



Facilitation Basics: An Introduction

Translational Ecology Short Course

Southwest Climate Science Center

April 4 – 5, 2018

Goals for the sessions

- ▶ **Discuss facilitation and its many applications**
- ▶ **Understand key principles and best practices that guide successful facilitation**
- ▶ **Review and practice basic tools and methods**
- ▶ **Discuss challenges and questions**

General outline

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Exercise – the good, the bad, the ugly
- ▶ Basic skills review – process and meeting design
- ▶ Exercise – meeting planning
- ▶ Dealing with difficult behaviors
- ▶ Evaluation

Basic assumptions

- **Facilitation is an essential skill in all professional work**
- **....it's also extremely helpful in our personal lives**
- **"Facilitation" is also a philosophy, a leadership style, a general approach**
- **Facilitative leadership is something that's both intuitive and can be learned, practiced, and significantly improved**

Elements of facilitative leadership

- **PIONEER:** catalyze action and recruit others
- **SPONSOR:** establish credibility and legitimacy
- **THOUGHT LEADER:** provide expertise and credibility
- **NETWORKER:** engage people across interests, sectors, jurisdictions
- **FACILITATOR:** bridge differences, create opportunities for inclusiveness, build agreement
- **STEWARD:** coordinate activities and ensure results

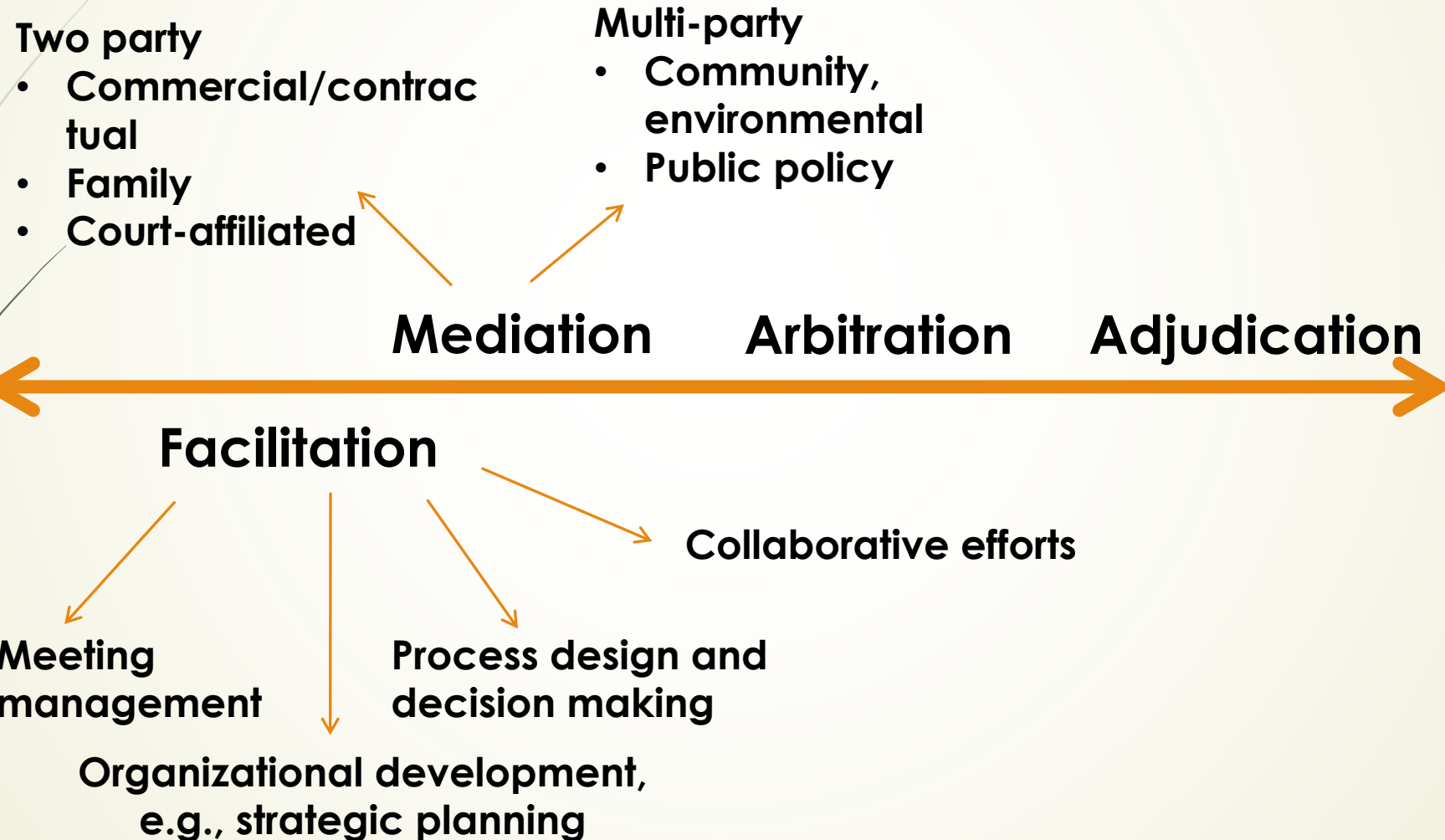
Adapted from: Center for Natural Resources & Environmental Policy, University of Montana

