



AKOMA FACT SHEET

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Conflict Negotiation

Conflict – something every entity or process is faced with sometime or another. The Community Planning process is one that may be filled with conflict. Occasionally in this process you will be faced with challenging behaviors and situations as you facilitate a community planning meeting. Not all conflict is negative. Conflict is an essential part of working together in a group. In fact, too little conflict can be just as harmful to the group's progress as too much. The hallmarks of positive conflict are respectful disagreement and the willingness to consider various options. Negative conflict is marked by anger, disrespect and a refusal to consider options. As a facilitator of the process, you don't want to squash all conflict. Focus the efforts on directing the energy of a conflict toward a positive result. Help the group stay open to different perspectives. The primary goal of a facilitator of the process is to promote positive behaviors and encourage full participation in the process. But when conflict gets out of hand, here are two types of conflict negotiation we suggest: meeting facilitation and mediation.



MEETING FACILITATION

Meetings, especially those dealing with controversial topics or involving many community stakeholders with diverse points of view, can be positive and negative. It is important to be familiar with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Community Planning Guidance*. *The Guidance* provides the basic framework for CDC HIV prevention grantees, state and local health departments to implement the HIV prevention community planning process. Effective facilitation skills provide structure and processes that focus a group's efforts, facilitate communication among participants, improve a group's ability to make collective decisions, and dramatically increases the chances that the meeting will meet its objectives. To manage conflict one should:

Make sure that all sides have an opportunity to be heard.

Help to clearly define the issue, perhaps by having each side of the debate restate the position of the other side to its satisfaction.

Keep discussion focused on the substance rather than the individuals.

Encourage the various sides to meet separately and come back to the full group for further discussion.

Help individuals to save face and be able to change their position.

informal- there are no formal process and procedures

Bring in outside assistance - individuals not directly involved in the situation - to help provide an outside perspective.

MEDIATION

It is pertinent to have a method(s) in place. However, the methods listed above don't always work, which leads to using other forms of conflict negotiation to handle the situations at hand. Mediation is a form in which a neutral third party helps the disputing parties discuss their issues with each other and reach resolution on those issues. The general purpose of conflict negotiation is to assist participating parties to reach common/mutual goals, attain future accomplishments, establish a solid professional relationship, and establish trust.

Source: Facilitating Meetings: A Guide for Community Planning Groups (July 2001)

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