A Lateral Thinking Approach to Regional Planning – Revisiting Pandemic Flu

Session Goal

Demonstrate the benefits of a problem-solving tool that encourages lateral thinking and can enhance multi-agency decision-making for projects requiring collaboration – using regional pandemic flu planning as a sample application.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:
• Identify directions of lateral thinking.
• Apply lateral thinking in the context of a pandemic flu planning scenario.
Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

• Identify some common gaps in pandemic flu plans and some common barriers to effective community or regional planning.
• Identify the benefits of using a lateral thinking approach to solve problems and plan in a more effective, collaborative manner.

What are indicators of effective and ineffective collaboration?

Issues in Collaborative Planning

• Bridging gaps between agencies
• Resolving conflict with external agencies
• Ensuring interoperability between agencies/jurisdictions
Lateral Thinking and Six Thinking Hats

By Edward de Bono

Disclaimer: Components of the Six Thinking Hats method are introduced and discussed in this session; however, this session is not endorsed by Edward de Bono. To receive the certified training, please visit http://www.debonoconsulting.com/Six_Thinking_Hats.asp

Traditional Thinking

- Western culture relies on classical Greek thinking
  - Argument and critical thinking
- “Truth” is to be reached through argument and linear, sequential thinking
  - Example: court systems

Scientific Method of Problem Solving

- Define problem
- Determine cause
- Develop alternative approaches
- Assess consequences
- Select a solution
- Implement chosen solution
- Evaluate, correct and redesign
Concepts

• Lateral thinking
  – Explores multiple possibilities and approaches in parallel instead of pursuing a linear sequential approach
  – Looks at a problem from many angles instead of tackling it head-on
• Six thinking hats
  – method for implementing lateral thinking

Activity

What are the Six Hats?

• Six colors of hats for six directions of thinking
  – Each hat identifies a direction of thinking
• You can “put on” and “take off” a hat to focus discussion in a specific direction
• Directs thinking to maximize sensitivity to, and understanding of, different perspectives at different times
Six Hats

- Separates thinking into six directions:
  - Objective, neutral
  - Emotional
  - Careful and cautious
  - Positive
  - Creative
  - Organization of the process

---

Six Hats

| White: objective facts & figures |
| Red: emotions & feelings |
| Black: downside, flaws & risks |
| Yellow: upside & positive outcomes |
| Green: creativity & new ideas |
| Blue: organization of thinking |

---

Why Lateral Thinking and Six Hats?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vertical thinking</th>
<th>Lateral thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looks for right approach</td>
<td>Looks for as many approaches as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rightness</td>
<td>Richness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proceeds if there is a direction</td>
<td>Proceeds to generate directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is analytical</td>
<td>Is provocative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is sequential</td>
<td>Can make jumps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses negative to block off certain pathways</td>
<td>There is no negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excludes what is irrelevant</td>
<td>Welcomes chance intrusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explores most likely paths</td>
<td>Explores least likely paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a finite process</td>
<td>Is a probabilistic process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Benefits of Lateral Thinking

• Examines problems, decisions, and opportunities holistically
• Decreases meeting time and increases meeting productivity
• Reduces conflict among meeting participants
• Simplifies the thinking process

More Benefits

• Goes beyond the obvious to discover effective alternate solutions
• Spots opportunities where others see only problems
• Elicits all sides of a decision before it is finalized
• Fosters collaboration

Real World Results

• Successfully used by organizations ranging from public service agencies to major corporations.
• Has shown significant increases in productivity through clearer thinking, improved communication, greater creativity and improved decision-making.
General Hat Issues

- Not categories of people
  - Not: “I’m a black hat thinker.”
  - Everyone can and should use all the hats
- A constructive form of showmanship
  - Show off by being a better thinker
  - Not destructive right vs. wrong argument
- Use in whole or in part

Using the hats

- Use any hat, as often as needed
- Sequence can be preset or evolving
- Not necessary to use every hat
- Can be used by individuals and groups

Blue Hat Thinking

- Use this hat to organize the process of thinking
  - Think about thinking
- Define the subjects toward which the thinking is to be directed
- Begin & end thought processes with blue hat
Begin with the Blue Hat

• Define the current situation or problem
• Are there alternative definitions?
• What is the end goal?
• What hats will you use and when?

