

Facilitation Guide

Consultation Part 1: **Developing the Requisites of Consultation**

An Assembly Development Module Workshop



“The evolution of local and national Bahá’í Assemblies at this time calls for a new state of mind on the part of their members as well as on the part of those who elect them, for the Bahá’í community is engaged in an immense historical process that is entering a critical stage. Bahá’u’lláh has given to the world institutions to operate in an Order designed to canalize the forces of a new civilization.

“ . . . Spiritual Assemblies must rise to a new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities as channels of divine guidance, planners of the teaching work, developers of human resources, builders of communities, and loving shepherds of the multitudes. They can realize these prospects through increasing the ability of their members to take counsel together in accordance with the principles of the Faith and to consult with the friends under their jurisdiction, through fostering the spirit of service, through spontaneously collaborating with the Continental Counselors and their auxiliaries, and through cultivating their external relations. Particularly must the progress in the evolution of the institutions be manifest in the multiplication of localities in which the function of the Spiritual Assembly enhances the individual believer’s capacity to serve the Cause and fosters unified action. In sum, the maturity of the Spiritual Assembly must be measured not only by the regularity of its meetings and the efficiency of its functioning, but also by the continuity of the growth of Bahá’í membership, the effectiveness of the interaction between the Assembly and the members of its community, the quality of the spiritual and social life of the community, and the overall sense of vitality of a community in the process of dynamic, ever-advancing development.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message
to the Bahá’ís of the World, 1996



Developing the Requisites of Consultation

OVERVIEW FOR FACILITATORS

Purpose

- ★ To examine what consultation is, how it differs from other forms of group decision-making, and what its prerequisites are

This module focuses on examining consultation – what it is, how it differs from other forms of group decision-making, and what its prerequisites are. It includes an opportunity for participants to assess their level of mastery of 16 consultative skills and to develop a personal action plan for enhancing their ability to consult, thereby improving their Assembly’s consultative climate.

What you will find inside your Facilitation Guide:

- ★ **Frontispiece with key quotation.** A one-page sheet containing a quotation from a letter of the Universal House of Justice which provides the foundation of the modules. (p. 2)
- ★ **Overview for Facilitators.** The-page you are reading. (p. 3)
- ★ **The Assembly Development Process.** A one-page description of the process of Assembly development, the role of these modules within that process, and how to request an Assembly Development representative to facilitate the modules. (p. 4)
- ★ **Guidance for Facilitator.** A four-page collection of suggestions for preparation before the session, tips for facilitating during the session, ideas for closing the session, and guidance on what to do with the workshop report form and evaluation forms after the session. (pp. 5-8)
- ★ **Highlights of this module.** A two-page listing of the module objectives, an agenda outline with times of each segment of the module, and a listing of materials needed. (pp. 9-10)
- ★ **Facilitator’s instructions for segments of this module.** A series of pages that provide the purpose and instructions for each section of the module.
- ★ **Description of the Office of Assembly Development.** A two-page overview of the vision and mission of this office and the services it can provide. (unnumbered pages near the end of the Facilitation Guide)
- ★ **Evaluation Forms.** A two-page evaluation form for the facilitator to complete and return to the Office of Assembly Development and a two-page evaluation form for the Assembly to complete two months after the workshops. (unnumbered pages at the end of the Facilitation Guide)

Note: You will also want to obtain a copy of the Participant Handouts.

The Assembly Development Process

“...enabling Assemblies to rise to a ‘new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities’...”

The National Spiritual Assembly focuses its Assembly Development initiatives towards facilitating the development of “a new state of mind” on the part of Assembly members and the community, thereby enabling Assemblies to rise to the “new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities” envisioned by the Universal House of Justice.

The development process is designed to be furthered by presentation of a variety of module workshops, each module covering a distinct topic or function. Use of these workshops will help Assemblies to understand more clearly the spiritual nature of their institution, to improve their performance, and to attain an ever advancing level of maturity as the primary institutions of the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh. When used with the general community, the workshops will heighten appreciation for the station and responsibilities of local Assemblies and deepen the desire to support and assist these institutions in their growth process.

The National Spiritual Assembly highly recommends that each workshop be studied with a Bahá’í facilitator who resides outside the particular Bahá’í community, although these materials may be used by Assemblies on their own. A list of Bahá’ís who serve as facilitators, called Assembly Development Representatives, is available from the Office of Assembly Development of the Bahá’í National Center at (847) 733-3490 or by e-mail to OAD@usbnc.org.

