationships** between participants throughout the process.
- **Create environments that manage/reduce confrontation** or other sources of participant discomfort.
- **Acknowledge that the group’s needs are primary** and manage facilitator’s influence and ego accordingly.
- **Create opportunities to adjust the process over time** to encourage the transfer of leadership from the facilitator to the group participants.
- **Help individual participants “save face”** by periodically checking in with them and providing discrete coaching or feedback as appropriate.
- **Maintain focus** on the needs of various participants and support them throughout the process.

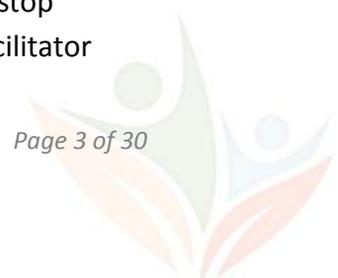
## Dilemmas

### **Power imbalances exist.**

Recognizing the different levels of authority and volume at the table, it is important to ensure that the ideas of less powerful members are afforded opportunities to be heard and considered in ways that minimize risks or repercussions to individuals willing to step forward.

### **Individual needs are sometimes at odds with collective needs.**

Extreme intolerance for process can truncate thoughtful discussion, while extreme inclination toward process can delay a group’s ability to develop concrete outcomes. Participants uncomfortable with the pace and process set by the facilitator often lose interest or stop participating. Despite these and other differences, thoughtful process design and facilitator



alertness to oppositional views and behaviors can keep a group on track.

**The potential exists for a project to fail.**

Despite the best design, facilitation, and group effort, projects can still fail to achieve the stated goals. However, even a loss can become a win when participants leave the “failed” process with new skills or helpful relationships that affect future problem-solving efforts.



## Stage 1: Invitation

When an initiative is proposed, a key consideration for the facilitator is whether the project has the potential to positively affect the community.

### Overview

When an initiative is proposed, the facilitator's first task is to decide whether or not to accept the invitation. A key consideration is whether the project has the potential to positively affect the quality of life in the community and whether it enables the facilitator to maintain integrity with the people and place that are the context for the work being done.

The decision to go-ahead results in a written agreement that specifies the scope of work, expected outcomes, timing, phasing, and next steps. This agreement, and the thinking that goes into it, form the basis for the work ahead.

*For a facilitator to maintain trust with a community of people, it's important to engage with only those initiatives that "add volume" to the voice of the community and its values.*

### Stage 1: Key Tasks

- Achieve clarity regarding roles and responsibilities.
- Assess alignment between convener's proposed scenarios and facilitator's thoughts on project trajectory.
- Assess convener's confidence in facilitator's ability to manage the group and deliver the project.
- Assess convener's compatibility with facilitator regarding commitment to transparency and willingness to let participants influence the project direction and decision making.
- Fully understand convener expectations for the proposal submission.
- Based on understandings that have been reached, craft an agreement that solidifies the scope of work, expected outcomes, timing, phasing, budgeting, and next steps.

### Stage 1: Checklists

The facilitator needs to have sufficient insight into the issues listed below in order to move forward with confidence that the resulting process design has the potential for success.

### Legislative



- Is the enabling measure intended to create real change?
- Is it politically and practically viable?
- Are legislators using the measure as a placeholder to defer action to another time?
- Is the measure a priority, or is it an initiative with which legislators have a superficial relationship?
- Is this a starting point for subsequent legislative or regulatory efforts?
- Is there a difference between the actual and the stated expectations of the initiative?

### **Executive (policy level)**

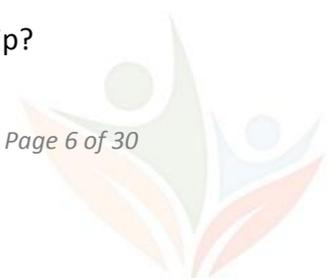
- What are the convener's stated goals for the process?
- Are there other, unstated desired outcomes?
- Is there a strong organizational commitment to support the impending process at the policy level as well as the operational level?
- Will the effort be adequately resourced for successful implementation?

### **Executive (staff level)**

- What do operational-level project team members want to get out of the process (besides the stated product or the higher-level policy goals)?
- What authority resides with project staff regarding decision making and committing the organization's human and financial resources?
- What are the project "status report" expectations, if any? Who, at what level of the organization, expects to be kept informed of the project status?
- What reservations (if any) do project staff members have regarding the initiative?
- Is there "baggage" from the past regarding the convening organization or project staff that will significantly affect the working group climate?
- Who else is being considered to facilitate the initiative? Why/why not?

