

## Guidelines ease facilitation process

If you are trying to work through a problem, develop a strategy or get consensus on an issue with your staff or board, the use of a facilitator often makes the process easier. It allows an impartial person to manage the process and keep everyone on track. MAS offers this service free of charge to non-profits.

The following guidelines on facilitation, adapted from an article by © Beatrice Briggs, International Institute for Facilitation and Change, are meant for facilitators. However they are useful to anyone who is engaging a facilitator or who is trying to resolve an issue.

**Get background information.** Do not rely on a single informant. Talk to as many of those involved in the conflict as possible to find out their perspectives. This not only gives you a more complete picture, it builds trust.

**Get agreement about who will be present and the time and place for the session.** Define the roles and negotiate a time and place to meet that is acceptable to all.

**Explain your role.** State your intention to be impartial and ask for the support of the group. Ask them to let you know if you appear to be showing favoritism.

**Establish a few ground rules,** such as:

- Speak for oneself (Use "I" statements)
- One person speaks at a time
- Everyone has a chance to participate
- Attack only ideas, not persons
- Seek first to understand one another, then seek solutions
- Confidentiality

**Manage the time.** Agree on how long the session will last and then do not exceed this time limit unless everyone agrees.

**Propose a process.** Keep the process as simple and fluid as possible. Some alternatives for getting the conversation going include:

- Opening affirmation. If appropriate, have each person state why the relationship with the others involved in the conflict is important to him/her
- Identify the issues. Give the principals in the conflict five minutes each to speak without interruption, then five minutes each to respond, and then open the discussion.
- Ask, "Well, what's going on here?" and let the conversation flow. Capture the responses on separate sheets of paper
- Structure the discussion in four parts  
What happened?  
How do you feel about it?  
What does this mean to you?  
What can we do about it?

(Reference: Institute for Cultural Affairs, Focused Conversation and Difficult Conversations by Stone, Patton and Heen) *(Cont'd on p. 4)*

## A new vision for Parkdale

How do you create a vision for a community that's feeling under pressure? This was the challenge facing the politicians, social agencies, residents' groups and businesses in south Parkdale recently. Worried that their community might be taken over by unfriendly condo developments, or that transportation issues and access to the lake were being overlooked, they decided to create a new vision.

A local politician's assistant had seen Mark Ellwood conducting a facilitated workshop, using the facilitated workshop model used at Management Advisory Service. She connected MAS with the client, the Parkdale Liberty Economic Development Corporation.

*(Cont'd on p. 4)*

## New goals challenge for MAS

These past few months have been busy and productive ones for MAS. Our two new Executive Directors, Chris Govern and Fred Simons, both volunteers, have been leading MAS in pursuit of our objectives to increase the number of projects the agency undertakes to assist the nonprofit sector in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and to re-organize and strengthen MAS to meet these expanding needs.

A little over a year ago, our Board agreed to increase the number of MAS projects annually from some 100 in 2007 to 500 over a five-year period. The plan was described as "aspirational" since its success would require a major effort involving marketing, strengthening and expanding the volunteer (VC) roster, reorganizing the administrative structure and upgrading the office facilities. Since that date but more especially over the past five months work on all of these fronts has been proceeding apace.

The goal of 110 projects for 2008 is on target. A review of the VC roster, intended to determine those VCs available to undertake projects and to update their interests and qualifications, is nearing completion. A Membership Committee has begun recruitment of new VCs. A revised VC profile and a new screening and orientation process is in place. An expanded data base is undergoing trial in the MAS office. We have joined Imagine Canada and are now included on its website. The MAS website has been up-dated.

Efforts to increase and stabilize MAS revenues are continuing. Procedures for the regular solicitation of donations from satisfied client agencies have been implemented, with favorable results. Recently, MAS has received a grant, \$3,000.00 from the St. Andrew's Foundation. Another application for funding has been made to the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Corporate

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members and other VCs may expect to receive a request for financial support later this fall. Members will receive a receipt for income tax purposes.

Successful programming requires a cadre of Practice Leaders to be in charge of each of MAS programme areas. Lack of Practice Leaders is a major factor impeding our inability to "grow the business" and filling the several unfilled positions is a high priority. Anyone who is interested is invited to contact the office.

Broadening and strengthening the MAS Board of Directors is also a major matter. Four of the ten positions on the Board will be open at the end of the 2008 year and work has begun to seek good candidates. Anyone interested in proposing a candidate, who need not be a member of the corporation or a current VC, is asked to contact the Chair of the Nominating Committee, yours truly.

*Ed Monahan*

### Need help developing a plan or resolving an issue?

MAS volunteers can facilitate your meetings to make them more productive and effective. Our facilitators don't just chair meetings, they bring a process that assures that at the end, you will have a product, plan or a method for resolving an issue.

We've helped hundreds of Toronto nonprofits and we can help you too.

Call us at 416-963-5792 or visit our website at [www.masadvise.ca](http://www.masadvise.ca).

