The Art of Consensus Building
When It Works and When It Doesn’t

Women in Government
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## Two Tracks for Democratic Decision Making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Track One: Traditional</th>
<th>Track Two: Informal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
<td>Debate</td>
<td>Negotiation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rules</strong></td>
<td>Robert’s Rules</td>
<td>Established Norms</td>
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<td>Mason’s Manual</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decision rule</strong></td>
<td>Majority vote</td>
<td>Consensus/compromise</td>
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WHEN SHOULD COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES BE USED?

Two Philosophies

*in the beginning...proactive approach*
when an issue is known to be contentious, to get stakeholders involved to help manage inevitable conflicts and build consensus

*after the fall...reactive*
when a contentious issue has already developed into a dispute or impasse, to work out a resolution.

UPSTREAM

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DOWNSTREAM
Moving from Conflict to Consensus

Divergent views and interests . . .

Struggle to overcome differences . . .
- Use Interest-Based Negotiation
- Build Respect and Trust

Leads to Collaboration

Group decides to work together to solve a mutual problem
Collaborative Problem Solving

Do this

Problem perception

- Problem analysis
- Problem definition

before you do this

Generate alternatives

Evaluate alternatives

Make decisions

Many groups jump prematurely to solutions without agreeing on the problem.
What Does a Convener Do?

- Calls people together to work out issues collaboratively, to seek consensus.

- Doesn’t dictate what the solution is

“It’s a way of taking action without taking sides.”
KEYS TO CONVENING

- Be inclusive
- Meet in a neutral place
- Be impartial
- Establish the purpose for the process
- Direct, rather than dominate, the discussions
- Keep things moving
- Demonstrate visible commitment
- Finally, make sure there's an outcome