### **Convening organization policy level and administration:**

- What areas might require policy level consultation, approval, and/or leadership?



- Will leadership act upon or genuinely consider the working group’s findings and/or recommendations?
- Does anyone have veto power over the group’s recommendations? If so, who? What is the likelihood of a veto? What is the process involved?
- Will confidentiality or intellectual property issues require accommodations in process design and/or working group communication and expectations?

**Facilitation team members:**

- Does this endeavor require specific political or content knowledge to successfully complete the work?
- Is the proposed initiative something I/we can manage?
- Is there a need for additional facilitators or recorders, or for certain skill sets (content expertise/research/report writing) to fulfill project and convener expectations?
- Are there compatibility factors to consider?

**Community:**

- How do key community stakeholders and/or informants (subject matter experts, state agency leadership or staff, prospective task force members, etc.) perceive the proposed initiative?
- Do community stakeholders think: This will move things forward? This is doable? This is a legitimate effort? This is survivable? This is worth potential risks?

**Stage 1: Dilemmas**

**Some conveners are reluctant.**

The complexity of subject matter, the mix of stakeholders, or the past history of public conduct toward the convener organization (or subject matter) can create reservations for some conveners. Exploring these concerns (“What are your major fears?”) is a prerequisite for designing a resilient process; the answers may influence a facilitator’s decision to proceed or not.

**Assignment may not be a good fit.**

A facilitator should reassess acceptance of work if it appears that the process is moot, information is being withheld, or the client has misrepresented the work.



**Information may be ambiguous or missing.**

A convener team may lack of clarity about what it wants or needs to accomplish. Alternatively, a client may already have a facilitator in mind and is not genuinely interested in attracting serious replies from others. In either case, achieving clarity about the purpose and expectations of the proposed work is an important prerequisite to moving on.

**Projects may be just for show.**

Facilitators need to differentiate between opportunities that could yield meaningful change and those that will have little or no influence on the issue at hand. Facilitators repeatedly aligned with these *fait accompli* processes may find their reputations questioned. There are times, however, when even though a project outcome is a forgone conclusion, a facilitator may decide that affording participants the opportunity to be heard and register their views “on the record,” outweighs the drawbacks of facilitating a “done deal” discussion.

**Stage 1: Vignettes**

In the case of the Taro Security and Purity Task Force (TSPTF), legislators and the convener staff agreed to exclude discussion of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) from the scope of issues to be addressed in this particular initiative. Excluding this topic enabled the TSPTF to formulate recommendations relating to a broader array of concerns to taro farmers across the state. It also lessened the likelihood of TSPTF meetings and deliberations being dominated by a volatile issue best addressed in some other forum.



## Stage 2: Pre-Launch

The work of this stage involves clarifying particulars of the strategy and process design with the convener to ensure that the project gets off to a strong and well-coordinated start.

### Overview

Delineating expectations—about the roles/responsibilities of convener staff and facilitation team, about the project scope, about the tentative process design, and about the desired norms for group conduct—ensures that team members operate from a shared understanding of them.

In this pre-launch stage, the facilitator works to understand the issue content from the perspective of both the convener and the group participants. A pre-meeting survey of working group members offers a preview of their values and beliefs, and sends a signal that their needs and interests will be taken into account.

With the information gathered, the facilitator can customize a process design and prepare draft scenarios for participants to discuss and modify during their first meeting. By the end of this stage, both convener and facilitator are aligned and ready to launch the working group sessions.

*Preparing draft scenarios with the right amount of detail encourages both abstract and concrete thinkers to participate in developing the group's operational guidelines.*

### Stage 2: Key Tasks

#### Clarify the particulars of strategy and process design.

- Delineate convener staff and facilitation team roles.
- Deepen project-related content knowledge.
- Clarify with convener what's firm and what's flexible regarding scope, timetable, agenda items, and budget.
- Agree on desired norms for group conduct.
- Clarify expected outputs.
- Understand policy-level concerns.
- Ensure that necessary expertise exists to deliver project.



### **Increase alignment between facilitator and convener.**

- Prepare convener staff to present project context and respond to participant questions that are likely to arise in early phases of the project.
- Clarify convener's role and degree of influence in working group.
- Walk through plans and expectations for the first session and anticipate areas of potential difficulty.
- Understand mutual expectations in terms of desired "climate" of the group, tenor of discussion, and degree of participant engagement.
- Clarify facilitator's prerogatives during and between working group sessions.