Assemblies may choose to study these workshops as an institution, may invite other Assemblies in their area to study together, or may invite their community to join them in exploring the modules. Workshops may also be used at Bahá’í schools or Institutes. If they are used with both Assembly members and other community members, Assemblies are encouraged to set aside follow-up time at one of their future meetings to consider the impact and implications of what was learned on their collective functioning.

Workshops in this program range from two to five hours in length with the majority averaging about four hours. They are, however, adaptable to different timing needs. Workshops are divided into separate segments which can be selectively deleted if timing needs require this. Optional supplemental materials are also included for use if more time is available.

Guidance for Facilitators

Before the Session

Personal preparation

- ★ Take time to prepare yourself spiritually and materially to facilitate this workshop. Meditate on your role in facilitating the friends' thoughtful study and consultation.
- ★ Read through the workshop and its handouts in advance of the session and ponder the themes in them.
- ★ Pray for assistance. Feel confident that the Blessed Beauty will guide and confirm you as you endeavor to serve the Faith.

Preparation of the course and its materials

- ★ Become familiar with the workshop and its options and extensions. Feel free to duplicate the handouts on colored paper and interleaf them in the Facilitation Guide if this would make facilitation easier for you.
- ★ The amount of time suggested for each segment of the workshop is a minimum only. If the number of participants in a workshop is large and many small groups will be reporting back, you will need to allow more time than the minimum to complete some segments.
- ★ If some of the participants are not proficient in English, consider ways to meet their needs. For instance, those who understand spoken English but do not read it easily could be paired with those who can read quotations aloud. These adjustments may affect the amount of time necessary to complete an activity or exercise.
- ★ Material which appears in italics is provided to supplement and extend the session if more time is available. Determine in advance how many expansions to the module, if any, are appropriate. Some factors to consider are available time, general level of experience and deepening of the participants, and local interest in a particular topic.
- ★ Have materials (such as a few extra handouts, art supplies, extra pens and pencils, small gift item) ready for each participant. It is wise to have slightly more of everything than you anticipate needing in case a larger than expected group of friends attend.
- ★ If the workshop segments you will be using require cards for games or exercises, prepare these beforehand. If workshop

Guidance for Facilitators, continued

segments have demonstrations, practice these once or twice beforehand.

- ★ Select devotional readings, prayers, and music you will want to use and make sure you have the equipment to play any music you might have.

Preparation of the meeting room

- ★ If possible, ask to see the meeting room in advance. Arrive early to set up. Adapt the room set-up to meet your needs, if possible.
- ★ Create an inviting atmosphere of beauty, dignity, and warmth to welcome participants. Possibilities include photographs of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, holy places or great teachers, heroines and heroes; framed quotations, decorating the walls with objects of beauty, tablecloths, arrangements of fresh or dried flowers, lighting, candles, music from diverse cultural backgrounds, bowls of potpourri or drops of rose oil, seating arrangements, and refreshments.

During the Session

Creating and maintaining a spiritual environment

- ★ Warmly greet the participants. Be sure that the spirit of the Faith permeates the room. While conveying the content of the workshop is important, it is equally important that the style of interaction does not feel harsh, nervous, or rushed. Be a bringer of light to the hearts of the group.

Facilitating discussion

- ★ These workshops ask facilitators to raise several questions to the group for possible consultation. If one question fails to elicit much response, move on to another one.
- ★ Express appreciation for each participant’s contribution.
- ★ Be mindful of who has spoken and try to give everyone an opportunity to offer a first comment before giving time for individuals to offer second or third comments. Depending on the size of your group, you may want to go around the room, inviting each person to comment briefly in turn.
- ★ As groups are consulting on quotations and focus questions, go from group to group and listen in, without interrupting the

Guidance for Facilitators, continued

consultative process. You may want to note comments or questions that arise and bring them up when the groups reassemble.

