

URBAN MANAGEMENT SERIES FOR SOUTHERN SUDAN

Tools for Strengthening Leadership and
Governance

Volume 3:
Technical Guidelines

UN HABITAT



URBAN MANAGEMENT SERIES FOR SOUTHERN SUDAN

Tools for Strengthening Leadership and Governance

Volume 3: Technical Guidelines



United Nations Human Settlements Programme Nairobi 2011



Urban Management Series for Southern Sudan

Tools for Strengthening Leadership and Governance

First published in Nairobi in 2011 by UN-HABITAT

Copyright (C) United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2011

All rights reserved

United Nations Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)

P.O. Box 30030, 00100 Nairobi GPO KENYA

Tel: 254-020-7623120 (Central Office)

www.unhabitat.org

ISSN – [Insert]

Disclaimer

The designation employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Settlements Programme, the United Nations, or its member states.

Excerpts may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated.

All photos (C) UN-HABITAT

Acknowledgements

Principal authors: XXXX

Contributors: Tom Carter, Solomon

Editors: XXXX

Design and layout: XXXX

Printing: XXXX

FORWARD



Signature Here

Joan Clos
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

PREFACE

Welcome to the Urban Management Series for Southern Sudan. The Series is intended to give direction and guidance on a wide range of urban management topics, but without saying exactly what to do – so it is not a manual. It aims to point Urban Managers in the right direction, by describing the factors and issues that need to be considered, and suggesting possible solutions in line with basic principles.

In this manner it provides a consistent background for all Urban Managers to approach their work. But it is fundamental that each reader decides what initiatives and actions are appropriate given the local circumstances and conditions, rather than just following a set formula.

How to use the Series

This is not a document that needs to be read from start to finish – it is to be used like a reference book or encyclopaedia. It is fine to dip into it to read sections that are of interest. As the reader becomes more familiar with the structure and content, s/he will discover new topics of interest. And as topics arise in work, s/he can search out the relevant sections, and discover new areas of interest.

It is a document that is to be kept close at hand, on the desk or an open shelf in the office – not locked away in a drawer or cupboard. Copies should also be distributed widely among professional and technical staff, and not restricted only to senior staff.

Regular Updating

These volumes have been prepared in 2011 – but the situation in Southern Sudan is constantly changing. It follows that they will need to be reviewed regularly, and updated to reflect actual current urban management priorities as well as changing political, institutional and social circumstances.

Overview of the Urban Management Series

This volume is one of a three-volume series produced by UNHABITAT for use by urban managers in Southern Sudan.

Current titles of this series, at the time of publication, include:

Volume 1: Urban Management Guidelines

Volume 2: Leadership for Urban Management

Volume 3: Enhancing Training in Land, Housing and Town Planning

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction to Urban Management Roles and Competencies

Chapter 2: The Representation Role and Competency

Chapter 3: The Communicating Role and Competency

Chapter 4: The Facilitating Competency

Chapter 5: The Using Power Competency

Chapter 6: The Decision-Making Competency

Chapter 7: The Policy-Making Competency

Chapter 8: The Enabling Competency

Chapter 9: The Negotiating Competency

Chapter 10: The Financing Competency

Chapter 11: The Overseeing Competency

Chapter 12: The Institution Building Competency

Chapter 13: The Leadership Role and Competency

Chapter 6: The Policy-Making Competency

What we think or what we believe in is, in the end, of little consequence. The only thing of consequence is what we do.
John Ruskin, 19th Century English Essayist

Introduction

The word policy gets confused with politics in some parts of the world. It may be the way the term gets translated into other languages. Policy-making can be politically motivated, but it's not politics. For some reason, actually for many reasons, "politics" has a bad reputation, and even some elected officials don't like to think they are in politics or worse yet that they are "politicians. Since we will go to some lengths to define what we mean by policy, it's only fair that we define politics before we move on. As one cynic said, "Politics is the art of getting votes from the poor and money from the rich by promising to protect each from the other." We welcome you, of course, to add your own interpretations. Now, about policy making...

Just what do we mean by policy?

There is the impression or expectation that policies result from a very deliberate process of decision-making on the part of policy bodies and are based on thorough analysis of all the conditions surrounding an issue under consideration and the various alternatives available to improve upon it. In reality, the policy process is very messy. Sometimes it really does happen

as suggested in the statement just made. Other times it evolves out of negotiations with several parties, for example, as conditions precedent in a donor-assisted loan agreement for a new water plant.

Given all these possibilities, the potential for your lasting influence, indeed your legacy, as a policy-maker can be greatly diminished. We want to help you learn how to escape the dilemma of policies being everything and nothing.

To summarise, policies show intent, declare stands on difficult issues, formalise visions, describe required actions, announce decisions, clarify relationships, and more. Policies are useful and necessary to assure good governance.

Who makes policy?

In reality, policies are made by all organizations whether they are public, private, non-governmental, or a mix of these. All levels of governments make policies, and often their policies are contradictory. So, when local governments make policies, they need to be aware that other levels of government or governments on their same level are also making policies that might not be compatible.

Involving others in your policy making responsibilities

Now we want to talk about the importance of involving others in your policy-making initiatives. Perhaps the best way to do this is to relate a story. By the way, we've inserted the word policy where we think a policy was either needed or implied to make this complex set of activities achieve its goal.⁶⁵

The Municipality of Quito, Ecuador, established a one-stop women's centre (policy?). It was a joint action with several NGOs and institutions (policy?). Its purpose was to assist poor women, especially those with social problems like family break-ups and domestic violence (policy?). It was able to acquire funds from the European Commission to create the one-stop centre (policy?)

65 Taken from a collection of cases prepared by IULA, Local Governments Working for Gender Equality. (The Hague. IULA, 2001), p13.

It involved a special police facility to help assaulted women and girls and provide legal aid for those who couldn't get access to the legal system (policy?). There were other services including child care (Policy?), medical services (policy?), addiction counselling (policy?), and training to help women form their own organisations (policy?).

The centre has been active in lobbying and raising awareness of gender equality and equity issues (policy?). And, the City

Council used this experience to develop a new municipal gender policy. No question, this was a policy!

While we don't know for certain, we suspect that the creation of this one-stop centre known as Las Tres Manueles did, in fact or in principle, intentionally or unintentionally, formally or informally, require a number of policy decisions. Some were probably administrative-type policies, others management policies, and finally others were what we believe to be governance policies. In just a few moments we will take a look at what these different types of policies are all about. However, before we do let's look at an important issue and concern that runs through all policies and policy related gender issues.

When one is helping another, both gain in strength.
Ecuador proverb

Gender and the policy-making process

There may be no better place in this series to talk in some depth about gender issues and elected leadership than here. After all, it is the policy-making competency that is used to forge new legislation, establish new programmes, and provide management and staff support to all good governance initiatives, including those that deal with gender equality and equity. One of the best sources of information and enlightenment on issues of gender equality and equity as it relates to the policy-making process comes out of Canada. The sourced is the organization Status on Women Canada, Policy Analysis

and of what you are about to read has been gleaned from this website and a document called Gender-based Analysis: A Guide for Policy-Making (revised edition, 1998). Check it out!

Development Directorate in Ottawa. Their website is: www.swc-cfc.gc.ca

Much Status of Women Canada (SWC) defines some of the terms we needed for this discussion in the following way.

- Gender is the culturally specific set of characteristics that identifies the social behaviour of women and men and the relationship between them. Because it is a relational term, gender must include women and men. Gender is an analytical tool for understanding social processes, and central to the formulation of many public policies.
- Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality.
- Gender equality means that women and men enjoy the same status; that they have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to all kinds of development and the benefit from these developments.

As SWC reminds us, gender equality is the equal valuing by society of both the

similarities and differences between women and men, and the carrying roles that they play.

What kinds of policies are we talking about?

Too often, elected officials get bogged down in the wrong kinds of policy-making. Many elected officials focus on administrative and management policy-making at the expense of governance policy-making.

Let's see if we can shed some light on this dilemma by looking at the different kinds of policies. There are administrative policies, management policies, and governance policies.

1. Administrative policies are more often than not procedures that have been established to carry out a specific function within the organization.

For example, personnel procedures in most organizations would define fringe benefits, hiring procedures and other standard operating procedures that have been developed by staff members or managers depending on the size of the organization. They may or may not be approved by the elected body depending on the function.

Local governments typically create a flood of procedures, guidelines, and what are often called policies to administer internal functions and duties. Many of them rarely go beyond the internal memorandum that spells out the procedures to be followed.

2. ***Management policies get closer to becoming governing-body material.***

They typically involve the preparation of annual and capital budgets, the working relationships with contractors and other external working partners, and the interactions with a variety of community-based institutions. John Carver in *Boards That Make a Difference* suggests that governing board members often get thrust into a super-staff relationship with their managers on management issues when they should be taking the high road to policy making. One reason this happens is that policy board members typically “pride themselves with being decision-makers and problem-solvers. They gauge their performance by such decisions and solutions, not by the clarity of the policies that led to them.”

66 Carver, John, *Boards That Make a Difference*, (San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1990),

3. Governance policies, driven by elected governing bodies that take a more activist role in policy formulation, are the kinds of policies Carver believes elected officials should be making. Carver also believes a governing board can gain far more control over what matters in the organization and be at less risk in getting lost in the administrative details if they focus on governance-type policy-making. He contends that policy boards need to be more proactive in promoting policies that focus on long range goals. As we will explore later, there is a direct connection between strategic planning activities and governance policy-making. But first, let’s look at an impressive demonstration of proactive policy-making.