### **Gather information about prospective participants.**

- Conduct a survey that will yield insights about participants, both individually and collectively.
- Identify interpersonal or group dynamics that might require special sensitivity or process accommodations.
- Synthesize survey responses to share with group in Stage 3; aggregate responses without attribution.

### **Prepare for the process.**

- Customize the process design to mitigate participant fears, concerns, and reservations associated with their group participation.
- Prepare draft charter describing operating protocols for group to consider.
- Prepare draft project trajectory and overall design scenario for group to consider.
- Disseminate and collect survey in advance of first scheduled meeting of working group.

### **Notify working group participants.**

- Provide background, logistics, and contact information to group members.
- Designate staff to answer pre-launch questions.
- Post a public announcement of project's commencement, if appropriate.



### **Arrange for project's administration.**

- Put in place tax clearances, liability coverage, expense documentation, reimbursement requirements, invoicing protocols, supplemental services, etc.
- Prepare a detailed project budget.

### **Stage 2: Checklists**

In the pre-launch stage, the facilitator and convener may want to consider questions like these:

- What do we want to know about group members individually and collectively that we can gather in a survey?
- Who will provide administrative project support (website support and document writing, for example)?
- Who is the final arbiter regarding content?
- Are there regulatory or compliance issues that need to be built into the process, (e.g., public notices, Sunshine Law, public access, postings)? Who is responsible for ensuring compliance?
- Which liability issues need to be addressed and how will they be handled?
- Will a convener representative participate as a member of the group? If so, does he/she have different set of expectations from other members?

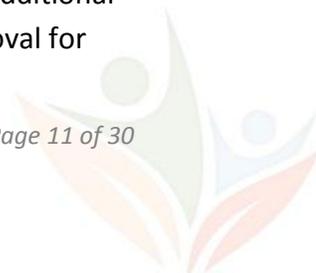
### **Stage 2: Dilemmas**

#### **Convener's style may not go over well.**

To avoid being perceived as controlling and increase the likelihood of being seen as belonging to the group, the convener representatives may be encouraged by the facilitator (even before the working group meets) to moderate their degree of participation and hold back from being the first to speak every time. Some participants may be suspicious of an institutional convener and its team (and, in some cases, suspicious of facilitators) who favor a “take charge” stance and perceive this style as rude and too aggressive. Anticipating this, the facilitator can coach the convener or even suggest involving a different individual from the convener team.

#### **Public sector participants face hurdles.**

Facilitator and convener need to be aware that budget constraints, collective bargaining agreements, and contract terms are sometimes invoked as barriers to participation. Additional hurdles for members of public sector organizations include needing supervisory approval for



travel, overtime, or participation in a long-term working group. Field trips and site visits involve added expenses and significant blocks of time that often occur beyond the normal working hours of some participants who may not have flex, comp, or overtime options. In some cases, technological accommodations (such as video conferencing and user sites) can be considered for these participants.

**Previously formed working group exists.**

If a working group exists, the facilitation team should familiarize itself with existing protocols, leadership structure, roles and practices, and either adhere to them or recommend modifications for the group to consider.

**Participants try to sway facilitator.**

Efforts by a few individuals in advance to predispose the facilitator to favor particular strategies, ideas, or candidates, can compromise the facilitator’s standing with the whole group when it convenes. Disclosing those interactions and bringing up past connections with the convener or members of the group can reinforce a facilitator’s commitment to transparency and avert accusations of collusion.

**Factions form in advance.**

Two or three members of an appointed working group may get together before the group convenes to push a particular platform or orchestrate a leadership structure that serves their interests. The situation may call for a facilitator to intercede and slow down the selection process, giving the group the opportunity to agree on how it will make such decisions. The facilitator must ensure that the collective will of the working group is not subordinated to that of an energetic few.

**Stage 2: Tips**

**Map out the process and possibilities with convener.**

It is useful to clarify the sequence of events and possibilities with convener staff before launching a new working group. The mapping out of proposed stages (in the form of flow charts, tables, or maps) helps a client understand the rationale for various approaches and options and serves as a mental dress rehearsal for everyone. It also may increase a convener’s comfort level with the process and equip them to design their own approaches for future initiatives. Discussing the pros and cons of scenarios also offers the facilitator insights into a client’s needs, interests, and thinking styles. Additionally, discussions about process design can help explore a convener’s sensitivity to budget, pacing, style, and comfort with conflict and change.