Using time

- ★ When small groups are asked to consult or work on an art project in a certain amount of time, give each group a “5-minute warning” when their time is nearly finished. This could be done either by going from group to group as a reminder or by ringing a small bell.
- ★ Be flexible and sensitive to the needs and understanding of the participants. If a particular question or point engages the group in lengthy but topic-related discussion, it may be preferable to allow participants to continue to pursue an area that intrigues them rather than to cut off discussion and move on to another point or exercise. Participants often experience exploring less material but in greater depth as more satisfying than a hurried look at many aspects of a topic.
- ★ You may choose to make the decision yourself about whether to let a group spend more time on one area and skip later exercises or activities. You may also choose to involve the group as a whole in the decision: “Since this topic is generating a lot of interest, do we want to 1) spend more time here and not explore a later topic, 2) extend the time of our session and not skip any segments, or 3) move on from this topic, go through all the following segments, and end at our original agreed-upon time?”

Dividing participants into small groups

- ★ Put stickers on participants name cards or leave cards with stickers at their place and have them group themselves according to sticker design.
- ★ Divide into groups by the month/season in which one’s birthday falls.
- ★ In theater/auditorium seating, form groups around where participants are sitting.
- ★ Create funny groupings and ask people to choose the group that best describes them (Example: people who love apples are group A; if your favorite color is blue, join group B; if Casablanca is your favorite movie, join group C.)

Guidance for Facilitators, continued

Closing the Session

- If you have Assembly members from several communities attending a session, you may wish to have them work together as an Assembly or work in groups composed of different Assemblies, depending on the exercise.
- If you have a combination of Assembly and community members attending, you may wish to mix the groups together for some exercises and separate Assembly members from community members for other exercises.

- ★ Provide verbal instructions on how to turn the evaluation forms in.
- ★ You may want to give a gift to each participant of a card with a beautifully lettered quotation that pertains to the workshop.
- ★ Encourage Assemblies that went through this workshop in a group larger than their own membership to have a follow-up period at an up-coming meeting to consult on what was learned and how it can be applied to their own functioning.
- ★ Suggest choosing a date and picking a topic for the next Assembly development workshop.

Please note: Have the participant evaluation forms turned in to you and return them with your evaluation form. Be sure to use the machine readable forms. Give participants their Bahá'í Locality Code and explain how to fill in the forms.

After the Session

- ★ Complete the workshop report form and mail it with the participant evaluations to:

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States,
Office of Assembly Development
1233 Central St.
Evanston, IL 60201
OAD@USBNC.ORG
fax. (847) 733-3486
phone (847) 733-3490

- ★ Send a follow up letter to the Assembly(ies) to thank them for participation and include a copy of their evaluation form to fill out two months after the workshop.

Thank you for serving the Cause by facilitating this Assembly development workshop!

Highlights of Developing the Requisites of Consultation

Objectives:

Participants will

- ★ Explore aspects of “a new state of mind”
- ★ Perceive the urgency of developing skill in the art of consultation
- ★ Understand what elements must be present for group decision making to be Bahá’í consultation
- ★ Assess areas of personal strength and challenge in various aspects of consultation
- ★ Develop an action plan for acquiring skill in 1-2 goal areas

Agenda outline: (Total time: 3 hours, 20 minutes)

- ★ **Introduction** (15 minutes), p. 11
An opportunity to introduce the Assembly development program, familiarize participants with the objectives of this module, and present an agenda outline of topics and activities.
- ★ **The call to “a new state of mind”** (20 minutes), pp. 12-13
A guided discussion to help participants grasp some of the implications of moving toward “a new state of mind.”
- ★ **Perceiving the importance of consultation** (10 minutes), p. 14
A review of quotations on the indispensability of consultation and a brief time to reflect on the difficulty of developing skill in consultation.
- ★ **Experiencing the collective wisdom of the group** (45 minutes), pp. 15-18
A “Lost on the Moon” activity designed to let participants experience the superiority of group decision-making.
- ★ **Defining true consultation** (35 minutes), pp. 19-22
A small group activity to identify elements which must be present for group decision making to be Bahá’í consultation and to develop a short definition of Bahá’í consultation.
- ★ **The art of Bahá’í consultation** (40 minutes), pp. 24-26
A small group activity focused on translating the spiritual requisites of consultation into behaviors which are expressions of these spiritual requisites.
- ★ **Developing the skills of consultation** (20 minutes), p. 29
A self-assessment activity to identify current levels of skill in various aspects of consultation, followed by a guided discussion on the importance of improved performance by Assemblies and the relationship between development of consultative skills by Assembly members and the maturation of the institution as a whole.
- ★ **Closing** (20 minutes), p. 30
An activity to consolidate what has been learned and to translate knowledge into behaviors by developing individual action plans to improve consultative attitudes and skills.