CASE STUDY

The municipal councils in the Durban, South Africa, metropolitan region have demonstrated by their actions the kinds of policy decisions advocated by Carver. With the advent of democratic government in 1994, the new South African constitution mandated local governments to promote local economic development, challenging them to adopt pro-poor policies that emphasized participation and consultation. Following municipal elections two years later, the local councils in the Durban metropolitan area began a sustained process of developing policies that would support the development of the informal sector on a region-wide basis.

With this vision clearly in mind, they undertook research on the informal sector to better understand its characteristics and needs. Working with informal sector participants, they developed policies for regulating and supporting street trading. One distinction of this consultative approach was the emphasis put on the interdependence of the formal and informal economies of Durban. Street traders were seen as a vital part of urban life and the economy of the region, not as an impediment to development as is often the case.

An inclusive process of consultation was designed and implemented involving a rich mix of stakeholders in the impact areas. They included informal and formal business associations, elected officials from the unions, civic groups, and forums designed to reach the less articulate, less

centrally situated groups of informal sector working men and women. These consultations resulted in the development of various policy initiatives needed to support a variety of ventures that would focus on building the informal sector of the metropolitan economy.

67 Carver, p.32.

For example, policies were established to:

- Simplify registration costs for vendors and home workers and provide incentives to become registered.
- Include informal trader association representatives on planning and policy committees such as the Self-Employed Women’s Union.
- Provide on-going support to trader organizations i.e. meeting places, legal advice, and secretarial help, using municipal assets whenever possible.
- Develop an information system that links the participating parties together.
- Foster collaboration between local governments and traders to improve the image of the informal economy.

This remarkable case study demonstrates the power of elected leadership policy-making based on a vision, rigorous field research, widespread consultation and involvement, and a constant drive toward implementation successes.

Those who expect to reap the blessings of democracy must undergo the fatigue of supporting it.

Thomas Paine, 18th Century British born American politician-author

How to craft a policy statement

68 Based on a case study by Jeremy Grest, *The Informal Economy Policy Framework in Durban*, in the publication *Sustainable Urbanisation*:

Bridging the Green and Brown Agendas, (London, The Development Planning Unit, University College London, 2002), pp.144-5.

Once again, we call on John Carver who has contributed as much as any one person to help governance bodies make a difference in the quality of their performance. Policies should be

Explicit and written:

This is the only way that others will know what the policy is designed to do. It means “laying one’s values on the table, exposing differences, and confronting them openly.” Openness and accountability are the principles that come into play with being explicit.

Current:

Up-to-date policies are the only ones that work. This means the portfolio of governing policies must be managed through annual reviews and purging sessions to get rid of outdates and contradictory policies.

Literal:

In other words, they must mean what they say. Carver makes the point, that “Governing is a verbal job; if a governing body’s words have little integrity,

governance cannot be excellent.”

Available:

Keep them in one place and make them easily accessible to all who need to see them.

69 Carver, p.41.

- Brief: While many are impressed by complexity and legalistic language that is meant only to impress other lawyers, governing bodies “need to seek the compelling elegance of simplicity.”
- Encompassing: Policies must support the wholeness that governing bodies want governance to be. This sounds contradictory to the “brief” criteria but Carver sees no inherent conflict. He advised starting with the larger issues such as gender equality and equity before dealing with subordinate concerns that might be implicit in the larger policy stand.

A reflective opportunity

We’ve been weaving into each of the competency discussions a look at how the good governance principles provide the platform for using the various competencies and how they in turn can serve the promotion of these principles. We want you to reflect on how you could use policy making to promote each of the good governance principles.

After each of the governance principles, describe a policy action that your elected body has taken or could take that would encompass the principle. Be as specific

as possible about the focus of the policy, the target group it would involve, and the intended results, i.e. the what, who, and why inquiries. For example, you might say: We will develop policies to provide skills training and counselling for homeless women for the purpose of making them more viable in finding sustainable employment opportunities as an example of the inclusiveness principle.

70 Carver, pp. 42-4.

71 Matzer, Jack. Financial Policy Making, (Bratislava, Slovakia. Local Government Assistance Center, 1998.), p.31.

Goals>Policies>Strategies>Implementation

Do you ever find yourself confused about the differences among the terms goals, policies and strategies?

Since they all have something to do with policy-making, it might be helpful to see how they interrelate.

Goals are statements that describe desired future conditions worthy of community effort and commitment. They

1. Reflect a community’s basic purposes;
2. Focus on results, not just the performance of tasks or completion of assignments; and
3. Call for a major commitment of human and material resources to assure their attainment.

Policies as stated previously are formal positions taken by the governing body to support the implementation of goals. They are also statements of intent; they state what your local government intends to do. In this context, they are not random consequences of chance behaviour. They

are deliberate acts by those who possess the responsibility for making decisions that will produce anticipated results. Policies make goals legal and sanction government courses of action. They lead to the development of strategies to carry out the goals.

Strategies are the means used to accomplish goals and implement policies. Strategies should encompass a wide range of alternatives to get programmes and projects implemented. They are the “how to” part of the puzzle. One strategy is to use a source other than local government organizations to carry out public goals and policies.

Implementation is the broad term used to describe the actions taken to carry out goals, policies and strategies. Implementation implies doing something tangible. You can physically see most implementations as they take place.

EXAMPLE

Suppose you represent a rural district as an elected official.

- Only twenty percent of the district residents have convenient access to a potable water supply at this time. This constitutes a problem.
- In reviewing this problem, your governing body has decided or established the goal that ninety-five percent of all citizens of the district should have a potable water supply within one kilometre of their primary residence within the next five years i.e. by the year

- Since the district doesn’t have the funds available to construct all the facilities required to meet this ambitious goal, they have adopted legislation or a policy that spells out the facilitating role the local government will take to help citizens develop their own sources of potable water. This legislation has also indicated there will be penalties imposed after certain deadlines have passed if citizens are not using potable water sources in those areas designated as safe water zones.

- Your elected body and its representatives have also detailed what they plan to do or a strategy to assist citizens in the implementation of this policy. The local government will assist in setting up neighbourhood user committees; provide training; locate long-term loan sources for the development of localized water sources; and provide inspection services during and after construction of the facilities to ensure that they meet certain standards.

- As soon as citizens begin to establish their committees, the implementation of the strategy has begun.

Policy dialogue opportunities

There are many ways to carry out a policy dialogue.

Here are just a few of the ways your counterparts in other parts of the world are responding to this role challenge: Governing body/staff recommendations.

Probably the most common approach to policy formulation is to rely heavily upon the local government's professional staff to make recommendations for your consideration. Their recommendations are generally tied to programmatic changes they want to make or to proposed budget allocations that may have policy implications. While this approach provides governing bodies with a professional perspective, more often than not it ignores the broader issues of the community

Elected official/staff interactions.

It's becoming more common for elected bodies to spend a few un-interrupted days each year thinking through long-range issues and concerns with key members of their staff. These meetings or retreats often take place in a setting away from the city and are usually organised and conducted by an outside facilitator, someone skilled in managing small group discussions. It is an opportunity for the elected men and women and their professional team to:

1. Reflect on the problems they are facing;
2. Think about opportunities to serve the community more effectively; and
3. Do some long-range planning or policy formulation.

Governing body/community discussions. Many governing bodies have initiated community-wide discussions that involve a large number of individuals representing diverse interests and groups. These expanded dialogues take a variety of forms and cover different time

frames. They can be single-issue oriented or include a wide spectrum of community concerns.

Community initiatives.

The trend toward participatory democracy and local self-governance has prompted some local governments to work directly with neighbourhoods in helping them plan for greater involvement in the locality. Sometimes the council assigns staff members to work directly with these sub-units of the local government in their efforts to be more self-reliant and directed. There are a number of excellent examples of this devolutionary approach to governance from around the world. The UN-HABITAT Local Agenda 21 initiatives helped local governments and communities in diverse geographic locations establish community consultation processes to formulate community-based policies, plans, and programmes.

Actions speak louder than words

Policies are curious manifestations of human intent. In the perfect world of good governance, they should be made in consultation with those who will be responsible for implementing them and with those who will be affected by their presence. They should also promote and put into operation principles of equity and inclusiveness. The rule of law principle pervades not just the process of policy-making but all those interactions and activities the policy sets in motion.

Public policies should also be subject to public scrutiny before and during

their adoption and after they become operational. They should be responsive to the rationale that led to their creation. These are the principles of openness and accountability. Effectiveness, which we interpret as "doing the right things" as representatives of those you serve as elected officials, is central to policy-making. Efficiency is a management responsibility and should be backed by administrative policies that adhere to all the other good governance principles.

Elected men and women by the power vested in them will either make policies that meet good governance qualities or policies that call into question their commitment to good governance and their citizens.





7: The Enabling Competency

Introduction

We are just at the beginning of an era of essential partnerships, alliances, and coalitions. We are learning to build community beyond the walls of the organization, with the same kind of initiative and energy we have used in building the organization within the walls.

Frances Hesselbein

Enabling is one of those relatively new concepts that is used to describe various kinds of interactions among governments, civil society institutions, and citizens to put good governance principles into practice. Ms. Hesselbein, quoted above, is reflecting on her experience as a leader in the non-governmental sector and not local government. Her “construction” metaphor is useful in conveying the essence of enabling as a community building strategy.

Moreover, we believe enabling is a leadership competency that has enormous potential 1) to add value to many local government functions and responsibilities at minimal costs and 2) to infuse the democratic process at all levels of the community with vigour and purpose.

Defining terms

Enabling is providing the means for others to get things done. It is also much

more. Posner, in *The Leadership Challenge*, describe what they believe to be the five practices of exemplary leadership. These are: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, encourage the heart, and enable others to act. Your ability to provide elected leadership and your ability to enable others are in many ways related to the other four practices outlined in their model.

