

Values In Action (VIA) – a decision making model

(with Facilitator Pages: “Moving Through the Steps”)

Criteria: When to use VIA

Importance: Could the decision influence the handling of important future issues?	Impact: Could the decision affect significant stakeholders/services?	Resources: Does the decision involve the allocation of a significant amount of resources?	Profile: Will the decision have a high visibility, internally and/or externally?
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If any of these criteria applies to the decision, VIA is needed.

Ground Work: Answer these questions to prepare for the VIA process

1. Do we have sufficient information about the decision?	5. What is the role of this group? Make decision, recommend or advise?
2. Who should participate? Who are the Stakeholders?	6. How much time will this process require? How much time is available? <i>(See Variations on VIA Process, next page.)</i>
3. Who will make the decision?	7. Who will lead this process?
4. How will the decision be made? Consensus, majority, individual?	

VIA Process: Use the VIA Worksheet

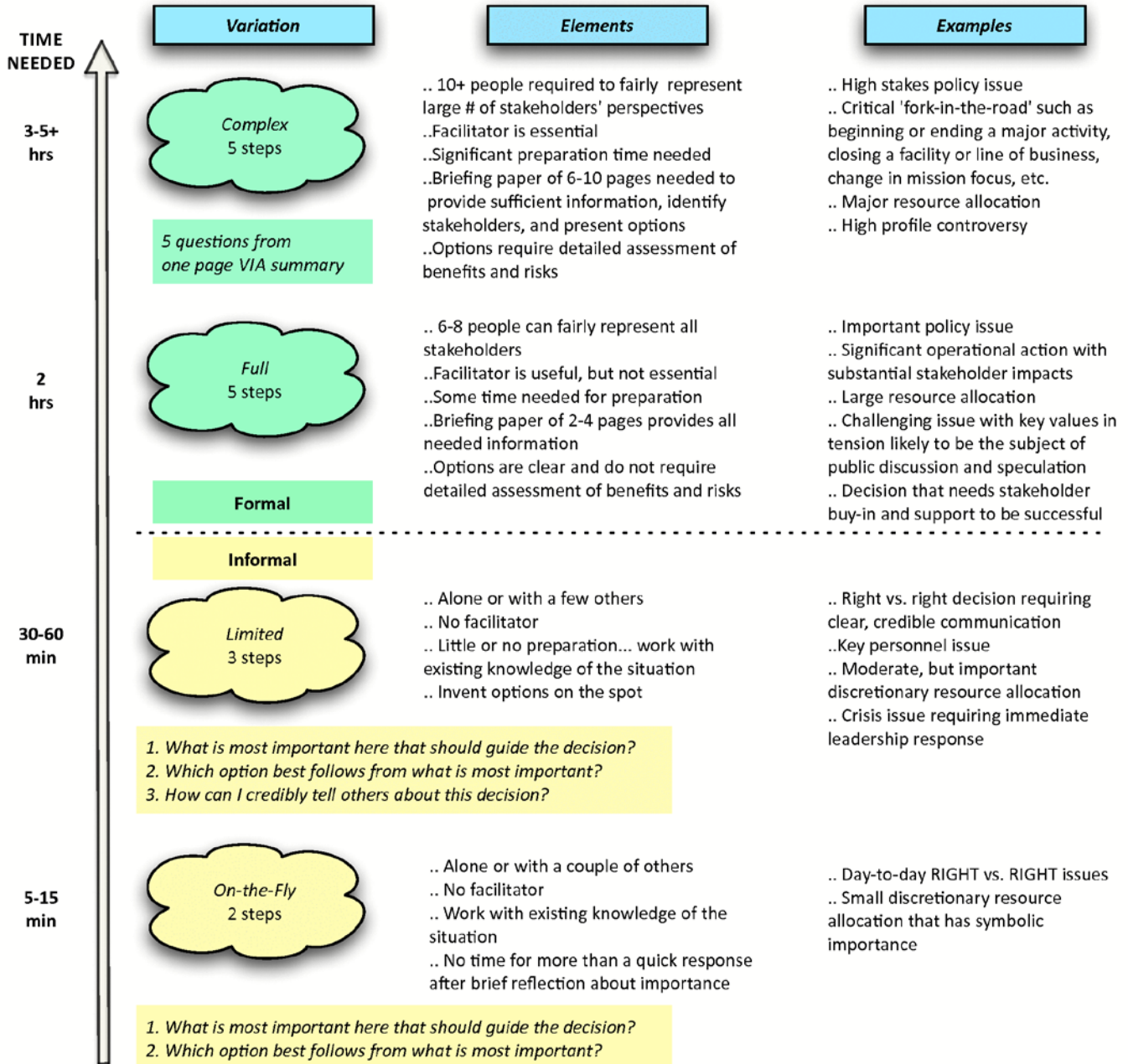
<p>STEP 1: CLARIFY What point of view do I bring to this decision?</p> <p>Outcome: Awareness and clarity about differing perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make sure everyone gets involved and responds briefly to the basic question. ▪ If there is time, follow up with another round and ask, “What assumptions, if any, are you making about this decision?” THEN, keep these perspectives in mind when people discuss what matters to them so the dialogue can deepen.
<p>STEP 2: COMPREHEND What’s important to the organization, to me, to those affected by this decision?</p> <p>Outcome: List of values to consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take time to hear briefly from everyone and build a comprehensive list of what is important to all stakeholders. Define the values discussed, e.g., “Stewardship,” “Integrity,” and “Quality” by saying what they mean in this situation ▪ Take time to reflect back what was said to insure understanding, to confirm key points and to insure clarity.
<p>STEP 3: COMMIT What are the most important values that should guide our decision?</p> <p>Outcome: Prioritize key values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask each person to advocate for the most important values that should guide the decision. ▪ Make sure that everyone clarifies the reason(s) for their choice of top values. It’s critical to understand these reasons and give everyone a chance to influence others and be heard.
<p>STEP 4: CHOOSE Which option is the best fit with the guiding values?</p> <p>Outcome: Alignment between values and action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider all the available options and determine which one aligns most closely with the most important values. ▪ Make sure you consider the downside(s) of your choice BEFORE finalizing the decision. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who will be most affected by this decision? ○ Which important values do not receive priority?
<p>STEP 5: COMMUNICATE How can/will we communicate this decision?</p> <p>Outcome: Credible decision that gains support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use one of the VIA reporting options to cover the key communication elements. Articulate the downside and acknowledge what issues you struggled with when making this decision.

