

# **MODULE 7**

## **Facilitating Problem- Solving and Decision- Making**



## TRAINING NOTES

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### *What you need to know*

1. It will take approximately 1½ hours to complete the following topics in this module.

<b>TOPIC</b>
Module Overview
The Creative Process
Tools and Techniques
Exercise: Dotmocracy
Decision-Making Methods
Choosing the Best Decision-Making Method
Exercise: How Would You Make the Decision?
Module 7 Key Points
Exercise: Reflection

2. The equipment and supplies you will need for this module are listed below:

- Computer projection system and screen
- PowerPoint slides 7-1 through 7-10
- Small size Post-It™ notes
- Avery Dots™—five per participant for use in the Dotmocracy exercise
- Flipchart easels with pads of paper
- Colored markers
- Masking tape
- Facilitator Guide
- Participant Guides.

## TRAINING NOTES

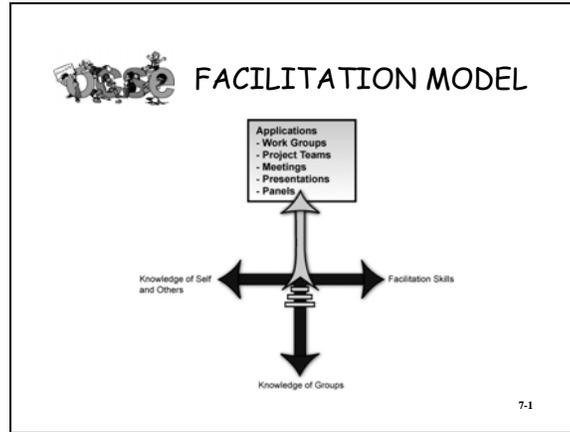
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### *What you need to say/do*

#### MODULE OVERVIEW

1. Tell the participants that so far in the workshop we have focused on the skills and knowledge that help them become more effective facilitators.
2. Show slide 7-1, **Facilitation Model**. Explain that these skills and knowledge can be applied to a variety of situations. This module will introduce them to a number of tools and techniques that can help them when they are in situations that require problem-solving and decision-making—such as work groups and project teams. Tell them that the next module will provide information on other facilitation situations.
3. Tell them that the learning goal for Module 7 is to identify the tools and techniques that encourage groups to be more creative when they are charged with solving today's complex problems and making decisions.
4. Show slide 7-2, **Module 7 Objectives**. Review the objectives.
  - Through brief demonstrations, you will examine a set of problem-solving tools and techniques.
  - After a lecture, you will identify three methods for making decisions.
  - Through a small group activity, you will apply guidelines to choose the appropriate decision-making method.
5. Show slide 7-3, **Einstein Quote**. Read the quotation aloud to the participants. Ask the participants to turn to the person sitting to their right and take 2 minutes to discuss how the quote relates to their role as facilitators.
6. After the discussion, have several volunteers share how they think Einstein's quote applies to them as facilitators.
7. Point out that in order for some groups to meet their desired outcomes, they must become more creative in the way they approach solving problems and making decisions. They can help groups achieve the desired outcomes by engaging them in the creative process.

## MODULE 7: FACILITATING PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING



### Learning Goal

The learning goal is to identify the tools and techniques that encourage creativity and help groups to achieve problem-solving and decision-making outcomes. You will use these tools and techniques along with your facilitation skills to work with groups which are charged with solving problems and making decisions.

The slide, titled "MODULE 7 OBJECTIVES", lists three bullet points:
 

- Examine a set of problem-solving tools and techniques
- Identify three methods for making decisions
- Apply guidelines to choose the appropriate decision-making method

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### Learning Objectives

- Through demonstrations, you will examine a set of problem-solving tools and techniques.
- After a brief lecture, you will identify the three methods for making decisions.
- Through a small group activity, you will apply guidelines to choose the appropriate decision-making method.