Facilitation

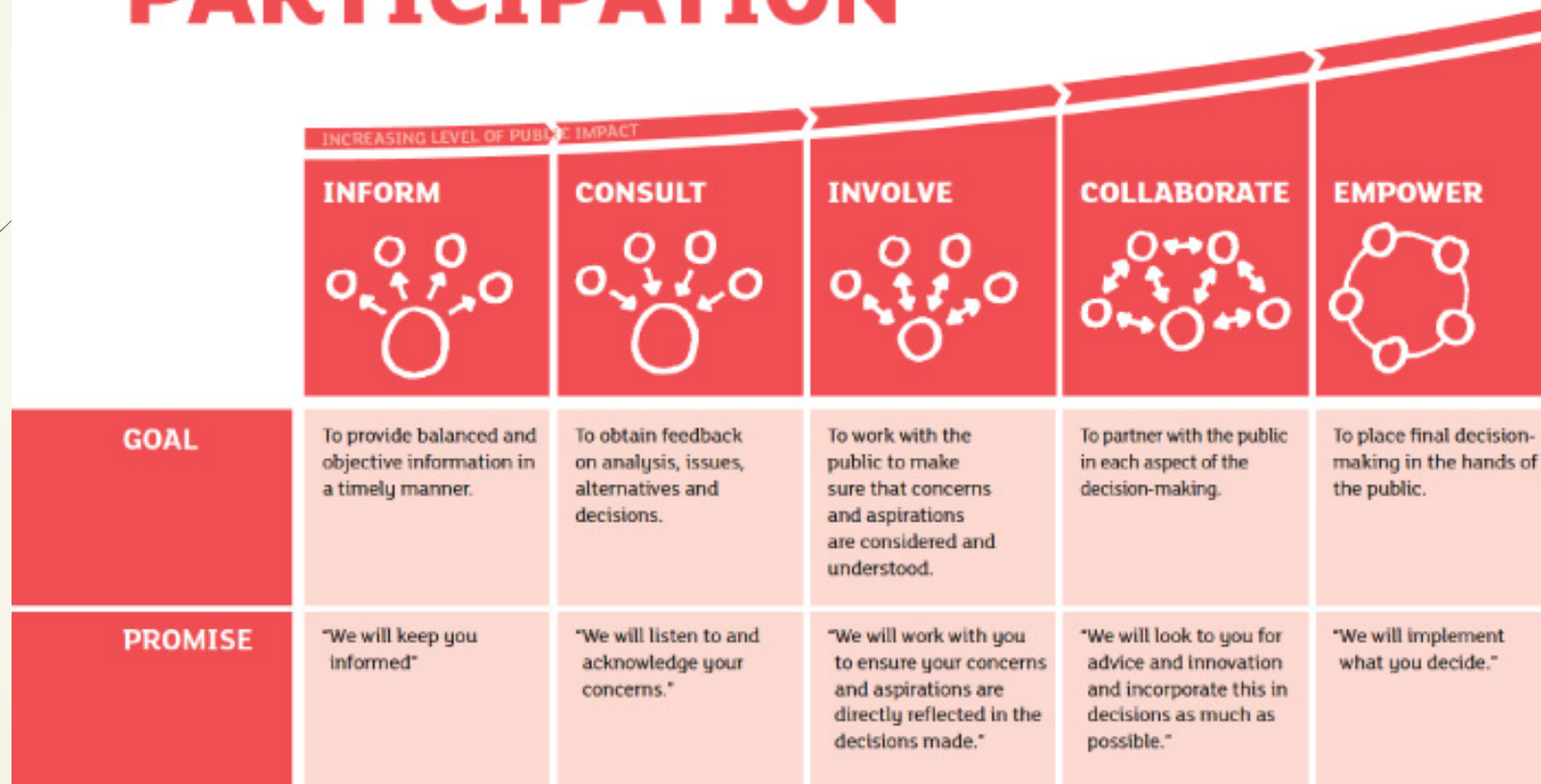
“the art of leading people through processes toward agreed-upon objectives, in a manner that encourages participation, ownership and creativity” *D. Sibbet (2002)*