End with the Blue Hat

• Did you reach your goal?
• What was the outcome?
• Evaluate the
  – Conclusion
  – Design
  – Solution
• Identify next steps

White Hat Thinking

• Use this hat to focus on available data
  – Facts and figures
• Look for gaps in knowledge
• Questions to ask:
  – What do we know?
  – What don’t we know?
  – What do we need to know?
  – How do we get the information we need?
Red Hat Thinking

- Use this hat to explore emotions & feelings
  - Hunches, intuitions, impressions
- Not necessarily logical or consistent
- Should not attempt to justify feelings or provide logical basis

Yellow Hat Thinking

- Use this hat to offer upside perspective
- Think about the positive aspects or the benefits
- Examine the opportunities
- Questions to ask:
  - What is the best-case scenario?
  - What are the benefits?

Green Hat Thinking

- Use this hat to explore new ideas, concepts, perceptions
- Search for alternatives and more alternatives
- Generate new approaches to problems
- Create an open-minded environment deferring criticism of ideas
Black Hat Thinking

• Use this hat to spot fatal flaws, risks, and barriers
• Logical negative – why it might not work
• Critical judgement, downside perspective
• Separates logical negative from emotional
• Helps to “bullet-proof” a plan or decision and makes it more resilient

Ground Rules

• Only one hat can be worn at a time, meaning everyone in the group can only think in one direction at a time.

• Everyone on the team does the same type of thinking at the same time. Everyone wears the same color hat.

Ground Rules

• When the hat changes, the direction of thinking changes.

• Use the hats/colors terminology in discussion.

• The facilitator will always wear the blue or organization hat but may also contribute to the discussion.
Facilitator’s Role

• Clarify the focus of the team’s thinking.
• Plan the sequence and timing of the thinking.
• Ask for changes in the thinking if needed.
• Manage requests from the group for changes in the thinking.
• Facilitate periodic or final summaries of the thinking for consideration by the team.

Participant’s Role

• Follow the lead of your facilitator.
• Use and understand the nature of each direction of thinking.
• Work within the time limits.
• Contribute fully and honestly under each of the hats.

Assignment

Should we implement six thinking hats in regional planning meetings?
Aspects for Consideration

– Organization of thinking process
– Known and unknown facts about six thinking hats
– Barriers to implementation
– Benefits to implementation
– Creative ways to implement
– Feelings about implementation

Regional Pandemic Influenza Planning – Challenges & Barriers

The Problem

• The potential for an Influenza Pandemic is high
• The effects of a pandemic will be profound and long-term
• Impact will be felt by every sector of society and at multiple levels
  – Health
  – Social
  – Emotional
  – Economic
  – Other ???
The Mandate

- Developing and exercising pandemic influenza plans that will:
  - ensure an effective and orderly response to a pandemic
  - minimize health, social and economic impacts of a pandemic
  - promote public trust

The Challenge

- An effective pandemic influenza response at every level will require close collaboration between key federal, state, regional and local partners …
  - integrated plans
  - agreement regarding key components & responsibilities
  - cohesive & coordinated implementation
  - consistent messaging

The Challenge

- Close collaboration must occur between diverse partners that have not traditionally worked together
- Partners cross disciplines, organizations, jurisdictions, political affiliations, and ???
- Partners have their own mandates, understanding of issues, concerns and emergency response strategies
Issues

Attitudes and Knowledge
- Beliefs
- Skepticism
- Hysteria
- Trust
- Understanding
  - Science/epidemiology of pandemic influenza
  - Resources available
- Misconceptions

Issues

Practice
- Impacted by constituents, community needs, political reality, resources, professional discipline and ???
  - Priorities
  - Response patterns
  - Communication processes

Potential Gaps

- Incompatible platforms
  - Technology
  - Communication
- Unsynchronized processes and systems
  - Surveillance
  - Data input and utilization
- Poor Communication
  - Language: use of jargon, different meanings
  - Conflicting messages
- Inadequate resources
  - Unfunded mandates
  - Inequitable distribution
Moving Forward

- Bridging
- Discussing
- Resolving
- Consensus building
- Coming together to develop an integrated, cohesive plan to:
  - prepare for
  - respond to
  - recover from

... a Pandemic

Moving Forward

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."

--Goethe

Six Hats Summary

- White: objective facts & figures
- Red: emotions & feelings
- Black: downside, flaws & risks
- Yellow: upside, positive outcomes
- Green: creativity & new ideas
- Blue: organization of thinking