Facilitative Leadership for Social Change

WHO DECIDES WHO DECIDES IN YOUR WORK?

Facilitator: Andrea Nagel
ABOUT IISC

IISC is building Big Democracy, the collaborative infrastructure to facilitate sustained engagement by leaders in their organizations and cities.

Over the past 25 years, we have developed a collaborative change lens through which we facilitate social change and we bring it to every engagement. IISC invites groups and leaders to shift power dynamics, focus on building networks, and magnify love as a force for social change. Using this collaborative change lens, we see leaders overcome challenges and have astounding impact.

Never before have people with such varied histories been so intimately connected, whether because they live in a densely populated urban area or because they are linked online. Communities are struggling together with immense complex problems, from childcare to climate change. This makes being willing and able to facilitate meaningful discussions across differences one of the most important leadership skills of the 21st century.

Solving complex problems means understanding that they have a systemic nature. Powerful leaders offer ways to investigate the root causes in order to look for high-leverage solutions and engage non-traditional allies.

IISC was founded in 1993 by Interaction Associates as an expression of its commitment to social change and as a way of bringing its collaborative methodologies into the social sector. Since then, IISC has grown from a staff of two to an organization of over twenty staff members and a cadre of affiliates who have worked with thousands of individuals, organizations, coalitions, and networks to boost and amplify their impact.
Facilitative Leadership: A Definition

Today's challenges and opportunities call for an expanded model of leadership. Beyond coping with change, leaders must design and manage change by tapping the power of participation.

Facilitative Leaders* inspire and create the conditions for self-empowerment so that people can work together to achieve a common goal.

They make it easier for people to:
- Contribute their ideas and expertise
- Speak up when they have problems
- Take initiative
- Work with others
- Make decisions
- Share responsibility for success

“We are living through one of the most fundamental shifts in history—a change in the actual belief structure of western society. No economic, political, or military power can compare with the power of a change of mind. By deliberately changing their images of reality, people are changing the world.”

WILLIS HARMAN
AMERICAN SOCIAL SCIENTIST AND FUTURIST
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTE OF NOETIC SCIENCES
Interior Condition of a Facilitative Leader

Facilitative Leaders are grounded and authentic. They operate from an intentional heartset and mindset that engenders collaboration and transformative results.

**HEARTSET:** What Facilitative Leaders deeply value and care about—in the moment—that guides their actions.

**MINDSET:** What Facilitative Leaders think—in the moment—that guides their actions.

**HEARTSET:** Facilitative Leaders value:
- Authentic leadership
- “Others as legitimate others” (Humberto Maturana)
- Unique and diverse perspectives
- Collaboration
- Love and compassion as forces for social change
- Equity and fairness

**MINDSET:** Facilitative Leaders:
- Are curious, receptive, and flexible
- See patterns
- Recognize and engage power dynamics while leveraging their own privileges
- Seek win-win solutions
- Cultivate individual, organizational, and network learning
- Create conditions for people to be their best selves
- Trust their intuition
Stages of Building Agreement

Building agreements is a critical leadership function. By getting people to agree on what to do and how to do it, leaders create a safe environment for people to work together and to participate fully.

1. PRESENT A PROPOSAL

"Because we all learn in different ways, the Workshop Leaders will be using a variety of learning vehicles in this workshop. If you are not getting your needs met, despite the variety of learning formats, please take the responsibility for your own learning by asking for what you need."

2. CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

"Is there anyone who is unclear about the proposed Learning Contract?"

3. CHECK FOR AGREEMENT

"Is there anyone who does not agree to this contract?"
SEEK MAXIMUM APPROPRIATE INVOLVEMENT

Facilitative Leaders gain people’s commitment to achieving organizational, community, and network goals by involving them in the decisions that affect their daily work and lives.
The Engagement Dilemma

Increasing involvement requires sharing more information, authority, and responsibility. There are benefits and risks to increasing stakeholder involvement in decision-making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>RISKS</th>
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<tr>
<td>• You get good, creative ideas</td>
<td>• People may not know enough to participate effectively</td>
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“I am accountable for the results. But how do I balance increasing involvement and getting the decision made?”

