

Facilitating Multi-Dimensional Listening

Helping Groups Identify Common Ground
while Acknowledging Differences

CommonKnowledge



California
STATE LIBRARY

Introduction



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The Changing Role of Libraries

Libraries are serving as community hubs

- Librarians often asked to assume role of facilitator
- Most are “learning by doing”

High level of interest in facilitation training

- Fall 2017 survey; 228 librarians in California responded
- Mix of experienced and beginners

Today is first of two webinars for more experienced facilitators

- Still developing plans for introductory level training

Lead Presenter



Susan Stuart Clark

Founder & Director of Common Knowledge Group (www.ckgroup.org)

- Trainer and consultant on community engagement initiatives; most projects involve libraries and/or local government
- Research Deputy with Kettering Foundation
- Board member National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (nccd.org)
- Recently designed and conducted Libraries Lead the Way community engagement and facilitation skills program

Poll Questions

- **Question #1**

Do you plan to apply these skills for:

- a) internal conversations*
- b) external conversations*
- c) both?*

- **Question #2**

How would you rate your level of facilitation experience?

- 5 = very experienced*
- 1 = complete beginner*

Common situations for basic facilitation

- Lead a group discussion about a book or library program
- Facilitate a discussion with teens or children
- Lead a regular staff meeting
- Conduct an orientation or simple training



Using Multi-Dimensional Listening:

Facilitation that helps a group
come to shared understanding
about a situation

Facilitating Dialogue, not Debate



Debate

Two sides
Winners & losers
Listen to enhance position



Dialogue

Multiple perspectives
Exchange for mutual
understanding
Listen to learn

Featured Librarians



Carolyn Brooks, El Dorado County Library

- Library Services Manager and School/Community Outreach Liaison
- Touchpoints Community Level Trainer
- Community Hubs Operational Manager



Danis Kreimeier, Napa County Library

- Director of Library Services and Community Outreach
- Board Member: NEWS (Napa Emergency Women's Shelter), Napa Women's Club
- Past President of CLA & former PLA Board member

Goal for Today

Help groups “**listen together**” to develop shared understanding:

- Where they agree
- Where they don't

From “ME” to “WE”



Agenda: Facilitating Multi-Dimensional Listening

- I Librarians and Listening: Starting points
- II Defining Multi-Dimensional Listening
- III Stories about Listening: Key Practices
- IV Question and Answer



Librarians & Listening: Starting Points

Librarian Service versus Facilitation

Same

- *Welcoming*
- *Open/neutral*
- *No value judgments*
- *Jointly making sense*

Librarian Service versus Facilitation

Same

- *Welcoming*
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- *No value judgments*
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Different

- *Not just one-on-one*
- *Supporting a whole group*
- *Not being the expert*
- *May not have clear answers*

A “conscious” listener is:



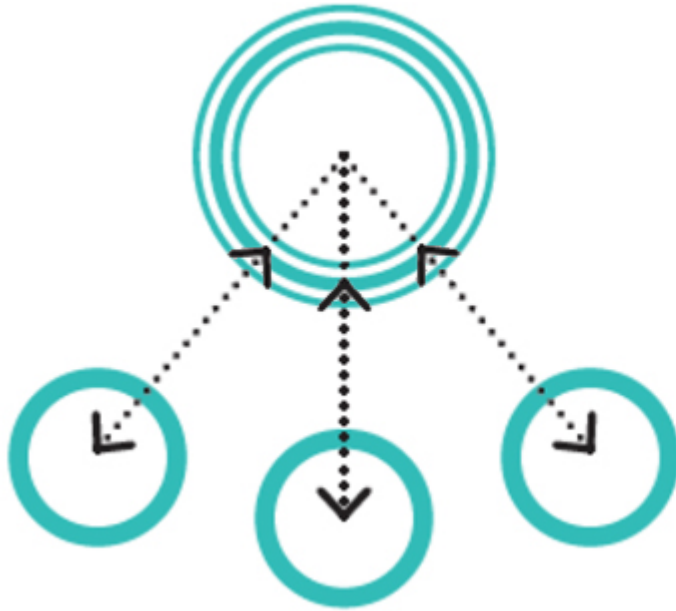
- Neutral and non-judgmental
- Curious and engaged throughout
- Listening to the whole person
- Using “friendly focus”

Role of the Facilitator

- When you are an instructor, the group is learning by listening to you
- When you are a facilitator, the group is learning by listening to each other