VARIATIONS ON THE VALUES IN ACTION (VIA) PROCESS

Leaders need a practical approach to difficult decisions that integrates conversation about ethics and values. Their actions and words should demonstrate to stakeholders that the organization 'walks' its mission and values talk.

VIA meets this need with a 'scalable' dialogue structure that fits the situation and the time available. It adds value by:

- encouraging participation that eliminates blind spots that might weaken the decision,
- keeping limited time focused upon importance,
- strengthening alignment between key values and the decision
- maintaining credibility by crafting a transparent communication



BOTTOM LINE... Credible, durable decision that clearly communicates values in action

How to Clarify (Step 1) and Comprehend (Step 2): Skillful Questions for Eliciting Stakeholder Values

Questions are the creative acts of intelligence. If they are formulated well, they can open doors, generate valuable information, and lay a firm foundation for thoughtful decision-making. Any of the following questions may help you understand the values context for your decisions.

<p>Uncovering Values</p> <p>Why is this important to you?</p> <p>What is important here that we need to look at?</p> <p>What do you think lies at the heart of the matter?</p> <p>What matters to you most in this situation?</p> <p>What can you tell me that will help me understand the importance of this issue to you?</p> <p>What is significant about this question for you?</p> <p>What is at risk in this issue?</p> <p>What worries you about this issue?</p>	<p>Outcome</p> <p>What is most meaningful to you in the comments and ideas we have heard up to now?</p> <p>What would you like to see come out of this? Why?</p> <p>What do you hope for?</p> <p>When we look back on this decision one year from now, how will we know we did the right/best thing?</p> <p>If your teenager was watching us make this decision, and asked why we did it, what would you say to him/her?</p> <p>How would you explain the basis for the decision if the (insert name of daily newspaper) ran a front page story analyzing this situation and examining the decision you propose to make?</p>
<p>Considering Stakeholders</p> <p>What seems to be important to them?</p> <p>What do you think our duties and obligations are in this situation?</p> <p>Who do you think will be affected by our decision?</p> <p>Who should we be concerned about as we make this decision? Why?</p> <p>What do you think the effects/consequences (intended and unintended) of our decision will be?</p> <p>What standards do you think they (name a stakeholder group) will use to judge the fairness/rightness/goodness of our decision?</p> <p>What criteria will our stakeholders use to evaluate our decision?</p>	<p>Ethics and Principles</p> <p>How do we know that this is the right thing to do?</p> <p>How do we know this is not the right thing to do?</p> <p>What makes this an inappropriate way to proceed?</p> <p>What standards(s) should we use to make a decision?</p> <p>What criteria should we use to determine the best approach?</p> <p>What would you do if it were your decision? Why?</p> <p>Why do you think this is a good decision?</p> <p>Why don't you think this is a good decision?</p> <p>If _____ (insert the name of a person you respect for his/her wisdom and integrity) were here and we asked for her comments, what would he/she say to us?</p>