(Participant Guide 7-1)

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## MODULE 7: FACILITATING PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING, CONTINUED



### EINSTEIN QUOTE

"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

—Albert Einstein

7-3

*(Participant Guide 7-2)*

## TRAINING NOTES

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### *What you need to say/do*

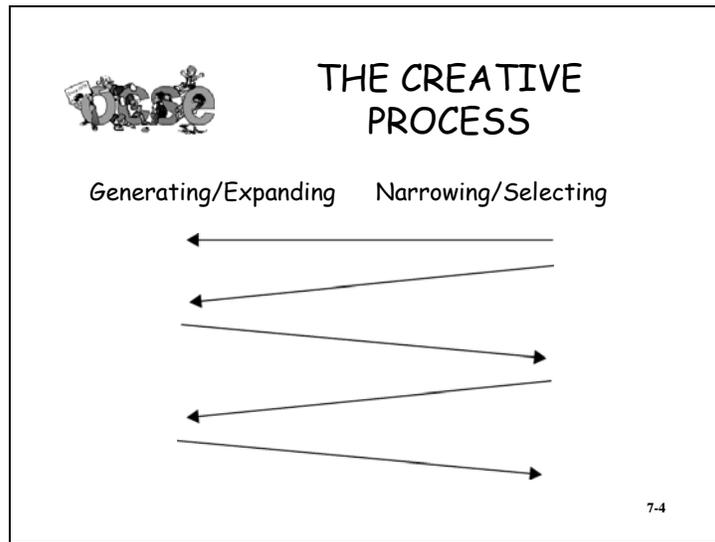
#### THE CREATIVE PROCESS

1. Show slide 7-4, **The Creative Process**. Tell the participants that the creative process involves alternating between two types of thinking.
  - The first type of thinking helps us to generate and expand on ideas or data.
  - The second type of thinking helps us to narrow the list.
2. Explain that by repeatedly alternating between the two types of thinking, we can ultimately prioritize and select items.
3. State that there are simple yet powerful tools that help move a group through this creative process.
4. Explain that we will look at three tools that are particularly helpful when groups are charged with solving problems and making decisions.

#### TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

1. Show slide 7-5, **Tools & Techniques: Brainstorming**. Tell the participants that brainstorming is a simple tool that is used to generate ideas and expand options for a group to consider. It is one of the most, if not the most, frequently used facilitation tools. Use this tool when:
  - Many ideas are needed in a short period of time
  - Group input is important
  - Ideas/data need to be generated prior to using other tools.
2. Refer participants to page 7-4 in their Participant Guides. Ask them to take a few minutes to read the information on brainstorming.

## THE CREATIVE PROCESS

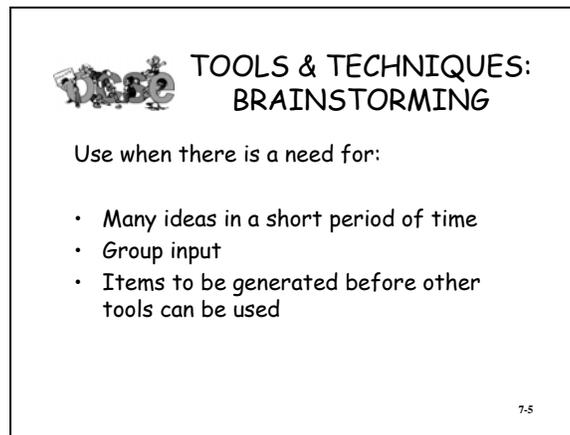


The creative process involves alternating between two types of thinking: generating/expanding and narrowing/selecting.

*(Participant Guide 7-3)*

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## TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES: BRAINSTORMING



The key to successful brainstorming is to create a nonjudgmental environment where all ideas are valued. Successful brainstorming involves the following steps:

1. Explain the purpose of the brainstorming session. Identify the issue to be addressed or the problem to be discussed.
2. Use a flipchart and, if possible, ask another person to be the recorder. If you anticipate a lot of ideas/data will be generated, consider setting up several flipcharts and having several recorders.
3. Write the issue or problem on a flipchart page or white board so that everyone can see it.
4. Review the ground rules for brainstorming:
  - Specify how much time will be allotted for brainstorming.
  - The goal is to go for quantity, not quality, of ideas at this stage.
  - Let the ideas flow; don't hold back. Sometimes the crazier the ideas sound, the better.
  - Do not evaluate, make judgments about, or criticize what someone says.
  - It's okay to ask questions to clarify, but not to debate, the idea.
5. Conduct the brainstorming session by having each person offer one idea at a time. Any person who is out of ideas may pass.
6. Record the idea using the person's words. As each flipchart page is filled up, post it so that all pages are visible.
7. When the time limit has been reached, stop brainstorming.
8. Review the flipchart and combine ideas that are similar.

