

HANDOUT 3.1 — DEFINITIONS

Process

Process is the structure, framework, methods, and tools used in all interactions between people. A process may include formal interactions, such as meetings and professional communications, and informal interactions, such as personal communications. The term “process” also refers to the climate or spirit established in a meeting, often associated with the facilitator’s style.

Content

Content is the topics or issues addressed during a meeting. Content includes the task, the decision made, or the issue that is explored and resolved.

meeting. Often, organizes the expert.”

Leader

The leader is the person who serves as the head of a team in a meeting. The leader is the person who calls for the meeting, determines and sets the meeting’s goals and objectives. The leader is often a “content expert.” Typically, the leader is the person who plans the meeting, sets the direction, and establishes accountability.

Facilitator

The facilitator is the person who contributes structure and process to interactions, so groups are able to function effectively and make high-quality decisions. The facilitator is usually viewed as a helper and an enabler – someone whose role is to support others (through the process design and delivery) as they work to achieve their goals related to the content. The facilitator moves the meeting along and keeps the process and people focused.

Facilitating Leader

MPA leaders and MPA managers may often find themselves in a dual role of facilitator and team/group leader in meetings they organize and/or attend. In this case, it is important to find the right balance between these roles that is appropriate for the situation or topic under consideration. MPA leaders and MPA managers may find they are not (or are perceived as not) “neutral” on the meeting’s content/issues. In those circumstances, following the facilitation guidelines emphasized in this workshop can promote effectiveness in meetings and ensure progress toward achieving the group’s goals and objectives.

Recorder

The role of recorder is a particularly important one. The recorder is the person who writes down and reports on the process, decisions, action taken (or to be taken), and the outcomes of a meeting. The recorder also often is responsible for reporting to the group about subsequent implementation of any action plan steps that were agreed to at the meeting.

Participants

The participants are the people who attend and interact with each other during a meeting. The participants provide input into the process, engage in discussion, and provide feedback on the topics of the meeting (the content). Participants may also contribute to the design and structure of the meeting (the process). For example, a good facilitator will often ask participants if the meeting is structured and being run in a way that will allow the issue to be addressed and resolved in a satisfactory manner.

Process Observer

The process observer provides feedback to the facilitator and the team leader on the process of the meeting. The process observer helps to “fine tune” the process by observing the interactions of participants and their level of engagement. The

process observer is concerned with the pace of the meeting, the level of participation by all members, the roles of the various participants, and whether the tools used to support decision-making are appropriate.