Clarify (Step 1): Examples of Points-of-View and...
Comprehend (Step 2): Range of “What Matters” within Each
 View (Values)

Economic

- Preservation of funding stream
- Frugality & austerity
- Financial stability
- Stewardship of IOA \$s; accountability to membership

Compliance

- Reputation of trustworthiness
- Documented adherence to regulations
- Metrics
- Defensibility
- Ability to account for elements of for decisions, actions

Religious

- Charity
- Fidelity
- Compassion
- Mutual support
- Sanctity of life

“Character Counts” Values

- Trustworthiness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Caring
- Citizenship

Ethical

- Credibility
- “Doing right thing”
- Consistency
- Honor
- Loyalty
- Words & actions matched
- Human rights
- Diversity of thought, backgrounds, experience
- Responsibility for consequences of decisions & actions

IOA Values

- Integrity
- Service
- Respect
- Collaboration

Aesthetic

- Beauty
- Creativity
- Elegance
- Simplicity

Business

- Quality
- Efficiency
- Dependability
- Predictability
- Reputation
- Schedule
- Timeliness
- Cost
- Performance
- Security
- Service
- Assurance
- Learning
- Risk management

Personal

- Caring
- Courage to act
- Responsibility for consequences of actions
- Competence
- Reliability
- Happiness
- Fulfillment
- Safety
- Health
- Trust
- Respect
- Fairness
- Autonomy
- Belonging
- Security/Stability

Social

- Citizenship
- Stewardship
- Cooperation
- Sacrifice
- “Greater good”
- Loyalty
- Collaboration
- Human rights
- Diversity
- Human dignity

Legal

- Justice
- Fairness
- Equality
- Freedom
- Order
- Defensibility
- Setting Precedents
- Managing IOA’s corporate risk

Professional Practice

- Integrity
- Accuracy
- Autonomy
- Honesty
- Knowledge
- Educational value
- Excellence
- Credibility
- Reputation
- Innovation

Clarify (Step 1): Example of the IOA Values Point-of-View and...

Comprehend (Step 2) What's Important within this View

In 2009, IOA's Board of Directors agreed on the following values important to the association.

IOA Values
<p>Integrity-</p> <p>IOA conducts all activities responsibly with equity and accountability to its membership and profession</p>
<p>Service-</p> <p>IOA supports its membership by providing innovative and high quality services.</p>
<p>Respect-</p> <p>IOA embraces a range of differences of people and viewpoints in building a robust organization</p>
<p>Collaboration-</p> <p>IOA promotes interaction among ombudsman practitioners and engages with other organizations to advance the profession</p>

Commit (Step 3) and **Choose (Step 4)**: Option 1 of 4 to Help Prioritize or Discern Guiding Values... *Comparing Stakeholder Impacts*

Option 1: Decision makers and individuals and groups who are affected by or take an interest in a decision are the stakeholders. The durability of the decision and credibility of the decision maker(s) will be affected greatly by the response of stakeholders to the decision. ***Review their values and concerns about a decision under consideration in this step.***

Those who must implement this decision hold the following values:

Makers of this decision hold the following values:

Others who will see this decision hold the following values:

The decision under consideration is:

Those who will formally review this decision hold the following values:

Beneficiaries for this decision hold the following values:

Those who may experience negative consequences from this decision hold the following values:

Commit (Step 3) and Choose (Step 4): Option 2 of 4 to Help Prioritize or Discern Guiding Values...*Relative Weighting Technique*

