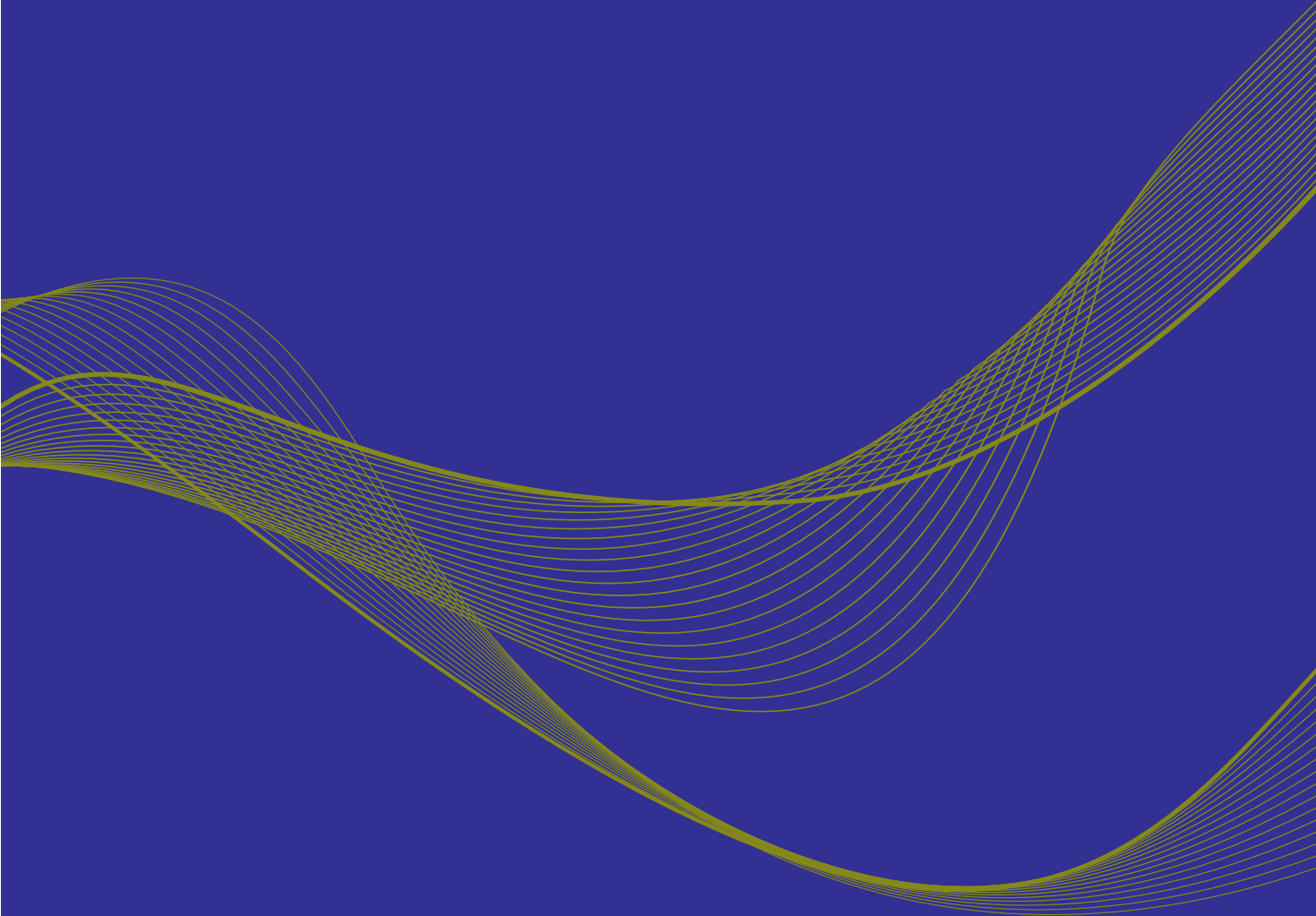




IAP2 AUSTRALASIA

Conflict in Engagement

An abstract graphic consisting of numerous thin, yellow, wavy lines that flow across the upper half of the image. The lines are layered and create a sense of movement and depth against the solid blue background.

Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

IAP2 Australasia

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an international federation of member affiliates, that seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation, or community engagement, incorporating individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest.

IAP2 Australasia is the affiliate for Australia and New Zealand, and is the leading public participation association in the world.

As an international leader in public participation, IAP2 has developed the IAP2 Core Values for Public Participation for use in the development and implementation of public participation processes. These core values were developed with broad international input to identify those aspects of public participation, which cross national, cultural, and religious boundaries.

The purpose of these core values is to help make better decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities.

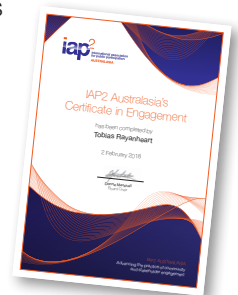
IAP2 Australasia Certificate in Engagement

IAP2 Australasia offers a Certificate in Engagement which comprises five days training consisting of:

- Engagement Essentials (a one-day prerequisite)

and either

- Engagement Design OR Engagement Methods (each course is two days)



The two additional days can be comprised of either:

- Engagement Design, OR
- Engagement Methods, OR
- two one-day modules provided by IAP2 Australasia, and approved to contribute towards the Certificate. Current modules include:
 - Conflict in Engagement
 - Strategies for Dealing with Opposition and Outrage
 - Engagement Facilitation
 - Engagement Evaluation
 - Engaging with Influence

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

IAP2 Australasia also offers an annual conference, a leadership forum, master classes and networking events throughout Australia and New Zealand.



Acknowledgments

Conflict in Engagement is owned by IAP2 Australasia.

We acknowledge the commitment of trainers in the development of this material and also IAP2 Australasia members who have provided feedback and input to ensure this course is contemporary and relevant to the current practice of engagement in Australasia.

The IAP2 Spectrum, Core Values and Code of Ethics are the property of International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Federation and form the basis of engagement practice across Australia and New Zealand.

The materials used for this course are the property of IAP2 Australasia however, as IAP2 Australasia is committed to advancing the practice of community and stakeholder engagement, we encourage the personal use of these materials, and ask that recognition of IAP2 Australasia be provided when materials are used.

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Disclaimer

The aim of Conflict in Engagement is to help you understand, and more effectively manage, conflict dynamics.

These materials are provided as support reading to develop the concepts presented in the courses and do not purport to provide sufficient information to act, or to give advice. The emphasis is on broadening perspective, providing examples and developing a sense of what to look for, what to question and from whom to seek guidance.

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Aim Objectives and Learning Outcome

Aim

The aim of Conflict in Engagement is to help you understand, and more effectively manage, conflict dynamics.

Objectives

- Explore a range of approaches for responding to difficult situations and challenging behaviours.
- Practise ways to respond to difficult situations.
- Explore the five dimensions of engagement conflict and ways to anticipate and/or mitigate factors that might give rise to conflict.

Learning Outcome

By the end of this course you will have the skills to enhance your ability to identify and mitigate situations of tension and conflict.

The aim of Conflict in Engagement is to help you understand, and more effectively manage, conflict dynamics.

IAP2 Code of Ethics

As professionals, we support the IAP2 Code of Ethics.

1. Purpose	We support public participation as a process to make better decisions that incorporate the interests and concerns for all affected stakeholders and meet the needs of the decision-making body.
2. Role of Practitioner	We will enhance the public's participation in the decision-making process and assist decision-makers in being responsive to the public's concerns and suggestions.
3. Trust	We will undertake and encourage actions that build trust and credibility for the process among the participants.
4. Defining the Public's role	We will carefully consider, and accurately portray, the public's role in the decision-making process.
5. Openness	We will encourage the disclosure of all information relevant to the public's understanding and evaluation of a decision.
6. Access to the Process	We will ensure that stakeholders have a fair and equal access to the public participation process and the opportunity to influence decisions.
7. Respect for Communities	We will avoid strategies that risk polarising community interests or that appears to "divide and conquer".
8. Advocacy	We will advocate for the public participation process and will not advocate for interest, party or project outcome.
9. Commitments	We will ensure that all commitments made to the public, including those by the decision-maker, are made in good faith.
10. Support of the Practice	We will mentor new practitioners in the field and educate decision-makers and the public about the value and use of public participation.

Introduction

Conflict in Engagement focuses on the ways that conflict can emerge in a community engagement context. It might be where the community feels likely to be affected by a change in traffic direction or the introduction of social housing into the local area. It might be as a result of the proposal to locate a fast food outlet along the route where school-aged children walk or as a result of the introduction of 'lock out laws' that lead to a 'good for some' (safety for residential areas) but 'bad for others' (hospitality traders) outcome at the same time. There may be one source issue - or more than one - and therefore a range of stakeholders.