“What are possible sources of my resistance for increasing involvement?”

• The nature and quality of the result?
• The process for getting there?
• How people behave?
• My own feelings?
Maximizing the Benefits and Minimizing the Risks of Involvement

SEEK MAXIMUM APPROPRIATE INVOLVEMENT
The key to maximizing the benefits and minimizing the risks of involvement is to seek the maximum involvement appropriate to the situation. Involvement begins with defining which decisions need to be made and then who should participate in making those decisions.

WHAT IS THE DECISION TO BE MADE?
Decisions can be defined in the form of questions.

For example:

- Who will represent our organization at an interview with a funder?

- Is this new program idea in line with our values?

- Should we pursue this particular grant opportunity given our organizational priorities?

- What criteria will we use to assess whether we are reaching our intended audience?

- What are the strategies we will pursue this year?

1. Describe a situation that requires you to make some decisions which will impact other people.

2. Write down one decision you have to make related to the situation above.
A key stakeholder is any person (or group of people) who:

- Is likely to be impacted by the outcome of the decision
- Voices unheard or typically marginalized perspectives
- Functions as a connector in or across sector(s)/field(s)
- Is in a position to implement the decision
- Is in a position to prevent it from being implemented
- Has relevant information or expertise
- Has informal influence without authority
- Is responsible for the final decision
Levels of Involvement in the Decision-Making Process

- **Consensus Requires That...**
  - Everyone has the opportunity to be heard
  - You seek a win/win solution
  - Everyone can live with the decision and everyone is willing to actively support and help implement it

- **Consensus is Not...**
  - Majority vote
  - Compromise
  - Everyone getting their first choice
  - A win/lose solution

*Fallback can be to any other level*
Factors to Consider

There is no one right way to make a decision. Facilitative Leaders make conscious choices about how much to involve others after weighing several factors.

STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN
How much do key stakeholders need to be involved so that they can confidently support implementation of the decision?

TIME AVAILABLE
How much time can be spent on making the decision?

IMPORTANCE OF DECISION
How important (versus how inconsequential) is the issue to people in the organization or initiative?

INFORMATION NEEDED
Who has information or expertise that can contribute to making a quality decision?

CAPABILITY
How capable and experienced are people in operating as decision-makers or as a decision-making team?

BUILDING TEAMWORK
What is the potential value of using this opportunity to create a stronger team?

INTEREST
Who is interested in being part of this decision-making process?
Exercise: Maximum Appropriate Involvement

PURPOSE
One of the most demanding challenges of leadership is maximizing win-win experiences by choosing an appropriate level of involvement. This exercise will give you practice choosing the appropriate level of involvement and communicating the rationale behind it.

INSTRUCTIONS
Get into pairs. One person will work through the situation from his/her workplace or community identified on page 2-4. The other person will act as a coach and help the leader think through and complete the worksheets on the following pages. Remember, you are not making the decision. You are determining the level of involvement of others (potentially) in making that decision.

1. Complete a key stakeholder analysis by filling out the chart below.

First identify the key stakeholders in this decision (include their job titles or responsibilities). Then describe what a “win” or WIIFMs (What’s In It For Me) would be for each stakeholder in this decision. A “win” means what they value or care about with respect to the decision; i.e., what would a good decision result in from their point of view?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAKEHOLDER</th>
<th>WIN</th>
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Exercise: Maximum Appropriate Involvement (continued)

2. Answer the questions below.

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<th>STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN</th>
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<th>IMPORTANCE OF DECISION</th>
<th>INFORMATION NEEDED</th>
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<tr>
<td>How important (versus how inconsequential) is the issue to people?</td>
<td>Who has information or expertise that can contribute to making a quality decision?</td>
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<th>CAPABILITY</th>
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<td>How capable and experienced are people in operating as decision makers or as a decision-making team?</td>
<td>What is the potential value of using this opportunity to create a stronger team?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who is interested in being part of this decision-making process?</td>
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3. What level of involvement have you chosen for this decision?