Enabling others, according to Kouzes and Posner, is based on two fundamental commitments:

- Fostering collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust; and
- Strengthening others by sharing power and discretion.

When local governments foster collaboration, they involve others in the governance process from goal setting to the implementation of programmes and services. Sharing power and resources is also important to assure that those who have been “enabled” have the means to get things done. By “others” we mean a broad range of institutional arrangements, not just individual men and women although individual efforts are not excluded in the enabling process. Here are just a few examples of how the enabling competency works.

- Enabling involves communication, not just from local government to local citizens but from the

bottom of the democratic process, neighbourhoods and groups of citizens to their local governments.

- Enabling involves shared decision making and making decisions where they mean the most to those who have to live by their consequences.
- Enabling involves the decentralisation of public programmes and services whenever possible or what UN-HABITAT calls subsidiarity.
- Enabling is the process of building partnerships with civil society institutions as well as other units of government.
- Enabling is assuring that your local government organisation is delegated the authority, resources, and responsibilities to implement legislated policies, programmes and services.

As you can see, enabling involves in one way or another all the other urban leadership competencies highlighted by this series, and it cuts to the heart of many of the good governance principles. It is also important to recognise that the enabling competency is a reciprocal relationship with citizens, all aspects of the civil society, and the local government managers and staff.

Being reciprocal, enabling flows both ways.

It is difficult to talk about enabling and how the process works without also discussing civil society. These two, enabling and civil society, are deeply intertwined in efforts to bring good governance

72 Kouzes, James M. and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2002), p.22.

In the long history of humankind those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.

Charles Darwin, 19th Century English naturalist

Enabling and civil society: What's the connection?

Civil society encompasses the whole range of civic action independent of formal political institutions. It includes service associations, philanthropic groups, cultural groups, religious organisations, labour unions, athletic organisations, youth and women groups, plus many more in every imaginable field of interest or endeavour. The concept also embraces economic relations, organisations, and activities not owned or directly controlled by the state.

In other words, if it isn't government, it's civil society. This is an important distinction to keep in mind when applying your leadership enabling skills and competencies.

73 Bahmueller, Charles F. "Civil Society and Democracy Reconsidered" *Sociedad Civil*, Vol.No.1, 1996 (Mexico City), pp.63.

74 Bahmueller, p.69.

The functions of civil society

We are focusing on civil society in our exploration of the enabling competency because it is fundamental to democracy

and good governance. Larry Diamond, co-editor of the *Journal of Democracy*, outlines what he believes to be the ten "democratic functions" of civil society. They include:

1. Limiting state powers by monitoring the abuse of power, such as corruption and vote fraud, and mobilising society to protest such abuses.
2. Supplementing the role of political parties in stimulating political participation.
3. Developing attributes such as toleration and moderation
4. Providing non-political ways to articulate, aggregate, and represent interests.
5. Establishing voluntary associations that transcend regions, religion, class, ethnicity, and other special interests.
6. Recruiting and training potential political leaders outside the mainstream of political parties.
7. Helping to build democracy through educating citizens about democracy and the democratic processes.
8. Helping to achieve economic reforms that strengthen democratic processes.
9. Strengthening emerging democratic states by pressuring them into patterns of behaviour that help them achieve good governance for their citizens.

Civil society is a potentially powerful ally in helping you and your local government

achieve and sustain successes in providing services to keep the faith of your citizens. 75 Diamond, Larry. "Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation." *Journal of Democracy* 5 (July 1994): pp-4-17.

Join with good people and you will be one of them.
Venezuelan proverb

Enabling in action

To better understand local government's enabling role, let's look at an initiative in Maracaibo, Venezuela. By collaborating with several private companies and community organisations, the city was able to provide health services to the poor when it was suddenly mandated that responsibility.

Enabling in Maracaibo, Venezuela

When Venezuela decentralised its governing process in 1993, the responsibility for health care was transferred to local governments. While the newly elected governing body of the city established health care services to the poor as one of its highest priorities, it was faced with budget constraints. As a result, the council adopted an idea from two local physicians who recommended the city establish mobile clinics.

With the assistance of several private companies and various community organisations, the municipality was able to establish mobile clinics and consequently provide health care on a regular basis to these isolated communities within the city. For example, a petroleum company

provided gasoline for the mobile clinics at a discounted rate; a large corporation underwrote preventative education in oral hygiene; and the Association of Neighbourhoods served as a link between the health teams and local citizens. By enabling others in the community to get involved in primary health care to the poor, the municipality was able to resolve a service obligation brought on by decentralisation.

76 UN-HABITAT, Department of International Development, and The Development Planning Unit University College London, Implementing the Habitat Agenda in Search of Urban Sustainability. 2001, p. 104.

There are two ways of spreading light: To be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

Edith Wharton, 20th Century American novelist

The enabling power of information and ideas

One of the most effective ways to enable others is to stimulate the flow of ideas and information from the bottom up, top down, and all around.

Information and ideas are important sources of political power. While we have talked about the communicating competency in an earlier chapter, it was directed mostly to the process of communicating from the perspective of the elected official and the governing body. Now we want to take a look at some ways to communicate information and

ideas from the citizen perspective, from the bottom up.

77 Fiszbein, Ariel and Pamela Lowden, Working Together for a Change, (Washington, DC, The World Bank, 1999), pp. 106-8.

Public deliberation

Public deliberation is the process of learning and reasoning together around a public issue of shared concern. The process has become more organised in recent years, thanks to organisations like the Kettering Foundation through their programme Making Choices Together.

Public deliberations are not public debates where those involved take opposite sides on an issue and do verbal battle. As the Kettering Foundation reminds those who have participated in hundreds of public deliberations sponsored by their organisation:

Deliberation is different. It is neither a partisan argument where opposing sides try to win nor a casual conversation conducted with polite civility. Public deliberation is a means by which citizens make tough choices about basic purposes and directions for their communities and their country. It is a way of reasoning and talking together.

It is important to frame any public deliberation in terms of three or four options for dealing with an issue, never just two polar alternatives. Otherwise they can quickly turn into debates between those who are for one of the alternatives and against the other. To deliberate is

also to weigh the consequences and costs of various options based on what is important to those deliberating.

78 Making Choices Together: The Power of Public Deliberation. (Dayton, Ohio, USA, Kettering Foundation, 2002), p. 10. For more information log on to their website: www.kettering.org

Public deliberations can be initiated by just about any concerned man or woman or organisation, involve from a few individuals to several hundred, be held in the corner of the local library or a public auditorium, last from two to three hours in single or multiple timeframe, and be moderated or not, although using a moderator is strongly suggested.

The Foundation provides an example of a grassroots-type deliberation.

A neighbourhood had a terrible mosquito problem. They also had a neighbourhood association and a neighbour who knew something about the public deliberation process. This individual gathered information from other communities about how they controlled mosquitoes and produced a little booklet called *Those Pesky Mosquitoes* which outlined the three most common approaches to the problem. He organised a meeting room and sent out a letter inviting people to attend a public forum to weigh the three options. About fifty people came and their deliberation resulted in committees being formed who in turn took actions to eliminate the mosquitoes with a minimum of environmental damage.

Those who moderate public deliberations are encouraged to follow these guidelines, to explain them to those participating, and to get agreement on them before any deliberation begins.

- The purpose of the deliberation is to work toward a decision, to try to make a choice.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate so no one will dominate.
- Listening is as important as talking.
- Participants should talk to each other, not just the moderator.
- It is important to keep the discussion on track and on the option being discussed at the time. The moderator can do this, but all participants are encouraged to perform this function.
- Participants must fairly consider every option and fully examine all the trade-offs involved in a choice. A diversity of views is essential.

79 Making Choices Together, p. 24.

Before bringing such a public deliberation to a close, it is usually a good idea to reflect on what has been accomplished.

Study circles

Study circles are largely an enabling process of small group deliberation that is voluntary and participatory. Typically, study circle programmes are initiated out of concern about an issue of community-wide interest. In most communities, one organisation takes the lead and approaches other key organisations to build a sponsoring coalition. The

small study circles can be formed at the neighbourhood level with the results of these deliberations being shared in larger forums where the ideas and priorities for action are brought together for further discussion. These series of dialogues can ultimately involve a widening circle of participants.

The most impressive aspect of this process is the potential to engage a large number of citizens in community-wide dialogues in very small groups on a common issue that has defied resolution within the larger community.

While Study Circles are largely an enabling process used in the United States, we encourage you to think about them as a potential resource for your own communities. The concept took shape when a small foundation in a small community in Connecticut established a resource centre in 1989 to promote public deliberation on important social and political issues. Since that time they have become a national force in promoting public dialogues at the local level. You can learn more about the study circle approach through their web site: www.studycircles.org.

80 These good ideas about deliberation were taken from Making Choices Together, p.27-30.

81 A Guide for Training Study Circle Facilitators (Pomfret, Connecticut, USA, Study Circles Resource Centre, 1998), p.14. Focus Groups

The focus group is another tool for getting useful information, feedback, and ideas from local citizens and representatives of particular interests and groups within your community. While the process is often associated with customer service evaluation within the private sector, it is an excellent tool to put in your enabling toolkit. Focus group discussions can help you as an individual elected official or as a governing body receive valuable feedback from constituents while reassuring them that their opinions are valued and taken seriously.

What is a focus group? A focus group is an informal gathering of men and/or women whose opinions are requested about a specific topic or several topics depending on your goal. The intent is to elicit perceptions, ideas, insights, and experiences from your citizens about the topic or topics. Focus groups usually include from six to twelve participants and normally last between one and two hours. Diversity may or may not be important depending on what you hope to accomplish.

