



## THE SUSTAINABLE KNOWLEDGE MODEL OF GROUP FACILITATION

Common Ground Negotiation Services bases its approach to group facilitation on the theory of sustainable knowledge. What sustains communities is the passing down of knowledge that improves life. Each generation builds on prior experience to teach the next the dangers to avoid. When a culture ceases to sustain and pass on this knowledge, the community is destroyed.

Using dialogue and negotiation, the group facilitation process uncovers and elicits the shared wisdom of community members. By identifying obstacles that stand in the way, the group gains knowledge of itself and its shared concerns. The right to public information and a wide distribution of that information promotes an informed citizenry, one that can participate in planning and decision-making. Using The Sustainable Knowledge model means that community projects are created and developed with those who benefit from, and make use of, the “product.” Projects that are conceived in this way stand a far greater chance of having continued value.

A community may include businesses, organizations, schools, families, nations, and the planet. While mediators and/or facilitators can assist groups in engaging in dialogue about social and political issues, it is important to distinguish between dialogue that promotes the practice of democracy and civil rights, and an empty exercise used for appeasement. Mediation, group facilitation, and other forms of Alternative Dispute Resolution, should not be used as vehicles for diverting accountability away from government or economic institutions. One cannot “mediate” between those who have all the power and those who have none. If attaining some balance of power is impossible, “facilitation” becomes unethical.

**Confidentiality is not applicable in a group facilitation process.** Group facilitation differs from other dispute resolution processes in that statements are considered public. A structured dialogue guided by a neutral and impartial third party, is in part determined by power differentials among participants. Equality may not be achievable, but respect for all participants is required.

### **Participants must demonstrate:**

- **Capacity (self-determination)**- the ability to speak on one’s own behalf and to listen to others’ points of view
- **Authority**- knowledge of the range of roles and decision-making power among members of the group
- **Good Faith**- the intention to negotiate, to respect the other parties, to make bona fide proposals, and to consider others’ proposals

~ Common Ground Negotiation Services ~

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