- Design and preparation
- Process leadership
- Balancing participation
- Maintaining/improving communication
- Developing/enforcing ground rules
- Team building
- Time management
- Summarizing
- Recording/documenting
- Ensuring appropriate follow up
- Evaluating, reflecting, learning

Range of applications



IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Source: IAP2,
<https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2017/02/14/spectrum-of-public-participation/>

The good, the bad, the ugly

- ▶ Reflecting on your own experience (as a facilitator or as a participant), identify what you have seen as:
 - ✓ Good or effective practice
 - ✓ Bad or really wrongful practice

Best practice criteria

1. Preparation
2. Role, approach, philosophy
3. Creative, responsive design
4. Evaluation, reflective learning, constant adaptation
5. Teamwork, sharing, access
6. Documentation and communication



1. Preparation

- ▶ **Insist on some degree of assessment, however defined**
- ▶ **Effective use of between-meeting time**
- ▶ **First in, last out**
- ▶ **Read (and understand) all issues/materials in advance**
- ▶ **Come prepared with questions, comments, prompts**
- ▶ **Challenge participants to do the same**

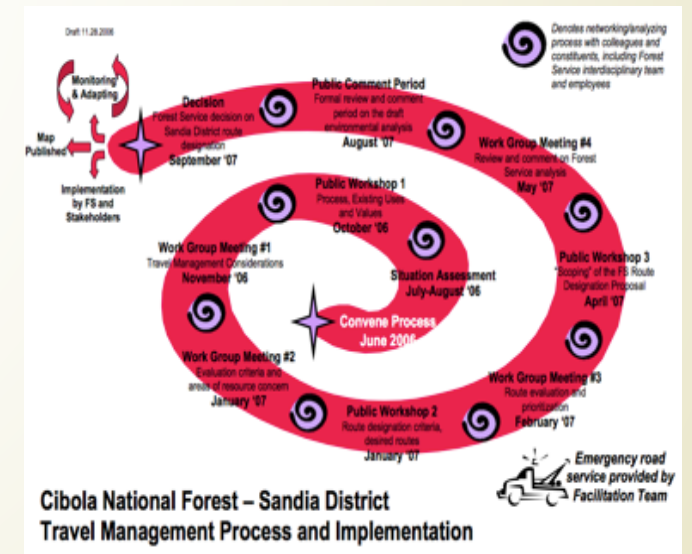
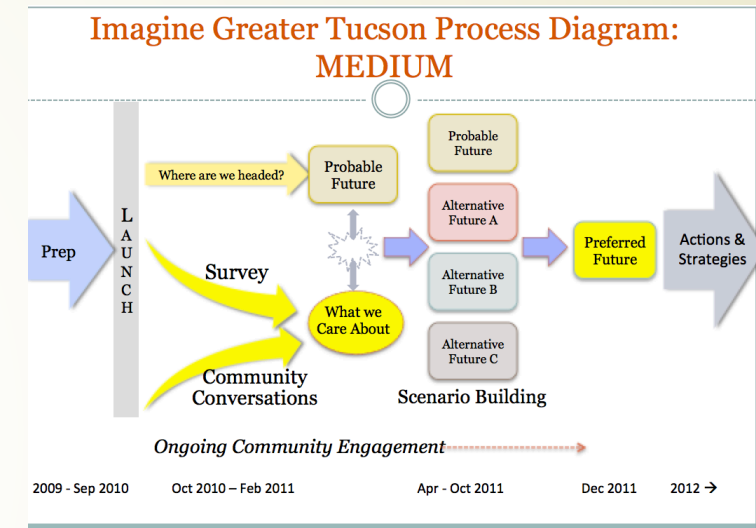
2. Role, approach, philosophy

- ▶ Work with participants to make informed decisions on process (see IAP2 spectrum, informed decision making)
- ▶ Adjust style/methods to suit the circumstances, need, mood
- ▶ Service first
- ▶ The ultimate goal: Invisibility



3. Creative, responsive design

- **Tailor the process to meet the needs of participants**
- **See each situation as an opportunity to draw on experience in the field**
- **Practice responsible experimenting**



4. Evaluation, learning, adapting

- **Seek regular feedback, and demonstrate that you're using it effectively**
- **Use a variety of evaluation methods to inform decisions and practice**
- **Use de-brief and strategy sessions with participants, particularly during phase-change transitions**
- **Work with your team to constantly reflect, critique, and learn from your experience**