## Stage 3: Formative

In the process of spelling out operational protocols and attitudinal expectations, participants begin to get to know one another.

### Overview

To establish a solid foundation for the group to build on in the course of its work, it is important to lay out clear operational protocols and set up guidelines for fostering a respectful and supportive atmosphere.

Culminating in some version of a charter, members outline and agree to the way the group will work, including setting ground rules for deliberations, expectations for attendance, guidelines for communicating between sessions, and standards for selecting topic areas and assigning members to caucus groups. In the process of formalizing the overall project trajectory, participants begin to get to know one another as individuals.

A synthesis of pre-meeting survey responses provides a preliminary list of what issues members are focusing on, which is helpful in the early formation of working groups. Ultimately, issues of interest will be narrowed to a more manageable scope and group members will be able to work in the subject areas of greatest importance to them.

*A good group structure is one that raises the comfort level of participants and their level of confidence in one another.*

### Stage 3: Key Tasks

#### Convener establishes baseline understandings with participants.

- Refine roles and expectations of conveners, facilitation team, and participants.
- Clarify practicalities such as expense reimbursement and travel logistics.

#### Group reviews survey feedback.

- Acquaint participants with range of views within the group in a way that equalizes their volume.
- Review proposed process design to identify areas for possible adjustments based on additional participant feedback.

#### Group formalizes project trajectory.

- Reaffirm and codify overall goals and end product.



- Adopt or affirm in principle the elements of a charter, including:
  - discussion ground rules
  - attendance expectations
  - agenda template
  - caucus topic areas
  - assignment of task force members
  - decision making methods
  - external communication
  - between-sessions communication
  - meeting notes
- Reach agreement about the general structure of business meetings and community meetings that will be convened.
- Collectively approve meeting and travel schedule/logistics.
- Generate a list of resource persons to invite to address the group at future meetings.

### **Stage 3: Dilemmas**

#### **Community customs may vary.**

It is often the custom of local groups in Hawaii to begin and end meetings with a pule, or short prayer, which could be considered at odds with the “separation of church and state” thinking. If there seem to be no reservations or signs of discomfort, this practice can continue throughout the group’s work. If there are mixed feelings, they should be talked about and resolved in a way that everyone can live with.

#### **Group members want to advocate at legislature.**

Participants may want to provide written or verbal testimony to the legislature on bills and resolutions related to the working group’s areas of interest. It’s important to clarify protocol for how feedback gets to legislative stakeholders, what the internal review process is for the working group, and what to do if participant positions are at odds with the official position of the convener agency. Developing guidelines in advance will save time, avoid misunderstandings, and enable the group to share its emerging thinking with legislators in a manner supported by the convener and the group.

#### **Participants have different preferences.**

Some participants may have stronger interests in site visits, detailed conversations with individual practitioners, and hands-on experiences, whereas others may want to spend time



codifying practices and producing a document. The facilitator needs to develop a path between the two, offering enough of both kinds of opportunities to get participants to stay engaged.

### **Unresolved issues show up behaviorally.**

Community concerns regarding unresolved issues with agencies are sometimes projected onto institutional representatives in the group who have little or nothing to do with these issues. It's important to identify and name what's going on, and make the decision of whether to address the dynamic in the context of the working group, handle it outside the group, or agree to disagree and move on.

### **Stage 3: Checklists**

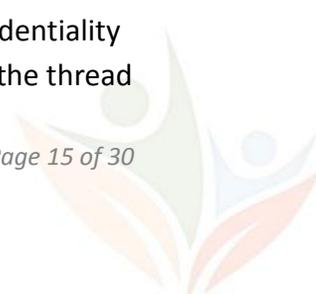
These types of questions come up in the course of working group discussions:

- In light of survey responses, how do we maximize the return on our community site visits and community meetings?
- What do we need to learn from our constituents? What is the best way to gather this input?
- How do we handle communication within and outside the group?
- How do we keep our efforts from getting derailed by people passionate about subject matter that is outside of the group's scope or focus?
- How do we manage difficult behaviors at meetings (angry community members or litigants)?
- What community, constituent, agency, policy, or subject matter people can we get to the table to help us better understand perspectives and positions?
- How should we handle public access to working group members and information via the website?