*(Participant Guide 7-4)*

## TRAINING NOTES

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### *What you need to say/do*

#### TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES, CONTINUED

3. Explain that you will use a “fun” topic to demonstrate how to facilitate a brainstorming session. Tell them that they will brainstorm ideas about why people are late for work.

(Note: If there are experienced facilitators in the group, consider asking one of them to demonstrate facilitating this brainstorming session.)

4. Write “Why are people late for work?” on the flipchart.
5. Review the ground rules and explain that the brainstorming session will last 5 minutes or until the group runs out of ideas.
6. Conduct the brainstorming session.
7. Show slide 7-6, **Tools & Techniques: Nominal Group Technique**. Tell the participants that the nominal group technique is related to brainstorming. Use this tool when you want to:
  - Ensure involvement from everyone, especially if there are those who are uncomfortable or reluctant to express themselves.
  - Communicate the expectation that there will be equal participation. This is particularly important when a “boss” is part of the group.
8. Explain that you will not demonstrate this tool but would like them to read the information on page 7-5 in their Participant Guides. Ask them to take a few minutes to read the information on how the nominal group technique works.

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### *What you need to know*

1. The brainstorming demonstration should take approximately 5 to 7 minutes. Save the flipchart pages for the Dotmocracy activity.

## TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES: THE NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE



### TOOLS & TECHNIQUES: NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE

Use when you want to:

- Ensure everyone's involvement
- Set expectation for equal participation

7-6

The nominal group technique is related to brainstorming. This method ensures involvement from all of the members of a group or team, especially if they are reluctant or uncomfortable about expressing themselves. The technique is an effective way to get people thinking about a situation and communicates the expectation that everyone will participate. It also prevents everyone from talking at the same time. The technique involves the following steps:

1. Identify the topic, issue, or problem to be addressed.
2. Have participants write down their ideas about the topic without consulting other participants. You can direct them either to write down a specific number of ideas or to list as many as they can think of at a time.
3. Go around the room in order and ask each participant to give one idea.
4. Each person must share an idea unless someone else has already given it. In that case, the participant would pass.
5. Record the ideas on the flipchart as they are given.
6. Allow no discussion or debate of the ideas at this point.
7. Continue in a round-robin manner until all ideas have been given.
8. Once all the participants have given their ideas, either stop the process (if no more information is needed) or open it up for more discussion by using brainstorming.

A variation of this technique is to have participants write ideas on Post-It™ notes, place them on the flipchart, and explain their ideas to the rest of the group. This encourages participant movement and the facilitator does not need to act as a recorder.

*(Participant Guide 7-5)*

## TRAINING NOTES

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### *What you need to say/do*

#### TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES, CONTINUED

9. Tell the participants that once groups have used brainstorming and/or the nominal group technique to generate and expand ideas, they are now ready to move on to the second step in the creative process.
10. Show slide 7-7, **Tools & Techniques: Multivoting**. Tell the participants that multivoting is a method for narrowing a list of ideas or options that a group has generated and can be used to prioritize and select from those options. Multivoting uses a point system in which participants allocate their points (votes) to one or more of the ideas that have been generated.
11. Refer participants to page 7-6 in their Participant Guides. Tell them to take 1 minute to read the information on multivoting; then they will practice multivoting in an exercise called “Dotmocracy.”

