

# Community Capacity Building For Community Engagement, Decision Making and Leadership

*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, terrorism and poverty because they require us to make collective decisions – a task for which we are ill-prepared. Often important public decisions become overloaded with controversy and deep divisiveness, or are made by others on the public's behalf behind closed doors. This course will focus on understanding the dynamics of public engagement in decision making and methods for effective input from formal and informal community leadership. It is part of an in-depth [Cultural Coaches Training Program](#). The topics that are covered include:*

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

We will take a brief look at:

- the fear or avoidance of engaging the public which often occurs based on assumptions that the public cannot be trusted to make good decisions.
- the history of governance models and what democracy requires of citizens and leaders
- the ways we meet and talk publicly and how this creates a challenge for collective decision making.

## **2. What are the ingredients of a good decision?**

We will analyze several common aspects of responding to issues to see what promotes moving through the developmental stages from identifying a problematic situation to a broad community response.

## **3. Seeing the whole picture.**

Working from a real case study we will:

- learn to see the whole systems map of issues in context,
- understand what are the tips of the iceberg and what are the root causes,
- see the difference between a complex issue and a simple one,
- see the history of how we build and maintain a problematic issue.

## **4. Complex issues require complex responses.**

After seeing the multiple old layers and facets that underlie our case study issues, we are then in a position to create multiple new actions for responding to it. A variety of comprehensive responses including individual actions, policy changes and broader community deliberation are needed to really impact deep seated problematic issues.

## **5 Getting Specific**

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 of wishful thinking, bafflegab of abstract concepts , and the tendency to advocate solutions without really having identified the question.

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

Different people have different assumptions of what makes a good solution to an issue based on their life experiences, beliefs and values. By continuing to work with our case study we will learn how to frame an issue from several different perspectives and then develop a range of diverse options or approaches to resolving the issue.

### **7. Deliberating the Options**

To be effective collective decision making requires sorting of meaning, weighing out of implications, anticipating and coming to terms with trade offs and consequences of our choices. Using the frames of different perspectives, we will practice deliberation and see how it can improve capacity for community engagement and decision making.

### **8. Review**

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

*This program is based on The Integral Process for Working on Complex Issues (TIP) researched and developed by Dr. Sara Ross. It integrates the following theoretical frameworks: complexity theory, adult development, deliberative democracy, and integral theory.*