### **Stage 3: Tips**

#### **Clarify terms so that everyone is using them the same way.**

The facilitator should remain attuned to the use of terms that parties apply to their work. Concepts like "transparency," "timeliness," and "confidentiality" mean different things to different people. For example, does transparency mean posting agendas and minutes where they can be reviewed by non participants? Does timeliness mean making information available for external review within a certain number of hours after a meeting? How does confidentiality play into a group's records (which need to be detailed enough to help people pick up the thread



of the discussion, but not so specific as to compromise someone's privacy or proprietary information)? The point is to clarify all terms that are being used by the working group.



## Stage 4: Gelling

Having internalized project goals and protocols, participants begin to work collectively and assume stronger leadership roles.

### Overview

Having internalized project goals and objectives, participants begin to experience themselves as a collective entity focused on problem solving. Working group members are able to adjust their behavior and participation style to comport with the protocols and agreements that the group adopted earlier (including those that have had to be modified along the way).

Reliance on the facilitator for direction begins to lessen in this stage and group members start to assume stronger leadership roles. The facilitator can now shift emphasis from directing the process to coaching emerging leaders to lead the process and manage subject matter teams.

By becoming better acquainted with the substantive issues in front of them, group members align with their primary areas of interest and begin to focus on assignments related to the project deliverables.

*In order to effectively work together, participants need to build trust in each other and in the process, and get comfortable assuming leadership and responsibility for the tasks.*

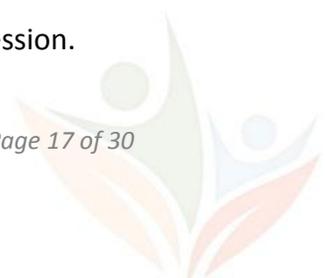
### Stage 4: Key Tasks

#### Facilitator tasks:

- Consolidate talking points that reflect the group's thinking.
- Break the larger products/deliverables into manageable incremental steps.
- Assess the group's capacity to write by giving small assignments to each caucus.
- Begin to cede leadership by supporting group leaders to participate in agenda design and session planning.
- Provide coaching for individuals as needed to enable them to strengthen their contributions to the work group team.

#### Participant tasks:

- Adjust behavior and participation style to comport with previously adopted protocols.
- Follow through on between-meeting assignments and be prepared for each session.



- Become more involved in developing agendas, setting group direction, and thinking about document(s) to be produced.
- Align with caucuses that focus on their primary areas of interest and understand the need to codify their findings and recommendations.

#### **Stage 4: Dilemmas**

##### **Convener perceives a power shift.**

The working group's growing cohesion can be perceived as threatening to the convener staff and can trigger confrontational or controlling behavior. It's best to prepare both convener staff and group members for this possibility and explore constructive strategies for responding to these dynamics before they occur.

#### **Stage 4: Tips**

##### **Create a plan for turning over leadership.**

As meeting management skills are modeled by the facilitator, the chair of a working group becomes more comfortable and relies less and less on the facilitator to conduct sessions. It helps to have worked out discrete signs the chair can use to signal the need for assistance or to invite the facilitator into a more directive role. The facilitator's goal is to help the chair anticipate meeting challenges that might trigger facilitator involvement and equip the chair with the tools to address them. This might occur when it is necessary to deal with a hostile community member or handle disputes that arise between group members.



## Stage 5: Stretching

Site visits, community meetings, and interactions with resource people stretch the participants' content knowledge, encourage their use of judgment, and strengthen their cohesion as a team.

### Overview

Site visits and community meetings provide participants with novel experiences that help them hone their thinking, strengthen their cohesion as a team, exercise judgment, and offer them real examples of situations that advance the work group's knowledge. Now that the structure is clear but flexible, one of the primary goals of this stage is to stretch the group's ability to understand and articulate each others' perspectives.

External resource people are called upon to provide specialized or technical information that not only elevates the group's content knowledge, but also lays the groundwork for future projects that could be mutually beneficial.

As deadlines approach for the completion of a report or plan, group members begin to invest energy in ensuring that the substance of their document genuinely reflects the collective positions of the working group and attempts to address problems at a systemic level.

*Having internalized the appropriate behaviors they agreed to, group members have fully transformed from being observers and critics to becoming actors and influencers.*

### Stage 5: Key Tasks

- Shift focus to the substantive content.
- Deal with substantive disagreements by clarifying points of view; revisiting charter as needed; and coaching participants to rethink their responsibility to a collective result.
- Coach individuals to deal with divergent thinking by “trying it on for size,” without having to change their minds.
- Develop protocols for communicating between meetings as subject matter caucuses progress independently.
- Use interactions with the community to gather specific information and stretch the group's comfort level with unpredictable dynamics.
- Prepare for conversations with technical experts to maximize their mutual benefit.



