Finding A Way Forward
Tips on Getting Unstuck in Issue Resolution

Despite our best efforts to solve issues, we can encounter a barrier that is difficult to move past. This quick-reference guide is a tool for your group to use to progress past such a stalemate.

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<th>When to use:</th>
<th>When groups are stuck, stalled, swirling or unable to reach consensus on a solution.</th>
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**Step 1**
Participant or facilitator calls for a “Time Out” to ask the group if “anyone else is feeling stuck?”

Get consensus to activate this process.

**Step 2**
As a group, determine which scenario best fits your situation and try the corresponding tips.

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**Scenario**

Group repeating same discussions or ideas without progress.

**Questions and Actions to Consider**

- Identify or review ground already covered using flip charts or virtual notes, e.g., action items, parking lot issues, consensus items, ideas already considered.
- Is there an option that didn’t initially look feasible that could be doable with a small tweak or change?
- Cross out solutions or ideas the group agreed could not be considered. Refer back to this if folks return to the same ideas.
- To generate momentum, identify small steps that can be done between meetings. E.g., talk to a subject matter expert.
- Can the issue be solved right now or are other factors, such as timing, preventing the issue from being resolved?

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| **Environment no longer feels safe to share ideas** | + Encourage group members to use "I" statements. E.g., "I feel like there is space to hear more ideas."  
+ Sometimes, naming it out loud can help, such as, "it feels a little tense in here," or "Is anyone else feeling a shift?" Then, ask the group for suggestions on moving forward or propose caucusing.  
+ Revisit or add to ground rules such as:  
  - Show respect for members' opinions  
  - Focus on the solution, not the person  
  - Don't interrupt or attack speakers  
  - Assume positive intent |
| **Unproductive discussions leave the group feeling drained and uninterested in continuing with the Issue Resolution process.** | + Review areas of agreement or consensus, and then build off of those.  
+ Look for "quick wins" — options that can be done quickly and with little effort.  
+ Is the group experiencing "analysis paralysis"? Ask the group if more information will help move the conversation forward? Can you develop ideas/solutions without additional information?  
+ Ask yourselves, "Are the right people in the room?" Are they directly impacted/involved in the issue or can they make decisions about the issue? |
| **Parties are coming to discussions with fixed positions, demands or a positional attitude** | + Review prior steps of Interest-based Problem Solving and each party’s MOST IMPORTANT interest(s). For a refresh of the IBPS steps, check out the LMP Methods Booster.  
+ Rephrase someone’s position as an interest or ask open-ended questions that get to the interest. For tips, check out the LMP Skills Booster - Active Listening and Effective Questioning.  
+ Describe your own needs using interest-based language to focus the conversation on interests rather than positions.  
+ Have each group restate, in their own words, the key interests of the other party. |
| **When you’ve tried all the above or other steps but discussions have “hit the wall” or reached a dead end.** | + Call a caucus with your group. Then ask your team, "If you had to resolve it today, what could you live with or what could you support?" Then come back together as a large group and share.  
+ Based on what’s shared, determine as a group best next steps. Group may agree to pause discussions to regroup.  
+ It may not be possible to reach consensus. If that happens, both management and labor reserve the right to make a decision or react to a decision. Review the Decision-making Continuum for a refresh. |