

# ***Comprehensive Social Change through Community Engagement, Deliberative Decision-Making, and Leadership training***

If your community or organization is concerned about some issues and would like to learn some new methods of responding to them then you may be interested in learning and experiencing this program and methods.

*Too often we are frustrated in our efforts to move forward on crucial issues ( local issues such as affordable housing, crime or land use, or global issues such as climate change, peace efforts and poverty) because they require us to make collective decisions – a task for which we are ill-prepared. Often important public decisions become mired in controversy and deep divisiveness, or are made by others on the public's behalf, seemingly behind closed doors. Some topics have so many interconnected layers it is hard to know where to start. Obviously, a new approach is needed. This experiential course will focus on understanding the dynamics of public interactions which lead to decision-making and methods for effective response. This workshop would be of interest to formal and informal community leaders, non profit organizations, facilitators, concerned citizens, and policy makers who are part of the growing movement towards deliberative democracy. It is part of an in-depth [Community Coaches Training Program](#). The topics that are covered include:*

## **1. Why is social change work so hard?**

To set the context for the rest of this program we will explore common experiences of hard working well intentioned citizens, organizations and funders when attempting to impact local or national issues like homelessness, poverty, crime and global issues like climate change, analyzing strategies and responses.

## **2. Why is it hard to make good public decisions?**

We will take a brief look at:

- The common ways we meet and talk publicly and how these impact our efforts and create a challenge for collective decision-making.
- The history of governance models and what democracy requires of citizens and leaders
- A look at some underlying assumptions: e.g. "that the public cannot be trusted to make good decisions," or "that the government is shutting the public out".

## **3. What are the ingredients of a 'good' public decision?**

We will analyze several common aspects required in responding to complex issues to see what promotes moving through the progressive stages from the initial defining of a problematic situation to a broad community response. We will identify why differing amounts of time, commitment, structure, and preplanning are required for the public engagement process depending on the outcome we are wanting from the interaction.

## **4. Seeing the issue in context, discovering it's root causes**

Working from a real case study we will:

- learn to see the whole systems map of the issue in it's context
- understand what are the visible 'tips of the iceberg' and what are the root causes
- see the difference between a complex issue and a simple one, and how that impacts how we respond to an issue
- identifying the behaviors and values of individuals and institutions associated with the issue
- see the history of how we build and maintain a problematic issue

## **5. Getting the Issue Manageable**

Big problematic topics can hide many important sub issues. By identifying these, we can define what it is we are really trying to deal with otherwise we talk past each other. We will look at some of the pitfalls: advocating an "either /or solution", wishful thinking, being too abstract and general, leaving the issue 'out there' for others to deal with and the tendency to advocate solutions without really having agreed on the concern or question.

## **6. Many actions are needed, done by many actors**

After seeing the multiple old layers and facets that underlie our case study issue, we are then in a position to create multiple new actions for responding to the problems. A variety of comprehensive responses including individual actions, publicly supported policies, and broader community deliberation are needed, some short term some long term, to really impact deep-seated problematic issues.

## **7. Framing: seeing the issue through several viewpoints**

Different people have different valid perspectives of what makes a good solution to an issue based on their life experiences, beliefs, and values. If we do not validate and give space for these different viewpoints and work with them instead of against them, we risk having efforts sabotaged and cannot move towards comprehensive action plans. By continuing to work with our case study we will learn how to frame an issue from several different viewpoints using a template, and then develop a range of diverse options or approaches to resolving the issue.

## **8. Deliberating the Options, Arriving at Decisions**

To be effective comprehensive and sustainable, collective decision-making requires sorting of meaning, weighing out of implications, trade offs, costs and consequences of the choices. This deep consideration helps people 'own' and sustain the decisions and less likely to sabotage actions later. Using the frames of different perspectives, we will practice deliberation about our case issue, and see how it can improve capacity for community engagement, informed decision making and implementation of action.

## **9. Review**

Throughout the course there will be time for reflecting on what we set out to do, what we learned, what has changed, what questions or reactions have arisen and what we could do better next time.

*This checklist has been developed by Jan Inglis of the Integrative Learning Institute and combines the fields of adult development, behavioral sciences, complexity theory, action inquiry and deliberative democracy. It incorporates theory and research of Sara Ross, Bill Torbert, Michael Commons, Paul Yankelovich and others.*