4. What is your rationale?
Managing the Decision-Making Process

The following are the questions to ask yourself in order to decide who (if anyone) to involve in your decision-making process and to understand your rationale for that level of involvement so that you can announce it to the group before you actually make the decision.

1. What is the decision that needs to be made?

2. Who are the stakeholders that need to be considered?
   - Who is likely to be impacted by the outcome of the decision?
   - Who voices unheard or typically marginalized perspectives?
   - Who functions as a connector in or across sector(s)/field(s)?
   - Who is in a position to implement the decision?
   - Who is in a position to prevent it from being implemented?
   - Who has relevant information or expertise?
   - Who has informal influence without authority?
   - Who is responsible for the final decision?

3. What are the “wins” or WIIFMs (What’s In It For Me) for each stakeholder? A “win” means what they value or care about with respect to the decision; i.e., what would a good decision result in from their point of view?

4. What are the factors to consider?
   - Stakeholder buy-in
   - Time available
   - Importance of decision
   - Information needed
   - Capability
   - Building teamwork
   - Interest

5. What is the appropriate level of involvement for each stakeholder?
   - Decide and announce
   - Gather input from individuals and decide
   - Gather input from the group and decide
   - Consensus (with a fallback)
   - Delegate with constraints

6. What is my rationale for choosing this level of involvement for the stakeholders in question?
Decide and Announce

The Facilitative Leader makes a decision with little or no input then announces the decision to those who will be affected by or must carry out the decision.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▲ The decision can be made quickly</td>
<td>▼ It may not be the most well informed decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▲ The leader is in immediate control of the decision</td>
<td>▼ Those assigned to carry out the decision may balk at implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▲ The implementation can begin immediately</td>
<td>▼ Those affected by the decision may harbor resentment about not having been asked their opinion</td>
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**EXAMPLE**
The community hospital recently reported that the majority of non-emergency cases in their emergency room come in between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., because there is no access to other health care providers in the neighborhood during those hours. The local health center closes at 6:00 p.m.. The executive director of the health center has decided to stay open until 9:00 p.m. to meet these non-emergency medical needs. She knows from previous discussions with the staff and their general commitment to serving their patients that the employees will support the move to stay open until the later hour. The executive director, in her role as a Facilitative Leader, announces the decision at a staff meeting, explains her rationale, and sets up another meeting to discuss implementation.

**KEYS TO SUCCESS**
- Explain the context for the decision and announce the decision itself
- Explain reasons for choosing the “decide and announce” approach
- Make time to answer questions, address concerns, and identify supports needed to implement the decision
Gather Input from Individuals and Decide

The Facilitative Leader asks selected individuals for input (ideas, suggestions, information). The leader makes a decision after gathering input from the individuals.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▲ There is more information with which to make a decision</td>
<td>▼ Some players may feel arbitrarily excluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▲ There is an increased likelihood that decision will be carried out</td>
<td>▼ If the decision is in conflict with input, players may undermine decision or be less likely to provide input the next time</td>
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<tr>
<td>▲ It doesn't require a meeting of all the players</td>
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EXAMPLE

It is the policy of our board of directors for the chair to appoint committee chairs and to rotate those roles every year. As a Facilitative Leader, the chair knows that the board is ready for the next rotation. He meets with each board member individually and asks for their ideas. Based on their input, the Facilitative Leader makes the rotation decisions, informs each affected individual, and then announces his decision and rationale at the next board meeting.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Explain how people will be involved in the decision-making process and give your rationale
- Explain what considerations or criteria you’ll be taking into account in order to make the decision
- Be clear about the type of input you need from individuals to make the decision
Gather Input from the Group and Decide