How are focus groups managed? Focus group discussions are facilitated or moderated events. Someone needs to plan and manage the discussions and that person should possess facilitating competencies. This is just another reminder of how these competencies are intertwined. While it is important to prepare a list of questions or topics to be discussed, it's important not to be too prescriptive. A focus group discussion should feel free-flowing and relatively

unstructured. Given this, it helps to select the venue carefully. An informal setting with a minimum of distractions where every person can see all others is important.

What does a focus group accomplish? The purpose of focus groups is not to reach a consensus, to make other kinds of decisions or to solve problems. Rather, it is to obtain a range of opinions from the participants on the topic or topics for which the session has been convened. Since each participant's point of view is of interest and equally valued, the moderator is expected to encourage all participants to express their points of view about each topic. Remember that focus groups are used to hear what people are thinking about the topic(s) in their own words.

What makes a focus group discussion different? The interaction of the participants is important to observe as well as what they are saying. It is often the unexpected comments, or the flow of a discussion that takes it away from the intended focus of the group, that provide the most important findings.

Enabling through shared decision making The sharing of public decision-making powers with diverse communities is a quantum leap forward in the enabling process. Here is an example of elected leaders sharing their decision-making powers with citizens.

EXAMPLE

Portland, Oregon. Portland, with a population of less than 500,000, has

nearly one hundred neighbourhood associations. The city government invites all of these associations and other civic groups to prepare budget proposals for service improvements and new or repaired facilities in their neighbourhoods. The associations decide how they will assess their needs and many hold public hearings and conduct citizen surveys. The city's Office of Neighbourhood Associations forwards these proposals to the proper city departments for consideration. Of the several hundred need reports submitted annually, over forty percent have been funded over the more than thirty years the neighbourhood associations have been in operation. Some neighbourhoods have also created their own funding mechanisms for local development.⁸³

82 Children and Young People's Participatory Budget in Barra Mansa, Implementing the Habitat Agenda In Search of Urban Sustainability, (London, The Development Planning Unit University College London, 2001), pp.174-5.

83 Epstein, Paul D. Using Performance Measurement in Local Government, (New York, National Civic League Press, 1998), p.150.

Be the change you want to see in the world.

Gandhi, 20th century Indian National leader

Forming partnerships

John Bryson and Barbara Crosby remind us in their book Leadership for the Common Good that we live in a world where no one is in charge. They are talking about the kinds of problems that often outstretch

the ability of local governments to cope with them successfully.

Bryson and Crosby are advocating a shared-power approach.

“Organisations and institutions that share objectives must also partly share resources and authority in order to achieve their collective goals.”

84 Bryson, John and Barbara C. Crosby, Leadership for the Common Good, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishing, 1992), p.4.

Potential civil society - local government partnership roles

A consortium of international organisations produced an excellent publication on building public-private partnerships entitled Focusing Partnerships: A Sourcebook for Municipal Capacity Building in Public-Private Partnerships. Here are some of the many service roles they believe non-governmental organisations can perform in partnership with local governments.

- Project formulation and development.
- Capacity building.
- Community interface.

86 Plummer, Janelle and contributing others, Focusing Partnerships A Sourcebook for Municipal Capacity Building in Public-Private Partnerships (London. Earthscan Publications, 2002), pp.93-5.

How to build local government-civil society partnerships

Partnerships for local governments involve joining other institutions, groups, or individuals to accomplish mutually beneficial goals and objectives. These partnerships can be as diverse as:

- Establishing joint ventures between a local government operating department and neighbourhood organisations. For example, in India, it is common to return 50% of the cost of collecting garbage back to neighbourhoods for their involvement in providing the service.
- Working with local religious organisations to provide shelter for the homeless.
- Establishing neighbourhood watch programmes to help police provide security in high-risk areas of the municipality.
- Divesting of certain public services where it becomes obvious that civil society organisations can manage them more effectively and efficiently.

We suspect that you can add many more examples from your own experience.

The key elements of a local government-civil society partnership should include:

- clarifying realistic objectives;
- defining the basic principles of the partnership;
- establishing the programme of change;
- defining the scope and functions of the arrangement;
- identifying the key partners, their

roles and relationships;

- defining levels of service and how the poor will be the focus;
- identifying the potential financing mechanisms;
- establishing the legal and regulatory framework; and
- identifying the major risks.

87 Plummer, Janelle, p.291.

Delegating

Delegating is an important enabling strategy, but it is more often associated with managerial discretion. While we will cover this enabling strategy in the Institution Building competency chapter, we believe the principles of delegation apply to many partnering relationships. Basically, delegation is providing others with the authority, responsibility, and freedom to operate on your behalf. It is recognition that they have the skills and will to act.

Networking

Networking is a process that ignores some of the attributes of more formal, bureaucratic systems of decision making and problem solving. Networking suggests an ever-widening knowledge of community resources that can be tapped to solve problems.

For example, you learned just the other day that the local brick factory is willing to make its truck available on Saturdays at no cost to haul building materials to one of the low-income areas in your city. You also heard that a building is being torn down in another part of town and some

of the building materials that are destined for the sanitary landfill could be salvaged. There's a local women's group in your community that has made a commitment to build a women's shelter but lacks many of the building materials to follow through on their commitment. You get in touch with the women's group, they call the brick factory to arrange for the truck and send one of their members to the deconstruction site to keep the materials from being hauled away.

Now, that's networking.

Two qualities characterize the networking process: spontaneity and freedom. Spontaneity is the willingness of individuals to reach out at any time under almost any circumstance to help those in need. Freedom, on the other hand, is the will and the ability to take action, to redefine institutional and programme boundaries to help them be more responsive, and to share power, influence, and access to resources in a collaborative, non-threatening manner.

Trust

In the very beginning of this discussion we mentioned that enabling is based on two fundamental commitments: 1) fostering collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust, and 2) strengthening others by sharing power and discretion. We've provided many examples of how to fulfil the second commitment involving power and discretion but very little on the issue of trust as part of the first commitment. We believe that trust is fundamental to building partnerships and effective

elected leadership.

David Carnevale in his book *Trustworthy Government* says, "Trust is faith in people, their motivations, and their capacities," and yet, we often use the term when we talk about government. "I don't trust my government."

Trust is reciprocal. Expressions of trust beget trust; distrust engenders distrust. Trust also lives by its own rule of physics. While it degenerates rapidly, it regenerates slowly.

89 Carnevale, David, *Trustworthy Government* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishing, 1995), pp.70-4.

90 Carnevale, pp.104-1.

Accountability

To ensure that your local government doesn't forfeit its accountability to its citizens when entering into enabling ventures with organizations, groups, or even individuals, it is helpful to apply the following criteria.

- First, establish to the extent possible a mutuality of enduring trust.
- Second, be clear about the goals and objectives to be pursued and the outputs and outcomes to be achieved.
- Third, keep the lines of communications open.
- Finally, determine who will be accountable for what

91 Tony Benn, from a lecture he delivered at Nottingham, England on 18 June 1993, entitled "The Independent Mind."



3. The Facilitating Competency

Introduction

If you have one good idea, people will lend you twenty.

Marie van Ebner-Eschenbach

Roger Schwartz in *The Skilled Facilitator* says all kinds of groups can improve the way they work together by using facilitating skills. In its truest form, facilitating is a process where a person, who is acceptable to all the members of the group, substantively neutral and has no decision-making authority, intervenes to help the group improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions.³⁰ He goes on to say that facilitating can be divided into two types:

1. Basic facilitation: the facilitator helps a group work more effectively on a specific issue or problem, and the group remains dependent on the facilitator for future assistance.

2. Developmental facilitation: the facilitator helps the group work more effectively on a specific issue or problem and coaches them on how to provide their own facilitating skills to work on future issues and problems. This approach involves learning-by-doing. Group members learn facilitator skills so they can apply them to future group endeavours without the need for external assistance.

In this chapter we assume elected leaders will perform as developmental

facilitators whenever it is appropriate. You will not only help groups be more effective when you are working with them but provide them with the values and skills to work more effectively on their own. The competency of facilitating group effectiveness is at its best when it is passed on to others through learning-by-doing.

A boat doesn't go forward if everyone is rowing her own way.

Swahili proverb

Facilitating: A skill based on group process

Core values that guide effective facilitation
In each of these potential facilitating opportunities, it is important to recognize that a set of core values should guide your involvement.

They include:

1. Valid and useful information: meaning that all involved share the information relevant to the issue, that they understand it, and that it is useful to their deliberations.
2. Free and informed choice: those involved are free to make decisions based on the available information and their concerns, interests and desires. They are not coerced or manipulated into making choices against their will.
3. Internal commitment to the choices made: those involved not only accept

the course of actions to be taken, but they also have a high degree of ownership and commitment to the decision(s) that will drive these actions.

These core values tend to reinforce each other. When a task-oriented group generates valid and useful information and makes informed choices based on that information, they will, more often than not, become internally committed to these choices.

Facilitating attributes and skills

The role of the skilled and principled facilitator is both challenging and rewarding. Those individuals who perform best as facilitators possess the following personal qualities, knowledge, and skills:
Personal qualities: The effective facilitator is

- Honest - acts on conviction.
- Consistent - can be relied upon to do what she says.
- Accepting - holds all individuals in unconditional regard.
- Caring - concerned about the well-being of others.
- Objective - has no vested interest in one action over another. This quality is difficult to achieve as an elected official who is expected to take stands on issues. If you have a vested interest, declare it along with your commitment to be fair.
- Flexible - ready to change when the situation calls for it.

- Responsive - to all points of view.

Knowledge: The effective facilitator understands and appreciates the importance of

- Cultural, ethnic, and gender qualities and contributions.
- Group and interpersonal dynamics.
- Adult learning principles and methods.
- Group process
- The expertise represented within the group.