Highlights, continued

Extension sessions for use if more time is available

- ★ ***Differences between Bahá'í consultation and other forms of decision making*** (15 minutes), p. 23

Individual reading of quotations to perceive how Bahá'í consultation differs from other forms of decision making currently in use, followed by group discussion of individuals' findings.

- ★ ***The example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*** (15 minutes), p. 27

An opportunity to become familiar with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's manner of listening, to reflect on what it would feel like to be listened to in this way, and to recognize these behaviors and attitudes as the standard to which all Bahá'ís should aspire.

- ★ ***Consultation as spiritual conference*** (20 minutes), p. 28

An opportunity to reflect on the dynamics of what 'Abdu'l-Bahá described as "the most memorable instance of spiritual consultation" and to identify behaviors which indicate the presence of the prime requisites of consultation.

Times given above are minimums. Module material which appears in italics is provided to supplement and extend the session if more time is available. If less time is available, you can skip whatever section seems to be less relevant to the needs of the group. You may also choose to direct participants to focus only on quotations in their handouts that are bolded, as these are the most vital. Focusing on bolded quotes may also aid participants who are slower readers.

Materials needed

- ★ Prayer book or prepared devotions
- ★ Whiteboard, blackboard or flip chart and markers and easel
- ★ Soft music for action planning time and equipment to play it on
- ★ Pens and pencils
- ★ A variety of highlighters
- ★ *Optional: A beautiful card or calligraphy rendition of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passage on the prime requisites of consultation to give as a gift to each participant (Facilitation Guide, p. 31).*

Note: You will need to inform the sponsoring Assembly that Participant Handouts for each person should be ordered from the Bahá'í Distribution Service prior to the event.

Introduction (15 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To introduce the Assembly development process
- ★ To familiarize participants with the objectives of this module
- ★ To present an agenda outline of topics and activities
- ★ To determine what questions and issues participants have on this topic

Activities:

1. Brief devotions

- ★ Open with brief devotions that you have selected or ask for a volunteer.

2. Introduction to Assembly development resources (2 minutes)

- ★ Give a brief introduction to Assembly development resources, highlighting that the purpose of the modules is to facilitate the development of “a new state of mind” on the part of Assembly members and the community, thereby enabling Assemblies to rise to the “new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities” envisioned by the Universal House of Justice.
- ★ A primary focus of this particular module, the first of two on consultation, is examining consultation – what it is, what its prerequisites are – and reflecting on choices individuals can make that will improve the ability of Assemblies to consult.

3. Overview objectives (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Read aloud the objectives of this module and have them posted.

See page 9 of the Facilitation Guide for a list of the objectives. Make adjustments for any sections that are removed for timing considerations or optional extension sessions that are added.

4. Review agenda (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Go through the agenda for the session, writing an outline of topics to be covered on a whiteboard or previously prepared flip chart.

See pages 9 and 10 of the Facilitation Guide for an agenda. Make adjustments for any sections that are removed for timing considerations or optional extension sessions that are added.

5. Invite questions (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Invite participants to share questions they have about this topic.
- ★ Make a list of these and post them. At the end of class, check to make sure that all have been answered or that the questioner has been referred to information elsewhere.

The Call To “A New State Of Mind” (10 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To grasp some of the implications of moving toward “a new state of mind”
- ★ To gain a deeper understanding of the Assembly’s roles and responsibilities

Activities:

1. Discussion of quotations (5-10 minutes)

- ★ Have a participant read aloud the first quotation on the handout “The Call to a New State of Mind” (see Participant Handouts, p. 3).
- ★ Invite participants to share thoughts and feelings about “a new state of mind” and the process of moving toward it.
- ★ Offer the thought that one implication is the need for all of us to listen to “old” quotes with “new” ears in order to find new insights in familiar quotations.
- ★ *You may also choose to share two other thoughts:*
 - *First, a new state of mind is not a one-time paradigm shift – a condition of once we “get it,” we will necessarily “have it” forever – as much as a continuing process of reorienting our minds from what is to the vision of what the possibilities are, as described in the Writings and Ridván messages.*
 - *Second, it is normal to slide back into “old” states of mind – especially under stress – for quite a while. States of mind are habits, or default settings, which take conscious, deliberate effort and time to change.*