Conflict in Engagement asks you to stand in the 'place'

of the individuals or groups you are working with; to feel the impact of the conflict situation so that you can understand their concerns and think through possible resolutions from that perspective.

Intended to be a practical course, Conflict in Engagement will offer you a framework for thinking ahead so that you can design engagement activities more effectively and practical tools. It is hoped that you will recognise conflict as a way of achieving a better outcome for all.

Conflict in Engagement asks you to stand in the 'place' of the individuals or groups you are working with; to feel the impact of the conflict situation so that you can understand their concerns and think through possible resolutions from that perspective.

Understanding ‘conflict’

Conflict management specialist, Peter Condliffe¹, defines conflict as:

“... a form of relating, or interacting, where we find ourselves (either as individuals or groups) under some sort of *perceived threat to our personal or collective goals*. These goals are usually to do with our *interpersonal* wants. These perceived threats may be either real or imagined.”

It has three propositions:

1. Conflict is seen as involving *perceived* threats
2. Conflict is experienced at an *interpersonal* level
3. It relates to our interpersonal wants or aspirations

When we experience conflict in engagement, it often relates to all three of these propositions. It may be about an issue or a proposition and the community’s or stakeholders’ perception of the impact of that issue for them personally.

Our role as practitioners in planning and delivering engagement processes is to ascertain whether conflict is evident and how we can plan to mitigate against the destructive aspects of conflict. This is not about avoiding conflict, rather stepping forward to manage conflict in a constructive way that maintains integrity for everyone involved.

Conflict can be productive – if you manage it

When we are engaging the community and stakeholders where there is likely to be conflict, a critical factor is our role as facilitators and our capacity to manage ourselves and our reactions. What is important for us as facilitators is to not let others’ behaviours control us, but rather, we need to step up or step forward and manage the conflict effectively while maintaining integrity.

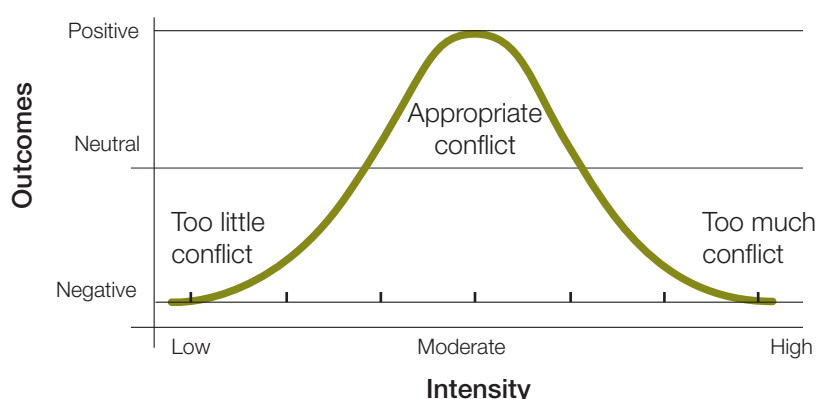
Peter Condliffe (1987) in his model “Reframing Conflict” talks about the positiveness of conflict and how it can help to contribute towards better relationships, better strategy and policy when managed successfully. In other words, we should not be in fear of it and see the potential for using the passion about an issue, or proposition, in a constructive process.

The illustration below highlights that:

- too little conflict (as experienced with the passive aggressive types) or
- too much conflict (aggressive agitators) leads to negative outcomes, however, appropriate conflict, or a moderate level of intensity in conflict, can contribute to positive outcomes.

Facilitators need the strategy of ‘frame of mind’ – stepping forward not stepping back.

Figure 1. Condliffe’s scale of conflict



Source:
Condliffe, P (2012):
Conflict Management

¹ Condliffe, P (2012): Conflict Management

Understanding Conflict in the Community Engagement Context

IAP2A courses are based on models that depict common ways that organisations and the community interact in engagement projects; who is responsible for leading and who is responsible for taking action.

Figure 2. **Community Engagement Model**



Conflict can arise during the lead/act interactions. Stephen Covey's² proposition, 'Seek first to understand', is a valuable reminder of the need to consider the other points of view.

Empathy

In order for us to be able to identify the emotions or feelings that may be evident with our audiences, and to enable effective management of the conflict, we need to have the capacity for empathy, defined as:

... the capacity to recognise emotions that are being experienced by another person and is a precursor to genuine sympathy or compassion.

If we have a strong capacity for empathy, then we have a tendency for greater positive regard for others and are more likely to help others. In an engagement sense this makes us more likely to identify and help others to resolve or reduce their conflict.

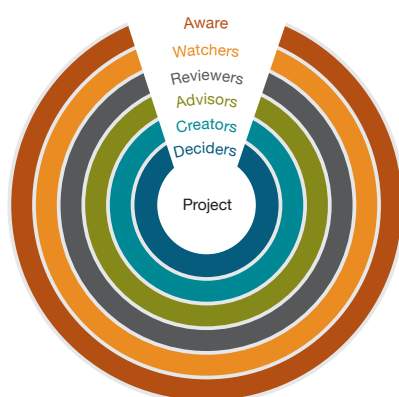
² Covey, S (1988): Seven Habits of Highly Effective People Franklin Covey

The role of individuals and groups

Aggens' model proposes that individuals or groups will decide their *level of interest* and *the way* they choose to engage. This may change, depending on the progress of the project, the reactions of a community or the effectiveness of the engagement.

Conflict can arise in response to the positions that individuals or groups take, and how others perceive them. One group may perceive that they are 'Deciders' but others may think they should hold less influential roles, such as that of 'Reviewers'. Further, some individuals or groups may not consider the issue to be important to them and choose not to engage but the organisation that leads the engagement may consider them to be central. Conflict may emerge in many ways and constantly change as the level of interest changes.

Figure 3. Aggen's Orbits of Participation



Note: the level of interest is not fixed. The level of interest of an individual or group can move depending on the progress of the project, the reaction of a community or the effectiveness of the engagement.

Orbit: **Deciders**

The level of passion for these individuals or groups is such that they not only wish to shape the process or outcome but are also willing to make the decision or take the action required as they see it. The participants are often directly affected by the decision of the project, or very concerned or excited by the potential outcome.

Orbit: **Creators**

There are some people for whom the subject in which participation is sought is so important that their orbit of involvement goes beyond giving advice on the product under development. For them, interest and knowledge make their direct involvement in the creation of ideas and proposals a reality.

Orbit: **Advisors**

The advisor is active in the development stages of a project or engagement through the provision of advice and links or suggestions about how to engage or how the problem or opportunity may be progressed. The advisor is active, but at a distance.

Orbit: **Reviewers**

A reviewer is more active than a watcher in keeping an overview or insight to the progress of the project or the engagement. A reviewer will be more likely to engage actively when the proposal is developed and they can respond based on a clear set of options. The options for responding at this stage need to provide a range of methods for a quick overview response, such as a poll or short survey, to provide full submissions and comment.

Orbit: **Watchers**

The host of the engagement may not know these participants, but the watcher will 'know' the host. In this orbit participants will use websites, social media and other media outlets and personal relationships to maintain a watching brief on the activity of the project and the engagement. Informed observers are often influential in shaping the opinions and confidence of communities about the engagement approach.

Orbit: **Aware**

The outer-most orbit consists of people who are aware but not active. Awareness is the baseline engagement requirement for this orbit. People need to be aware of the project - perhaps not in detail - and also aware of opportunities to participate. Opportunities that enable participation and don't present an unreasonable barrier to participation. Transparency, accessibility and integrity of communication are fundamental to this orbit.

Aggens 1983

Summary

In this section, four concepts of conflict in engagement have been proposed:

1. Peter Condliffe proposes that the essence of conflict is *perceived threat* to personal or collective goals.
2. IAP2A's Community Engagement Model proposes five profiles which are defined by who leads and who acts in the context of:
 - **'community advocacy'**, where the community will lead and demand the organisation be responsible to act.
 - **'community acts and contributes'**, where the community will lead and accept the responsibility for action
 - **'organisation implementation'**, where the organisation accepts responsibility to lead the engagement and to act
 - **'behaviour change'**, where the organisation leads the engagement and the community is responsible for the action
 - **'shared leadership and action'**

3. Aggens' Orbits of Participation which proposes that individuals or groups will define their level of involvement based on their perception of how important the issue to them. The situation can change; an event (such as a proposed change in legislation) may prompt individuals and/or groups to change their interest and response. You may have an engagement plan in mind but the stakeholders change.
4. The 'accidental' participants who, unlike those in the 'Orbits' concept, may not respond or taking any notice because they are not aware of how a change might affect them. Other groups, such as peak bodies, might step in to represent them.
5. 'Other', such as activist groups and social media...

Discuss these concepts in terms of how you identify potential situations of conflict in your engagement projects. Consider the time-line profile of this potential conflict.

