



# 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.

**When to use:** | **When groups are stuck, stalled, swirling or unable to reach consensus on a solution.**

**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.

Scenario	Questions and Actions to Consider
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**Group repeating same discussions or ideas without progress.**

- + 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?

Continued on back

## Scenario

## Questions and Actions to Consider



### Environment no longer feels safe to share ideas

- + Overt negative attitudes
- + Disrespectful comments or shutting down 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.