		<i>Rate each Option according to how it satisfies each important value...3 = high, 1 = low...relative weight X rating = Score</i>			
Criteria	Relative Weight	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Example: Job security for our employees	25%	3 Score= .75			
Value A. _____					
Value B. _____					
Value C. _____					
Value D. _____					
Value E. _____					
Total Scores	100%				

Commit (Step 3) and Choose (Step 4): Option 3 of 4 to Help Prioritize or Discern Guiding Values...*Balance Sheet*

Option Under Consideration:

<p>To Honor this Value DO NOT CHOOSE this Option: Reason?</p>	<p>Important Values to use as decision criteria</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Value A. _____</p> <p>Value B. _____</p> <p>Value C. _____</p> <p>Value D. _____</p> <p>Value E. _____</p>	<p>To Honor this Value CHOOSE this Option: Reason?</p>
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Commit (Step 3) and Choose (Step 4): Option 4 of 4 to Help Prioritize or Discern Guiding Values... *Using Polarity Management to “map” two equally important competing values. Guides action plan to prevent impasse, manage and mitigate unintended and difficult effects of a decision.*

We encourage you to edit this map so the language and values work for you

Basic Steps to Managing a Polarity Well Over Time

Action Steps

How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing in this left pole?
What? Who? By When? Measures?

Action Steps

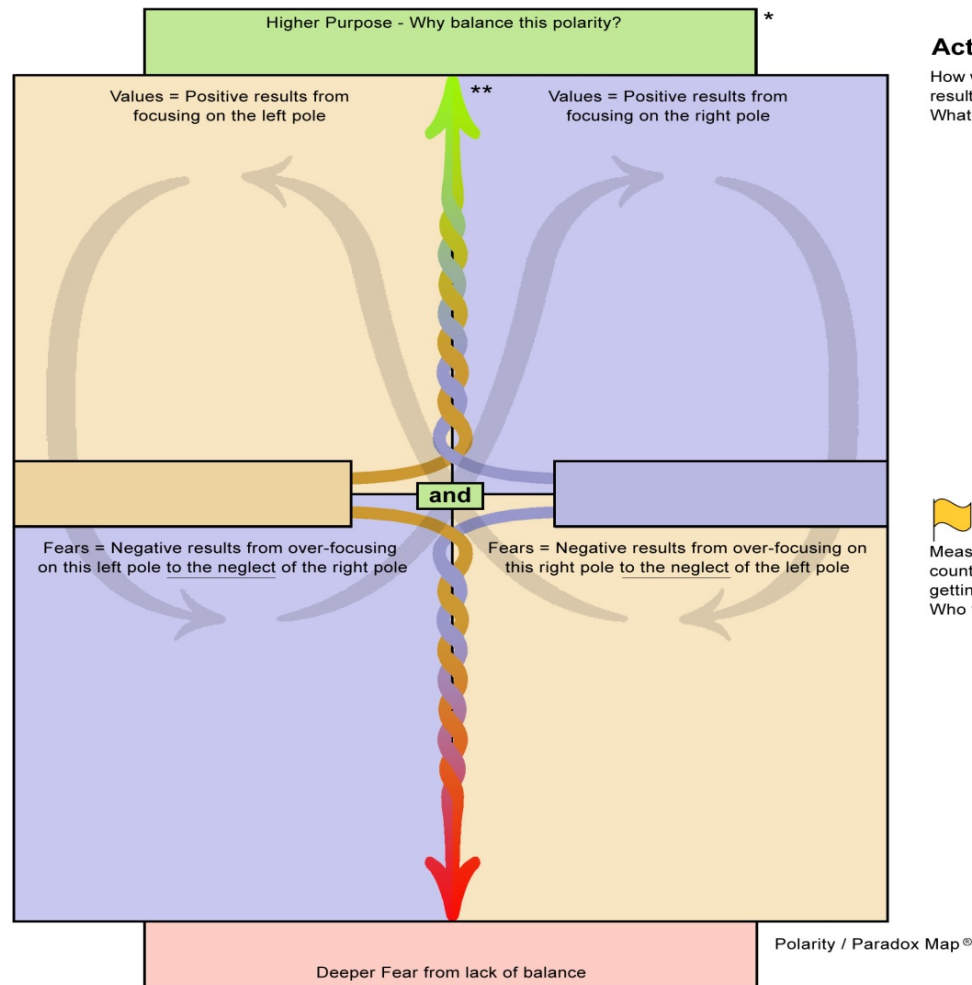
How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing in this right pole?
What? Who? By When? Measures?