Five Dimensions of Engagement Conflict

At times we will have a sense there is likely to be conflict because of the nature of the issue being talked about or because of some of the context, that has happened before, the community values or the level of impact. At other times we may be in the 'moment' of engaging the community and stakeholders and conflict 'emerges' or 'appears' and confronts us as we are managing the engagement process.

As engagement practitioners we need to understand

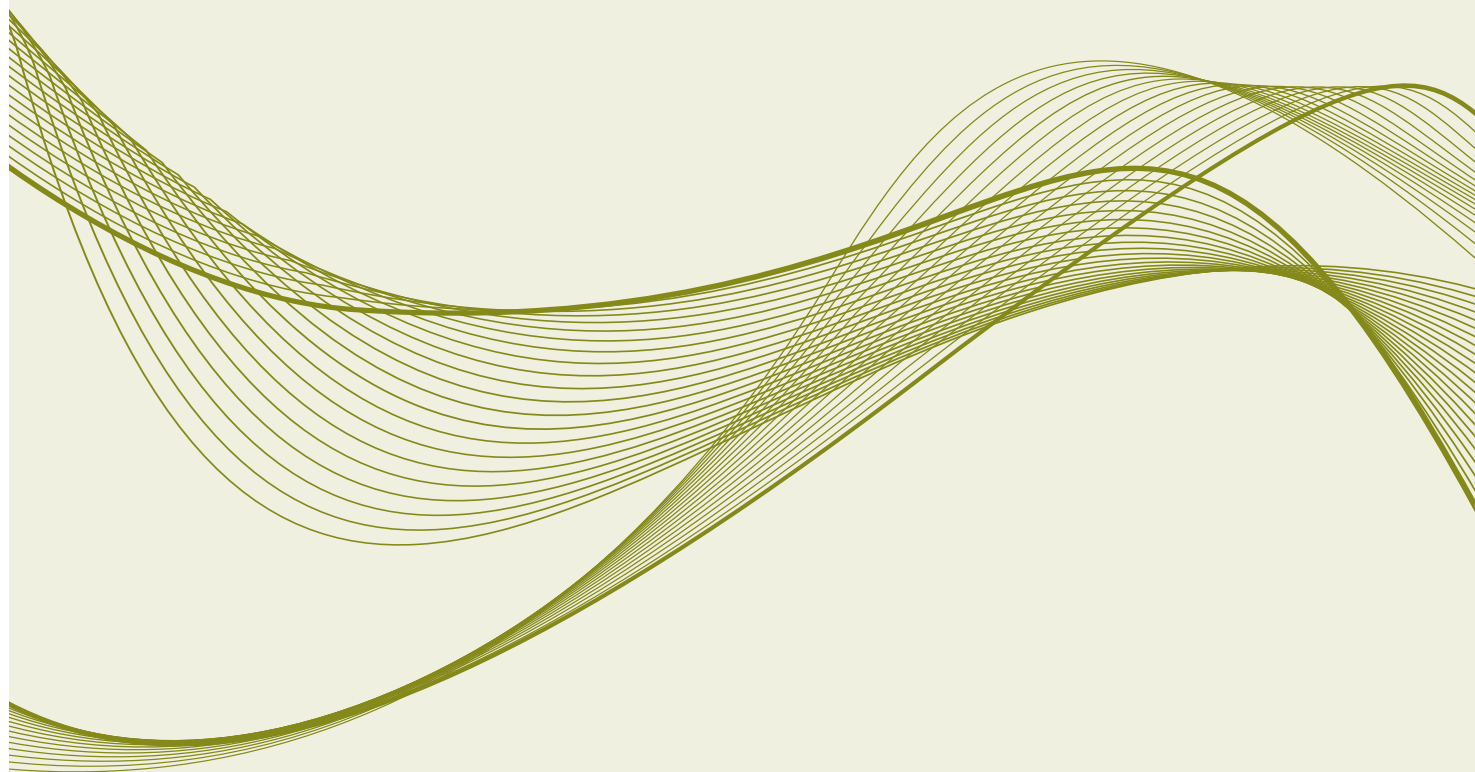
the differing factors, or dimensions, that contribute to conflict in the engagement process. There are five dimensions that may contribute to conflict in engagement and that need to be considered in planning and managing community and stakeholder engagement:

The Five Dimensions of Conflict in Engagement explored in this course are shown below, and outlined following.

Figure 4. The five dimensions of engagement conflict



While you are engaging with individuals and groups now, their previous experience will influence their response to your project. Equally, the work you do will affect their future responses. Taking engagement *legacy* into account can be an important driver of success.





People

Issues to consider include:

- What have been the previous experiences of the community and stakeholders in relation to the issue?
- How are the community and stakeholders feeling about the issue and the organisation that is leading the engagement?
- What is their ability to access the engagement opportunities?
- What are their expectations on how they will be engaged?

In considering approaches for managing 'People', the issue or proposition, the wider public and where there may be conflict, we need to understand the *types* of conflict.

Types of Conflict

There are many forms and prompts of conflict in life, and many can be raised in engagement processes. Two key forms are:

Affective conflict

Conflict that is prompted by an emotional response that may not be rational or controllable.

The debate about local government investment in sporting fields rather than a cultural centre, could be an example in engagement

Functional conflict

Conflict over objective matters, such as tasks or the way tasks are undertaken.

A debate about 'how' a workshop is being conducted, or about a topic or issue ('what'), such as the debate about paid parking, could be an engagement example.

Consider the following types of conflict that may underlie engagement in some way and present as 'affective' conflict.

Affective conflict

Affective conflict can result from an emotional response to an issue that is important to the people involved but can be subjective. Further, it can be important to one person or group, but not to others.

Consider the following examples and how they may emerge in an engagement context.

Values Conflict

Which could be triggered by:

1. **day-to-day values** such as the tone of interaction between people. This may be a result of culture or social-economic circumstances, rather than a sign of conflict.
2. **terminal (absolute) values** such as where a person might categorize others as 'right wing' or 'hard right', and issues as 'right' or 'wrong'.
3. **self-definition values** such as where a person self-identifies and wishes to be acknowledged accordingly. An example is 'gothic' or 'proud leftie' of 'your elected representative'.

Relationship Conflict

Which could be triggered by:

1. **strong emotion** such as racism, that may reflect a learned behaviour or life experience.
2. **misperceptions/stereotypes** such as descriptions or clichés that may have been learned from others over time).
3. **poor or miscommunication** such as a lack of courtesy of the way a person speaks.
4. **negative/repetitive behaviour** such as subtle examples of bullying (ignoring a person, not including a person on the invitation to a group event) or by interrupting the speaker.

Interest Conflict

Which could be:

1. **substantive** such as where a person's strong emotional commitment is at stake
2. **procedural** such as a process that may cause some to feel that they have not been heard
3. **psychological** such as where a person might be interested in one group of people for a particular reason. Claiming to be 'an expert' can also create a sense of dominance that can cause conflict
4. **different perceptions of data** such as where research has been called into question
5. **self-interest** such as when some individuals are motivated to participate in a public forum because of the profile it offers.

Consider the following types of conflict that may underline

Affective conflict can cause one person, a group of like-minded individuals or a range of different individuals and/or groups who hold values or relationship-based connections, to display their emotive responses in different ways.

This subjective and emotional stimulus is a challenge for the engagement practitioner.

engagement in some way and present as 'functional'.

Functional conflict

Conflicts that might be more 'objective', include:

Conflict over 'facts' (data, evidence), which could be driven by:

1. a lack of information
2. misinformation (use of data/evidence in a particular way)
3. different views on what is relevant
4. different perceptions of data/evidence and its importance or implications
5. different assessment procedures

Structural Conflict, which could be driven by:

1. how a situation is set up
2. role definitions
3. time constraints
4. geographic/physical differences
5. unequal power or authority
6. unequal control of resources

and... you must be able to identify many other prompts and drivers of Conflict!

These underlying prompts, or drivers, then present in various forms depending on a person's ability to interact with others and ability to manage their own emotions.

