

## **ARIZONA CIVIC TRAINING – ACT!**

### ***Creative Problem Solving***

A structured method of problem solving that leads to innovative, creative, and effective outcomes.

The Creative Problem Solving (CPS) framework is organized into three components and six stages, with one or more stage in each component:

1. Explore the Challenge
  - Identify the Goal, Wish or Challenge
  - Gather Data
  - Clarify the Problem
  
2. Generate Ideas
  - Generate Ideas
  
3. Prepare for Action
  - Select and Strengthen Solutions
  - Plan for Action

The CPS framework is flexible and can be entered at any stage depending on the nature of the task at hand. Within each stage of CPS, there is a divergent phase and a convergent phase. There are numerous divergent and convergent thinking tools that can be applied, depending upon the nature of the task.

#### ***Use to:***

Advance possibilities toward new outcomes. CPS is a powerful method to apply with groups, as it encourages involvement by all. An environment is established where creativity is fostered, ideas are listened to and valued, and change is embraced.

#### ***Timing:***

The scope of a CPS application can range from a one-time session to a longer term series of sessions. This depends on the complexity of the task. When there is a very clear objective or goal, a single session application can take from 90 minutes to one day.

#### ***Preparation:***

In preparation for a CPS session, the facilitator conducts a meeting with the client to understand the task at hand, what the desired outcome is, who will be involved etc. With this information, the facilitator designs a process plan for the session, then makes the necessary logistical arrangements.

#### ***Implementation:***

At the end of a CPS session, an action plan is developed for implementing the outcomes. What are the forces that might help move forward? What are the forces that might get in the way of moving forward? Who will do what by when?

#### ***Debrief:***

It always pays to spend some time at the end of a CPS session to debrief. This is a way to extend the learning from the session. Ask the questions: What did you like about the session? What opportunities lie ahead as a result of the session? And, What concerns did you have about the session?

**Resources**

- ❑ Staffing
  - A facilitator (manage process), client (owns the challenge), and resource group (assists in generating new and varied options).
  
- ❑ Equipment
  - Flip chart, post-it notes, pens
  
- ❑ Space and room set-up
  - Depends on group size and nature of the task.
  
- ❑ Budget
  - Cost of facilitator and materials.

**Documentation:**

All of the output from a CPS session is documented during the session on flip charts. This makes it fairly easy to create a report of the output and any decisions that are made.

**Variations:**

There are many variations in the application of Creative Problem Solving depending on the nature of the task being addressed. It can be applied to complex, systemic type challenges, or to very specific challenges. It can be applied when improvements are needed or when something entirely new is needed.

**Hints:**

At the heart of CPS is divergent and convergent thinking, the dynamic balance of creativity. Divergent thinking is generating lots of options and convergent thinking is evaluating and making decisions about the options. The secret to creating new possibilities is to become more conscious of which thinking mode you're in, so you can separate your divergent thinking from your convergent thinking.

***Please contact Douglas Reid of Innovate: Group for Advancing Possibilities (602-788-3003) if you would like more information on:***

- Facilitating a CPS session
- A two-day "Foundations of CPS" training program
- A five-day "Facilitating CPS" training program