Early Warnings***

Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this left pole. Who will know?

Early Warnings

Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this right pole. Who will know?



Polarity Management Associates www.polaritymanagement.com

*Thanks to John Scherer **Thanks to The Strategy Academy, Rotterdam, The Netherlands ***Thanks to Todd Johnson

Values Based Decision-making Worksheet

1. CLARIFY PERSPECTIVE

Point of View (How do you see the situation?)
Consider "lenses" you look through, e.g.
Roles you occupy, Related experiences
Education & training

Key Facts (What you know to be true..)

Assumptions (What do you believe is true?
How confident are you about this being true?)

Needed Information (What do you want to learn and from whom?)

2. COMPREHEND THE RANGE OF IMPORTANCE

Personal Values

Organization/Professional Values

Other Stakeholders Values

3. COMMIT TO WHAT MATTERS MOST (THE GUIDING 'STARS')

Identify the values from 2. that are most important to you and be clear WHY in this situation.

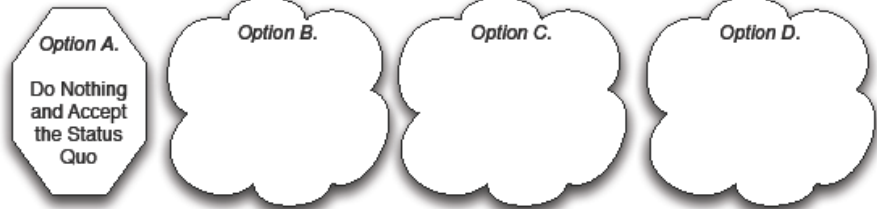
A.
Why?

B.
Why?

C.
Why?

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4a. PREPARE TO CHOOSE BY DEVELOPING YOUR OPTIONS



4b. CHOOSE IN ALIGNMENT WITH WHAT MATTERS MOST

Which option is the best fit with the guiding stars from step 3? What is your reasoning?

What are the benefits/costs of this choice?
Who is burdened? What values had to yield to the guiding values?

BENEFITS COSTS
(Downside)

5. COMMUNICATE TRANSPARENTLY TO THOSE WHO NEED TO KNOW

State the decision clearly.

Use ordinary language to explain the values that guided the decision.

Own it. Whose decision is it? Who participated?

Acknowledge the downside. Be candid about what you don't like in the decision.

IMPLEMENTATION (What are your next steps? When/how/to whom will you communicate the decision? How will you follow up and evaluate progress?)

Communicate (Step 5): Two Reporting Options

Reporting Option 1: Decision Summary (Bottom Line Approach)

Purpose: To model accountability and prepare to explain the decision to stakeholders (**Transparent**)

Support, approval, or cooperation from interested parties may be necessary for the decision to move forward.

Will you be able to demonstrate that you were thorough in considering all the values involved in the decision? (**Comprehensive**)

How are values you said were important congruent with the decision?

Does your reasoning support the outcome? (**Coherent**)

1. **State the decision in direct, simple language. Be clear who 'owns' the decision.** *(It was the decision of the Board or Committee members to recommend.....)*
2. **Describe (using everyday language) the values that 'drove' the decision.** *(Ultimately we concluded that _____ and _____ were most important and had to drive our final decision.)*
3. **Be candid about the 'down' side(s) of this decision, i.e.** *(There are some things about this decision that we don't like or will have consequences that will need to be managed well.)*
 - a. **Describe applicable values that could not be honored by the decision and briefly indicate the reasoning for your judgments that other values were more important in this situation.** *(Example: Loyalty to our long-time members or continued viability of IOA and our IOA values of _____ and _____ are important to us. However, there were other values of _____ and _____ that weighed more heavily because_____.)*
 - b. **Address any negative impacts of the decision on stakeholders. Pay particular attention to those who were not fully consulted in the decision process.** *(We recognize that an inevitable impact of our decision will be _____ for _____ (stakeholders). However, in our judgment this does not outweigh the need to honor _____ because_____.)*
 - c. **If negative impacts can be mitigated, explain options or plans to do so.** *(We've asked _____ (a person or committee) to monitor and report back the unintended consequences and impacts of this decisions. We ask for your feedback and patience as we understand and manage those unintended impacts.)*

Communicate (Step 5):

Reporting Option 2: Decision Summary (Story Format)

Purpose: To model accountability and prepare to explain the decision to stakeholders. (**Transparent**)

Support, approval, or cooperation from interested parties may be necessary for the decision to move forward.