Optional extension: Further discussion of quotations

- ★ *For an extended session, have participants read aloud the remaining quotations on “The Call to a New State of Mind,” (Participant Handouts, pp. 3-4). The following questions can be asked in any order, and you have the option to ask them after the paragraph in question or after all quotes are read.*
- ★ **Ask the group as a whole:**
 - *How might “an expansion of thought” be stimulated? (par. 3)*
 - *What might fall into the category of “the obscuring dust of acquired knowledge”? (par. 5)*
 - *What are some of the assumptions and conceptions we*

Call To “A New State Of Mind,” continued

have in general about institutions, their authority, and “what is natural and appropriate in relationships”?
(par. 6)

- *Where do these assumptions and conceptions come from?*
(par. 6)
- *How do we remove “obscuring dust” and “clear the ground for new conceptions of social organization”?* (par. 5)
- *How comfortable is the process of “ever more rapid change”?* (par. 8)
- *Is resisting or hiding from this “onrushing” and “quickenning wind” an option for us? For humanity as a whole?* (par. 4)
- ★ *Ask for thoughts on the process of “experiencing the rigorous effects” of an “onrushing” and “quickenning wind” ventilating “the modes of thought of us all, renewing, clarifying, and amplifying our perspectives.”* (par. 4)
- ★ *Ask for one word descriptions of the feelings that being part of such a process evokes. Acknowledge as a normal part of the change process all the feelings, whether they express excitement or reservations.*

2. Read passage, underline and share (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Ask participants to read the passages from the Ridván 1996 message (see Participant Handouts, p. 3) silently and underline or highlight what they feel are key words or phrases that have particular implications for the topic of this module.
- ★ Invite participants to share what they have underlined.

***Canalize:**

to channel into a particular direction;
provide an outlet for

Perceiving the Importance of Consultation

(10 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To perceive the indispensability of consultation
- ★ To appreciate the difficulty of developing skill in consultation

Activities:

1. Review quotations (5 minutes)

- ★ Have participants read aloud the first four quotations on the handout “Perceiving the Importance of Consultation.” (see Participant Handouts, p.5)
- ★ Comment that the passage (paragraph number three from above mentioned sheet) “No welfare and no well being can be attained except through consultation” is a very flat, categorical statement. Bahá’u’lláh doesn’t say “except for very intelligent people” or “except for very mature institutions.” In fact, consultation is not just a highly recommended practice, it is a law. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to it in the next passage as an “explicit ordinance”.
- ★ **Ask:** What does it feel like to walk down an unfamiliar path in the dark without a light? What are the risks?

How often do we try to understand and solve complex problems without “the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way”? How well does that work?

2. Reflecting on difficulty mastering consultation skills (5 minutes)

- ★ Comment that the House of Justice speaks of consultation as a skill, an art, and a new form of “human corporate action.” (see the fifth quote on page 5 of the Participant Handouts)
- ★ Ask participants to read the fifth and sixth quotations on the handout.
- ★ Invite thoughts on why consultation is difficult to master.
- ★ Share the last quotation (#7) on the handout by reading it aloud.
- ★ Suggest that before the House of Justice guided our thinking on this subject, many of us believed that consultation was what automatically happened whenever Bahá’ís opened their mouths. Thinking that we already have mastered consultation is a barrier to developing skill in this art.

Suggest that another difficulty may be a perception on our part that our own thinking does not need to be “supported and

Perceiving the Importance of Consultation, continued

enriched by the collective experiences and wisdom of the group.” (refer them to page 6 of Participant Handouts).

- ★ Suggest that when we are tempted to think along these lines we might call to mind Bahá'u'lláh's statement that “No welfare and no well being can be attained except through consultation.”(refer them to quote # 3 on page 5 of the Participant Handouts)

Experiencing the Collective Wisdom of the Group (45 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To experience the superiority of group decision-making

Activities:

1. Setting up the activity (5 minutes)

- ★ Have a participant read the first two quotations on the handout “Experiencing the Collective Wisdom of the Group.” (see Participant Handouts, p. 6)
- ★ Comment that one of the cultural assumptions most Americans have grown up with is the superiority of individual decision-making – “individual initiative, personal ability and resourcefulness.” This is especially the model for those in leadership positions. Our movies portray cultural heroes as independent leaders who go in, size up a situation, and make a decision. Rarely are these heroes shown asking their companions for their assessments or suggestions.