Interpersonal skills: The effective facilitator is skilful in

- Active listening.
- Giving and receiving feedback.
- Asking questions that will stimulate discussion.
- Observing group and individual behaviour that can either contribute to or adversely affect the effectiveness of the group.
- Presenting information and concepts that will help the group progress toward its goals.
- Stimulating interaction.
- Building and maintaining trust.
- Bringing successful closure to the group's interactions.

Looks pretty intimidating, doesn't it? And yet, many of these personal qualities are associated with other competencies covered in this series. For example, the communication skills from the previous chapter and the concepts and

strategies you will be exploring in the enabling competency have overlapping tendencies. And, the personal qualities required of the effective facilitator extend to all the representation and leadership roles and responsibilities as an elected official.

A reflective opportunity

Go back to the laundry list of facilitator attributes we have listed and check those where you believe you are the strongest and most effective in using in group situations. List the most important ones below.

.....

Now, return to the lists and check those you believe you can improve upon. List the two or three most important personal improvement items and put together a "to-do" list of actions you can take to help you be a more effective facilitator.

.....

When one is helping another, both are strong.
German proverb

What makes groups perform effectively?

Groups work at two different levels of interaction: task and relationships. These two interactive components operate simultaneously and often get trampled by each other. The facilitator can play an important role in helping groups maintain a healthy balance between their task and relationship needs. The following are some of the key task and relationship characteristics that are important to effective group performance.

Relationship-related characteristics:

Groups are effective when their members:

- Get acquainted with each other if they haven't worked together before.
- Agree on the group's purpose for working together;
- Collaborate on group tasks and responsibilities;
- Openly share information, ideas, and feedback;
- Support one another;
- Confront issues with care and courage;
- Respond constructively to feedback from one another; and
- Encourage everyone to contribute.

Task-related characteristics: The group's task effectiveness is enhanced when they:

- Are clear about what they want to achieve, in other words, why they have convened their collective resources;

- Clarify their individual roles and responsibilities as members of the group;
- Determine the need for external support and resources;
- Agree on how they will work together;
- Establish some groundrules including such concerns as making decisions, staying on track; disagreeing openly, and sharing all relevant information;
- Prepare an agenda;
- Record accurately what happened during the meeting; and
- Manage their time in relation to the tasks to be performed.

Music, to create harmony, must investigate discord.
Plutarch, First Century Greek Moralist

Managing conflict

Conflict is one of those things that most of us avoid if we can. The problem is, the conflict, and whatever is causing it, usually doesn't go away. It just sits there and simmers - and simmers. Avoiding conflict can and does create a lot of problems in many organizations. We also know that different cultures deal with conflict differently, and what we have to say is from a Western management bias. Given this, we urge you to look at this aspect of using your facilitating competency based on your own experience and cultural norms.

Know the source

Conflict can develop when there are differences in:

- Facts and perceptions (our

communicated view of reality)

- Preferred goals and outcomes (how things ought be, not how they currently are)
- Ways, or methods, for achieving those goals
- Values (our fundamental beliefs)

Differences over facts and perceptions are usually easier to resolve than differences in goals, outcomes, and the methods used to achieve these results. Values are the most difficult differences to resolve or even to manage with any degree of long-term success.

Conflict strategies

Different people have different ways of dealing with conflict. Many years ago, Kenneth Thomas, who is considered one of the leading experts on conflict management, identified five basic strategies individuals and groups employ when faced with conflict. These approaches are based on two primary dimensions of behaviour, "assertiveness," (the extent to which we attempt to satisfy our own concerns) and "co-operation," (the extent to which we attempt to satisfy the other person's concerns). Using a two dimensional model with high and low values on these two behaviours, he has defined five specific methods of dealing with conflict.

1. Avoidance: (unassertive and uncooperative) Individuals who adopt an avoidance approach to conflict don't pursue their own interests and concerns or those of their adversaries. They simply

avoid conflict by such tactics as not showing up for the meeting or by postponing the issue until some undetermined future date.

2. Accommodation: (unassertive and cooperative) Those who adopt this style neglect their own interests to satisfy the concerns of the other party. Tactics include such contrasting approaches as: yielding to the other side's point of view and selfless generosity.
3. Competition: (assertive and uncooperative) This style is the opposite of accommodation. It's a power-motivated strategy designed to win at any cost when confronted with a conflicting situation.
4. Collaboration: (assertive and cooperative) And, the opposite of avoidance. Collaboration, at its best, seeks to find win-win solutions to conflict. This involves solutions that satisfy the needs and concerns of both parties. Such a strategy involves an understanding of why the conflict exists and finding solutions that eliminate, or at least minimize, competition for resources.
5. Compromise: (somewhat assertive and cooperative) Parties tend to compromise when they are looking for fast, mutually acceptable solutions that partially satisfy both parties. Strategies include finding a middle ground everyone can live with and splitting the differences that exist between the conflicted bodies.

universal "right answers" when it comes to dealing with conflict. All five modes of behaviour are useful. It depends on the situation. It is believed that each of us tends to have a dominant style for dealing with conflict. For example, some of us might avoid conflict at all cost while others may have a tendency to be competitive in conflict situations. Then again, we might resort to compromise or one of the other styles suggested by the Thomas model.

Explore the difference

If you are going to help manage conflict, the best place to begin is with a better understanding of the issues behind the conflict. This means digging beneath the surface indicators of what might be causing the conflict. Facts are the easiest to confirm and reconcile. Perceptions are more difficult. They have a tendency to become distorted, partly because we have the tendency to attribute motives to other people's actions and "see" things that will confirm our own position.

Here are some things you can do to help facilitate the resolution of a conflict between two individuals or groups.

1. Help the individuals or groups see the conflict from the others' point of view. Here is a situation when "active listening" skills can be used.
2. Look for situations where the conflicting parties have made assumptions about the intentions of others based on their own fears. Often we assume the worst in conflict situations, and these fears drive us to

entrenched positions.

3. Move the warring parties away from attacking each other and placing blame. When this happens, we usually become defensive, counter attack, and create more distortions.
4. Help them create additional options. Often the only alternatives they have available are the two over which they are at odds.
5. Let them vent their emotions. Sometimes the emotions are more important than the facts. By getting them out, the parties often are able to unload feelings that inhibit constructive discussion.
6. Help them find win-win solutions. Not everyone wins in the resolution of conflict, but it is surprising how many times conflicts can be resolved with both sides coming out as winners. This is where your ability to listen and help those in conflict generate new options can be invaluable.

Your best resources, in helping others resolve their differences are: (a) the raw materials (knowledge and emotions) they bring to the situation, and (b) your patience and empathy in helping the adversaries refine their raw materials into an agreement they can both live with.

Gender issues in conflict resolution

The field of Conflict Resolution has traditionally not taken much notice of gender issues in either theory or practice. 'Gender' is a term used to describe the different socially-constructed roles usually, but not always, assigned

to people based on their sex - their biological characteristics. Gender issues include questions related to both men and women, but gender is often seen to imply a focus on women because of a concern in the field with inequality and empowerment of socially disadvantaged people - often women.

Local governments' recognition of women's role in conflict resolution can assist in lowering the level of conflict, and to identify and sustain avenues for the continual provision of municipal services. For example, as women are responsible for sustaining households, have children who are victims or agents of conflict, and as many women are active in community affairs, they have an interest in peace and the regular functioning of municipal services.

To reiterate, conflict is a potentially valuable resource in most organizations. Your facilitating competencies can help to resolve these conflicts and differences. If you haven't already been introduced to the UN-HABITAT, FPD and LGI series entitled Building Bridges between Citizens and Local Governments through Managing Conflict and Differences we urge you to check out the UN-HABITAT website for access to them. www.unhabitat.org

The stitch is lost unless the thread is knotted.
Italian proverb

Facilitating and mediating

In many ways, the processes of facilitating

and mediating are similar. Both are efforts to improve the quality of thinking and acting among the parties involved and to help them reach decisions acceptable to all members. In most situations these two processes also involve neutral third party interventions. In other words, the facilitator or mediator is on the outside looking in, not involved directly in decision making.

The major difference between these two processes is the issue of conflict. Mediation assumes the parties involved are in conflict. They haven't been able to resolve their differences and have sought the services of a mediator. In the case of facilitation, there may be conflict within the group but it isn't the reason why the group agreed to have someone help facilitate their interactions. The focus in facilitated sessions is primarily on making better decisions and solving problems.

We provided a definition of facilitation earlier in this discussion. You might want to compare it with the following definition of mediation. According to Carl Moore, mediation is the intervention into a dispute or negotiation by an acceptable, impartial, and neutral third party who has no authoritative decision-making power to assist disputing parties in voluntarily reaching their own mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute.

If we keep following the idea of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, we will end up with an eyeless and toothless world.

Gandhi, 20th Century Indian National

Leader

We want to encourage you to take advantage of the joint publication by UN-HABITAT and other interested parties called Building Bridges between Citizens and Local Governments through Managing Conflicts and Differences. It provides a much more thorough discussion of various ways to manage conflict and differences. You can find it on the UN-HABITAT website.

When is mediation appropriate?

There are some generally accepted conditions that make mediation an appropriate intervention.

Mediation is appropriate when:

- Strong emotions have muddled judgement.
- The parties know each other.
- There is no great disparity in the power relationship between parties.
- Maintaining the relationship between the parties is important.
- Those in conflict see the need to have a third party help them resolve their differences.
- There is a need for a quick decision.
- Lots of people are affected, e.g., a neighbourhood dispute.
- The parties involved want to avoid a costly, formal, public procedure like litigation.

There are also some conditions that make mediation an inappropriate intervention.