5. Teamwork, sharing, access

- ▶ **Benefits of working in teams – however configured**
- ▶ **Set the tone and demonstrate collaboration as you work within team settings**
- ▶ **Encourage teamwork and collaboration in both formal and informal ways**
- ▶ **Harness the power of individuals within teams**

6. Documentation, communication

- ▶ **Ensure appropriate level of documentation of all meetings, discussions, and decision points**
- ▶ **Offer timely, well written progress reports**
- ▶ **Provide appropriate access to all relevant information**
- ▶ **Ensure translation of highly technical material**
- ▶ **Use technology and social media to communicate regularly with all participants (and beyond)**

Fundamentals (I)

- ▶ All participants are present for a reason – **create opportunities for everyone to participate and contribute.**
- ▶ Lead by holding participants to their own standards and working agreements. **Adjust your approach to suit the group's needs.**
- ▶ **Always remember The Objective and The Question.** Keep reminding people what the session is about, and how it relates to the group's wider agenda and purpose.
- ▶ Most of the really important work of facilitation happens *outside* of the meetings – **preparation** (assessment, agenda development, logistics, materials), **and follow through** (documentation, evaluation) are key.
- ▶ **Creativity is infinite, time is not.**

Fundamentals (II)

- ▶ **Documentation:** make sure you have a plan, and appropriate resources (recorders, laptops, flip charts, pens).
- ▶ Use **visuals as much as possible** to summarize ideas, focus attention, negotiate consensus, and provide references throughout the discussions.
- ▶ **Divide, with rules.** Use plenaries, small groups, exercises, and ensure integration.
- ▶ Like a lot of things, **facilitation works best with good, timely feedback** – monitoring the group, and evaluating meetings and the group progress overall, is a core responsibility and skill.
- ▶ **Achieving invisibility** – the less involved you need to be in the conversation, the more the group can focus on working toward meeting its needs.



Questions, comments?