

A Step–By- Step Process for Visioning

The following is a useful method for structuring community visioning. A similar approach can be used with a committee visioning process. The process details the development of a shared vision as well as common values.

Preparations

Select a site that can readily accommodate 40-100 persons. Set up the room with participants seated in a circle. This encourages participation by all persons in attendance.

Invitations should be clear and be sent in a timely manner to avoid confusion. Care should be taken to ensure that the time and place facilitate broad attendance. Carefully consider the venue and schedule and how it will accommodate participants with differing schedules or lifestyles.

Key individuals to support the visioning process include 1) a facilitator who can effectively manage the large group process in a neutral way and 2) one or two note-takers to record the discussion. Recording is a task that should not be assigned or undertaken lightly. The recorder(s) should be skillful at organizing and synthesizing material and should strive to capture the exact wording — to the extent possible — used by participants. You may also want to designate some individuals to act as observers; these individuals can assure everything is on track and can provide suggestions to the facilitator if needed.

Welcome/Introduction

Set the tone of the visioning session by greeting participants when they arrive, arranging for clear signage and offering light refreshments. Helping people feel comfortable upon arrival and communicating to participants the importance of their presence can go a long way toward building trust and commitment.

The facilitator or a MAPP Committee representative should open the meeting with an explanation of MAPP and why a visioning process is important. The list of benefits cited in the MAPP Visioning guidance can be a useful reference. Be sure to emphasize that the goal is to create a shared vision for the community and not a vision for any one organization.

Building Rapport/Icebreaker

After the introduction, a small amount of time should be dedicated to building rapport among the participants. Everyone in the room should be given a chance to introduce themselves. Consider having participants engage in icebreaker exercises; these can help to ease tension in the room and get everyone comfortable. Icebreaker activities might include the following.

1. As people introduce themselves, ask them to state their expectation for the meeting. They can also be asked to state a "fun fact" about themselves, to help ease the tension.
2. Since all of the participants may not know each other well, participants can be divided into groups of two to four to "chat" for ten minutes, then return to the larger group to introduce each other.

Vision Brainstorming and Development

Once participants are comfortable with the topic and with each other, the dialogue should be

moved toward discussing a vision for the community. Questions should be formulated beforehand to drive this discussion. Useful visioning questions might include:

- *What does a healthy Community mean to you?*
- *What are important characteristics of a healthy community for all who live, work, and play here? and*
- *How do you envision the local public health system in the next five or ten years?*

Responses to these questions should focus on broad concepts, not details. Responses can be collected through brainstorming activities or by writing ideas down and then sharing them. The group can be organized to gather information through small group processes, or the questions can be addressed by the group as a whole.

Possible approaches for brainstorming include:

- Ask each person to write down what they believe about healthy communities. Then ask participants to pair up, share their thoughts, and develop a joint list. Participants should clarify each other's ideas and discuss any conflicting information. Then each pair can join another pair and repeat the process. The process is repeated until the entire group is back together.
- Ask each participant to write down their ideas. Then, in round-robin fashion, go around the room, posting all ideas on a flip chart (this can be shortened by limiting the number of ideas offered). After all ideas are shared, the group discusses and organizes them.
- Distribute small pieces of paper and ask participants to write down their ideas — one idea on each piece of paper. Then have participants tape their ideas to a wall. A small group then moves the ideas around until common ideas are grouped together. List and discuss the common ideas.

Values Brainstorming and Development

Once many ideas have been gathered and there is consensus about the concepts contained in a community vision, the group can move on to identifying common values (this may be done in the second part of the first session, or during a second session). It is strongly recommended that the actual drafting of the vision statement be done by a small task force or staff group.

The values brainstorming process should be similar and can use the same brainstorming techniques. Questions to elicit thoughts on common values include:

Taking into consideration the shared vision that has been developed, what are the key behaviors that will be required of the local public health system partners, the community, and others in the next five to ten years to achieve the vision?

What type of working environment or climate is necessary to support participants in performing the above behaviors and in achieving the vision?

Closing the Session /Check-out

At the end of each session, the facilitator should ensure that everyone is comfortable with the results of the session. Give participants a chance to make final comments or express concerns about the results or the process. This helps to ensure that participants leave the session without feeling frustrated and may also improve future group processes. Close the meeting with a discussion of next steps. Discuss the need for and timing of future meetings. Make sure everyone understands the next steps and how follow-up will occur.

Follow-up to the Session

After the visioning session, a small group should compile the results and draft statements for the shared vision and common values. The draft statements should be presented to the visioning group participants (through a follow-up session or through other mechanisms). Participants should be given a chance to make minor adjustments.

Once everyone is satisfied with the vision and values, each should be formally adopted. The statements should then be kept alive through the remainder of the MAPP process. All MAPP materials, such as brochures, leaflets and reports, should include the statements. References to vision and values statements should be made at the beginning of each MAPP committee meeting.