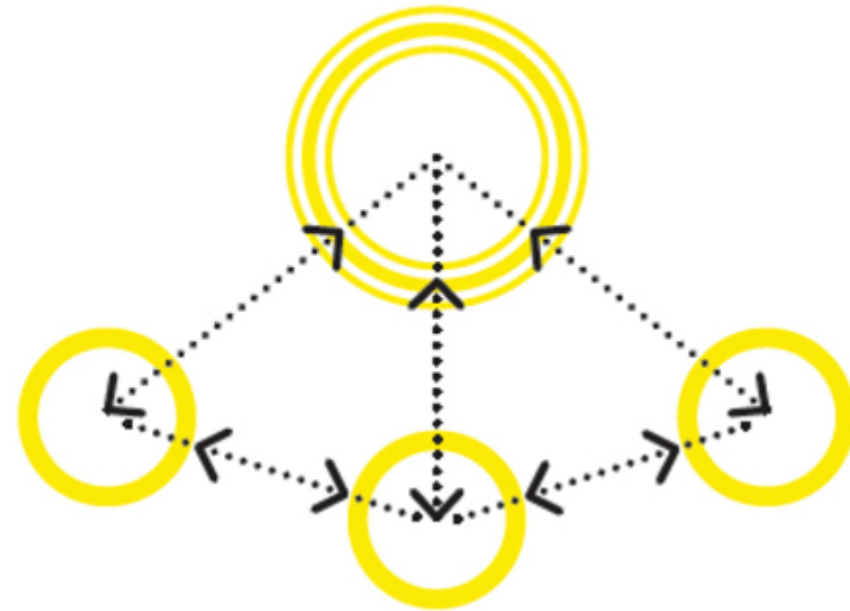


Beginning facilitation



*Facilitator as “chief listener”;
at the center of the group*

More advanced facilitation



*Facilitator helps everyone in
the room listen to each other*

Common misperception: Facilitators “smooth things over”

- The root word “facile” is often translated as “make easy”
- Yet, your role is to help a group do its work, which may not be easy
- Effective facilitation puts people “at ease” when they are being asked to stretch their perspectives





Defining Multi-Dimensional Listening

Three “Channels” of Listening

- Listening to Yourself
- Listening One-on-One
- Listening Together as a Group
 - Making sense of the whole situation together



Key practice: Personal Preparation



- Know thyself!
- Choose a preparation approach that lets you be ready to stay present to what is happening.

Key practice: Help prepare the group to listen

- Establish commitment to dialogue (versus debate)
- Group guidelines that share responsibility for listening
- Icebreaker that sets up practice with conscious listening (e.g., a Think, Pair, Share)



Sample conversation guidelines

- Treat each other with respect
- Listen to learn
- Help make sure everyone has a chance to share
- Assume good intentions
- Your questions are valuable





Listening Stories:

Key Practices

Common Situation #1

- In a staff planning meeting, the group came to some agreements. But in the follow up, it turns out that the consensus was more fragile than it seemed.

What happened?