Will you be able to demonstrate that you were thorough in considering all the values involved in the decision? (**Comprehensive**)

How are values you said were important congruent with the decision?

Does your reasoning support the outcome? (**Coherent**)

1. **How did you approach this decision? (Provide some brief highlights of the decision process, e.g., the steps you took, who was at the table, whom you consulted, the level of time and effort involved)** *(I/We would like to give you a sense of the road we took to get to this decision.)*
2. **Be candid about the ‘down’ side(s) of this decision.** *(There are aspects of this decision that we don’t like or that cause consequences that we’ll need to manage well:_____)*
 - a. **Describe applicable values that could not be honored by the decision and indicate the reasoning for your judgment that other values were more important in this situation.** *(Example: Loyalty to our long-time members or continued viability of IOA and our IOA values of _____ and _____ are important to us. However, there were other values of _____ and _____ that weighed more heavily because _____.)*
 - b. **Address any negative impacts of the decision on stakeholders. Pay particular attention to those who were not fully consulted in the decision process.** *(We recognize that a consequence of this decision will be _____ to _____ (stakeholders). However, in our view this did not outweigh the value of _____ because _____.)*
 - d. **If negative impacts can be mitigated, explain options or plans to do so.** *(We’ve asked _____ (a person or committee) to monitor and report back the unintended consequences and impacts of this decisions. We ask for your feedback and patience so IOA can hear and manage those unintended impacts.)*
3. **Describe (using everyday language) the values that ‘drove’ the decision.** *(Ultimately, we believe that _____ and _____ had to drive our final choice.)*
4. **State the decision in direct, simple language. Be clear who ‘owns’ the decision.** *(Therefore, it is the decision of our Board/Committee to _____.)*

Facilitator Pages: Moving Through the Steps

1. Clarify Perspectives

Transition Language to Move On	Indicators of Readiness to Move On	Indicators of Need to Slow Down/Back Up
<i>Now that we understand some of the points of view we bring to this decision, let's take some time to identify what seems important to each of us.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants already beginning to name values. - Impatience by key members of group (you can always come back to Clarifying "frames"). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heated statements that indicate strong judgment about others' points of view. - Inability to listen and understand what others are saying.

2. Comprehend What Matters

Transition Language to Move On	Indicators of Readiness to Move On	Indicators of Need to Slow Down/Back Up
<i>We have a list of what's important. Now let's take a look at the list and get a sense of whether any of these values are most important.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A list of important values on the flip chart. - Affirmative response by group members to the question: "Are these clear as stated?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inability to speak to the concerns of important stakeholders. - Inability to listen and understand what others are saying. - Missing essential information.

3. Commit to What Matters Most

Transition Language to Move On	Indicators of Readiness to Move On	Indicators of Need to Slow Down/Back Up
<i>Let's take this shorter list of key values and begin to look at the options we have in light of what we know must drive our decision.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A shorter weighted list of the most important values from the larger list of all important values on the flip chart. - Each person has been offered the opportunity to express (through advocacy, 'voting,' or other method) the sense of relative importance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inability to speak to the concerns of important stakeholders - Inability to listen and understand what others are saying. - Comments by participants that indicate a lack of clear understanding of the values list. - Missing essential information.

4. Choose to Act

Transition Language to Move On	Indicators of Readiness to Move On	Indicators of Need to Slow Down/Back Up
<i>We have a decision, so let's clarify how we will report this decision to those who need to hear about it.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clear choice about how to proceed based on the options available and the key values. - Affirmative response by group members to the question: "Is this what we agree to do?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of knowledge about the range of options that are available. - Inability to speak to the concerns of important stakeholders and impacts upon them from particular options. - Inability to listen and understand what others are saying. - Missing essential information.

5. Communicate to Others

Transition Language to Move On	Indicators of Readiness to Move On	Indicators of Need to Slow Down/Back Up
None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A completed decision summary form. - Agreement on how the report will be made (by whom, when, where) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If consensus is necessary or desirable, lack of support for the decision summary content. - Lack of knowledge about stakeholder impacts.