The Facilitative Leader asks the group members to share their ideas in a meeting. The leader makes a decision after hearing from the group.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▲ There is more creative thinking because of group synergy</td>
<td>▼ It takes more time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▲ There is an increased likelihood of a well informed decision</td>
<td>▼ It may surface issues or conflicts inappropriate for that meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▲ People feel included and may be more committed to implementation</td>
<td>▼ If resulting decision is in conflict with input, people may sabotage implementation</td>
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EXAMPLE
A Facilitative Leader has decided to hold a planning retreat with all of the people who report directly to her. Because the results of the retreat could impact everyone who works for her, the Facilitative Leaders asks them at a staff meeting to suggest desired outcomes and specific activities for the retreat. Based on the group’s input, the leader designs and distributes the agenda to be used at the retreat.

KEYS TO SUCCESS
• Explain how people will be involved in the decision-making process and give your rationale
• Set guidelines for the type of involvement and input you want
• Set a time limit for the discussion
Consensus

A consensus decision is one that every member of the team is willing to support and help implement. All key stakeholders have had an opportunity to give their opinion and to understand the implications of various options. All members, including the leader, have the same formal power to support or block proposals. If consensus cannot be reached, the leader has a fallback decision-making option. If consensus on the criteria is not reached, he will make the decision himself, taking the group’s discussion into account.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Advantages</th>
<th>Possible Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▲ It educates the team through active participation</td>
<td>▼ It may take more time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▲ It provides a high level of support for the decision</td>
<td>▼ Team members may not have the collaborative skills needed to reach agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▲ There could be faster implementation because more people are already up and running on the issues at hand</td>
<td>▼ People may interpret leader’s choice of consensus approach as weakness</td>
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Example

A Facilitative Leader has decided that his organization's counseling intake process is unable to handle the growing demand for services. He wants to revamp it before the winter, which is usually the busiest time of year. He would like all of the intake workers and their supervisors to come to a consensus on criteria for the design of a new system. If consensus on the criteria is not reached, he will decide himself.

Keys to Success

• Explain exactly what consensus means in the given situation and why you’ve chosen it as the appropriate level of involvement

• Clearly outline the constraints, including time and financial limitations

• Identify a fallback level of involvement if consensus can’t be reached within the specific time period. Fallback options could include:
  ° Leader decides
  ° Person with most expertise/experience decides
  ° Leader designates (or group identifies) team to whom to delegate with constraints
  ° Super-majority (75-80%) vote
Delegate Decision with Constraints

The Facilitative Leader defines the decision that needs to be made in the form of a question or questions, clarifies the constraints on the decision (e.g., budget, timeframe, quality requirements), and delegates the decision to others. The leader does not alter the decision as long as it adheres to the constraints. A fallback option should be identified in the event the group cannot make the decisions within the constraints.

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▲ It frees the leader up to deal with other issues</td>
<td>▼ The team may not have the skill, experience, or perspective to make an informed decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▲ It minimizes undermining of the decision</td>
<td>▼ It may take more time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▲ It develops leadership capability of others</td>
<td>▼ The team may take on issues outside the bounds of the task</td>
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EXAMPLE

A Facilitative Leader is accountable for ensuring that an appropriate mix of teachers and assistant teachers are on duty at the day care center she directs at all times. Staff-to-child ratios have been established by the state. Parents contract for specific hours each day. The director delegates staff scheduling decisions to the infant, toddler, and preschool lead teachers as a group, provided that they meet the staff-to-child ratios at all times and ensure that each staff member is fully and appropriately assigned without resorting to overtime. In case the team cannot reach agreement, the director gathers input from the lead teachers as a group and decides.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Be sure that you are truly willing to accept any outcome that honors the constraints
- Explain how people will be involved in the decision-making process and give your rationale
- Clearly state constraints
- Build in milestone points for process and content checks
- Be available to answer questions