- Share separately written sections with the whole working group to ensure that major elements are widely endorsed and diversity of thought is well represented.
- Oversee draft revisions to incorporate group feedback and address issues including writing style, Hawaiian language, and production considerations.
- Develop a rollout strategy for distributing and presenting findings.

## **Stage 5: Dilemmas**

### **Writing skills are lacking.**

Working group members may have the knowledge to lead caucuses but lack the writing skills required to produce a report. An offer to help by convener or institutional staff may be rejected if trust has not been adequately built. Alternatively, experienced writers in the group may be willing to take on additional assignments to support less experienced caucus group leaders. Another option to consider is to contract third parties.

### **Participants are reluctant to take on writing.**

Participants may be cautious about offering to take on writing assignments for a number of reasons, including: existing work load; conflicts between the findings and recommendations of the group and their agency’s official positions on matters; conflict with their personal positions; or fear of being accused of skewing content. Framing the opportunity as one of preparing a “draft” for group review and modification may kick-start contributions. If resources permit, retaining an intern or external writer is also an option.

### **Teams are reluctant to share drafts.**

The convener staff and group members may want to work on and complete their assignments in isolation before sharing with the others. The exchange or sharing of drafts may require facilitator support or intervention to overcome impasses over who will share what products with whom and when. As a start, the facilitator may want to tease out the basis for withholding and ask the group, “What is the consequence of omitting information from our decision making?”

### **There are different opinions as to the intended audience(s) for final report.**

A report that is primarily geared for an institutional as opposed to a community reader results in differences of opinion on matters such as tone and appearance of the document. It’s important to arrive at an understanding of who the audiences are and figure out a way to make the report work on more than one level. In some cases, the data is presented separately from the basic findings, allowing the report to be read and understood at different levels of detail.



**Convener wants organization’s positions to be reflected.**

It is important to anticipate emerging conflicts between the findings and recommendations of a working group and the public positions held by the convener organization. Even when the findings and recommendations of the working group are at odds with the convener team, the report cannot alter the group’s conclusions. Conversations about this tend to work best with a small editorial group that is moderated by the facilitator. There are a number of ways the group can handle disparate views in the final report:

- reach an accord on one or the other position prevailing, or arrive at a jointly supported brand new position;
- present both positions on a particular issue, with descriptive narrative supporting the rationale for each;
- include a minority report.

**Facilitator may be tempted to step out of neutral role to offer advice or guidance.**

Where the facilitator could make a major difference in helping a wishful group become realistic, or in helping a worried group become less cautious, he or she may be tempted to weigh in. (This is the first stage in which this is even a possibility, as the facilitator is no longer as pivotal to keeping the group working effectively.)

The facilitator needs to follow two guiding principles: 1) do no harm, and 2) raise questions. The facilitator can help the group step back and evaluate its current logic by asking questions such as, “How would that idea play out?” or “What other strategies might there be?”

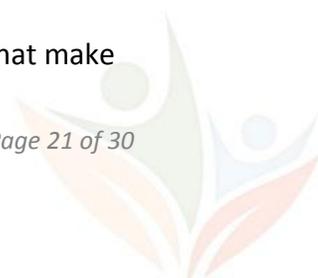
**Attendance becomes sporadic.**

People miss meetings due to legitimate, unforeseen schedule conflicts or employment constraints and may lack the patience to read through meeting notes and document drafts that would bring them up to speed. Sporadic attendance also makes reintegration into the group challenging. This is most difficult when the group has arrived at conclusions and positions that are at odds with those of the participant(s) who haven’t had the benefit of the group’s ongoing learning experiences.

In such cases, interim interactions with working group members via telephone, conference calls, or distribution of regularly scheduled updates can maintain their connection and focus. Inviting members to identify resource people they’d like to meet also helps to refresh their commitment to the process.

**Engagement may falter.**

Group members’ engagement may falter if a community meeting goes awry in ways that make



them uncomfortable. Debriefing the group soon after a difficult community meeting and hearing the perceptions of other group members can help all of them. Learning more about what was difficult for participants provides an opportunity for the facilitator to retool the meeting management strategies going forward.

The facilitator needs to be alert to the emergence of any problems or events that can trigger slippage and then enact pre-emptive or mid-course corrections to avert disintegration of group focus and commitment.

