

A Workshop on
Managing Horizontal Issues©
A Collaborative Pattern Language

Description
and
Content Overview

Developed and Delivered by:

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Managing Horizontal Issues©

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Introduction

The issues and situations facing organizations today are more complex and dynamic than those of only a few years ago. A key characteristic of these issues is that the clear responsibility, authority and jurisdiction to resolve them often does not reside with a single work unit, agency or department. In order to develop and implement processes through which these “horizontal” or “cross-cutting” issues can be effectively addressed, organizations and individuals must have both the commitment and capacity to work in a collaborative, cross-functional manner.

Collaboration is most necessary in situations where the mutual interdependence of parties is clearly established -- i.e., no party can fulfill their mandate or achieve their goals without the cooperation of others. True interdependence requires that each party consider the interests and needs of others to be as important as their own. There is no room for an adversarial, “win-lose” style. The parties involved must collaborate and strive for a “win-win” outcome.

Effective collaboration on horizontal issues requires a balance of four essential elements: an understanding of the nature of horizontal issues; a comprehensive and inclusive analysis of the situation; the ability to build and maintain relationships, networks and partnerships; and effective organizational processes and structures. These must be supported by a strong foundation -- the knowledge, skills and abilities of key individuals.

Taken together, these four elements and the supporting foundation equip individuals and organizations to work effectively and efficiently in a complex, changing environment, using collaborative skills and processes to manage horizontal issues.

In this workshop, emphasis is placed on developing participant ability to design, lead and participate in collaborative processes. Specific areas of skill development include communication, negotiation, dialogue and conflict resolution. A collaborative approach to problem solving, based on dialogue and focusing on interests rather than positions, is introduced. The situation analysis model includes risk assessment. Emphasis is placed throughout on proactive development of productive, respectful relationships with other departments and stakeholders.

The workshop format is highly interactive, with presentations, small and large group dialogues, scenarios, and individual exercises. Skills and processes are demonstrated and practiced throughout. It is designed in a 3 day format for up to 25 participants. A comprehensive workbook and resource manual is provided.

Managing Horizontal Issues© -- Workshop Overview

- 1. Understanding Horizontal Issues:** Knowledge of the nature of horizontal issues, and what their management requires that is different. Emphasis on process, interdependence, being proactive, leadership, organizational culture, relationships and the need to take a systems approach. Requirement for collaboration and cross-functional approaches.
- 2. Situation and Risk Analysis:** A clear understanding of the overall situation, the context and the circumstances which define the issue, the impacts, the risks, and those affected. The ability to differentiate symptom and root cause. Correct problem definition.
- 3. Relationships, Networks and Partnerships:** When and how to build and maintain relationships, networks and partnerships. Networks may be both formal and informal. Diversity is a resource only if it is connected. Network analysis, communities of practice and knowledge management. Role of individuals in networks.
- 4. Purpose, Process and Structures:** The ability to establish groups, explore values, define problems together, develop shared goals, and to establish and work within effective (collaborative) processes and structures. Develop and use terms of reference, group protocols or Team Charters. Ensure accountability.
- 5. Stakeholders:** Knowledge of stakeholders, and how we can ensure that the right people and groups are involved, and that the process is able to achieve results while accommodating diversity and demonstrating flexibility. Develop stakeholder and community profiles.
- 6. Individual Styles and Group Dynamics:** Knowledge and appreciation of diversity of individual styles, backgrounds, experience, cultures, interests and other factors. How individuals behave in groups, and what happens within groups to affect their performance. Work with Emotional Intelligence.
- 7. Communication and Dialogue:** The importance of communication, especially listening and the ability to suspend our judgment and avoid making assumptions while seeking to understand, not necessarily to agree. Practice dialogue, and develop a new perspective through shared inquiry and learning.
- 8. Conflict Resolution and Negotiation:** The ability to manage differences of views, to discuss interests instead of positions, and to focus on the problem and not the people. Understand causes of conflict and negotiation styles.
- 9. Public Participation:** Understand and be able to use a range of public participation processes to engage citizens and stakeholders. Knowledge of emerging techniques, key elements and best practices.
- 10. Collaboration and Consensus:** How to collaborate and work toward consensus with diverse groups in complex situations. Ten Principles for building consensus. How to move forward in the absence of consensus.

