



Stakeholder brainstorming workshop

A facilitated idea-generating and problem-solving workshop focused on making conceptual breakthroughs that will lead to new initiatives with lasting benefit.

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Client type: Stakeholder group or convening institution.

Challenge facing the client: When a country's stakeholders confront a complex interdependent problem such as development of new housing policies and programs, traditional forms of interaction sometimes have the effect of driving parties away from rather than

toward consensus. Ideas offered may be seen as concessions rather than contributions, sparking not collaboration but intransigence. The parties may be locked into localized thinking that lacks access to illuminating experience (good or bad) from other countries, and they may be unaware of intriguing ideas that could be imported, adapted, or simply used as a springboard for new synergistic forms.

What AHI delivers: a stimulating, thought-provoking, and constructively intense experience

A workshop (or brainstorming session, as it is sometimes called) is an apparently paradoxical exercise in structured chaos, or directed play; even as the stakeholders are encouraged to be freewheeling and imaginative, the event must be structured and facilitated to channel this creative energy. Workshop conception and facilitation includes:

1. *Initial client conference and goal specification.* A workshop is a living human laboratory to invent ideas and conceive solutions. Goals must be set first before invitations are sent.
2. *Agenda and briefing material development.* Materials must be focused, helpful, non-judgmental, non-directive, but pointed and provocative, to stimulate thinking rather than harden positions.
3. *Facilitation of the workshop:* set expectations and ground rules, energize participants, elicit and encourage development of promising ideas, capture the group's insights, coordinate the timing, and manage the event to a successful resolution. Facilitation is a knack that yields smiling, thinking, active participants.
4. *Full post-workshop documentation* that records the workshop's learning, insights, ideas, tensions, points of consensus, recommendations, and action items.
5. *Post-workshop followthrough* as directed by the convening client.

David Smith of AHI has a proven track record of facilitating powerful idea-generating workshops of stakeholders from countries as diverse as the UK, Ireland, South Africa, Kenya, and numerous US national and state contexts. These have led directly to legislation conceived, proposed and (in the US) successfully enacted.

What AHI does and how AHI works with the client's team

Normally AHI is engaged by the convening body -- government, a trade association, a broad-based stakeholder group, or a donor. From the beginning, AHI works closely with the convener to develop goals, appropriate size and mix of participants, invitations, and marketing/ solicitation materials to recruit the right people for the right interval of time. A typical work plan includes:

1. The client specifies the goal and lays out capacity parameters (how many days, how many people, how soon to be conducted) for the workshop.
2. Working with the client, AHI develops materials that the client uses to invite participants. AHI also provides the agenda and briefing materials.
3. AHI travels to host country to facilitate the workshop and capture its ideas and recommendations.
4. After the workshop, AHI provides post-workshop documentation and followthrough as directed.

How AHI's work is used; followup activities

- Workshops that succeed produce ideas people want to implement.
- AHI is always keen to advance from concepts into action, in the form of legislative or financial proposals and programs.