

Functions that may need scaffolding when designing and leading deliberative group processes: Playing with cards

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In the article *Deliberative Methods for Complex Issues: A typology of functions that may need scaffolding* (full reference below) I describe and explain 24 functions served by the different techniques and facilitation interventions employed by process leaders. In order to make the framework more practically useful, I have designed 24 cards, each describing one of the functions, as well as the risk involved when not scaffolding the function. These cards can be useful for process facilitators in a number of different ways.

1. When you are in the process of designing an appropriate structure for a particular group process you are to lead, you can use the cards in order to help you think through what the group needs from you. One productive way of using the cards for this purpose is to sort the cards by placing them in a pattern of 4 rows and 6 columns. You should place the cards representing the functions that you feel are most important to scaffold to the right, and the cards for the functions that seem less relevant to the left. If possible, do this together with one or a few colleagues (or the client). Here are more precise instructions:

- a) Spread out the 24 cards on a table.
- b) Start with any one card, read the text, and consider whether you think the function is important for the particular process you have in mind. If it seems important, place it to the right hand side. If it doesn't seem very important, place it to the left hand side.
- c) Then pick another card and decide if it goes right or left. If it goes in the same direction as the first card, you have to consider which one of them is more important, and sort them so that the more important card is to the right of the less important one.
- d) Continue the process in the same way for all the cards. You have to weigh each card against the other cards, so that you decide if the card you have in your hand is more or less important than the cards you have already considered.
- e) Do respect the rule that the cards should be fitted into a grid with 4 rows and 6 columns, where the leftmost column represents functions that are not deemed relevant or important in the particular assignment, and the rightmost column represents the most important functions. This rule forces you to think through what a particular group, with a particular background and composition need in order to work effectively towards the particular purposes defined for the process.
- f) When you have finally placed all the cards into the grid, you can start thinking about what particular activities, techniques, rules, etc., that you need to include in the process design in order to support the functions you identified as important.


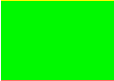




2. A second way to use the cards is when you want to gain a more clear insight into the strengths and weaknesses of particular methods, for example Open Space, Future Search, Soft System Methodology or The Integral Process for Complex Issues. You basically proceed in the same way as described above: Sort the cards in 4 rows and 6 columns. In this case, the 6 columns represent a scale from weakly to strongly

scaffolded. You have to consider whether the particular method in focus is designed to scaffold each of the 24 functions described by the cards. If you do this conscientiously, you will discover that each method considered has a profile of strengths and weaknesses regarding what it is designed to assist a group with.

3. A third way to use the cards is to reflect on your own personal "theory of change" or your own strengths and weaknesses. In this case you might, for example, spread out the cards in front of you and pick 3 cards that represents functions that you are good at scaffolding, and 3 cards for functions you want to become better at being mindful of and supporting.

The cards are posted as a separate pdf file. You can print them using a color printer and as thick cardboard sheets as your printer can handle, then cut out the cards.

The functions are color-coded according to the six categories of functions described in the above-mentioned article:

	Attentional support
	Relationships
	Attitudes/Feelings
	Understanding
	Empowerment and creativity
	Decision-making and coordination of action

Reference:

Jordan, T. (2014). Deliberative Methods for Complex Issues: A typology of functions that may need scaffolding. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal*, Nr 13, pp. 50-71. URL: <http://iaf-world.org/index/ToolsResources/IAFJournal/journal-abstracts.aspx>.

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