These may be even more important to consider!

Don't consider mediation when:

- There are indications that one party intends to use the mediation to further enflame the conflict or to achieve an ulterior motive.
- It is evident in preliminary discussions that the parties are not willing to listen to each other.
- Parties are too disturbed to work toward a collaborative agreement.
- There is a power imbalance between the feuding parties that makes mutual decision making unlikely.
- Key persons or parties are unwilling to participate in the process.
- It is unlikely that any agreement that has been reached will be implemented.

These conditions suggest that the decision to mediate should be based on a clear understanding of the circumstances that exist between those in conflict.

The "how-to" of mediation

There are many models of mediation to consider. We have summarized below a practical and commonly used approach to mediation.

Stage One: Pre-mediation planning

Once the parties agree to work with a mediator, help them to understand the process and trust both you and the process. This includes gaining a mutual understanding of how the process will

work; understanding the guidelines of engagement such as confidentiality and who makes the decisions, considering logistics such as where the mediation will take place, and developing a rapport among the parties to the mediation. Planning should also include selection of a venue that provides privacy and rooms for holding joint meetings with those in dispute as well as smaller rooms for meeting with them separately. Anything you can learn about what has created the disagreement or conflict will be important, not for making up your mind ahead of time but to help you understand the circumstances that have resulted in the dispute.

Stage Two: Beginning the mediation

This initial stage covers introductions (you can assume the warring parties know each other), ground rules you think are important, logistics such as the time you think it will take to reach an agreement and where to get a cup of coffee, and how the process works, i.e., the possibility that you might want to meet separately with the parties to explore options for resolution.

Stage Three: Defining the issues

This is also referred to by some as providing "uninterrupted time" for those in dispute to tell their side of the story. It will be important to help them understand the importance of listening to each other in as courteous manner as possible given the circumstances. It is advisable to ask the most agitated party to speak first. There are to be no interruptions or rebuttals during the time each person is speaking.

Stage Four: Exchange time

After the individual presentations, it's time to begin the dialogue to help all concerned better understand the nature of the conflict. This is the time to ask questions, explore assumptions behind the conflict, and look for common ground. As mediator, you will want to control this session, make sure that each party to the conflict has an opportunity to contribute, and look for understanding and opportunities for resolution.

You may also want to hold separate meetings with the parties to the conflict if it looks like this might help. You might want to check out a person's concerns more thoroughly, perhaps confront unhelpful behaviour, or help them think through their options.

Stage Five: Generating options to resolve the dispute

At this point, you might want to summarize what you see as the issues to be resolved. List them on a blackboard or newsprint so they can be seen by both sides. Elicit options for resolving each issue, evaluate and refine them, and test for agreement on each. This is the stage where you can bring into use the tools in Chapter Five on Decision Making.

Stage Six: Get it in writing

This is the time to build the agreement with the disputing parties. Detail who will do what and when. Emphasize positive, doable, acceptable actions. Make sure the agreement is even-handed and not conditional. Have all parties sign copies of

4: The Using Power Competency

Introduction

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.
Lord Acton, (1834-1902) British statesman

We've decided to start this essay with the Lord Acton quote because it may be the most frequently used statement to describe power. It would be dishonest to ignore power's decidedly bad reputation, particularly when it comes to governance. While power is essential to the political process, it scares many of us because it is so often misused by those in public office. In spite of these ominous signs, we believe that power is at the heart of your ability to lead as an elected official. It can also be one of your most respected competencies in the judgment of others, when used with principle and compassion.

The historian, James MacGregor Burns, helps provide the context for this discussion about the positive attributes of power. In his seminal book on leadership, Burns says, "We must see power - and leadership - not as things but as relationships and to analyze power in the context of human motives and physical constraints.

The arena of power is no longer the exclusive preserve of a power elite or an establishment or persons clothed with legitimacy. Power is ubiquitous; it permeates human relationships. It exists whether or not it is quested for. It is the

glory and the burden of most of humanity. Nearly all human beings can stand adversity, but, if you want to test their character, give them power.

Abe Lincoln, 16th President of the United States of America

A reality check

Power dominates political and governance processes.

And it is the one competency that is abused most often by those who yield power.

For example, if an elected official: steals money from the public treasury,

- takes a bribe,
- bends the rules so only his friends can bid on a huge public contract,
- pressures local government staff to fix traffic tickets, or
- pays off the police to ignore a prostitution ring he operates in the city;

There would probably be little disagreement that these are all examples of misuse of political and position power. While you may argue about the seriousness of each example, we believe you would agree that they all represent the misuse of power and a violation of the public trust.

Now the good news: All these examples can be turned around by elected officials who use their many sources of power to serve the public good in principled and

courageous ways. In other words, using power cuts both ways. While power is often misused within local governments, those same sources of power can be directed to build strong, truly representative and responsive local governments. Before we look at how you can use power as an urban leader, we need to spend a few moments talking about those components that make up your personal power base.

What is power?

James Lucas says power is a human force for achievement or obstruction that can be used individually or collectively for the constructive good, or the destruction, of other people and institutions. It is important to see power not as a commodity to be used but as a relationship to be honoured. Those relationships involve the use of a rich mix of power using strategies available to elected officials. We will explore those options in a moment but first, here's an opportunity to reflect on what has just been said.

There is almost no troubled situation that cannot be improved by rearranging it to distribute power more equally.

Virginia Satir, 20th Century American Author

42 Lucas, James, Balance of Power, (New York: American Management Association, 1998) p.13.

The link between corruption and the culture of power

While the corruption of public institutions has been described in many ways, we want to talk about it in terms of the

misuse of various kinds of elected leadership power. Corruption can be fuelled by the misuse of your legitimate powers as elected representatives of the people, by the rewards that you can provide to your friends, by coercion through the misuse of the “powers” of your office, by manipulating information in less than transparent ways, and in your connections with those who connive with public officials to exploit the public trust for personal gain.

Sources of power available to urban leaders

We have divided the various sources of potential power into three categories. They include your: legitimate power sources which come with the office of elected service; personal power sources which more often than not depend on others believing you possess them; and creative power sources which rely on your ability to combine resources and various other power sources to get things done.

Legitimate power sources

Elected officials by virtue of their office have authority to act on behalf of their constituents. Authority is the legal framework within which they work to get things accomplished on behalf of the community. This legal mechanism is the system that gives the power to formulate and implement collective values. This authority to act, the basis to use legitimate power, can also be described in terms of two other types of power: reward power and coercive power. In other words, a body of elected officials has the right and ability to reward and punish others.

1. Reward Power.

The use of your legitimate Reward Power is initiated and implemented either individually or collectively by members of the elected body. Elected officials can reward constituents by doing favours, recognizing the efforts of others, helping them get access to various public facilities and services, and recommending individuals for appointments to various local government boards and commissions.

Collectively, elected bodies can use their legitimate powers to dole out all kinds of rewards: contracts, changes in land-use zoning that often result in instant financial gain to individuals and groups, official recognition to individuals and groups for all sorts of reasons, jobs and promotions to select individuals, building new schools and health centres in select neighbourhoods, and providing a myriad of services from garbage pickup to police protection. Reward powers are only constrained by the resources that can be garnered and an official’s imagination. It is also one of those power sources that is most susceptible to misuse.

2. Coercive Power.

Local government elected bodies through their institutional powers of authority can arrest individuals, impose fines and penalties, make legitimate decisions that are meant to harm certain parties i.e. location of public facilities, take away privileges, dismiss employees who aren’t associated with their political parties, charge fees designed to intimidate businesses they believe are undesirable,

and order police actions that are designed to target selected audiences. If you think legitimate power can be coercive, consider the potential power of using legitimate powers illegitimately. It’s not beyond the imagination of some unscrupulous elected officials.

Personal power sources

The next four sources of power based on expertise, information and ideas, image, and the right contacts, are only available to use as power sources if other people believe you possess them. In other words, if you believe you are an expert in some area of specialization but no one else thinks you are, it is hardly a source of power to exploit.

In other words, these sources require a transactional relationship between you and others before they become empowering options you can employ to get things done.

3. Expertise Power.

Expertise can be individual or institutional. Elected bodies develop over time various kinds of expertise that give them power. An individual elected official, also has the opportunity to develop specialized expertise, or might be elected based on previous expertise. Physicians often run for office to use their medical expertise to bring about reforms or to fight for more health-related expenditures from the local government’s budget.

4. Information and Idea Power.

This power source is both individual and collective. Most elected officials run for

office on a platform of ideas and possible policy reforms. If they are elected based on these ideas, it demonstrates the power of ideas. Information is potentially powerful if it can be used to provide evidence for elected bodies to take certain actions.

Information can also be withheld which is a negative use of this source of power. The internet has become an enormous source of political power in some places based on its ability to get information to thousands of people simultaneously. While this has more direct application to larger units of government, it is an informational source that can also be tapped by local governments and elected men and women to increase their power bases.

5. Image Power.

Image power is largely in the eyes of the beholder but nevertheless a source of power to many elected officials. Officials who engender respect, obedience, and allegiance from their constituents can use this adoration to promote policies that might otherwise be difficult to adopt within a community.

6. Proximity power.

The right contacts and connections can make you more powerful. This could be an elected official who was a close friend of the country’s president or some other dignitary, who was married to a person who is a popular radio talk show host, or who has connections with a large ethnic community within your municipality that is beginning to develop political clout? The potential power these connections

and contacts can bring to an individual who is serving on an elected body is enormous.

Creative power sources

The final three sources of power, catalytic, shared, and holistic, depend on your creative talents to visualize how various combinations of resources and power sources can help you accomplish your goals.

