
Sample Conflict Resolution Rules

Steps and Guidelines for Conflict Resolution No one approach to conflict resolution will make sense in all group situations. However, the following steps and guidelines can serve to help manage a conflict so that it works to enhance the team, rather than detracting from it.

Step One:

The people who are directly involved with the conflict should be contacted by the person who perceives that a conflict has arisen. This person can be one of the parties to the conflict, or can be an outside observer.

Step Two:

The people in conflict should schedule a meeting with each other at a mutually convenient time, with enough time set aside to discuss all of the issues associated with the difficulty. It would be best if this meeting could take place within ten working days of the original contact.

Step Three:

During the first meeting, the people involved in the conflict should use their conflict management skills as they engage in an open discussion on the matter. This includes active listening, open inquiry, non-violent communication, identification of unmet needs, and a proposed strategy to meet the future needs of all parties involved.

Step Four:

If during this meeting the conflict cannot be resolved, then the parties should identify a neutral person to serve as a mediator, and a meeting should be scheduled at a mutually convenient time for all the people involved. This meeting should take place no more than fifteen business days from the initial meeting. The mediator so designated should have training in mediation skills, and must be completely neutral — both in terms of their emotional ties with the parties in conflict, and in their real or perceived interest in its outcome.

Step Five:

All parties, with the help of the designated mediator, should use this meeting to identify the needs of each party and come up with a strategy to meet those needs.

Step Six:

If during this meeting the conflict cannot be resolved, then the issue should be brought to the attention of the whole team, or some higher decision-making body, for resolution. The action by the Stakeholder Group will be considered final.

Actions to Avoid

- Talking to anyone about the conflict, other than those directly involved, before the first or second meeting. Exceptions to this policy are understandable if the conflict involves illegal behavior or behavior that poses a direct threat to someone's physical safety.
- Suppressing the factors and signs that indicate there is a conflict to be addressed.
- Using language that can be perceived as judgmental, blaming, and/or coercive when engaged in dialogue with a person involved.
- Behavior toward a person involved that could be described as hostile, threatening, harassing, angry, demeaning, insulting, or otherwise uncivil.

Being Prepared

The important thing to recognize is that every group has built-in probability for conflict. Everyone can agree 100% on the mission and the strategy, but still, when it comes to acting on it, the unspoken goals of the personalities involved are bound to sometimes clash. Knowing how to deal with it, and taking steps in advance to make sure that the team has an understanding about how to handle conflict, is critically important for the sustainability of your sustainable development project. **Below is a collection of important guidelines to establish at the beginning of the group process, before any specific conflicts arise.**

- It is essential to recognize that conflict during a group process is inevitable, and that it should be embraced as a part of working through complex issues. This requires that the group avoid violent communication, which is the primary reason people are fearful of conflict. To this end, the group will embrace an ethic of peaceful communication and a process for resolving any conflicts that persist.
- For all decisions, the team strives to be inclusive of all points of view, and works to balance the needs of the organization with the needs of the people involved with the organization. To this end, the Stakeholder Group commits to using non-violent, democratic, and transparent processes to ensure that the decisions it makes are ethical and just, and that they meet people's needs in ways that enhance their well-being.
- The team will make every reasonable attempt to schedule meetings at times when all the parties to a conflict can attend, and to make enough time available on the agenda to fully discuss the issues involved. The team recognizes the need to provide due process for people whose positions or financial well-being are involved, as well as the need to conduct business about confidential personal issues in a way that protects everyone's privacy.

- We will make a commitment to treating everyone with respect and civility and to working to find solutions to problems that match the goals and aspirations of the organization as a whole. We seek to be life-enhancing, peace building, and non-violent in all of our work, and we strive to interact with all the people involved in a ways that foster this ethic.