Conflict – What it looks like

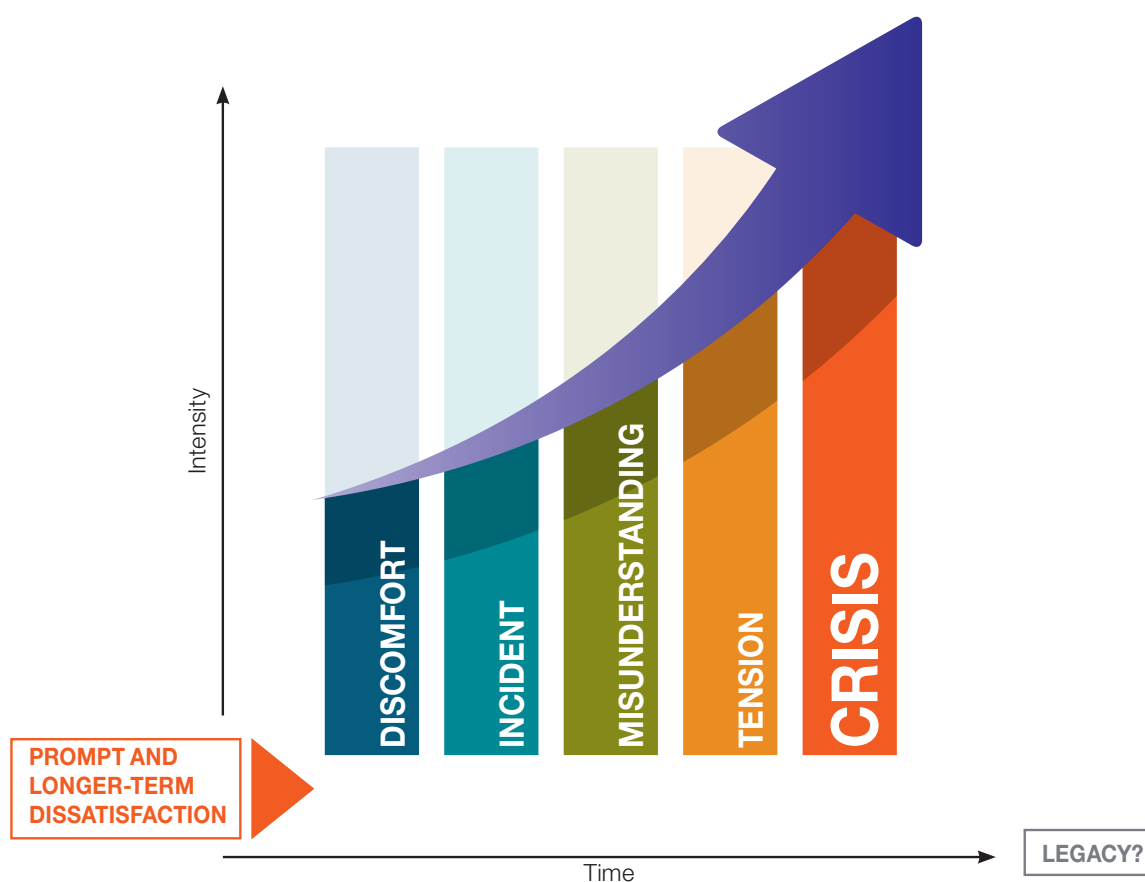
Conflict is often perceived as a threat to a person's status, well-being or amenity, and hence taken personally when the 'prompt' may not have been intended as such.

In an engagement context, conflict can occur at any point of time and be resolved, or not. If not resolved, conflict can create an emotional response such as anger, anxiety, embarrassment or frustration that can disrupt the group dynamic and cause a rift in relationships. It is possible that the result can be both larger (in terms

of impact), last over time and be more destructive to the individuals, stakeholders and the social fabric of the community. Very soon your organisation will know about 'the groups that are at odds'. Further, conflicts tend to be stored in memories and may thwart future engagement initiatives.

The commonly-accepted model of how conflict develops follows.

Figure 5. The 'moving walkway' of conflict - Engagement possibilities



This model depicts the concept of a 'moving walkway' of conflict from a prompt, escalating to a crisis unless the conflict is addressed sooner, then later.

In an engagement context, there can be at least three different scenarios, for example:

1. **Conflict can apply to a 1:1 situation**, such as where you are speaking with a person or, say, on a project site where you – and those with whom you are ‘interacting’ – are members of the community. You need to respond effectively and quickly to contain the conflict in the conversation – and the reason for it – escalating.

This can be a personal safety risk – it’s not a time to be flippant or dismissive, especially if the person you are speaking with displays signs of being edgy or unwell. Organisations that have staff who are in situations where conflict might be present, should have training and processes in place to protect staff.

2. **Conflict can be present for some time (this might be the ‘discomfort’ stage)**. Members of the community may have had concerns for months or years and you may walk into that context. The original concern may have been simmering but ‘inflamed’ by a different issue and so you may not have the background knowledge to respond immediately and effectively. Some communities live in situations where conflict exists for years, in many forms.

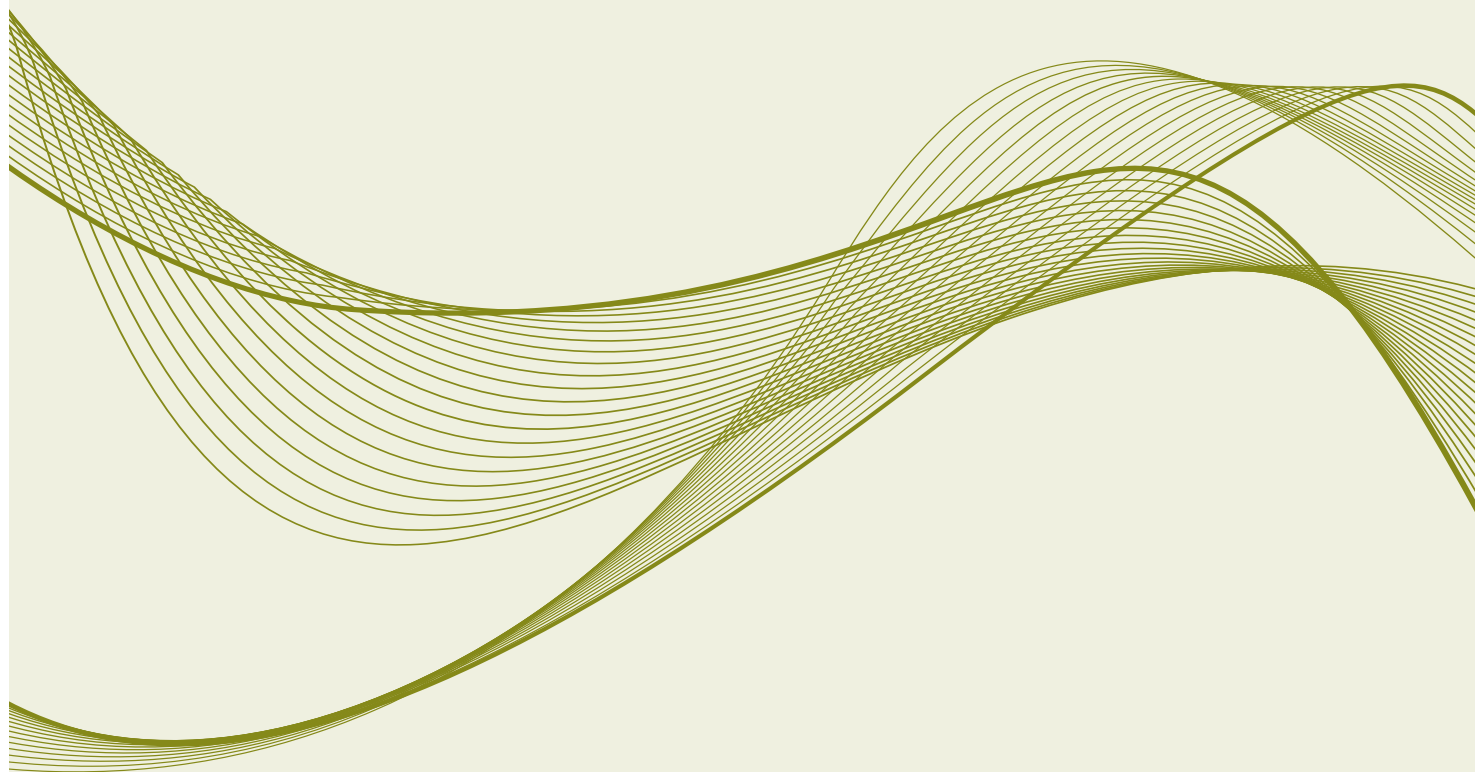
3. **The issue being raised might be one of many – or not related to the current situation at all**. In community consultations, individuals can raise issues that are not within your, or the project’s, jurisdiction. For example, arterial roads are the domain of the State Governments, not local councils.

If the conflict is not addressed immediately and effectively, the ‘moving walkway’ seems to get faster and possible ‘White Flag’ points – where a pause offered by one party would allow appropriate corrective action to be taken – are not addressed. Increased complexity, fuelled by ‘affective’ dynamics can cause a ‘prompt’ or another ‘unrelated issue’ to escalate.

Consider examples of behaviour and how you might act positively to ‘step off the moving walkway’. A case example – that deals with common human drivers and causes of conflicts – follows.

Once you have read the case example, if you feel you have an experience that you would like to apply the model to, please do so. This enables you to gain feedback in a constructive environment.

If the conflict is not addressed immediately and effectively, the 'moving walkway' seems to get faster and possible 'White Flag' points - where a pause offered by one party would allow appropriate corrective action to be taken - can be missed.