The Team

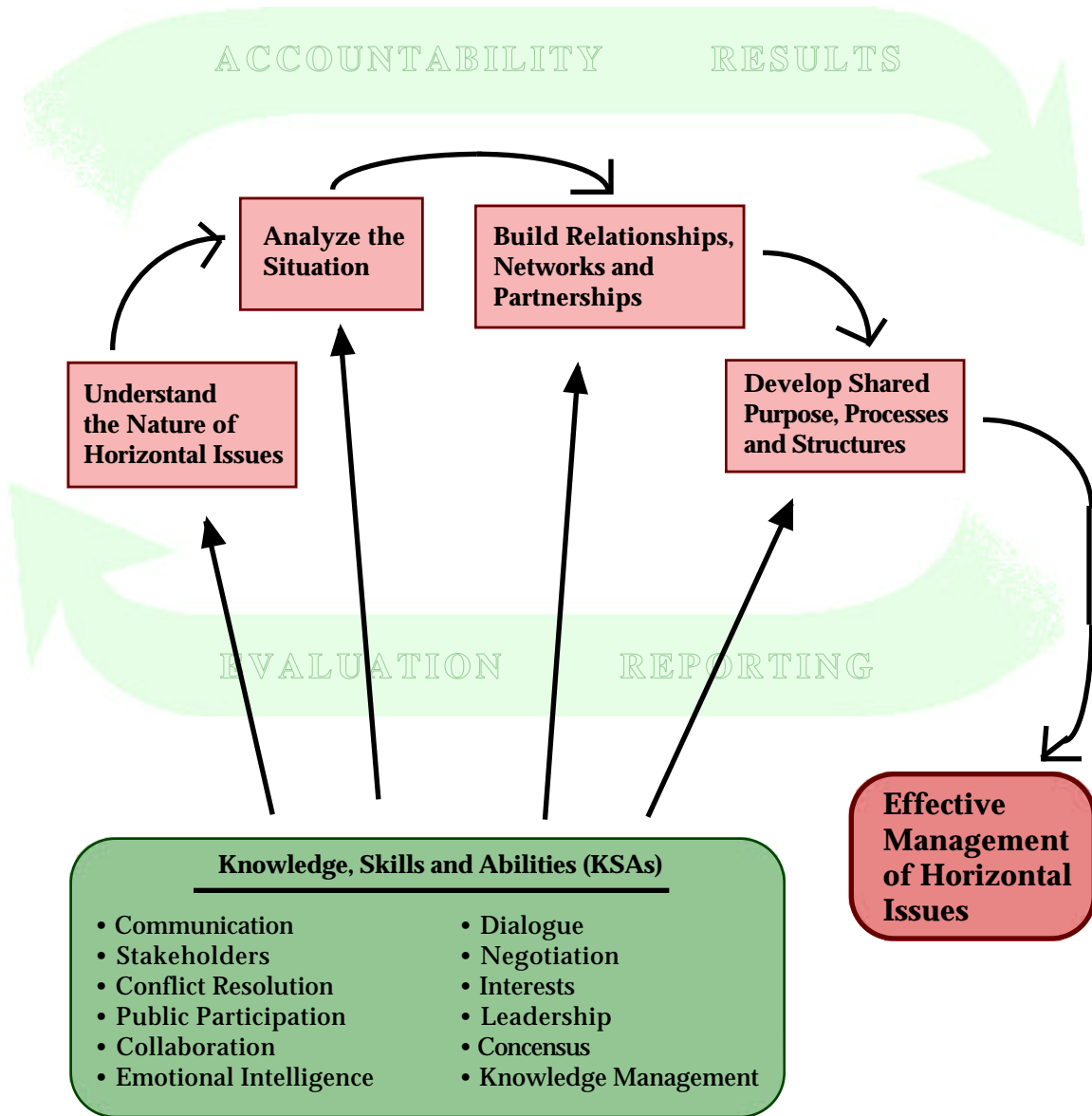
Peter LeBlanc and Bruce Smith provide consulting and training services on the management of horizontal issues to a wide range of public and private sector clients. Their services include: strategic analysis and planning, risk management, policy development, and the design and facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes. They also work directly with executive teams, work units, boards of directors, groups and organizations to enhance individual and collective knowledge, skills and abilities relating to dialogue, collaboration and consensus-building.

Individually Peter and Bruce offer training workshops in risk management, public participation, conflict resolution and public policy development. Together they offer a comprehensive three day workshop -- Managing Horizontal Issues.©

Peter LeBlanc has over 35 years of management experience in both the public and private sectors in Canada. He was formerly with Environment Canada, where his work on the Green Plan and Sustainable Development initiatives earned him the federal Public Service Merit Award for "exceptional and distinguished contribution to the effectiveness and efficiency of the public service." He was also awarded the Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada for "recognition of significant contribution to compatriots, community and to Canada." Peter is an Honorary Research Associate at the School for Resource and Environmental Studies in the Dalhousie Faculty of Management, and is President of his own management consulting firm, which specializes in developing training programs for all levels of management, helping them to develop the tools and skills needed to solve today's complex problems.