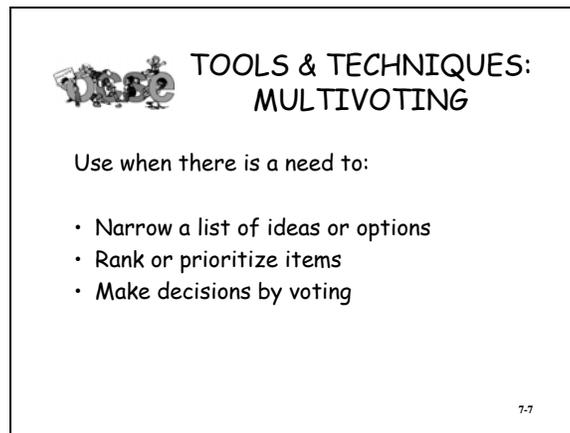
#### EXERCISE: DOTMOCRACY

1. Distribute five Avery Dots to each participant.
  2. Refer to the posted flipchart pages of brainstormed ideas on why people are late for work. Tell the participants that in a moment they will vote for the top five reasons why people are late for work. They will do this by placing their Avery Dots next to the idea or ideas on the flipchart pages.
  3. Remind them that each dot represents one vote. They may place all five Avery Dots next to one item or distribute the dots among several ideas.
  4. Have the participants come up to the flipcharts and vote.
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### *What you need to know*

1. The Dotmocracy exercise will take approximately 5 to 10 minutes. It is intended to be a fun and energizing activity. Don't allow people to come up to the flipchart one at a time to vote. Encourage people to come up at the same time—a little bit of chaos helps a group to “lighten up.”

## TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES: MULTIVOTING



1. Start with the list of brainstormed ideas that the group has generated. If need be, clarify each item and eliminate duplicates.
2. Have the group decide on the number of points to be allocated to one or more of the ideas. For example, if the list is very long, you might want to use a 7-point system. If the list is shorter, a 5-point system may be sufficient.
3. Have each person allocate his/her points to one or more of the ideas or items. A person can give all his/her points to a single item or split them up.
4. Have each person call out his/her vote (points) and record the votes on the flipchart next to the item(s).
5. Tally the votes (points) for each item.
6. Circle the items with the most votes.

### Variations of Multivoting

- **Avery Dots.** Use colored Avery Dots™. These are circular, self-adhesive stickers that can be purchased in most office supply stores. Each dot represents a point or vote. For example, if you decide on a 5-point allocation, each person would receive five Avery Dots. Each person places the representative number of dots next to the item(s) on the flipchart. Continue with Step 5.
- **N/3.** Take the total number of items on the flipchart and divide by three. Each person then has that number of votes to spend on the items he or she thinks are most important. This process can be repeated until the list is reduced to an appropriate number of items.

*(Participant Guide 7-6)*

## TRAINING NOTES

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### *What you need to say/do*

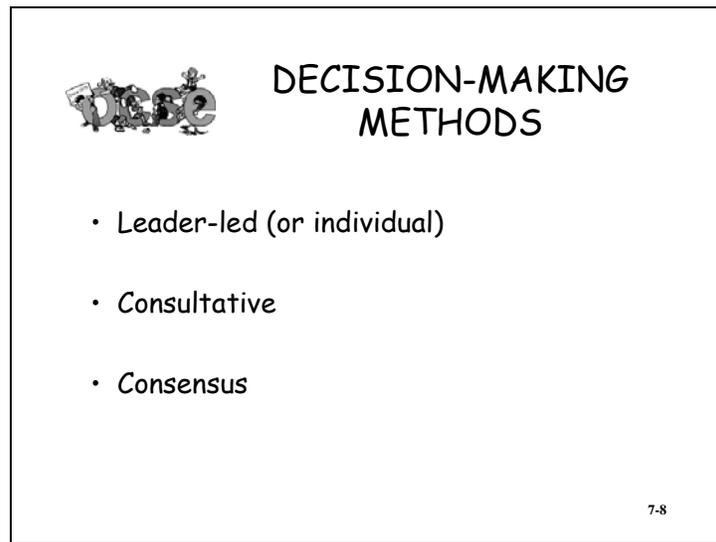
#### **EXERCISE: DOTMOCRACY, CONTINUED**

5. After everyone has voted, tally the votes for each idea. Then circle the five items that have the most votes. Explain that the group could continue to multivote until only one option remained.
6. Ask participants for their reactions to multivoting. Emphasize that it is a great way to energize a group while getting important work done.
7. Remind participants that multivoting is an important part of the creative process and a fun technique that allows a group to rank or prioritize items and make decisions by voting.
8. Tell the participants that the next part of the module will examine three other methods for making decisions.

