Evaluating Options

by Sophia Tutorial

☰ WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss how to help parties evaluate options in order to find a solution that satisfies everyone. In particular, we'll focus on:

1. Evaluating Options for Desirability
2. Evaluating Options for Feasibility

1. Evaluating Options for Desirability

As you know, the goal of the conflict resolution process is to bring the conflicting parties together and help them work towards a solution that will meet their mutual needs.

At this point in the process, we've uncovered the parties' interests, or the reasons why they hold their opposing positions. The interests are what need to be met in order for the parties to feel satisfied.

Once we looked at the interests, we brainstormed options for how we could meet Party A's interests, Party B's interests, and their mutual interests.

However, we didn't evaluate these options; we simply brainstormed as many ideas as possible. We now have a long list of ideas that need to be evaluated.

As the intervener, you definitely want to check in on the desirability of each option with both parties. This is really their solution, so they have to be happy with it.

You can ask questions to check in with them on how they feel about the options. If something isn't desirable to either or both of the parties, you take it off the table.

2. Evaluating Options for Feasibility

Additionally, it's important to make sure the options are feasible for both parties.**Feasibility** has to do with how possible is it to actually take a particular action.

Something may look like a good option, but you need to ensure that it's really possible to carry out.

IN CONTEXT

Let's say that the parties are two sisters who have come together in the resolution process. They've been in conflict over the care of their mother, who's elderly and still living at home. They both have been sharing the responsibility of this care. There are other siblings out of state, but the two sisters are the only ones who live close by. The responsibility has become a burden, creating a dispute between the sisters.

They're now looking for ways to supplement this care, and they've come up with a number of options. As they look at these, perhaps they see one that looks pretty good. But then they realize that they can't move ahead with it because it's going to cost too much. It involves taking their mother some place where they'd have to pay a lot of fees, and it's going to be too expensive. So there might be some financial, or even availability considerations here. They might have to cross that option off right now because they just can't make it happen.

They then look at an option that involves changing the way that they're working together to care for their mother, but perhaps this option isn't feasible for one of the parties. Party A might say, "That really isn't going to work for me. I can't work with that particular option because of time constraints in my schedule, so we're going to have to cross that one out."

It's also possible to find ways to try to make an option feasible. One of the sisters might suggest, "Why don't we bring in some outside help. We could get some of the other family members to help pay for the first option." While this may be a good idea, these two parties can't make that decision for the outside family members because those people are not at the table. The conflict resolution process is an iterative process, and the sisters may have to return to this question by bringing other family members into the process.

As an intervener, you may find that the parties start looking at the issue a little differently based on evaluating their options, and there are any number of reasons why an option might not be feasible.

Then, you might look at the list of options and see that once you cross off the unfeasible options, there are still a few things left.

Once you have a few ideas that have feasibility, you can move ahead with those. If not, you may need to revisit the problem statement in the brainstorming phase.

🗎 TERM TO KNOW

Feasibility
The degree to which a proposed action or solution is actually possible.

☆ BIG IDEA

The evaluative stage is an important part of the conflict resolution process in which the parties are really working together to come up with the best possible solution based on what is both desirable and feasible for everyone.

✓ SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that once you have produced a list of ideas through brainstorming, you can guide the parties through the evaluative stage. You now understand that **options are evaluated based on what is desirable and feasible** for both parties. There are any number of reasons why an option might be feasible, and you may need to revisit an earlier stage of the process if none of the listed options are deemed workable for the parties. Good luck!

Source: ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA TUTORIAL BY MARLENE JOHNSON.

📄 TERMS TO KNOW

Feasibility
The degree to which a proposed action or solution is actually possible.