



“The Strike Teams were very close to being filed under ‘good ideas that didn’t work out.’ The Hagerty team facilitated a critical meeting at the field office that laid the groundwork for improvements that were to come.”

CASE STUDY Facilitation

Facilitating a Meeting to Improve Post-Disaster Housing Delivery

“Necessity is the mother of invention, but who owns implementation?”

In 2004, Florida was hit by four major hurricanes within a six-week period. This unprecedented string of disasters caused widespread devastation across the state and left tens of thousands of residents homeless. FEMA responded by creating rapid-response local field teams, called Strike Teams, to help deliver temporary housing to disaster victims. It was a good concept. Strike Teams were a much-needed local presence and were able to respond with speed and agility to a quickly changing situation. However, communication and coordination problems limited the Strike Teams’ effectiveness. Because each team acted independently and approached its mission differently, communication broke down. As a result, disaster victims were not served efficiently. In an extreme example, some families received two temporary housing units while other families received none. Something had to be done or FEMA would have to pull the plug on the Strike Team concept.

An opportunity presented itself when all Strike Team leaders were scheduled to come to the central disaster field office to pick up equipment. Four hours before they arrived, FEMA asked Hagerty to meet with the Strike Team leaders and put them all on the same page. Strike Teams needed to conduct certain basic housing operations in a consistent way, and they also needed to communicate more effectively with each other and with the central field office.

Hagerty faced a challenge. Each one of the thirty independent-minded, strong-willed and confident Strike Team leaders was perfectly suited to running a multidisciplinary team in a Spartan, post-disaster environment, but, taken together, they weren’t necessarily the easiest group to facilitate. Furthermore, FEMA’s patience with the Strike Teams was running low. Hagerty saw that this was probably the last chance to make changes and save the program.

The Turning Point.

The Hagerty team consisted of three experienced facilitators, each with an understanding of disaster recovery operations. They realized that trying to force a solution on the Strike Team leaders wouldn’t be effective; once the teams returned to the field, the leaders would revert to their old ways of doing things. The key was to let the Strike Team leaders share their ideas, gripes, and experiences, to tell each other what worked and what didn’t. By sharing information, the leaders as a group could develop a consistent approach to their mission.

The facilitated session revealed that Strike Team leaders did not have a comprehensive understanding of the housing process. As a result, they didn’t appreciate how critical it was to track the steps in the process and communicate with all parties involved. Furthermore, each Strike Team apparently did some things well but struggled with other aspects of the process. Six hours of talking, sharing, charting, and some heated discussion eventually produced general agreement on broad steps the Strike Teams could take to standardize and improve key housing processes.

A Successful Journey. A Welcome Destination.

The Strike Team meeting was a tremendous success. It produced new, standardized processes that were communicated to all Strike Team members, and the leaders established a weekly conference call to discuss and address emerging issues. All Strike Team members were given direct access to the tracking database so they could enter information and view progress overall. The most important result was quicker, more efficient delivery of housing. In the end, 16,000 trailers were delivered to hurricane victims in only a few months, which at the time was a FEMA record.



“Great facilitators distinguish themselves through preparation and skill. It’s when diverse perspectives are respected and leveraged that innovation and teamwork flourish.”

CAPABILITY

Facilitation

The Questions

- Are you finding it difficult to simultaneously manage the dynamics of a meeting, record results, and make a meaningful contribution?
- Are you getting the information and results you need from every meeting—on time and on schedule?
- Do you know how to use the latest facilitation and group management technology?

The Facts

Improving programs, assessing results, plotting a new course—each of these activities is vital to your job as a public manager. Each also requires input from staff, stakeholders, and experts. Getting the right people into one room is challenge enough, but managing a meeting effectively in order to get the desired results can seem impossible. You have clashing personalities, competing agendas, and general group dynamics to worry about, not to mention the substantive information you want to convey. In some situations, you may never be able to get a particular group together again. You could use someone to focus on meeting dynamics so all the participants can concentrate on the substance of your mutual endeavor.

With Hagerty, you gain the perspective of an experienced, independent third-party facilitator. Hagerty professionals have extensive experience facilitating meetings for a broad range of public and private sector clients. We have the professionalism, skills, and tools to help you manage a meeting and get relevant answers and results.

Why Give Up Your Day Job?

Hagerty emphasizes thorough preparation in advance of a meeting. Preparation reduces meeting management breakdowns and the facilitator has the flexibility to respond when unanticipated meeting roadblocks occur. Hagerty professionals have experience managing a variety of meetings and group activities including focus groups, business process mapping and re-engineering workshops, strategic planning sessions, after-action reviews, and meetings to discuss lessons learned.

Hagerty meeting facilitation services can help you:

- Develop an agenda, determine talking points, and choose reading materials to assign to group members in advance of the meeting
- Use a range of group-dynamic intervention techniques to keep the meeting on time and on task
- Record ideas and comments, prepare meeting notes and analysis, and identify follow-up actions
- Use various technologies, from flip charts to electronic groupware, that can facilitate rapid diagnostic appraisals and brainstorming and help to distill great ideas

The result is a meeting that is more efficient and effective. In addition, you’ll be confident during the meeting that you and your team are exchanging the right information to achieve the right results.

Hagerty professionals have provided Facilitation services to many clients, including:

Agency for International Development
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Food and Drug Administration
National Nuclear Security Administration