

CONFLICT RESOLUTION – PROCESS STEPS

INSTRUCTIONS: Conflicts and disputes will inevitably emerge in a collaboration because of the challenges of managing multiple mandates and cultures and diverse perspectives. The following steps describe a process for effectively dealing with conflict. It recognizes the importance of agreeing to a formal process before differences have escalated into conflict and then to ensure that all partners abide by it.

1. Determine who and how issues or concerns will be brought forward.
2. Clearly document the problem or conflict in a way that gets at the root issues, the sources and history of the conflict and clarifies the assumptions. Consider issues of confidentiality.
3. Determine who will resolve the issues (e.g., Steering Committee, subgroup or neutral person/ agency). To the degree possible, ensure the group or person selected to manage the process of resolution is seen as neutral and credible by all those affected.
4. Ask those parties that are affected by the conflict to: reflect on the information; ensure mutual understanding; agree to interpretations; and identify the individual's interest in the issue. Try to frame the issues and concerns in a way that can result in new understandings and solutions.
5. In an open and constructive environment, identify possible solutions that best meet the needs and interests of all those affected. Be prepared to compromise and find consensus. Utilize any elements of the collaboration agreement that helps frame solutions (e.g., value statement; roles and responsibilities).
6. Select and document the best possible solution(s), develop a plan to implement them that includes actions, responsibilities and timelines.
7. If an acceptable solution cannot be found, move to a more formal process of facilitation, mediation or arbitration by an independent person.
8. Bring closure to the dispute by ensuring that the people with the conflict have let it go, both in their 'head and heart'.
9. Communicate the results to appropriate stakeholders.

