Tip Sheet: Dialogue Tips from the Experts

For several decades, leaders in organizational development have studied the impact of thoughtful questions on planning and decision-making. We share insights from three current experts.

> **Study "what's good."**

Professor Ronald Fry, from the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, encourages planning groups to "study what's good if they want to get more good." (2012, Leadership Video Series Created for PMFO) In other words, by examining what is going well, planning groups develop insights into ways to apply good practices in new situations. Conversely, focusing on what is wrong usually produces only incremental change. An expert in Appreciative Inquiry, Professor Fry advises that posing positive questions and encouraging storytelling about successes helps people see the bigger possibilities and go beyond the incremental "tweaks" to truly innovative solutions.

> **Consider the benefits of "great questions."**

Michael Marquardt, author of *Leading with Questions* (2014, John Wiley and Sons), writes about "great questions." He suggests that great questions are selfless, and support the work of the group by

- creating deep reflection;
- testing assumptions and causing individuals to explore their thoughts;
- enabling the group to better view the situation;
- opening doors to the mind; and
- leading to breakthrough thinking.

> **Come to the table with a "learner mindset."**

According to Marilee Adams, president and founder of the Inquiry Institute (InquiryInstitute.com), when team members participate with a "learner mindset," (*Change Your Questions, Change Your Life*. 2009, Berrett-Koehler Publishers), they ask great questions that lead to thinking objectively, creating solutions, and relating in a win-win way. She also says that approaching a situation as a learner allows members to become more open to new possibilities and ask questions more effectively. Team members who are in the learner mindset will pose such questions as

- What possibilities does this open up?
- What can we do about this?
- What can we learn from this?