

## **‘CONFLICT COMPETENCE’ - WHAT SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDINGS DOES A PERSON WITH CONFLICT COMPETENCE HAVE?**

### **Understanding and assessing conflict**

1. Understands that conflict includes attitudes and behaviors as well as the contradictions among stakeholders’ goals.<sup>1</sup>
2. Moves beyond the concepts of conflict resolution toward conflict transformation<sup>2</sup> that encourages long term changes in attitude.
3. Uses conflict assessments<sup>3</sup> to design and prepare for interventions.
4. Moves beyond symptoms and triggering events, and inquires into the root causes of conflict.
5. Sees conflict from a dynamic rather than static view, considering the various stages of conflict and likely future scenarios<sup>4</sup>.
6. Seeks new information, and adapts her/his thinking to new data and new understandings.
7. Knows that working with conflict will raise very personal issues and that one’s own feelings and attitudes about conflict are always nearby.

### **Approach to actors and conflict**

8. Moves to assess conflict and take early action rather than letting conflict unnecessarily escalate.
9. Understands that, although dealing with individual people, conflicting parties often connect to, and are part of, institutions and systems that directly affect or even drive the conflict.
10. In two party conflict, accepts that “three treaties” (one across the table and one on each side of the table) are often needed – therefore working for all three treaties.
11. Understands and applies interest based bargaining principles<sup>5</sup>.

### **Process design**

12. Helps parties and clients co-design conflict processes that support all elements of competence listed here.
13. Develops protocols and guidelines to make the process effective and safe for participation.
14. Encourages all parties to exchange the data needed for decision making.
15. Helps structure meetings and working agenda to work toward agreed upon goals.
16. Finds and involves expert assistance as needed.
17. Encourages processes that reduce the likelihood or intensity of future unproductive conflict.

### **Communication in conflict**

18. Works to improve communications both across the table and internally within parties, discouraging unproductive behaviors.
19. Encourages direct dialogue that permits each party to understand the other.
20. Opens dialogue to ensure that all necessary points of view are heard.

### **Decision making, summarizing and implementing**

21. Recognizes the varying role of law in conflict resolution (i.e., sometimes law plays a dominant role and other times a reduced role).
22. Understands and discourages decision making errors.<sup>6</sup>
23. Prefers and seeks durable outcomes and resolutions over “quick fixes.”
24. To the extent possible, works toward written summaries or draft agreements that build upon tentative agreements rather than re-open issues that have been previously resolved.
25. Understands how to remain engaged to facilitate the implementation of any agreements reached.

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<sup>1</sup> *Peace by peaceful means: Peace and conflict, development and civilization*, J Galtung. Sage, London, 1996

<sup>2</sup> *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, JP Lederach, Good Books, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Working with Conflict*, S Fisher et al, RTC Birmingham, 2003

<sup>4</sup> *The Art of the Long View*, P Schwartz, Doubleday, 1991.

<sup>5</sup> *The Art & Science of Negotiation*, H Raiffa, Belknap Press, 1982.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://jpmcmahon.com/settlement-errors.html>