Bruce Smith is the principal of BLSmith Groupwork Inc., a company specializing in collaboration, dialogue, conflict resolution and consensus building in all aspects of governance. BLSmith Groupwork assists individuals, groups, communities and organizations to communicate and work in a cooperative, respectful and productive manner - placing emphasis on mutual understanding - and having the patience, discipline and skill to develop shared perspectives and pursue common directions. Bruce has over 25 years of experience in natural resource and environmental management, including federal and provincial governments, industry and small business. He is an experienced consensus facilitator and mediator who has been awarded the designation Chartered Mediator (C.Med.) by the ADR Institute of Canada. He regularly works at the interface of government, industry and community, including First Nations, and has extensive experience living and working in rural and remote communities.

Managing Horizontal Issues Graphic Workshop Outline[©]



The workshop is structured around four key areas: understanding the nature of horizontal issues; situation and risk analysis; building and maintaining relationships, networks and partnerships; and developing shared purpose and effective and efficient collaborative processes and structures. These form four stepping stones which, when supported by a foundation/pool of knowledge, skills and abilities, can result in effective management of horizontal issues.

The first four sections in the workbook introduce the essential steps to the effective management of horizontal issues: understanding the nature of horizontal issues; analyzing and understanding the situation, including risk; building and maintaining strong relationships, networks and partnerships; and, forming and managing effective processes, groups and teams. These are woven together and expanded upon throughout the three day workshop.

1. Understand the nature of horizontal issues

[They are characterized by complexity, cutting across multiple mandates, mutual interdependency, and requirement to work collaboratively to achieve consensus.]

Horizontal issues are those for which no one individual, organization or department has the exclusive mandate, authority and/or resources. Each can try to address a symptom, but none can address the root cause. Parties must recognize the complex nature of the issue and, as a result, their mutual interdependence. Collaboration is required if they are to work together successfully, and turf protection must be avoided.

Because each party/department has its own mandate, the groups seeking to manage a horizontal issue must work together to achieve consensus on a mutually acceptable course of action, because in most cases the authority to decide and act will remain and be exercised within the traditional structure. Once we understand the nature of horizontal issues, the next task is to do a situation and risk analysis.

2. Analyze and understand the situation and risk

[An issue cannot be resolved unless it is fully understood. It is essential to know what is going on, who is or may be involved, their interests, and the potential impacts and risks. A common definition of the problem must be developed.]

Horizontal issues are complex, and it is critical that individuals and organizations have the ability and take the time to do a thorough situation and risk analysis. This is best done by a small, interactive team that brings together a broad range of knowledge, skills, information and perspectives. It is better to explore and discard ideas than to run the risk of failing to identify a potentially key factor.

Key factors that should be assessed include: What is driving the issue? Why now? Who are the stakeholders? Who cares, is or may be involved? What are the social, environmental and economic factors and impacts? Is there political interest or concern? Media attention? Links to other issues or ongoing processes? Others.

The ability to call on a formal or informal network to gather and assess information can greatly enhance the quality and timeliness of a situation analysis.

3. Build and maintain strong relationships, networks and partnerships

[Diversity is a source of strength and resiliency not because of the numbers of people included, but because of the links among them.]

Relationships are the links and connections between individuals who get to know each other in various settings. They enable information flow, and enhance the ability of individuals and organizations to work together productively.

Networks are a product of the development of multiple relationships. They may be formal (organizational) or informal (personal). Both are important. Networks should be established and maintained proactively. We need to understand network centrality and key roles for individuals, as well as how networks help us do effective Knowledge Management and build Communities of Practice.

Individuals can be especially effective when they have a high level of emotional intelligence, and use a personal style which allows them to focus simultaneously on achieving goals and maintaining relationships. The key roles which these individuals can play are variously referred to as: glue people, bridge people, change agents and knowledge links. Relationships and networks not only help us carry out situation and risk analysis, they support the development of effective group processes and structures, and enhance the ability of group members to work in a collaborative manner.

4. Form and manage effective groups and teams

[It is essential that effective groups have a clear sense of purpose, and that they design and establish effective processes and structures which support collaboration.]