*(see story page one)*

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## Implications for MAS

# HR trends in the nonprofit sector

**M**AS clients tend to be a diverse group of organizations, representing differing levels of development, sizes and mission complexity. As such our clients represent a diversity of approaches to HR issues. While some organizations are sufficiently large to have HR specialists on staff, others lack the size or budget or don't perceive the need for this staff specialization.

What are or may be emerging HR trends that have implication for MAS? Just as it is difficult to identify the state of HR development among our clients, it is even more difficult to identify emerging trends and issues. My response at this stage is that while these trends are not clear, based on the types of requests we have seen recently some interesting possibilities emerge.

For the past couple of years, we have received significant requests for assistance in policy development, most particularly from small organizations that are recognizing the need for management consistency through HR policy standardization. Many organizations have no written policies, and rely on the Executive Director to ensure consistency in procedures and decision-making. While we have had some requests for policy review and for assistance in writing a single new policy, the majority of the some half-dozen requests over the past three years have been for "boiler plate" policies.

I would expect that as funding sources tighten their requirements, standardized policies and procedures loom large as a way of ensuring effective management oversight. If so, we can expect to have more requests from smaller organizations as they scramble to keep up with requirements for continued funding.

On the other hand, I sense that larger organizations are beginning to see the HR issues that accompany growth that their private sector counterparts are also beginning to recognize. As organizations move from small units to larger ones with emerging management levels where the relationship between employee and supervisor is qualitatively different, new issues such as a decline of trust, erosion of employee engagement, and a decline in the value

placed on personal relationships within the organization can emerge.

There are indications of growing pressure on smaller organizations to increase their program diversity and/or seek linkages with organizations servicing similar client groups. This pressure appears to be coming from the government and other funders who see efficiencies in larger organizations. While we might take issue with equating size with efficiency, there is much to suggest that there is pressure on organizations to grow their mission and mandate. If true, it will have profound impact on the sector as we know it, and a no less profound impact on MAS.

If this evolution of our clients is real, we will be seeing more requests for more complex interventions, including change readiness evaluation, change management strategies and processes and more requests to retool board members to lead and manage ochange processes. Not only will organizations become more complex, so will their management processes.

**Michael Landa**

### **HELP WANTED**

The MAS Nominating Committee is seeking nominations to fill four positions on the Board of Directors coming vacant at the end of this year. Board members must share the objectives of MAS and have experience in consulting. They should also have familiarity with the nonprofit sector. They need not be members of MAS or VCs. The Board meets quarterly. Board members are expected to attend Board meetings and to serve on at least one of Board committee.

#### **SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATIONS TO:**

**Ed Monahan, Chair,  
MAS Nominating Committee,  
by e-mail or letter – [emona@rogers.com](mailto:emona@rogers.com) or  
MAS, 700 Bay Street, Suite 700  
Toronto ON M5G 1Z6**

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**Go with the flow.** Once the conversation gets rolling, follow the group's lead. Intervene primarily to balance participation, enforce the ground rules, focus or deepen the conversation and to help the group notice when new information emerges.

**Be alert for the "aha" moments.** These moments can be fleeting. When a change in the dynamic within the group or among the protagonists occurs, pause and draw attention to what has just happened.

## A new vision for Parkdale

(from page 1)

After some initial discussions about logistics, the first of three sessions was held in November 2007. During that session, a diverse group of about thirty people from various community agencies answered the question, "What is your long-term vision for Parkdale?" The process developed a number of major themes, one of which was a pithy, yet powerfully motivating call to action; "Take back the lake." The Parkdale community was largely cut off from Lake Ontario when the Gardiner expressway was built. This theme represents an inspiring and assertive expression of community will. Other themes dealt with employment, housing, community participation, transportation, culture, employment, and the streetscape.

After this, a second workshop dealt with obstacles to reaching the vision. This workshop can tend to be difficult, since it deals with barriers, but the group managed to identify a number of important hurdles. Not everyone in the community agreed about harm reduction (safe injection sites) or how to engage new immigrants in the planning process. But the beauty of the facilitated workshop is that it allows many points of view to come forward and incorporates them into major themes.

Finally, a third workshop answered the question, "What action should we take to overcome the hurdles to achieve our vision?" At the end, a number of teams were identified to take charge of various directions that emerged. There was one overriding theme; a desire to include diverse groups in planning. Whatever happens with the specific themes relating to community identity, public space, housing, and social enterprise, the group felt that involving all of the diverse communities in Parkdale is paramount.

The participation at all of the sessions was diverse and passionate. And as a bonus, politicians from various levels of government were involved. At the last session, Councillor Gord Perks, MPP Cheri Di Novo, and MP Peggy Nash were all in attendance – a rare occasion where all of them engaged in a workshop at the same time. The process also gained some excellent press coverage by the Parkdale Liberty newspaper.

The vision is now complete. Next, the planning begins. MAS will be there to help.

### MAS Charitable Number

MAS has official charitable status (**Number 86043 1667 RR0001**) which means we can issue receipts for income tax purposes for donations in various forms.

### HOW TO REACH US

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