## **Stage 5: Tools**

### **Maximizing meetings with resource people**

The facilitator can help the group leadership maximize the benefit of interactions with high-value resource people outside the group (i.e., technical experts) by considering targeted and strategic questions like these in advance:

- What kinds of information do you want the guest resource person to provide to this group to help it accomplish its work?
- What questions would you pose to trigger discussion on these points?
- What does this group have to offer this resource person?
- What do you want to have gotten out of this by the time the conversation is over (by way of agreements, commitments of support, financial assistance, invitations, access to research or data)?
- How might you distribute questions across the working group to give more members the opportunity to interact directly with the resource person? Who is the best group member to raise each question (presuming it can be tied to a particular group member's expertise or interest)?
- In what ways might this resource person assist in the implementation of the report recommendations?

## **Stage 5: Vignettes**

A cross-sector working group comprised of taro farmers and public sector agency representatives was formed by the legislature to provide advice on ways to assure purity and security of taro cultivation in Hawaii. The facilitator met with Taro Security and Purity Task Force (TSPTF) members to prepare for a short meeting with a high ranking University of Hawaii official.



Having considered their wish list in advance, working group members were able to select a couple of project topics that would meet the criteria for use of UH research funds. As a result, the official left with a deeper and more specific appreciation of the ways the university could become more relevant in its research choices. Working group participants began to see these types of conversations as ways to line up future allies and partners to support implementation of their year-end recommendations and beyond.



## Stage 6: Completed Scope Of Work

A final report is produced in this stage, along with a strategy for its distribution. Closing activities recognize the group's accomplishments and set the scene for future alliances.

### Overview

A completed, high-quality report containing findings and recommendations is delivered in this stage, along with a rollout strategy that ensures its timely and widespread distribution to interested stakeholders.

This stage honors the contributions of participants, invites reflection on their experiences, and galvanizes group members to become involved with one another in new collaborations and community alliances going forward. For many people, their capacity to contribute in the future will be stronger as a result of their participation in this initiative.

A post-project debriefing and evaluation by participants and conveners seeks guidance on improving future endeavors.

*The increased capacity of individuals to contribute to the community as a result of their participation is as vital an outcome as the promised end product.*

### Stage 6: Key Tasks

- Produce a report containing findings and recommendations.
- Develop a rollout strategy for distributing the report to interested stakeholders via articles, websites, networking, presentations, and media exposure.
- Craft “sound bites” for report-related presentations.
- Encourage the ongoing collaboration of participants in future community alliances.
- Debrief and evaluate the project with participants and convener.
- Acknowledge working group participants for their individual and collective accomplishments.
- Build in time for group member self-reflection as part of the closing activities.

### Stage 6: Tools

#### Debriefing the project

In an effort to improve future endeavors, a post-project completion debrief and evaluation is



developed by the facilitation team and approved by the convener team staff and working group leadership.

- Questions in participant evaluations usually ask respondents to identify peak experiences, epiphanies, and assess the quality of the overall project design.
- A separate debrief and evaluation process is targeted specifically to the convener team and includes a more technical assessment of facilitator/process strengths and weaknesses.
- At the debrief, the facilitator may opt to offer an assessment of “next steps,” particularly when acting on these issues would likely benefit the larger community.
- Ministerial loose ends are addressed to ensure that contract terms and conditions have been satisfactorily addressed as a precondition to receiving final payment for work completed.

### **Providing closure**

The closure activity during the final meeting provides opportunities for participants to:

- consolidate their learning
- note their most important lesson or memorable experience
- reinforce the confidence they have gained in themselves
- validate the strength and power of the relationships they have cultivated through this process
- honor the group’s efforts, courage, and accomplishments, and appreciate everyone’s investment of time
- reflect on the group’s aspirations for advancing the work its members just completed

Closing statements from the facilitator offer an opportunity to:

- praise and celebrate the group’s accomplishments and the effort it took to achieve them
- share a few personal feelings (and identify them as such)
- formally end his/her engagement



Closing statements from the convener may include:

- information about funding for specific, follow-on activities
- an explanation of additional resources and possible roles for the current participants
- a status update regarding the convener’s continued support or disengagement from the project

## **Stage 6: Dilemmas**

### **Deadlines are missed.**

Glitches associated with merging and editing multiple contributions can result in missed deadlines and start a blame game. The creation of an editorial team can help maintain the group’s momentum and keep the group’s “climate” feeling positive.