Just as the situation analysis is better developed by a team, it is essential that horizontal issues be managed by a team or task group that includes representatives of all organizations/departments with some mandate or authority around the issue, as well as other stakeholders who are seen as critical to achieving a successful outcome. Based on the situation analysis, the group is given or develops a terms of reference which clearly describes its purpose, as well as other things such as: deliverables, time lines and due dates, reporting requirements, and individual roles and responsibilities.

The team should develop its own process and structures, which it sets out in written protocols, ground rules, team charter or memorandum of understanding. The protocol should address: partner relationships and responsibilities; group operating principles; membership; leadership; decision making; meeting process and logistics; and other factors which they consider important. The team then proceeds to follow its own terms of reference and protocols as it manages the horizontal issue. Success criteria and processes for monitoring and evaluation are essential for continuous learning. Means for ensuring accountability must be developed and implemented.

The four steps just described are supported by knowledge, skills and abilities in the following areas: stakeholders, individual styles, group dynamics, communication, dialogue, conflict resolution, interest-based negotiation, public participation, collaboration. The following outlines the final six sections of the workbook.

5. Stakeholders

This section defines a stakeholder, and provides tools for stakeholder analysis which can help us select participants, and bring important considerations into process design. This section also discusses the nature of interest groups, and includes consideration of what constitutes “public interest”, as well as discussion of what is an appropriate relationship between government and stakeholders. Tools include a Stakeholder Profile and a Community Profile. A good understanding of stakeholders and communities is an essential element of situation and risk analysis.

6. Individual Styles and Group Dynamics

This section includes an overview of approaches/instruments relating to individual styles, and an in-depth look at five basic conflict/negotiation styles -- avoiding, competing, accommodating, compromising and collaborating, and the implications of overusing or underusing any of them. Roles and relationships of people in groups, stages of group development and factors that contribute to group learning are considered.

Working with emotional intelligence involves a wide range of personal and social competencies, among which are some of direct relevance, including: commitment, understanding others, leveraging diversity, political awareness and numerous social skills including conflict management, building bonds, communication and collaboration.

Knowledge of ourselves and others is important for all aspects of horizontal issue management, especially building and maintaining relationships, and development of shared purpose and effective process and structure.

7. Communication and Dialogue

Effective relationships are built on sound communication, including verbal and nonverbal skills. This has direct relevance not only to our own ability to communicate, but also to our ability to understand the styles, needs and views of others in order to achieve effective communication. Exercises are included for active listening, paraphrasing, reframing and questioning. Dialogue is presented as an in-depth conversation that intends to produce deeper understanding and shared learning, and is practiced by participants throughout the workshop. Listen to understand, avoid assumptions and engage in shared inquiry.

8. Conflict Resolution and Interest-Based Negotiation

This section covers the causes of conflict, links to the five styles discussed in Section 6, describes how conflict escalates and presents a simple model for the assessment and strategic analysis of conflicted situations. A number of conflict resolution strategies are presented, with an emphasis on the use of interest-based negotiation. Also covered is the design of dispute resolution processes for multi-stakeholder groups.

Interest-based negotiation is also referred to as mutual gains bargaining. It is a technique based on the premise that if the parties understand the reasons behind the formal positions being put forward, it will open up innovative ways of achieving resolution. It places emphasis on determining and meeting the needs of the parties, instead of focusing on the stated positions. This technique is frequently used in environment and natural resource multi-stakeholder consensus processes.

9. Public Participation

Management of horizontal issues may involve citizens and external stakeholders as well as government departments and agencies. This section provides general background and specific guidelines for effective public participation, and answers the question “why involve the public?” Treasury Board guidelines on Citizen Engagement are included, as is a spectrum of involvement. Principles for public participation are considered, and techniques for public participation, including emerging methods such as public policy dialogue, Open Space Technology, Future Search, World Café, Study Circles, Scenario Planning, Appreciative Inquiry and a variety of online options are discussed. Key characteristics of emerging techniques are highlighted; best practices are presented.

10. Collaboration and Consensus

This section is a synthesis of the knowledge, skills and abilities which are necessary for us to be able to work in collaborative processes. Together they form a Pattern Language -- tried and tested methods which remove barriers and capitalize on opportunities. The nature of a collaborative organization is discussed, with connections made to group learning. A continuum of collaboration is presented which illustrates the potential advantage to an organization which can apply the knowledge, skills and abilities in a proactive, intentional and strategic manner to effectively manage horizontal issues. Collaboration is the overall process through which we can effectively manage horizontal issues.