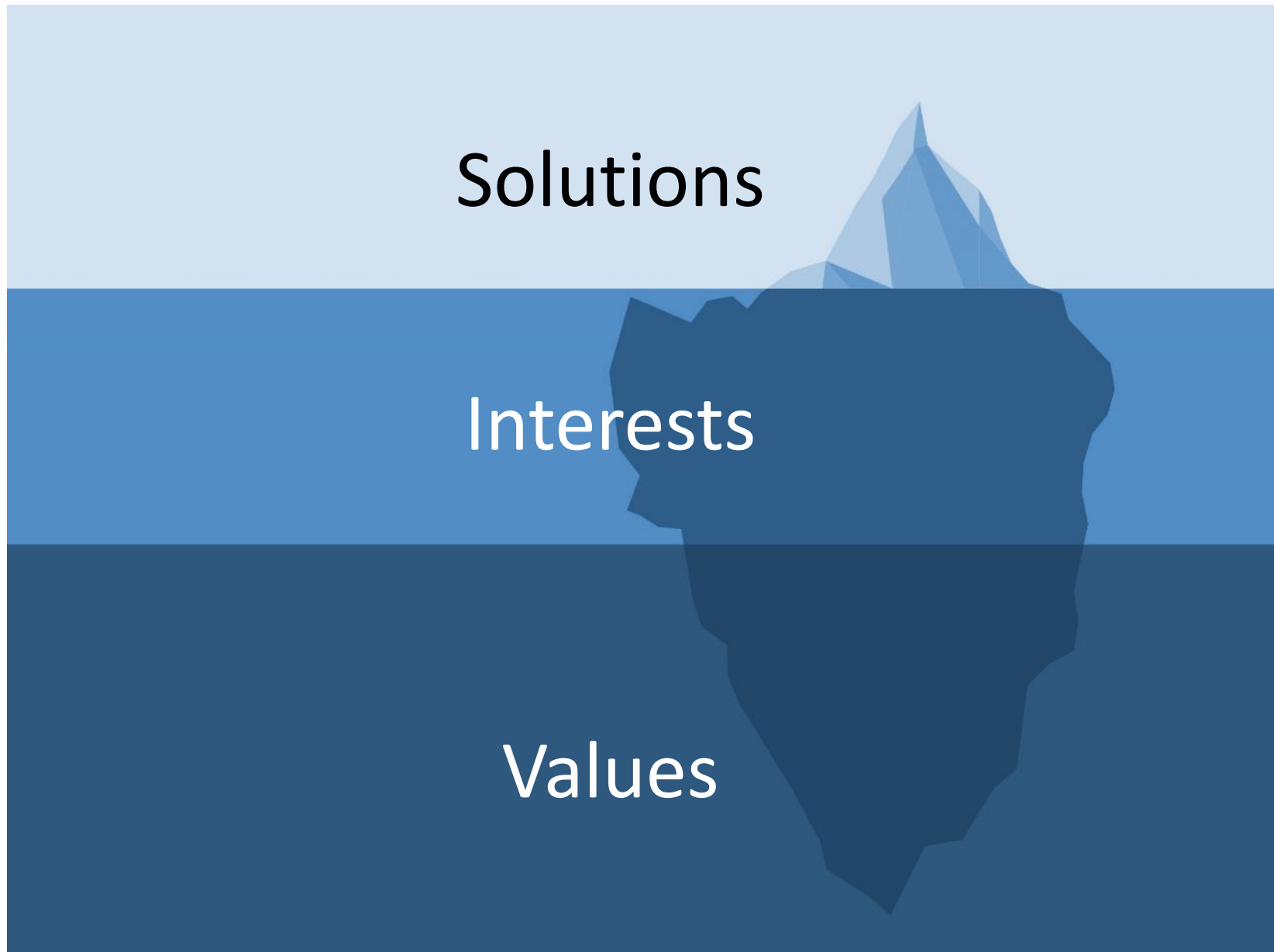
Important issues of concern did not get surfaced.

Common Situation #2

- In a community meeting, people shared their points of view without discovering any points of agreement. They “were heard” but still left feeling demoralized.

What happened?

The conversation did not surface and identify connections or shared values.



Napa Community Conversation



Key Practice: Adjusting your focus

Scale in broad statements:

- “Can you give me an example or situation you’re thinking of?”

Expand overly specific ideas:

- “What about that idea is important to you?”