Skill Practice 1

Consider appropriate responses

A Prompt**Announcement on national news**

An affective conflict

A functional conflict

Discomfort**The 'plus' (a larger audience and passing on the skill and history) and 'minus' (impact on TownCo and its *people*)**

An affective conflict

A functional conflict

An Incident**Publicity about a meeting (which you are facilitating)**

An affective conflict

A functional conflict

Misunderstanding**(or not appreciating the importance of words, titles, experiences or values of others)**

An affective conflict

A functional conflict

Tension**Impact on the locals day-to-day**

An affective conflict

A functional conflict

Conflict – How groups respond

When we consider conflict in engagement, we are overlaying a personal response to affective and functional conflict, onto a group response.

Tuckman (1965) investigated behaviours exhibited in a group, how members inter-relate (group structure)

and whether the group is focused on a task or social outcomes. His four stages, shown below, have been accepted and most subsequent research incorporates those stages. His fifth stage – ‘adjourning’ or ending – is now considered important to engagement success and legacy.

Figure 6. Tuckman's focus of group development

	1 Forming	2 Storming	3 Norming	4 Performing	5 Adjourning
Group structure	Testing and dependence	Intra-group conflict	Development of group cohesion	Functional role-relatedness	Breaks up
Task activity	Orientation to the task	Emotional response	Open exchange of relevant interpretations	Emergence of solutions	Saying farewell

This model is generally accepted to be ‘normal’ and you can expect the conflict that is generated. He later looked at the dynamics of ‘successful group contexts’ and found that success of a group depends on:

- **Intent** - whether the group (and in our engagement context, all the groups in the process) want to grow and achieve the outcome
- **Synchronisation** - whether the group members move through and relate in the same phases at the same time

Tuckman proposes:

‘If the group is not able to resolve differences or dysfunction, the dominant behavior will become either apathy or conflict, and group disintegration will result.’

Is there a risk that you could end up with the ‘last man/group standing’ which could be the loudest voice or the stakeholder with a vested interest?

We talk about ‘engagement legacy’. How could this concept affect the community’s approach to engagement?

Ways to reduce conflict 'in the moment': Active listening *plus*

There are a number of approaches to handling an immediate conflict situation that involves speaking with an upset person or group. Active listening is a core skill to develop and the common steps in the process are:

Steps for active listening

1. Calm yourself and become quiet
2. Ask questions to clarify their situation
3. Paraphrase to check understanding. Ask "is that correct?"
4. Reflect the meanings
5. Acknowledge the feelings
6. Summaries to ensure a shared meaning. Ask "is that correct?"
7. Don't judge - get a clear picture of what is being said without attributing blame or suggesting a solution.

As well as using active listening skills, you need to develop your presence by matching the body skills and managing the situation. Consider the following.

Approach	What you do	What you say
'Speak in 'I' language'	Stand in a calm posture, hands beside you. Ensure there is sufficient personal space between you – step back if necessary.	Acknowledge: "I acknowledge/accept that this situation concerns you..." Or use active listening – i.e. clarify what the person is concerned about.
Do not accuse or talk too much.	Listen, nod or show understanding. Remain quiet while the person talks 'out' (says all he or she wants to say) Allow silence after a person spoken.	Only say what is necessary. Don't say "I understand..."
Conclude immediately and effectively	Indicate a change – 'invite' (by using open arms) the person to walk to an area where there are more people or to the front door.	"What can I do for you?" "Can I get [person] to contact you?"

Understanding the impact of affective (emotion-driven) conflict and that of functional (objective, a 'thing') conflict helps in preparing for an event, engagement practitioners – and other colleagues who may be involved in some way – often need to deal with a situation that arises 'in the moment': unexpectedly, and you have to deal with it.

Let's look at more complete ways (mind plus physical) to manage a situation.

Non-verbal responses

Approaches include:

- If you sense a person or group is 'tense', **walk in a relaxed but intentional way to stand near them**. Try to engage the leader by eye contact (always try and meet key leaders before any meeting) and disarm by smiling and referring to them.
- If a person or group is being negative, **'accidentally' stand to block them from direct view**, then start to 'back away' (walk backwards ... you have checked this out) and indicate, with an open arm, that you involve them in the conversation.
- If a person is too dominant, **indicate with an open hand** (at a low, hip level and direct eye contact) to desist.

More direct responses

Approaches include:

- **remove the person from the room**. The best option is to do that is before the tension increases. Whisper to the person, indicating how the person could help the people if he or she could... If that does not work, calmly ask the person to leave. Wait till the person has left the room before you speak again. The majority will respect you for taking positive action.
- **enforce the group rules**. Calmly and in a measured way, remind the group that they had agree to...
- **appeal to the 'greater good'**... what everyone has given their time to contribute to...

Consider the calm, methodical approach from the then NYPD top negotiator.



Facilitators

Key issues to consider include:

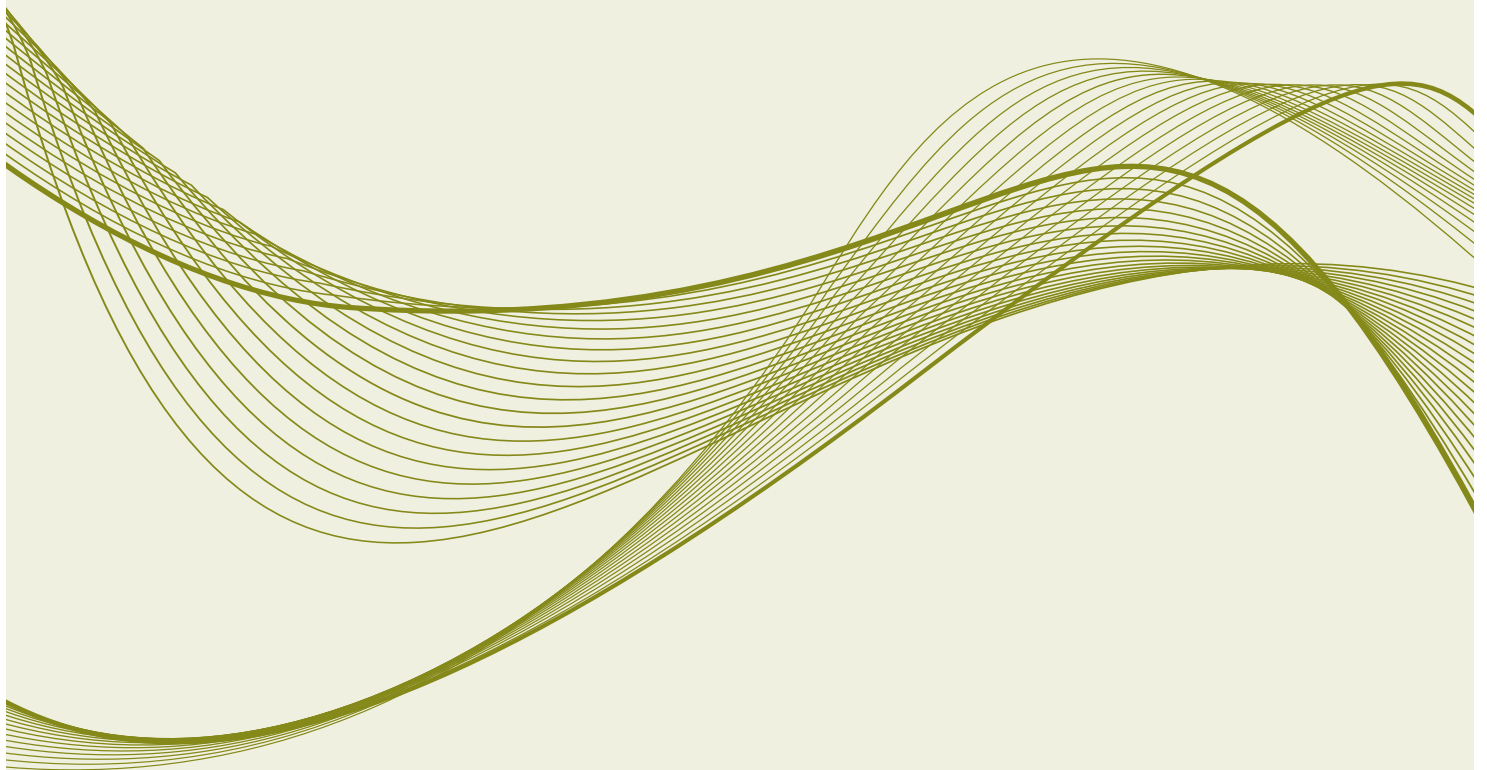
- What is their skill and ability in managing engagement processes?
- What is their capacity for self-awareness and how do they respond to situations involving conflict?
- How well has the facilitator prepared for the engagement activities and used their own hosting and group management skills with the stakeholders?

Facilitators can be external consultants, our colleagues or ourselves. From your experience consider your criteria for selecting and briefing facilitators.

