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# Meeting Design and Facilitation at the Georgia Health Policy Center

The Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) focuses on solutions to complex issues facing health and health care today by conducting, analyzing, and disseminating qualitative and quantitative findings to connect decision makers with the objective research and guidance needed to make informed decisions about health policies and programs.

Meeting design and facilitation are core services provided by the project teams at GHPC. GHPC has successfully used the process of purpose-driven meeting design and facilitation for projects that have critically shaped state policies affecting workforce planning, population health, early childhood well-being, and long-term services and supports design. Our approach emphasizes pre-meeting design, meeting logistics, and post-meeting action, in partnership with our clients, to meet the needs of participants.

## Approach to Meeting Design

GHPC employs many elements of the Whole Scale<sup>®</sup> meeting design concept<sup>1</sup> that engages people from organizations and communities to achieve rapid, significant, and lasting change through a whole-system approach. This approach is used when organizational changes or systemic issues arise that require aligning and engaging a group of people. GHPC identifies, convenes, and facilitates a team of representative stakeholders to design the meetings. This team is a small-scale version of the whole system and, therefore, is reflective of the different stakeholders' perspectives. The design team collaborates to identify the right issues to be addressed and determines the meeting's goals, outcomes, and agenda.

GHPC guides the design team through the entire process, engages appropriate speakers, provides pre-event planning, prepares meeting materials, and follows up on post-meeting action items such as production of final reports.

Our meeting design process maximizes group interaction and minimizes content that strays from the meeting purpose. It is our experience that the wisdom lies with the meeting participants, and so meetings typically include interactive sessions to engage and utilize the knowledge and experience in the room. Best practices in adult learning and conversational capacity are used to guide our meeting design and facilitation services.

### GHPC's Whole-System Process Enables Participants to:

- Clarify and connect multiple, current realities
- Unite around a common picture of the future
- Reach agreement on action plans
- Build the processes, structures, and relationships that keep the organization or issue moving forward
- Align leadership and other stakeholders so that they can implement changes together



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<sup>1</sup> Dannemiller Tyson Associates.  
<http://www.dannemillertyson.com/services.php>



## Guiding Principles

Our approach to meeting design and facilitation starts with the overall guiding principles that are incorporated into all work at the GHPC. The guiding principles are:

- Create the right environment to have important conversations
- Provide relevant information from primary and secondary research, best practices, thought leaders, surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews
- Build and value relationships
- Think systematically about difficult problems
- Continuously learn within and among projects and programs
- Advocate for a way to approach problems, rather than a specific solution
- Find creative ways to teach others what we have learned

## Meeting Facilitation Style

During the meeting, GHPC staff serve in a neutral, catalytic role to convene stakeholders, facilitate the sharing of evidence-based information, and assist in complex decision-making processes. The GHPC recognizes the importance of tailoring tools and curricula to meet the needs and preferences of learners who are practical, self-directed, experienced, and goal-oriented. The GHPC employs strategies that are effective in increasing stakeholder engagement and fostering learning. Engagement of all meeting participants is key to the success of a meeting.

## Project Examples

### The Georgia Community Health Worker Forum

GHPC facilitated the Georgia Community Health Worker (CHW) Forum, sponsored by the Georgia Department of Public Health, Kaiser Permanente of Georgia, and Morehouse School of Medicine, to begin to outline a CHW model and plan for the state. The goals for the forum included creating a common understanding of the roles and values of community CHWs and fostering alignment of current CHW efforts to support health improvement and health care access in Georgia.

In advance of the meeting, GHPC facilitated a design team made up of multi-sector stakeholders to develop the conference goals and agenda. GHPC gathered data and assisted in the engagement of experts to present on CHW models and best practices used locally and in other states. Center staff also sourced information about the existing range of CHW programs, approaches, and policies in Georgia and the baseline training needs for CHWs.

Through facilitated activities, peer-to-peer learning, and idea exchange, meeting participants began to draft the core elements and recommendations for a statewide



CHW model. Meeting outcomes were enabled through a design that used team-based facilitation and fostered inclusivity, access to excellent information, encouragement of a big picture vision, and an emphasis on congruent agreement.

### Early Childhood Learning Assessment

The Georgia Department of Early Childhood and Learning, in collaboration with the Maternal and Child Health Section of the Georgia Department of Public Health, has been working to develop a unified, statewide approach for comprehensive assessments in early childhood learning facilities to ensure that all of the state's developmentally at-risk children are identified and referred for care.

GHPC facilitated the work of a 45-member task force and its three subcommittees over a two-year period to identify opportunities to align and improve Georgia's current assessment practices and recommend changes related to child-level assessments in Georgia's early care and learning settings.

The overall work plan included evaluating the current state of assessment in Georgia, identifying best practices, and making recommendations for changes in practice and policies for early childhood comprehensive assessments.

GHPC ensured that this long-term project stayed on track through scheduling and designing regular communication



and meetings. The center was also responsible for surveys and interviews that informed the recommendations for modifications to current policy and practice and drafting the final report of the task force.