#### **DECISION-MAKING METHODS**

1. Show slide 7-8, **Decision-Making Methods**. Tell the participants that in a group or team environment, there are several different options for making decisions. The three methods you will discuss are:
  - Leader-led (or individual);
  - Consultative; and
  - Consensus.
2. Explain that while team decisions can be of higher quality than individual decisions, competent decisions do not always require the efforts of an entire team. Also, each method has its share of advantages and disadvantages.
3. Refer participants to pages 7-8 through 7-10 in their Participant Guides. Ask them to read the information provided on the three decision-making methods and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

## DECISION-MAKING METHODS



In a group or team environment, there are several different options for making decisions. Three common methods are:

- Leader-led (or individual);
- Consultative; and
- Consensus.

While team decisions can be of higher quality than individual decisions, competent decisions do not always require the efforts of an entire team. Also, each method has its share of advantages and disadvantages.

*(Participant Guide 7-7)*

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## DECISION-MAKING METHODS: LEADER-LED

### Advantages

- Is fast and efficient
- Doesn't need to spend time involving others

### Disadvantages

- Doesn't tap group knowledge, experience, and creativity
- Doesn't build acceptance or "buy-in"
- May create resentment, low morale, or reduced team effectiveness
- May result in poor, relatively "uninformed" decisions

### Appropriate Situations

- Minor or routine decisions
- Emergency situations
- When a leader has all the necessary information and "buy-in" is not a concern

*(Participant Guide 7-8)*

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## DECISION-MAKING METHODS: CONSULTATIVE

A leader gets input from individuals or the group before making a decision. This can come in the form of information, suggestions, or advice. It is important to remember that even though the leader is collecting information from other individuals, he or she ***retains the responsibility*** for making the final decision.

### Advantages

- Taps others' knowledge, experience, and creativity
- Gains some of the benefits of team discussion
- May result in better, more informed decisions

### Disadvantages

- Requires more time and resources than the leader-led method
- May not build acceptance or “buy-in” for implementing a decision
- Does not allow for the resolution of conflict or controversies among team members
- May result in power struggles among subordinates or group members as they vie to influence the leader

*(Participant Guide 7-9)*

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## DECISION-MAKING METHODS: CONSENSUS

This is purely a group (or team) decision-making method. It typically involves three features:

- Each group member participates in discussing the issue
- The group mutually decides what to do
- The final decision must be one that everyone can accept and support; every member must consent before the decision is adopted.

### Advantages

- Synergy—tapping into others' knowledge, experience, and creativity, which results in higher quality decisions
- Maximized interaction
- Discussion and challenge of all ideas
- Less emphasis on assumptions and more emphasis on fact
- Opportunity to resolve conflicts
- Strong acceptance and support for decisions, which promote commitment to implement
- Enhancement of future decision-making ability of the team
- Opportunity to build and strengthen the team; trust

### Disadvantages

- Time consuming
- May require a great deal of skill and psychological energy
- Sometimes impossible to get everyone to agree
- Leader may lack communication and facilitation skills needed to steer the group toward consensus

*(Participant Guide 7-10)*

## TRAINING NOTES

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### *What you need to say/do*

#### **CHOOSING THE BEST DECISION-MAKING METHOD**

1. Show slide 7-9, **Choosing the Best Decision-Making Method**. Tell participants that quality, information, time, and acceptance are factors that need to be considered when deciding which of the decision-making methods to use. It is helpful to ask a series of diagnostic questions. The answers to these questions will indicate which method should be used. These questions are:
  - How important is the decision?
  - Does the leader have enough information?
  - Is it clear what information is needed and where to get it?
  - Is time a constraint?
  - How likely are other people in the group or organization to accept the decision?
  - How likely is conflict over possible solutions?
2. Refer participants to page 7-12 in their Participant Guides. Tell them that the factors and related questions serve as guidelines to help them to choose the best decision-making method.
3. Tell the participants that the next exercise will give them an opportunity to apply the guidelines to decision-making situations described in three case studies.

## CHOOSING THE BEST DECISION-MAKING METHOD



### CHOOSING THE BEST DECISION-MAKING METHOD

- How important is the decision?
- Is there enough information?
- What information is needed and do you know where to get it?
- How much time is available?
- Will group/organization accept decision?
- How likely is conflict over solutions?