Figure 7. **Criteria (skills for success) for selecting and briefing facilitators**

External consultants	Your colleagues	Your team members

‘If the group is not able to resolve differences or dysfunction, the dominant behavior will become either apathy or conflict, and group disintegration will result.’



Emotional intelligence

Daniel Goleman⁵ proposed the concept of 'emotional intelligence' and our capacity as human beings to recognise and manage our emotional state based on neurological concepts associated with our 'amygdala' - the part of our brain that makes us "snap" in circumstances of stress. In ancient times this was important for survival when 'fight' or 'flight' responses were needed when confronted with dangerous situations.

It is responsible for the sudden outburst we may have when experiencing 'road rage' for example. Goleman calls this an "amygdala hijack".

In the community and stakeholder engagement context we need to understand the matters that trigger our own amygdala hijack so that we can develop strategies to avoid them occurring, or strategies for managing them

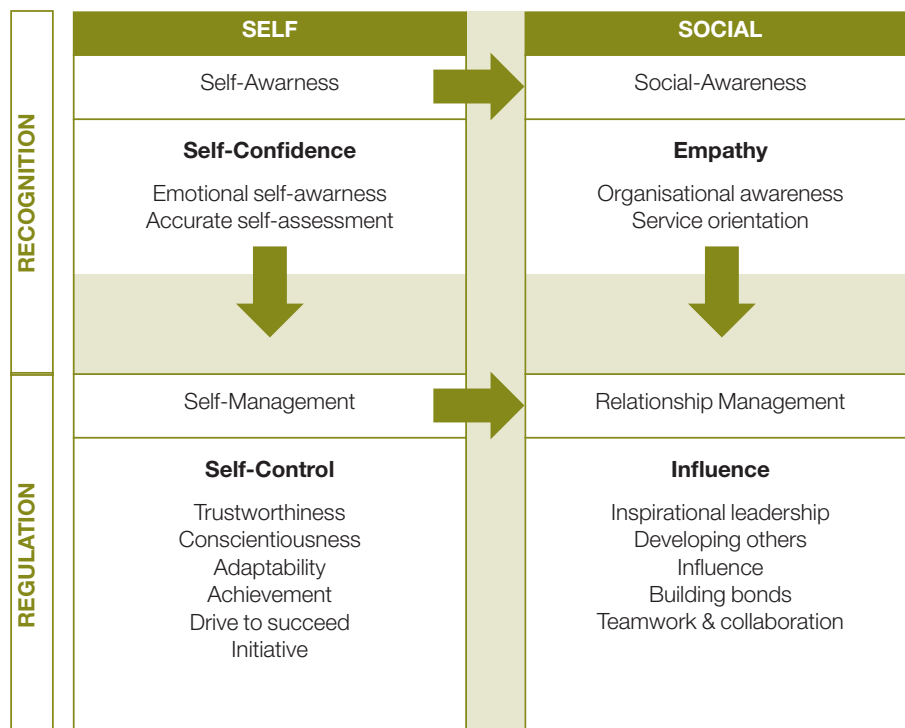
when they do. We also need to have the ability to empathise with others, accurately read group dynamics and know how to settle disputes or persuade others when we are managing groups in the engagement activities.

Goleman proposes that there are five aspects to managing and developing your emotional intelligence:

1. To take initiative and strive to improve, and to persevere in the face of setbacks and frustrations (*motivation*)
2. To sense what others are feeling and being able to take their perspective (*empathy*)
3. To accurately read social situations and group dynamics, and be able to interact smoothly to help negotiate outcomes and settle disputes (*social skills*)
4. To recognise your strengths (*self-awareness*) and to be aware of those around you (*social-awareness*)
5. To control or regulate (*self-manage*) your responses as you seek to develop your skills with working with others (*relationship management*)

The following diagram shows this self/others responsibility.

Figure 8. Making Emotional Intelligence a useful tool




⁵Goleman, D (1998): Working with Emotional Intelligence

The previous diagram proposes the importance of being aware of yourself and how you act and are perceived, and how you can work to 'self-regulate' your responses.

Social Competence = Social Awareness + Self-Regulation

Consider the following traits of low emotional intelligence and high emotional intelligence. Choose one set of traits and consider how you, in a facilitator role⁶, can help 'move' the response and reduced the conflict in an event.

What can you do?		
Low Emotional Intelligence		High Emotional intelligence
Aggressive Demanding Egotistical Bossy Confrontational		Assertive Ambitious Driving Strong-willed Decisive
Easily distracted Glib Selfish Poor listener Impulsive		Warm Enthusiastic Sociable Charming Persuasive
Resistant to change Passive Non-responsive Slow Stubborn		Patient Stable Predictable Consistent Good Listener
Critical Picky Fussy Hard to please Perfectionist		Detailed Careful Meticulous Systematic Neat

⁶ Note: you act in 'facilitator' roles at different times and in different ways. You may not be the profile consultant, but you may greet people, talk to certain people while everyone is waiting, and so on.



Managing your ‘hot buttons’

Counting to 10 or, if it is really bad, count to 100!

This might sound trite but from a neurological perspective the physical act of counting switches on our neurocortex (previously shut down by the amygdala hijack) and enables us to create space from the thing that caused stress.

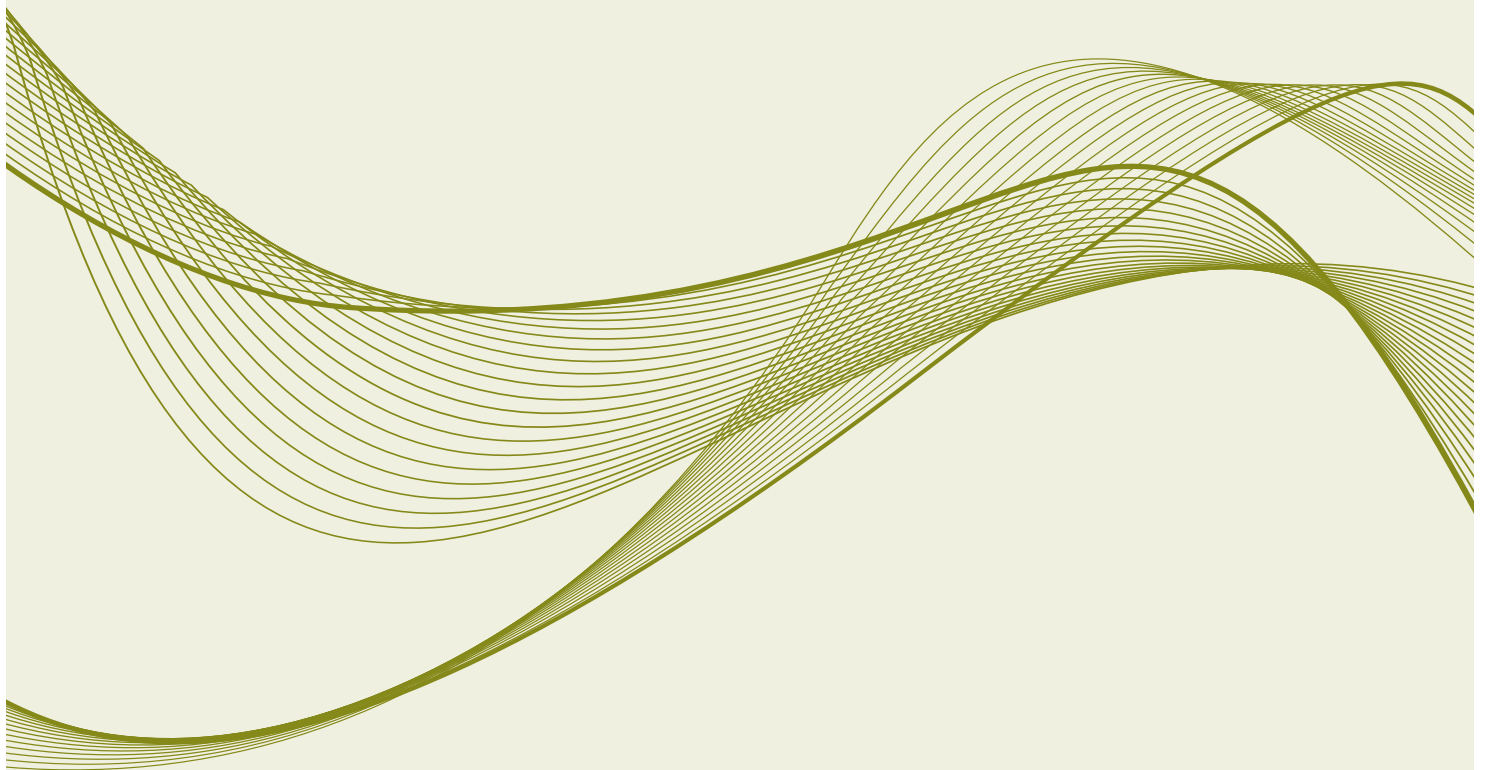
Breathing or deep mindful breaths

Mindful breathing triggers the ‘rest and digest’ hormones in our brain and physically helps us to feel peaceful.