Napa Story #2

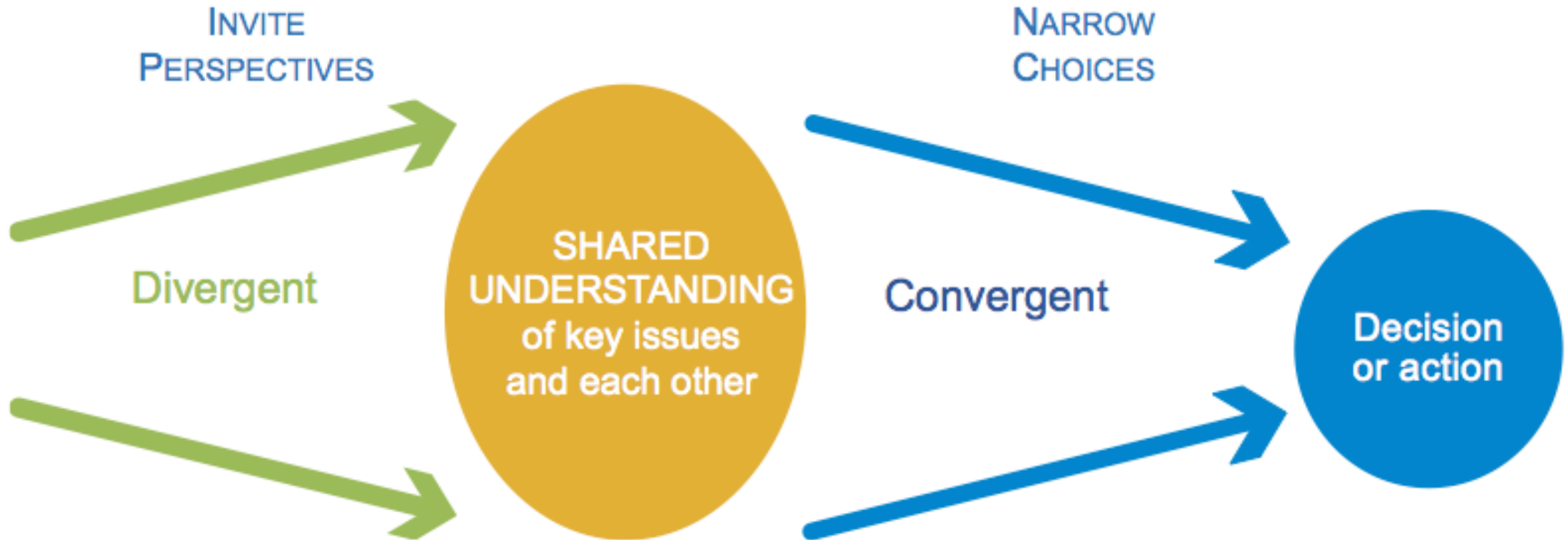


Key Practice: Letting others make their own meaning



- Letting different perspectives “sink in”
- Trusting the participants to connect dots

The “Arc” of a Conversation



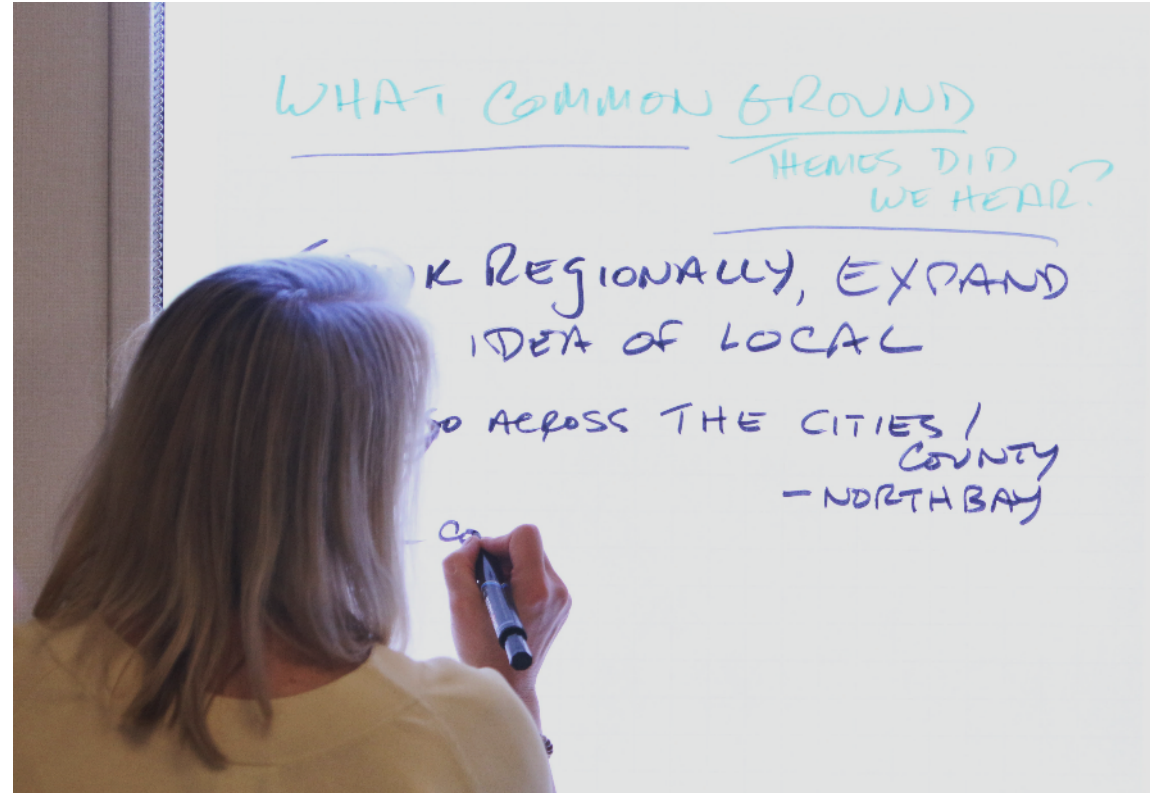
Key Practice: Question “arc” for group listening

- **Getting participation going:**
“Does anyone have a similar or different experience to what was just shared?”
- **Mid-way – balancing:** “Is there someone who has a different experience or perspective on what we're discussing?”



Key practice: Question “arc” for group listening

- **Beginning to listen for common ground:** “What connections are you hearing between what’s being said?”
- **Testing for common ground:** “What are we hearing that you seem to agree on? What needs more discussion?”



Libraries Facilitating Unity in Community



Listening
TOGETHER



Learning
TOGETHER



Leading
TOGETHER

IV

Question & Answer

Thank You and Next Webinar

March 7, 12 noon webinar:

Facilitating Constructive Contributions:
Dealing with Difficult Behaviors; Helping People
Share from a Better Place

Thank you for joining us today
and for filling out the feedback survey.