7. Catalytic power.

This source of power results from your ability to put two or more sources of power together, each of which may not be sufficient to produce results by themselves. For example, many policy changes which represent the use of your legitimate power base as elected officials might not be possible without expert, information, and even contact power. Information power is magnified greatly when fused with legitimate power. Sound policies demonstrate this truism.

8. Shared power.

This power source has become popular in recent years as individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions in various combinations come together to forge alliances and to interact for the purpose of achieving their separate or collective goals.

9. Holistic power.

This power source becomes possible not by combining other power sources which defines catalytic power but rather in combining several of the other competencies we have been talking

about in this series. For example, you may combine your communicating, policy-making, and institution-building skills to create a new organization to work with street children. By pulling together your various competencies as individual and collective elected officials, you are able to accomplish goals that were previously impossible. Thinking and acting in holistic fashion can be powerful.

Connecting the power competency with good governance

We can do noble acts without ruling earth and sea.

Aristotle, 3rd Century BC Greek Philosopher

Using power in a principled and strategic manner is fundamental to good governance. It is also an important leadership competency in relation to others like decision making, policy making, overseeing and negotiating. We will look at the inter-linkage between the various competencies in a moment, but first, a look at the links between using power and the principles of good governance.

Participation and civic engagement.

Effective leaders make it possible for their citizens to get involved and do good works. To accomplish this, leaders empower others to act not by hoarding the power they have but by giving it away. Authentic civic engagement requires local governing bodies to share information and resources. Both are at the heart of using power. To hoard these powers or use them unilaterally encourages the

ultimate abuse of power.

Transparency and accountability.

When the mechanisms are in place to assure transparency and accountability, it is more difficult to be corrupt, to manipulate resources for personal or political gain. On the other hand, corruption practices can become so pervasive and institutionalized that everybody in the organization and community simply acknowledges their existence and operates accordingly.

- Equity and diversity that assures access to decision-making and the basic necessities of life by all citizens creates a built-in mechanism for assuring openness and accountability. They become the other set of gatekeepers that make misuse of political powers nearly impossible.
- Efficiency in the delivery of public services is incompatible with abuse of power. Corruption is costly, creating shadowy mechanisms for siphoning off public funds and resources.
- When efficiency is working as a local government norm of operation, misuse of power involving tangible goods and resources is nearly impossible.
- Subsidiarity, the delegation of authority and resources to the closest appropriate level within the community for programme and service delivery, while admirable, has the potential to harbour the misuse of power. Deals can be cut between elected officials and local politicians that undercut the

intent of subsidiarity. These political shenanigans become more difficult for unscrupulous officials to use when the other principles of good governance are being implemented effectively.

Using power in an effective and principled manner also creates a synergistic relationship with other leadership competencies in this series. As we mentioned earlier, the application of more than one competency can result in the generation of holistic power. Let's look briefly at some of the possibilities. Mix and match your competencies and power sources

Elected men and women have the opportunity to combine their individual and collective competencies and potential power sources to serve their local governments and communities. For example:

- The decision-making competencies of an elected body are increased significantly by using the expert and information powers of your elected colleagues and local government staff.
- Policy-making is dependent on the use of legitimate powers to reward those who abide by legislative mandates and to punish those who stray.
- The negotiation competency can be more successful when it taps any one of several elected leadership power sources i.e. image, connections, and expertise.

- The financing competency is highly dependent on the legitimate powers to reward and punish. For example, enforcing taxes, rewarding high performance employees, collecting fines, and providing incentives for sustainable development within the community.
- The overseeing competency is fuelled by information power.
- Institution-building is complex and can benefit substantially from catalytic and shared power inputs.
- The enabling competency and power sharing are synonyms for effective elected leadership.
- The facilitating competency is enhanced by image and expert power by those who use it.

The urban leader's potential to build holistic power bases is dependent on the skilful use of each of the competencies in combination with appropriate sources of individual and collective power.

What about empowerment?

In our age, independence and the ability to get things done are often mutually exclusive.

Robert Dilenschneider

Empowerment has become the mantra for many individuals and institutions that promote decentralization, subsidiarity, and, yes, democracy. These conceptual strategies only work when the devolution of responsibility and resources are married to accountability.

Power and gender

I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves.

Mary Wollstonecraft, 18th Century English Author and Women's Rights Advocate, (1759-1797)

In a world where nearly half of the population is disenfranchised for one reason or another, it would be blatantly wrong to talk about using power as an elected official competency without calling your attention to the importance of gender equality. In many patriarchal societies, the use of power is largely seen as a prerogative of the male species.

To provide a narrow window of opportunity to better understand how this issue might manifest itself within your elected body, we turn to research by Beth Vanfossen on gender differences in communication. According to Dr. Vanfossen's research, there are certain gender patterns in communication that take place in formal groups like city council meetings.

- Men tend to gain the "floor" more often and to keep it for longer periods of time than women.
- Men with expertise tend to talk longer than women with expertise. This is perhaps important when expertise is a source of power.
- Men initiate more interaction than women.
- Men are more likely than women to interrupt the speaking of others.

- Women are more likely to be interrupted than men.
- Talking time is related both to gender and organization power.

The more powerful spend more time talking than the less powerful.⁵⁰
50 Vanfossen, Beth, Gender Differences in Communication, a paper presented to the Women and Expression Conference at Towson University Institute for Teaching and Research on Women, Maryland, USA. 1998

Whether you agree with these findings may not be as important as thinking about how you and your colleagues communicate on issues that involve power and gender. Do these conversations differ when gender is involved? Are women at a disadvantage in communicating during your elected body proceedings? If so, why? What might you and others do to address the issues of gender as they relate to the use of power within your elected body, and more importantly, within your local government as an institution representing all citizens?

Issues of power and administration

There is another critical relationship to be considered in terms of power and authority. This is the relationship of elected officials with the local government officers and staff, those responsible for administering your local government and its programmes and services. While the power and authority of an elected official comes from the electorate through the ballot box, the ability to deliver the attributes of power is largely in the hands

of those they employ to manage and deliver policies, services, and programmes within their jurisdiction.

Many of the things already said about using power as an elected official also apply to relationships with the local government's officers and staff.

On the other hand, the local government staff male and female members are not without their own power base. Let's take a brief look at some of sources of power they have available.

1. The staff represents knowledge, skills and experience that are difficult to replace.
2. Key staff members have expert knowledge and information about the organization, its operation, and the community that are invaluable to the ongoing implementation of programmes and services.
3. Local government employees are in a unique position to mobilize a network of friends and supporters who can be used to counterbalance elected decisions and actions if the employees think you are being unfair in your use of legislated authority.
4. Those who work for local government have many ways to divert or sabotage the good intentions of council-enacted programmes and services, if they so choose.
5. If all else fails, they can run against an elected official in the next election.

Forging a shared power partnership.

The relationship between the elected officials and employees of local government should be seen as an interdependent partnership. They need each other to be successful, and their goals should be largely congruent. This doesn't mean there won't be disagreements or conflicts, but they should be addressed in the spirit of mutual trust and respect. Here are some thoughts on how to keep the power partnership between these two arms of local government fine-tuned and operating effectively.

1. First and foremost, the officers and male and female staff of the local government need to be delegated the authority, responsibilities, and resources to do what is required of them. And they must be held accountable in the use of these attributes of governance.

2. Channels of communication should be kept open between urban leaders and the staff. There should be minimal "surprises" on both sides of this relationship.
3. Leaders should be goal-directed with their programmes and services and direct in their relationship with the staff.
4. Acts of coercion invite acts of resistance and retaliation. They are both attempts to unbalance or re-balance the power relationship, and they rarely work.
5. Sharing power is not the same as giving it away. Some elected officials seem reluctant to share their power of the public trust and responsibility with others, particularly those who work for them.



5: The Decision-making Competency

Introduction

Decisiveness is "biting through" the entirety of the situation and not nibbling around the edges, or just pulling off what is loose around the bone.

Bob Messing, 20th Century American Author

(The Tao of Management)

We all make decisions, individually and collectively, hundreds of times a day. So, what's there to talk about? Plenty! Individuals, groups like urban leaders, organizations, even countries, make bad decisions not just some of the time but frequently. It's often difficult to hold those who make bad decisions accountable, particularly if the decision has been through a bunch of legalistic, bureaucratic, and public relations type filters.

Making decisions is a cross-cutting competency

The political process is about making decisions on behalf of those you represent. Decision-making is at the centre of your elected leadership roles and responsibilities. When we think about your financing, overseeing, institution-building, negotiating, and policy-making competencies, these all are based on making sound and principled decisions. These are the "what" aspects of elected leadership. Every one of these competencies is dependent on elected officials exercising their individual and

joint decision-making powers and responsibilities. They represent decisions about:

- Allocating scarce financial and other resources;
- Holding others accountable;
- Building the institutional capacity of your local government to be more responsive and responsible;
- Negotiating to get the best deal for your local government and its citizens; and
- Most importantly, establishing local laws that define the present and future boundaries of public and private behaviours

More often than not, fulfilling each of these "what" competencies requires: 1) individual decisions which define your personal choices on specific issues; and 2) group decisions that represent a collective will to act on behalf of your constituents.

The other competencies of communicating, facilitating, enabling, and using power are associated with the "how" aspects of decision-making. We could also include negotiating as one of these competencies. Of all these competencies, using power may be the competency that is most intertwined with decision-making. Through your elected body's legitimate power sources, the policy-making, financing, and overseeing responsibilities that come with the office of elected leadership, you have a number of decision choices.

People know what they do; they

frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does.

Michel Foucault

Decision-making and good governance
The decision-making competency is very much linked to the principles of good governance espoused by institutions like UN-HABITAT and others. Let's spend a few moments looking at these principles as they relate to decision-making.