Sharing your insights with peers

Let them know what are the triggers that activate your ‘hot buttons’ and sharing ideas on how team members can help each other will better prepare you, and your team, to manage those ‘moments’ when there is a risk of losing your calm, control and neutrality.

Daniel Goleman proposed the concept of 'emotional intelligence' as our capacity to manage our emotional state based on neurological concepts associated with our 'amygdala' - the part of our brain that makes us "snap" in circumstances of stress.



Skill Practice 2

Individual behaviours in a group context

Common Group Roles	Some ways to manage
Defeatists They feel the problem is hopeless, and are always blaming, failing to act on the problem or someone else. Use the term “they” a lot (They are always ...).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask them who “they” are. ■ Ask what part of the problem they can act on. ■ Ask what would have to change to resolve the problem.
Storytellers Have a focus on their own personal problems and experiences and tell long stories about these. They can bore the group or get the group more interested in the story than in the topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interrupt, and ask them to summarise the problem in one sentence. ■ Check that the rest of the group is interested in the issue. ■ Check that the problem is current, not history.
Experts Often feel they know at least as much, if not more than the facilitator does. They can compete with the facilitator, try to “help” them, contradict them, or undermine them. Often, they are looking for recognition or acknowledgment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use their expertise constructively in coaching and assisting others. ■ Keep them focused on the topic.
Cynic Sneering ‘been there, done that’ attitude; able to describe previous negative situation. Uses the power of always being partially right.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Acknowledge them. ■ Invite participation. ■ Don’t pander to them or negotiate with them.
Activists Have an analysis, which they apply to everything. The source of every problem can be the same, and it is usually up to someone else or something else (the system, the government, and management) to change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask “is it realistic to expect this situation to change?” ■ “How can we work around the problem?” ■ Structure activities to take all the groups point of view into account. ■ “Let’s hear from everyone.” ■ “What is the range of factors contributing to this problem?”
Withdrawer Has a low participation level, does not get involved in discussion, may take lots of notes, or get involved in private conversations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Give them a choice of roles. ■ Ask them to bring it back to the group. ■ Feedback their behaviour and ask them to do something different.

Reflect on a recent engagement event or one which is looming and decide how you will best respond to these behaviours.

Common Group Roles	Some ways to manage
Defeatists	
Storytellers	
Experts	
Cynic	
Activists	
Withdrawer	

Some see this approach as stereotyping and consider that it is not a useful way to think about the behaviours of individuals or groups we may need to interact with in a situation of conflict. If we think we know and understand the motivations or concerns of others, we may overlook important personal or organisational motivations.



Skill Practice 3 Placement

This method, called ‘Placement’ was developed by US politician historians, Neustadt and May (1986), who propose that if you understand the person or group in their context and their history, you will be able to plan more effectively to deal with situations of conflict.

	Stakeholder/Group A	Stakeholder/Group B	Stakeholder/Group C
Who			
Values			
Objectives			
Perceptions of others			
‘Story’ Known formative events in his or her (or their organisations’) life.			
How would you approach this context?			

Issues to consider include:

- Is the physical environment conducive for hosting conversations?
- Will the space for hosting the conversations be considered as neutral?
- Is the layout suitable for conversations or does it create a sense of power play of 'us and them'?

- Neutrality – having a space that most people will feel comfortable, pertaining to number of people in attendance.

- Accessible – having a space that is located centrally, with good access to car parking or public transport, and has good physical accessibility and ensure that team members are available for playing ‘host’ – greeting people and making them feel comfortable.
- Venue choice – avoid clashes with other activities, particularly those that may be noisy and ensure that the venue size will accommodate expected numbers

What 'lessons from life' have you learnt?

Individual behaviour: Online

In the online environment the escalation of conflict can be influenced by trigger points based on contributor comments or new information. The escalation can happen quite rapidly giving us very little time to consider

whether or not to respond. If the decision is made to make a response, then the key messages, or other strategies, need to be developed and implemented very quickly.

In the table below different roles are described for common online user behaviour and how it can be managed in a positive way are shown following.

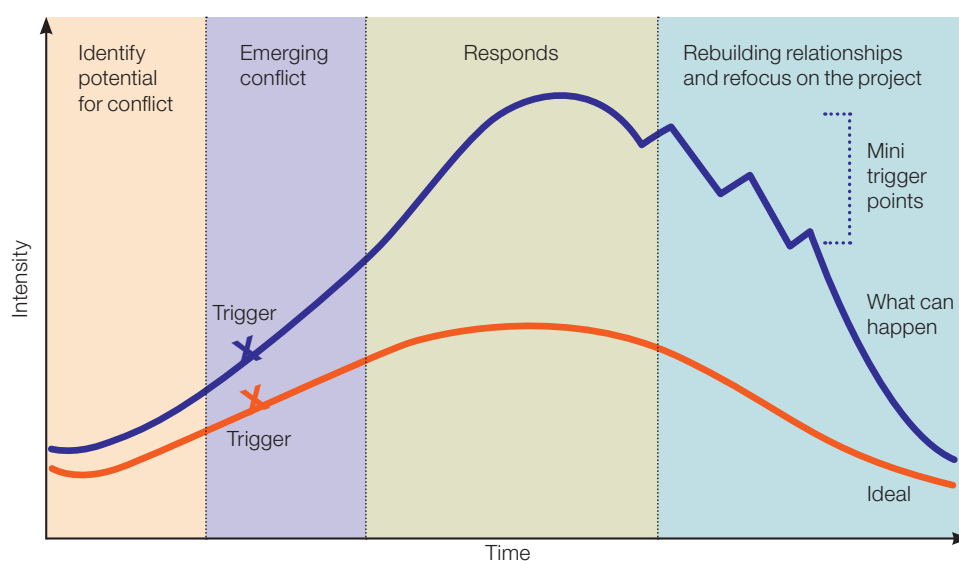
Online	Approach
Legitimate complainant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Treat them with respect and politeness. ■ Be responsive to their concerns and ask if they would like to contact you directly. Invite them to direct message you.
Troll Trolls post comments in order to inflame a situation, create an argument or upset other users. They can post negative and inflammatory comments. They do not really wish to participate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask for detail and if you can help. ■ Ask them to direct messages to you. If they don't respond, then politely say you are sorry you weren't able to help them but invite them to keep in touch if they want to talk or work through the issue.
Watchdog Watchdogs will monitor the web or your organisation for topics of interest, and then engage vigorously. They are motivated by passion and want to be involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review and analyse past engagements to identify watchdogs. ■ Develop a proactive engagement strategy to involve them. Consider doing this offline first.
Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify and foster. Advocates are the most credible party to support you. ■ Develop a user loyalty program.
Lurker A person who watches and reads but does not actively participate. The '90-9-1 principle' says that in every 100 users, 1 will create content, 9 will edit content or contribute, and 90 will lurk.	You may need a strategy to de-lurk your community – similar to reaching out to non-participants in offline engagement. Research has shown strategies that work include time (lurking reduces over time), linking participation with social capital, and demonstrating benefits of participation.

Escalation of difficult behaviours

In the online environment, the escalation of conflict can be influenced by trigger points based on contributor comments or new information. The escalation can happen quite rapidly giving us very little time to consider whether or not to respond. If the decision is made to make a response, then the key messages, or other strategies, need to be developed and implemented very quickly.

The key points for us in managing conflict in the online environment are:

- **Know your topic or the emerging issue** – consider what is the trend and what the escalation is about
- **Engage with media early** and reduce chances of community-led negative coverage
- **Decide on what approach may be appropriate** and be prepared to act quickly
- Consider language and tone to use in the response so as not to inflame the situation – avoid defensive language
- **Follow through** with your online response protocols
- **Have a plan for actively managing online responses** – a media management plan





Some questions to consider:

1. Do we treat all stakeholders the same? Should we? What happens if we treat organisations differently and others find out?

2. Do we treat community members as groups to be ‘managed’ rather than trying to listen and consider their views?

3. Do we stereotype individuals and organisations, rather than seek to understand their point of view?
4. Do we seem to pay more attention to ‘the ‘squeaky wheel’ or the annoying person? Have you had a colleague peer review your interactions with individuals and spokespersons of groups?

5. What is your first sentence when you are challenged by a stakeholder in public or by a senior person in your workplace?

SUMMARY: Ways to manage people where there is conflict

Our role is to advocate for an effective process to help manage conflict that may be present or may emerge and engage effectively – not to run a great project. Further, we can demonstrate integrity and transparency in what we do by:

- Using empathy – unless we can experience empathy, we can’t understand what values are important and get to understand the source of the conflict
- Actively listening to demonstrate an interest to listen and understand people when they are emotive
- Acknowledging feelings

- Using the opportunity to understand people better
- Determining what is important to the process.