7-9

*(Participant Guide 7-11)*

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## CHOOSING THE BEST DECISION-MAKING METHOD

FACTOR	QUESTION TO ASK	METHOD TO CONSIDER
Importance of decision	Is a high quality decision essential?	Y: consensus N: leader-led, consultative
Leader's information and expertise	Does the leader have enough information to make a high quality decision?	Y: leader-led N: consultative, consensus
Information needed	Is it clear what information is needed and where to get it?	Y: leader-led, consultative N: consensus
Time constraints	Is enough time available?	Y: consensus, consultative N: leader-led
Importance of acceptance by people in group or organization	Is acceptance by all members of the group or organization critical?	Y: consensus, consultative N: leader-led
Likelihood the group will accept leader's decision enthusiastically	If leader makes the decision, are other groups members likely to accept it enthusiastically?	Y: leader-led N: consensus, consultative
Likelihood of conflict	Are group members likely to favor conflicting solutions?	Y: consensus N: leader-led, consultative

*(Participant Guide 7-12)*

## TRAINING NOTES

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### *What you need to say/do*

#### **EXERCISE: HOW WOULD YOU MAKE THE DECISION?**

1. Refer participants to page 7-13 in their Participant Guides. Ask them to read the instructions. Answer any questions they may have about the exercise.
2. Have participants form two groups of four to six persons each.
3. Assign one group case study #1 and the other group case study #2. Explain that each group is to read all cases, but only complete the case assigned to their group. Tell them they will need to choose a spokesperson to report out the answer for their case study and their rationale.
4. Tell them that if there is time, both groups will complete case study #3.
5. Tell the participants to use the guidelines on Choosing the Best Decision-Making Method on page 7-12 in their Participant Guides.
6. Tell the participants they have 10 minutes to work in their groups to complete the exercise.
7. After 10 minutes, ask the spokesperson for Case 1 to share the group's answer and the rationale. Provide the recommended answer and facilitate a large group discussion of why that method was chosen.
8. Repeat the process for Case 2. Complete Case 3, if time permits.
9. Reiterate that the answers provided are recommendations. The guidelines they use to choose the most appropriate decision-making method are just that—guidelines and not hard-and-fast rules. Ultimately, participants must exercise their best judgment in each situation.

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### *What you need to know*

1. The exercise on choosing the best decision-making method takes approximately 20 minutes. Allow 10 minutes for small group work and 10 minutes for the spokespersons to share their answers and rationale and for large group discussions.
2. The recommended answer and rationale for each case study are located in the appendix to this module. Link the answers to the specific decision-making method.

**EXERCISE: HOW WOULD YOU MAKE THE DECISION?**Instructions:

1. Silently read your assigned case. Read the other cases so that you are familiar with them.
2. Circle the choice you think represents the best way to make the decision for the situation described in your assigned case.
3. Share your choice with your group. Then decide as a group which method is the preferred one and why. Refer to “Choosing the Best Decision-Making Method” on page 7-12 to help you reach a decision.
4. Choose a spokesperson to report out the group’s selection and rationale.

Cases adapted from a series of decision-making case studies developed by Marshall Sashkin.

*(Participant Guide 7-13)*

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## EXERCISE: HOW WOULD YOU MAKE THE DECISION?, CONTINUED

### CASE 1

You are a director of a large child support enforcement agency. Your agency has done well under your leadership and your four managers hold you in high esteem. You appreciate that, but you know that your success is based mostly on simple hard work and a few good decisions. Lately, you feel that your managers are becoming increasingly dependent upon you and rely too much on your judgment.

Nine months from now, an additional site will be added to the already existing satellite offices so that the agency can better serve its clients. You are to determine the best location for the new site. Your managers will have to support the site in “concrete” ways, not just in attitude. The staff of this new site will come from among the staff of the existing units, and the existing units will provide technical assistance and support, at least for a little while.

You have asked each manager to develop a list of possible locations with information explaining why each location would be good and what problems might be present. To decide where to locate the new site, you will:

- A. Talk to each manager privately, reviewing in particular the locations common to the four lists to get enough information to make your final decision.
- B. Review the lists and reasons; then make a decision.
- C. Call the managers together as a group to review their lists and fully discuss the options before they, as a group, make a final decision.
- D. Go over the set of lists with each manager and get each manager’s best ideas and evaluations; then you will take these into account when making your final decision.
- E. Meet with the managers as a group to share information, review their lists, and get their ideas and suggestions as a group; then you will take this information into account when making your final decision.

