

# DESIGNING FOR ENGAGEMENT

HOW TO CREATE MEETINGS THAT BRING PEOPLE BACK

**FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

SUMMIT 2026

ERIN BALDWIN DAY



Introduction

Stand up & form a circle

Check in: one word to describe how you're feeling right now

Gallery walk:

If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about your community council, what would it be?

How will you know the next 2 hours have been time well spent?

What do you hope for in your neighborhood? How do CC's support that hope?

# PAIR SHARE:

Share about a time that you showed up to an **unfamiliar space** and immediately felt **welcomed**.



You have 30 seconds to think, and then turn to your neighbor and answer this question.

What common themes did you hear?

# FACILITATION PRINCIPLES

1

**generous authority**

2

**creativity**

3

**hospitality**



## GENEROUS AUTHORITY

Raise your hand if you've ever been in a meeting of any type where one person took over the conversation, and the facilitator didn't intervene.

How did it feel? (popcorn)

What do you wish the facilitator had done?

## WE MUST PRACTICE

- respecting time limits
  - holding people accountable for conduct
  - safeguarding the group experience
- (create your own language for these scenarios in advance)
- developing group agreements for dialogue

## CREATIVITY

What do you think I mean by this?

I want to empower you to change the game:

- ask reps to send written reports and use the meeting for a deep dive on a single topic
- ask for presentations from the muni, other local entities
- choose one meeting at the beginning of the year and design the meeting flow together

Combination of:

- group engagement on issues?
- internal conversation on tough topics?

- education?
  - community connection?
  - identify and develop a specific neighborhood improvement project with a local business?
- Then pitch it to your Assembly members?

## HOSPITALITY

Consider the newcomer experience at every meeting.

What makes people feel welcome?

Station an officer by the door to say hello with nametags & the agenda

Small touches matter -- even a laminated sign that says "welcome, we're glad you're here!" goes a long way

# FACILITATION PRACTICES

**1**

**advance preparation**

**2**

**form follows function**

**3**

**connection on purpose**



## 1. advance preparation:

- agenda structure decisions
- supplies kit
- always consider newcomer experience (lingo, acronyms, etc.)

## 2. form follows function:

Roberts Rules are useful for debate & decision-making;

NOT useful for dialogue and connection -- meeting structure can shift to meet the purpose

## 3. connection on purpose:

- use nametags at every meeting (+ sticker for first time attendee)
- get everyone talking
- use meaningful, universal questions
- check in/check out

# PRACTICE:

Together we're going to try a process that you might use in your own council to be more creative & purposeful together in 2026!



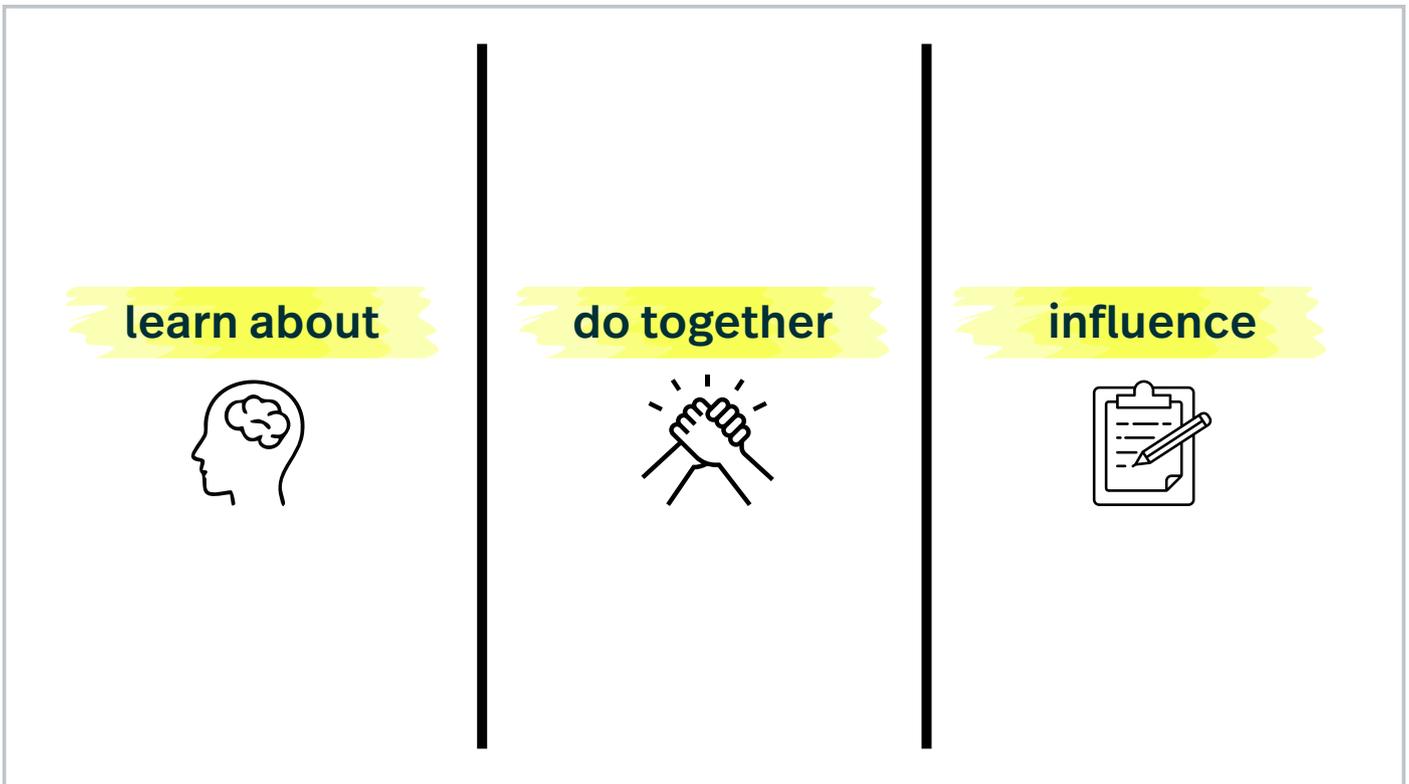
Sheets of paper on the tables

Divide into columns:

What would you like to:

- learn about
- do together
- influence

with your community council?



Verbal instructions:

- everyone gets their own pen or marker
  - brainstorm everything that comes to mind -- no wrong answers
  - no talking for the first 5 minutes
  - I will tell you when 5 minutes is up!
- (what am I practicing? generous authority!)

After 5 minute timer:

- walk around the table and put a check mark by the ideas you like
- talking is allowed now
- synthesize your results: what are the top 3 in each category?

SHARE OUT

# REFLECT:

What tools do you need to be able to replicate this activity in your own council? What would you change to make it work for your context?



# NEXT STEPS

- create your toolbox
- seek out facilitator training  
(Alaska Humanities Forum!)
- share your vision!



Revisit the sticky sheets before you leave!

# CHECK OUT:

One sentence structured like this:

When I arrived today I felt \_\_\_\_\_.

Now I feel \_\_\_\_\_.