52 Lucas, James R. Balance of Power, (New York, American Management Association, 1998), pp. 14-5.

- Participation or civic engagement is at the heart of participatory decision-making.
- The rule of law as a guiding principle should never be questioned when making public decisions or private ones for that matter.
- Transparency and accountability are principles that are often ignored by local elected officials.
- Decision-making should be responsive, and we might add timely. These are not only good governance principles, but they also represent good management practices.
- Equity and inclusiveness may be two of the most difficult governance principles to factor into your decision-making as elected officials.
- Efficiency and effectiveness are bottom-line concerns with all major public decisions. Effectiveness is doing the right things, those

decisions more associated with policies and long-range planning. Efficiency is doing things right, the decisions more often aligned with the competencies of financing and overseeing.

Decision-making is at the core of being an elected official. Making decisions that adhere to the principles of good governance is at the heart of urban leadership.

A reflective opportunity

Before you move on, it is time to reflect on the many ideas about decision-making that have just been presented. We suggest you take the good governance qualities just discussed and jot down examples of decisions your local elected body has made recently that fit these categories. For example, were there decisions involving issues of inclusiveness, civic engagement, transparency, efficiency, or other principles of good governance? If so, make a note of them below.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

The art of making effective decisions

Having good intentions and a sound understanding and commitment to the principles of good governance and gender balance aren't enough. It also takes analytical skills, an understanding of

information and data and how to organize it, the ability to reason and engage in critical inquiry, and knowing how to use your experience and observations to reach logical and workable conclusions. In Smart Choices, the authors say that an effective decision-making process fulfils six criteria:

54 Eagly, Alice, Gender and Leadership: A Review of Pertinent Research (Evanston, Ill. Harmony: Forum of the Symphony Orchestra Institute, April 1998), p. 103.

1. It focuses on what's important.
2. It is logical and consistent.
3. It acknowledges both subjective and objective factors and blends analytical with intuitive thinking.
4. It requires only as much information and analysis as is necessary to resolve a particular dilemma.
5. It encourages and guides the gathering of relevant information and informed opinion.
6. It is straightforward, reliable, easy to use, and flexible.⁵⁵

In order to fulfil these criteria, we are suggesting the following seven-step decision-making process.

55 Hammond, John, Ralph Keeney, and Howard Raiffa, Smart Choices, (New York. Broadway Books, 1999), p. 4.

1. Awareness and vision
2. Building decision-making coalitions
3. Focusing in on the problem or opportunity

4. Determining your goals and objectives
5. Developing options
6. Deciding on a course of action
7. Implementation readiness

Step one: Awareness and vision

Awareness and vision often starts with problems and opportunities. Awareness and vision is more like an attitude or a mindset, a way of looking at things as an elected official. For example, solving problems begins with the basic awareness that something is wrong in the organization or community, or about to be, and needs to be addressed. A vision, on the other hand, is about a future state that is an improvement on the current situation.

Like problems and opportunities, awareness and vision lend themselves to description by contrast:

- Awareness is seeing "what is." Vision is seeing what "can be."
- Awareness is more tactical, short-term, and specific. Vision is long-term and strategic in its perspective.
- Awareness looks at the details; vision paints the "big picture."
- Awareness involves convergent thinking or focusing in. Vision is at its best when our thoughts diverge from the beaten path.

Step two: Building decision-making coalitions

You never plough a field by turning it over in your mind.
Irish proverb

It's never too early to think about expanding your circle of decision-makers to solve problems and seize opportunities at various levels of the local government organization and the larger community. Another way to describe that circle of decision-makers is through the commonly used term, stakeholders. Stakeholders in decision-making can involve not just individuals but groups and organizations as well. They can be many citizens, young and old and from different income, ethnic, and cultural communities of your local government. They are those who may be either the cause of an issue, like pollution, or those who suffer the consequences. They are also those who will support your elected body in matters of public policy making, and those who oppose your initiatives.

Step three: Focusing in on the problem or opportunity

Thinking is preparation for action. People who are afraid of action, increase the preparation.
Otto Fenichel

One way to make better decisions when the decisions involve problems is to ask your problem a series of simple questions. This dialogue with your problem is perhaps the easiest way to understand

whether you have a problem and whether or not you want to do something about it. Sometimes the best solution is not to solve the problem.

Here are some questions to ask your problem:

- What is the problem, the real problem?
- Why is it a problem? Or, what is causing the problem? Some street maintenance departments spend a lot of time fixing potholes and never stop to ask why the potholes are there in the first place.
- The Why? question is one worth repeating over and over until you get to the bottom of the problem.

Step four: Determining your goals and objectives

We like to think of the goal as being the summation of a set of objectives. In other words, it is the global objective, less specific, less measurable, etc. Defining objectives and putting them into descriptive words that clearly state what you want to accomplish requires a kind of discipline that some of the other steps do not. As you write those objectives, ask yourself if they are:

- Measurable
- Specific
- Result-oriented
- Realistic and attainable
- Time bound

Step five: Developing options

Once you have defined where you want to go by stating your objective, it is

time to analyze the forces surrounding the objective and the changes you want to accomplish by achieving your objective(s). We achieve our objective, e.g., problem solved or opportunity seized, by unbalancing these forces and shifting the equilibrium in the desired direction. Three processes are involved:

- **Diagnosis:** Identify the major forces, driving and restraining, that are helping to maintain the current level of activity.
- **Unfreezing:** Changing the different strengths of the individual forces, both pro and con.
- **Redefining:** Re-freezing the situation at a new, desired level of achievement-based on intended results.

There are three basic decision-making strategies for bringing about change to achieve your objectives. You can:

- **Add to the driving forces.** This generally is less desirable since adding driving forces usually results in more opposing forces, which increases tension.
- **Remove or reduce restraining forces.** This is usually more desirable and less obvious.
- **Add driving forces and eliminate or reduce restraining forces.** This is probably the most frequently used strategy.

Step six: Deciding on a course of action

The analysis stage of your decision-making, problem-solving, opportunity-seizing process should provide you with

emerging options. Options, by their very nature, require more decision-making. In an environment of scarce resources, it is important to consider what economists call the "opportunity costs" of your decisions.

For example, what are the opportunity costs if your local government decides to spend scarce funds on a heart transplant centre at the university hospital rather than an AIDS prevention educational programme?

Decisions with multiple objectives cannot be resolved by focusing on only one of the objectives. More often than not, you are obliged for political and other reasons to seek a satisfactory solution, to not let the "best" become the enemy of the good. Herbert Simon, who has written extensively about decision-making in public settings, calls this the "satisficing" solution. Recognizing the need to engage in "satisficing" decision-making, it is important to resist the pressures that often force us to take the first available satisfactory solution to a problem. Finding new options to old problems is how the future gets invented.

Step seven: Implementation readiness

The decision-making process doesn't end with making decisions. You also want to be assured that your decisions will become effective actions. Two dimensions are relevant in assessing the potential effectiveness of your decision. These are (a) the quality of the decision, and (b) its acceptance by those who either have to execute it or will be affected by it.

Both of these will have an impact on the final outcome, which also needs to be considered as you move towards a final decision. The quality of the decision will depend on a number of factors. These factors could include, for example:

- Goal focus
- Resource availability
- Timing
- Feasibility
- Adequacy
- Acceptance

Group decision-making options

Edgar Schein describes the following ways that groups make decisions.

Decision by formal authority or self-authorization: This type of decision-making is central to the role and responsibility of an elected official.

1. Decision by minority: Have you ever felt coerced into silently supporting a decision by someone else? It happens frequently when individuals get together to make decisions.
2. Decision by majority rule: This involves voting and/or polling of those who have the authority to vote.
3. Decision by lack of response: This is when someone suggests an idea and nobody responds to it. By not responding, the group has made a decision not to support the idea or the contributor.
4. Decision by consensus. While making decisions by consensus can be time consuming, it is one of the most

effective ways to make decisions because it builds commitment into implementing the decision.

5. Consensus is not the same as unanimity. There may still be differences of opinion, but these differences have been heard, and those who hold them are prepared to support the decision.
6. Decision by unanimous consent. In this case, everyone agrees on the course of action to be taken. Sounds good but here is a word of caution about coming to a quick unanimous decision. Group decision-makers are sometimes the victims of something called "groupthink." Groupthink is the mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action.

Some final thoughts about decisions and decision-making

Since one of your primary and most important roles as elected officials is policy-making and policy-making is all about making decisions, we will continue looking at this fascinating competency from a slightly different perspective in the chapter on policy-making. But first we'll hear from Peter Drucker, a world treasure when it comes to telling us what we should know about things like decision-making. According to Peter Drucker, a world treasure when it comes to telling us what we should know about things like decision-making,

A decision is a judgment. It is a choice

between alternatives. It is rarely a choice between right and wrong. It is at best a choice between 'almost right' and "almost wrong" - but much more often a choice between two courses of action neither of which is provably more nearly right than the other."

Perhaps because decisions are largely judgements made by mere mortals, Drucker emphasizes the importance of hearing dissenting points of view. He lists three reasons why dissent is needed.

- First, it safeguards the decision-makers against becoming prisoners of the institution.
- Second, "disagreement alone can provide alternatives to a decision. And a decision without an alternative is a desperate gambler's throw, no matter how carefully thought out it might be."
- Finally, "disagreement is needed to stimulate the imagination.

The effective decision-maker, therefore encourages and seeks out dissent..

57 Schein, Edgar H., Process Consultation, Volume One. (Reading, MA., Addison-Wesley, 1988), pp.69-74.

58 Drucker, Peter, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices. (New York, Harper and Row, 1973), p. 470.

59 Drucker, p. 473.

