

**Participatory Group Facilitation:
Gaining Authentic Input in Public Health Planning and Improvement Processes**

Roundtable Session Outline

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Abstract Text: As part of accreditation readiness, local public health departments (LHDs) are required to complete several planning processes with multiple partners and diverse stakeholders. Gaining authentic input from local public health system, hospital, academic, and community partners is a key ingredient in conducting a thorough Community Health Assessment, Community Health Improvement Plan and a departmental strategic plan. Meaningful community engagement is also important to more general public health system improvement efforts.

This session will identify and describe group facilitation processes that have been successfully used in several states and LHDs to gain authentic input from partners and constituents across the country. Information will be shared about the philosophy, purpose and methods related to this type of facilitation. Examples of the results of participatory group facilitation processes and of how results were used will be discussed.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain the theory supporting participatory group facilitation methods
- Differentiate which facilitation methods are best suited for different purposes
- Identify participatory facilitation methods that support authentic community input

Learning Objective #1: Explain the theory supporting participatory group facilitation methods

I. Why Participatory Methods?

- Organizations need proven planning & problem solving processes to effectively engage stakeholders
- Structured methods result in greater commitment & ability to implement decisions & strategies
- Enhances creativity, innovation and a larger portfolio of ideas to draw from
- Produces a common framework for decision-making, communication, planning & problem solving
- Encourages initiative & responsibility

II. Fundamentals of Participatory Methods:

- Inclusive Participation: Recognizes & honors contributions of all
- Profound Respect: Allows for inclusive participation by honoring each individual equally and trusting that both the individuals and the group are capable of doing the work they have set out to do
- Teamwork & Collaboration: Pools individual contributions into larger more informative and inclusive patterns
- Welcome diversity while minimizing polarization and conflict
- Facilitates individual & group creativity
- Results in action
- Enables deeper levels of commitment, greater capacity for sharing wisdom and owning decisions arrived at collectively.
- Methods are needed so that participation results in a return on investment in time dedicated to planning or decision making

III. Benefits of Participatory Methods:

- Production of action plans that get done
- Accomplish in short periods of time what could take weeks with traditional methods
- Brings together a wide range of perspectives resulting in comprehensive plans

- Generates commitment on the part of participants that result in quick and effective implementation
- Builds team spirit
- Allows for remaneuvering in follow-up to strategic planning that reflects changes and opportunities.

Learning Objective #2: Differentiate which facilitation methods are best suited for different purposes

In order to match the method to the situation, need to ask and answer three questions:

- What is the purpose?
- Who needs to be involved?
- What conversations need to take place?

I. What is the purpose?

- Why are undertaking this effort?
- What do we want to accomplish on this change journey?
- What aspirations do we hold?
- If we are successful in accomplishing the change, what will be different in our world?

II. Who needs to be involved?

- Internally focused?
- Externally focused?
- How many people?
- Everyone at once, or in smaller groups?
- Bring a spirit of invitation.
- Make a clear choice to engage with participants.
- Get the right people involved.

III. What conversations need to take place?

- Take the time needed.

- Pay attention to the flow.
- Keep it simple.

See matrix of facilitation methods.

Learning Objective #3: Addressing the need for participatory methods to address authentic community input in PH

I. Examples of application within Public Health

- Regular Team Meetings
 - ✓ Well facilitated meetings are a way to increase the involvement of staff during the meeting and in the implementation
 - ✓ Trainings for New Managers to improve their facilitation skills
- New Projects or Initiatives
 - ✓ Census building interventions
 - ✓ Creative problem-solving for solving issues
 - Brainstorming using Consensus Workshops
 - Action Planning

II. Community Meetings - where PHD lead agencies

- Intra agency meetings
- Accreditation: CHIP and CHA

III. Cross Departmental or Cross Agency efforts- large group and multi stakeholders

- 5 year Strategic Planning for Department

Matrix of Participatory Methods

Potential Methods

Method	Used For	Because
Open Space Technology***	Focusing on a specific and important purpose or task — but <i>beginning</i> without any formal agenda, beyond the overall purpose or theme.	Allows groups to self-organize; allows issues most important to group members to emerge; allows individuals to take responsibility for future actions.
World Café**	Facilitating open and intimate discussion, and linking ideas within a larger group to access the collective intelligence or wisdom in the room.	Fosters productive relationships, collaborative learning and collective insights around real-life challenges or key strategic questions.
History Wall*	Provides a quick review of an organization's history within the larger societal and context.	Provides an historical perspective from which to view current and future work.
Wave Trends Analysis*	Enables a group to reach a shared level of knowledge about incoming and outgoing trends shaping their environment.	Establishes understanding about how external or internal trends are affecting an organization's current work, and may affect future work.
Focused Conversation*	Creates an environment for collective thinking to take place within a limited time frame.	Enhances dialogue; broadens a group's perspectives; elicits clear ideas and conclusions.
Consensus Workshop*	Coming to consensus in a short period of time through a collective, integrated thinking process.	Generates creativity in a short amount of time; infuses everyone with a sense of responsibility; catalyzes integrated thinking; builds team consensus.
Action Planning / Accelerated Action Planning*	Allowing all those responsible for implementing a project to plan together how to accomplish the task.	Clarifies directions; aligns resources; designates leadership roles and responsibilities; builds team trust and support.

ToP Strategic Planning*	Moving a group from its vision to agreed-upon actions.	Enables groups to be agile in response, creative in implementation, and better able to encourage and develop broad-based initiative and responsibility.
Design Thinking^	Framing and solving problems and discovering new opportunities with an emphasis on <i>doing</i> .	Emphasizes non-traditional focus areas: empathize; define; ideate; prototype; and test.
Human Systems Dynamics^^	Applying principles of complexity, nonlinear dynamics, and chaos theory to understand and influence the patterns in teams, organizations, and communities.	Increases capacity for adaptive work; focuses the work on what really matters; improves communication; reduces stress within organization.

*** Open Space Technology - openspaceworld.org/wp2/

** The World Café - www.theworldcafe.com/

* Technology of Participation - www.top-network.org/

^^ Human Systems Dynamics - www.hsdinstitute.org/index.html

^ IDEO - designthinking.ideo.com/

References

Books

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Training:

ToP Training Network
<http://www.top-training.net/>

The World Café
<http://www.theworldcafe.com/services-programs/signature-learning-programs/>

Websites:

Institute of Cultural Affairs. <http://www.ica-usa.org>

International Association of Facilitators: <https://www.iaf-world.org/site/index.php>

Open Space: <http://openspaceworld.org/wp2/>

Technology of Participation: <http://www.top-network.org>

The World Café. <http://www.theworldcafe.com>