

Course Title: Decision-Making in a Political Environment

Audience: County Council Members and Senior County Staff – State of South Carolina

Total Time: 3 hours (including one 15-minute break)

Course Outline

1:00 – 1:10 pm | Welcome and Introduction (10 min)

- Welcome participants and overview of course objectives
- Your role is to make decisions
- Discuss the importance of effective decision-making in a political environment
- Quick participant introductions: share a recent decision-making challenge

1:10 – 1:40 pm | Decision-Making in Government (30 min)

- Overview of decision-making theory and practices in government
- What is a decision? How decisions are made.
- Herbert Simon (Administrative Behavior), Duncan MacRae (Public Policy Analysis), others
- Identification of problems and fact-finding in a political context
- **Interactive Discussion:** Participants share examples of difficult decisions in their counties

1:40 – 2:10 pm | Political Environment and Strategies (30 min)

- Understanding the political landscape: stakeholders, power dynamics, and influence
 - 7 types of power
- The political environment – how is it different from business, non-profit, or personal setting
- Approaches and insights for making better political decisions
- Strategies for gaining passage of legislative actions:
 - Minimum winning coalitions
 - Building consensus
 - Negotiation and compromise
- **Group Exercise:** Analyze a hypothetical local policy decision and map the coalition needed for success

2:10 – 2:25 pm | Break (15 min)

2:25 – 3:00 pm | Getting to YES! Structured Negotiation in Government (35 min)

- Overview of fundamentals of Getting to Yes!
- Negotiation theory and the structured negotiation process

- Identifying negotiation styles: competitive, collaborative, accommodating, avoiding, compromising
- Developing your Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA)
- **Exercise:** Role-play a negotiation scenario relevant to a county issue

3:00 – 3:30 pm | Decision-Making Criteria and Evaluating Alternatives (30 min)

- Public Values & Policy Choices
- Setting criteria for evaluating alternatives
- Weighing political feasibility, public impact, legal constraints, and budget considerations
- **Case Study:** Review a decision scenario and identify the most effective course of action based on multiple criteria

3:35 – 3:50 pm | Integrating Political and Analytical Approaches (15 min)

- Balancing technical analysis with political realities
 - Lawrence, KS example
- Strategies for achieving outcomes while maintaining public trust
- **Discussion:** Participants reflect on lessons learned and share takeaways

3:50 – 4:00 pm | Wrap-Up and Q&A (10 min)

- Recap of key concepts
- Questions and next steps for applying strategies in real-world decision-making
- Evaluations