*(Participant Guide 7-14)*

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## EXERCISE: HOW WOULD YOU MAKE THE DECISION?, CONTINUED

### CASE 2

You are the project manager of a group that provides technical support for the statewide-automated child support enforcement system. You are responsible for installing additional computers and related hardware to bring people “on line” in five of the agency’s largest units. It is important to have a clear and accurate schedule so that equipment will arrive when it is needed.

You have experience working on similar projects and have the technical and historical data needed to determine the earliest and latest times that the equipment will be needed. So it’s relatively simple to calculate the time at which the equipment needs to be delivered for each of the units.

In preparing the schedule you will:

- A. Use your knowledge and data to set up a plan that will ensure equipment is available when needed and will be there a bit early if, as hoped, the project continues to go a bit ahead of schedule.
- B. Meet with your staff and have them work out a schedule to encourage them to move the project ahead as fast as possible.
- C. Meet with each staff member individually to make sure your information and calculations are correct; then you will go ahead and set up the schedule.
- D. Call the staff together to review the information as a group and check out all the data; then you will go ahead and set up the schedule.
- E. Meet with each supervisor alone to share the problem of developing the schedule and to get their ideas; then you will prepare the final schedule yourself.

*(Participant Guide 7-15)*

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## EXERCISE: HOW WOULD YOU MAKE THE DECISION?, CONTINUED

### **CASE 3**

You have recently assumed the job of managing the technical training provided for those who use the region's automated child support enforcement system. Caseworkers are still experiencing difficulty using the system, and your first task is to oversee the development of a new training program that will increase their technical knowledge and skills. Your agency contracts out the training, and three vendors have submitted proposals for the work. Some of your staff have had experience with the vendors. You will therefore:

- A. Analyze the proposals you have received. Based on your understanding of what needs to be done, what each vendor is proposing, what you know about each vendor, and the proposed costs, you will decide which vendor to use.
- B. Talk to the staff members who have had experience with the vendors you are considering to get as much information as possible. Then you will use this information to make your decision.
- C. Ask each staff member individually for ideas or suggestions on which vendor to choose to develop the training. When you have talked with all of them, you will make your decision.
- D. Meet with the staff as a group to get their ideas and suggestions. Based on this information, you will make your decision.
- E. Meet with the staff as a group to discuss the problem and have the group decide which vendor to go with.

*(Participant Guide 7-16)*

## TRAINING NOTES

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### *What you need to say/do*

#### MODULE 7 KEY POINTS

1. Show slide 7-10, **Module 7 Key Points**. Review the slide.
  - Many groups which are charged with solving problems and making decisions need to be more creative in order to achieve the desired outcomes. This is particularly important when faced with problems that are highly complex and whose solutions will have significant consequences.
  - Effective facilitators use a variety of tools and techniques that involve participants and encourage a group's creativity.
  - In solving problems and making decisions, a leader must consider various factors when choosing the most appropriate decision-making method.

#### EXERCISE: REFLECTION

1. Tell the participants that this final exercise will give them a chance to apply the guidelines for choosing a decision-making method to their own situations.
2. Refer them to page 7-18 in their Participant Guides. Ask them to read the instructions and ask if they have any questions.
3. State that they have 10 minutes to individually complete the exercise. Then you will ask for volunteers to share their information.
4. After 10 minutes, have several volunteers briefly explain the decision to be made and which method they've determined is the most appropriate one and why.
5. Close the module and transition to Module 8, Facilitating With Technology.

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### *What you need to know*

1. The Reflection exercise takes approximately 12 to 15 minutes.
2. Make Post-It notes available for marking pages.

## MODULE 7 KEY POINTS



### MODULE 7 KEY POINTS

- A creative approach is needed to solve today's problems and make decisions
- There are tools and techniques that facilitate the creative process
- There are numerous factors to consider when choosing the best decision-making method

7-10

*(Participant Guide 7-17)*

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