Remember not to take on the responsibility to solve an individual’s dilemma or let the behavior of others affect our role. Engagement practitioners need to be able to comfortably step forward and work confidently in contexts where there is conflict.



Context

Issues to consider include:

- What is the history of the problem or proposition?
- What is the level of impact of the issue or proposition for the community and for the organisation?
- How important is it to the organisation?
- What is the relationship between the organisation and the community and stakeholders?

Context is the background setting environment in which the project is being undertaken. Careful consideration of the context will help to identify possible points of conflict within the community that can then help us shape the appropriate response, or process, to manage the conflict and still engage effectively.

The engagement context is shaped by:

- The history of the problem or proposition
- Reputation or standing of the host of the organisation and its leaders
- The industry or international approaches to similar issues
- Organisational approaches
- Local issues
- Relationship between an organisation and the communities, or the community's relationship with the organisation
- Scale and consequence of the proposed changes.

The model below, from our engagement methodology, reminds us to keep questioning beyond the 'known'.

Figure 9. **Context – consider issues more broadly than 'local'**



A thorough assessment of context is important to planning any engagement process, however, this step becomes critical when there is the likelihood of conflict. Some ways to help understand and potentially mitigate the conflict in engagement include:

- Develop a detailed understanding of the scope of the matter or issue.
- Complete a risk and opportunity analysis and share this with team members and decision-makers.
- Understand how others may be dealing with similar issues and consider how they have acted – what has been successful? What hasn't been successful and why?
- Where possible meet with decision makers to understand how they have approached matters such as this in the past?
- Openly explore and discuss their views on the potential for conflict, and their views about managing conflict, in the engagement processes.

Skill Practice 4 Specific Challenges

The following challenges where conflict was present were raised by previous participants. You can use these, or identify a challenge that is relevant to your group.

Select an issue and context (eg; planning for an engagement project when you know an activist group will lead a public campaign before the election (context)). Your trainer will help the group negotiate – and perhaps tweak – the context so that it is relevant to what a larger number may face.

1. **Identify** the purpose of the engagement project and clarify the context features. Try to use an example common to your group.
2. **List** the factors or issues that will be known and likely to arise; and those that may not apply.

3. **Identify** issues that may cause an emotional response (affective conflict) and issues that can cause functional conflict that can be 'planned out'.
4. **Outline** how you will prepare for the engagement event.

You will have the opportunity to present to the group, and record the presentations of others as a summary for later reference.

Example:

Planning for 50 but 150 arrive...

Conflict that arises when you hand over to other parties in the implementation phase...

Handling conflict at the leadership level between parties involved.

Engagement Methods to avoid when conflict is likely.

Managing a number of projects where conflict is present in all... at different times... with different dynamics...

How do you work with large lobby groups who can fund public campaigns against you?

Managing conflict in a political context, navigating media... minders...

Preparing internal stakeholders for when they will interact with stakeholders on a project where it is likely that conflict will be present... be generated

- Government/Peak body situations: conflict over implementation of a new policy
- Working with multiple partners who have different priorities
- Implementing a national program – split jurisdictions
- Keeping projects alive over years when key stakeholders (Ministers, those involved) change, leave the process, start a competitive process...

Managing conflict arising from other groups in the community who are running their own engagements.

Managing conflict throughout a whole process – what happens and when.

Notes



Design Process

Issues to consider include:

- What level of preparation has occurred?
- What is the level of commitment by decision makers for the engagement process?
- Is the engagement process appropriate to resolving the issue or proposition?
- Does the engagement process enable fair access opportunities for meaningful engagement?

Engagement design is planning engagement activities and approaches to engagement, stakeholders, organisations and communities in decision-making, problem solving, informing and behaviour change. A review of the best practice engagement across a range of types of engagement projects identified the following:

- The need for guidelines for engagement
- The perspectives of the community and/or stakeholders may change the engagement goals or method selection.
- Review and redesign are a critical requirement of any design.
- Equally, particular challenges can occur that will test our planned process and so we need to be flexible and adaptive to accommodate new information or challenges that may come from the community.

Once any aspect of these elements changes then the others need to be reconsidered.

Our approaches need to include:

- Choosing methods that help to build trust
- Allowing opportunities for venting of concerns and issues
- Demonstrating transparent processes
- Have clear expectations from the decision made on the negotiables and non-negotiables
- Creating multiple opportunities for participation in the engagement process
- Ensuring that comprehensive engagement occurs enabling those with less than a vested interest to be engaged as well as those who have high concerns – refer to ‘Orbits of Participation’
- Choosing methods that enable deliberation of the many factors involved in the project or proposition.

The worksheets provided as an appendix reflect the core process proposed in this course.

Reflection

In terms of your engagement experience and looming projects, consider the points raised in discussion and note issues to change or later think about.

Dimension	Improvements to consider
People	
Facilitators	
Setting	
Context	
Design Process	

Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to bounce back in response to adversity. In an engagement context, resilience is the capacity to be able to bounce back following emotional and conflict-driven engagement processes or the capacity to demonstrate empathy but not have your personal self adversely affected by others' behaviour.

What are the characteristics of resilience?

How do we know if we have it or what we need to do to enhance our resilience?

Gail Wagnild, founder of The Resilience Centre USA, has developed a way in which to measure and strengthen our resilience core. She has identified five essential characteristics of resilience:

1. **Meaningful life (purpose)** – knowing that we have a sense of purpose in our life and being able to articulate that.

Consider, "What do I do that others value?"

2. **Perseverance** – the determination to keep going despite difficulties, discouragement and disappointment rather than giving up - the capacity for courage and emotional stamina when things are tough.

Consider, "Do I finish what I begin?", "Do I give up too quickly?"

3. **Self-reliance** – is a belief in yourself, with a clear understanding of your capabilities and limitations.

Consider, "Can I usually think through a problem and work out a good solution?" or "Can I do what needs to be done in an emergency or will I fall apart?"

4. **Equanimity** – this is about balance and harmony rather than dwelling on disappointments or being weighed down with regret and catastrophes.

Consider, "Do I see the glass half-full or half-empty?"

5. **Coming home to yourself** – the capacity to be at comfortable yourself (achievements, life situation) and with being able to recognise your own worth.

Consider, "Am I willing to take a course of action that I know to be right, but which is unpopular with my peers?"

Resilience is important to our mental and physical health and so in the context of community engagement we need to be able to develop and strengthen our resilience in order to withstand the pressures and stresses in managing conflict. Knowing our resilience core and taking steps to strengthen it will provide us with the courage and emotional stamina to manage conflict in engagement.

Ways of building resilience include:

- Consider ways that your support systems – resources, colleagues and line management – can help you.
- Create time to prepare and make time to step away when it is affecting you adversely.
- Use debriefing strategies to share the experiences, insight and possible next actions.
- Look for continuous learning.
- Extend new strategies.
- Reframe the conflict – keep the conflict in perspective.

Appendix

Conflict in Engagement – Preparation Your project – where conflict may exist:

Profile (Individuals v groups)	Drivers	Key dynamic
COMMUNITY ADVOCACY Community Leads / Organisation Acts		
COMMUNITY ACT AND CONTRIBUTE Community Leads / Community Acts		
ORGANISATION IMPLEMENTATION Organisation Leads / Organisation Acts		
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE Organisation Leads / Community Acts		
SHARED LEADERSHIP AND ACTION Shared Leadership and Action		
Community groups run their own responses		



Conflict in Engagement – Preparation Your project – where conflict may exist:

Groups/Key individuals likely to be involved	Conflict issues likely to be raised
<p>Who:</p> <p>Values:</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Perceptions of others:</p> <p>‘Story’</p>	<p>Affective:</p> <p>Functional:</p>
<p>Who:</p> <p>Values:</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Perceptions of others:</p> <p>‘Story’</p>	<p>Affective:</p> <p>Functional:</p>

Indicative Project Plan

Project Stages	Concept plans Announced	Submissions EOI's called	First stage of Engagement Project	Progress to end – does it stay on track?	Evaluation: What is the Engagement legacy?
Priorities for engagement success					
Those involved:	What is the nature of their involvement? Where might conflict arise?				
Council Govt (Minister) Funder Developer Utility NFP/peak body 'Members'					
Media, Interaction with public					
Process: handing over to ... Project teams					
Etc					

Conclusion

Conflict in Engagement understands conflict dynamics in a personal, interpersonal and group context and then in the larger-scale engagement context.

It proposes that conflict is inherent where people perceive threats to their amenity, but we know there are many prompts and drivers of conflict. An understanding of those drivers can help engagement practitioners plan more appropriately and cope with conflict as it arises.

Conflict, well managed, can be a prompt for a better outcome.

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