

Designing a multi-stakeholder process is as much a conflict skill as facilitating one. These exercises develop your capacity to think through who needs to be in the room, how the process should be structured, and what can go wrong — before you begin.

EXERCISE 1 — The Stakeholder Map

Skill: Mapping who needs to be involved and how

Time: 30 minutes · Frequency: Before any multi-stakeholder process

What to do

For a real or hypothetical conflict situation, draw a stakeholder map with four categories:

Primary parties: Who is directly in the conflict? Whose agreement is essential?

Secondary stakeholders: Who is affected but not at the center? Whose buy-in matters for implementation?

Spoilers: Who has the interest or capacity to undermine any agreement? How might they do it?

Missing voices: Whose perspective is systematically absent — and what would change if they were included?

Reflection questions

- Who are you most tempted to leave out — and why?
- Where is the greatest power asymmetry among the stakeholders?
- What would change about the process design if you took the missing voices seriously?

EXERCISE 2 — The Failure Mode Analysis

Skill: Anticipating what can go wrong before it does

Time: 20 minutes · Frequency: Before any facilitation engagement

What to do

For a process you are about to design or facilitate, write down the five most likely ways it could fail.

Be specific — not 'it might not work' but 'the most powerful stakeholder will dominate the conversation' or 'the community representatives will not feel their concerns were taken seriously.'

For each failure mode, write one specific design decision that would reduce its likelihood.

Reflection questions

- Which failure mode are you most likely to overlook because it feels uncomfortable to name?
- Which design decisions address multiple failure modes at once?
- What does this analysis reveal about where your process needs the most attention?

EXERCISE 3 — The Process Design Challenge

Skill: Designing a process structure for a specific conflict situation

Time: 45 minutes · Frequency: Before any facilitation engagement

What to do

Choose a real or hypothetical multi-stakeholder conflict. Design a process to address it by answering:

1. Purpose: What is this process trying to achieve — information sharing, consultation, co-design, or decision?
2. Sequence: What needs to happen before the main meeting? What conversations, consultations, or trust-building activities?
3. Structure: How will the meeting itself be organized? What methods will you use to ensure all voices are heard?
4. Power: What specific steps will you take to manage power dynamics and prevent dominant voices from crowding out others?
5. Follow-through: How will you ensure implementation? Who monitors? Who is accountable?

Reflection questions

- Where is your process design weakest?
- What are you most likely to skip or underinvest in?
- What would a participant from the least powerful group think of this design?

EXERCISE 4 — The Post-Process Review

Skill: Learning systematically from every process you facilitate

Time: 30 minutes · Frequency: Within 48 hours of any facilitation

What to do

Within 48 hours of facilitating a multi-stakeholder process, write honest answers to:

1. Did the process achieve its stated purpose? If not, why not?
2. Whose voice was most present — and whose was least? What produced that imbalance?
3. What did you do well as a facilitator? Be specific.
4. What did you do that made it harder than it needed to be?
5. What will you do differently in the next process?

Reflection questions

- What pattern do you notice across multiple post-process reviews?
- Where does your facilitation consistently fall short?
- What kind of support — supervision, peer review, coaching — would help you develop most?

For process design support and facilitation coaching, contact diazprinzh@conflictmanagementspace.com