### **Limited budget for report.**

Budget constraints sometimes require that the final report be pared down. This can mean that fewer photos get included or fewer hard copies get made. In the latter case, widespread distribution of the full report can still be done as a PDF attachment.

### **Pre-existing tensions can resurface.**

In a group whose members have some history with one another, a group can move all the way through its deliberations without being too deeply distracted by those pre-existing tensions — only to discover, at the very point of completion, that an argument boils up to the surface. The facilitator may allow an old argument to surface, but then slow down the discussion by asking the parties to state their positions clearly and explain how those positions relate to the purpose at hand. Through this process of honoring the individuals involved and bestowing on them the responsibility to assess relevance, they are more likely to recognize that their dispute needs to be dealt with elsewhere.

## **Stage 6: Tips**

### **Maximize the use of down time.**

Travel time and in-between meetings and meals provided opportunities for a facilitator to informally secure feedback from individuals about the efficacy of the project process design. As the process nears completion, the facilitator might encourage people to talk about their future plans and their post-project intentions to work in their own communities. The facilitator can help people think about ways they could leverage their new-found relationships with other working group members and resource persons. In anticipation of taking the next steps with others in the group, it may be beneficial for those involved to revisit earlier protocols regarding



contact information, preferred methods of communication, and receptivity to interacting off-line.



## Stage 7: Iterative Impacts

Participants are emboldened to build on the relationships and skills they've developed to pursue change in their communities going forward.

### Overview

The long-term goal of this type of cross-sector collaboration is to strengthen people—in terms of their confidence, skills, and networks—so they are fully competent to pursue change in their communities beyond the close of a particular initiative.

Part of that change involves learning to navigate systems effectively and hold institutions accountable as individuals pursue their community interests and work to get their needs met.

During the final stages of the formal collaboration, participants are encouraged to build on collaborative relationships they've developed, monitor the progress of the project they've worked on, and involve more and more people in subsequent cross-sector problem solving and planning efforts.

*The essential, long-term goal is to build the capacity to change things in the community.*

### Stage 7: Key Tasks

- Encourage participants to track the progress of their products after project completion.
- Inform participants about how to monitor post-project implementation.
- Enable group members to imagine the impact of their recommendations on various audiences/constituencies.

### Stage 7: Checklists

#### Benchmarks of success:

A key goal of a collaborative process is to enable people to be more confident in pursuing their interests and getting their needs met. This is accomplished over time in several ways.

- As people come to know each other more deeply, they can recognize and value their talents and build trust and faith in one another. This allows them to work from a place of mutuality instead of unilateralism.
- A collaborative process strengthens each participant's network of connections inside and outside the working group, and lets them learn that they can count on one another for help.



- As participants gain pride in what they have achieved, they gain confidence about undertaking future endeavors.
- As participants learn about and experience collaboration, they are likely to embrace it as a preferred approach to problem solving and apply it to subsequent initiatives.
- Old hostilities and misunderstandings can often become clarified and worked through in the course of a collaboration, even when this was not a stated goal of the initiative.
- Where the overall goal is to change things in the community, a key objective is to reduce the divisions that exist between communities and institutions.
- With more confidence and better connections, working group participants become empowered to go directly to the sources that can help them get what they need to accomplish their goals.
- A collaborative process that teaches people more about the “toeholds” and pathways to working effectively with institutions helps them make better use of limited resources by learning to navigate systems effectively.
- While systems tend to favor “bigger players” rather than everyday people, a goal of the collaborative process is to help people learn how to hold institutions and systems accountable so that they adhere to the laws, procedures, and regulations they should be following.

#### **Indicators of long-term impact:**

- Information flow is more vigorous, as evidenced by the expansion of list serves and newsletter distribution, and by changes in the composition of advisory groups to include a wider demographic.
- Cross-sector collaboration and consultation occurs by choice, even if it is not required as part of an official process.
- Better solutions (as defined by all sectors) are reached more expeditiously.
- More community members are able to participate effectively and comfortably in other cross-sector problem solving and planning efforts.
- Resources are more effectively utilized.

#### **Stage 7: Dilemmas**



**Very few of the people who will be affected were actually participants in the collaboration.**

Those people were not touched by the experience may not be “bought in” to the change and cannot be expected to invest their time and energy to produce the change. Working group participants can anticipate this and create strategies for handling it. As an example, members could develop a longer-term plan that includes breaking the group’s goals into small steps that are intentionally designed to involve more and more people as time goes on.