While social science research has repeatedly demonstrated the superiority of decisions made by groups over decisions made by the “smartest” person within the group, this knowledge, confirmed by both science and religion, seems counter-intuitive to the feelings and beliefs of most Americans.

- ★ Ask participants to ponder individually:
 - How often do you try to move a piano or large couch by yourself?
 - How often do you make an important decision or come to a point of view by yourself?
 - What do these answers say about our understanding of when we could benefit from the collective wisdom of others vs. the collective physical strength of others?
- ★ Comment that for many of us, it is easier to say “I am only so strong - I need help” than to say “I am only so smart - I need help.”
- ★ Read aloud to participants the following situation:

“Due to mechanical difficulties your spaceship has just crash-landed on the lighted side of the moon. You had been scheduled to rendezvous with a mother ship 300 kilometers away in the daylight, but the rough landing has ruined your own ship and destroyed all of the equipment on board except for fifteen items.

Experiencing the Collective Wisdom of the Group, continued

“Your crew’s survival depends on reaching the mother ship, so you must choose the most critical items available to you for the 300-kilometer trip. The emergency manual prepared by the Space Agency, which explains how to make these decisions, was also destroyed in the crash, and all communications with earth have been cut off. You are on your own.

“You have survived the crash. Your next concern is to try to survive the moon.”

2. Individual decision making (5 minutes)

- ★ Instruct participants to turn to their handout sheet “Lost on the Moon Individual Decision Making” (Handouts, p. 7). Give them the following instructions: “Your task is to rank the fifteen items which were not destroyed in the crash. Place the number “1” by the item you believe to be the most important to survival and the number “2” by the second most important. Rank order the entire list, so that the number “15” represents the item you believe to be the least important to survival.”
- ★ Instruct participants not to talk with anyone else as they make their rankings. Alert them to leave the scoring side of the form blank. (Give a two-minute warning).

3. Collective decision making (15 minutes)

- ★ When participants have finished their individual rankings, have them assemble into groups of 4-5.

Groups should consult together to come up with a collective ranking for each of the 15 items. (see Participant Handouts, p. 8). Give a two-minute warning.

4. Scoring individual and group rankings (10 minutes)

- ★ When groups have finished their collective ranking, explain the scoring:

The “Lost on the Moon” exercise was submitted to the Manned Spacecraft Center of NASA in Houston, TX. It was referred to the Crew Equipment Research Branch for solution, who ranked the fifteen items and gave their sometimes surprising rationales.

- ★ While still in groups, have participants score the exercise, beginning with their individual rankings first, by comparing

Experiencing the Collective Wisdom of the Group, continued

NASA's rankings and rationales

the ranking they gave to an item with NASA's ranking, which you will read to them from list below. Participants should enter NASA's ranking numbers in the appropriate column on their individual scoring sheets. (see Participant Handouts, p. 7)

★ Share NASA's rankings and rationales (numbers in parentheses are the item numbers on participants' sheets):

1. Two fifty-kilogram tanks of oxygen (5)
Most pressing survival need.
2. Twenty liters of water (10)
Replacement of tremendous liquid loss on lighted side.
3. Stellar map of the moon's constellations (4)
Primary means of navigation.
4. Food concentrate (14)
Efficient means of supplying energy requirements.
5. Solar-powered FM receiver-transmitter (11)
For communication with mother ship, but FM requires line-of-site transmission and short ranges.
6. Twenty meters of nylon rope (7)
Useful in scaling cliffs, tying injured together.
7. First-aid kit containing injection needles (8)
Needles for vitamins, medicines, etc., will fit special aperture in space suits.
8. Parachute silk (2)
Protection from sun's rays.
9. Self-inflating life raft (15)
CO₂ bottle in military raft may be used for propulsion.
10. Signal flares (9)
Distress signal when mother ship is sighted.
11. Two .45 caliber pistols (3)
Possible means of self-propulsion.
12. One case of dehydrated milk (12)
Bulkier duplication of food concentrate.
13. Solar-powered portable heating unit (6)
Not needed unless on dark side.
14. Magnetic compass (13)
Magnetic field on moon is not polarized; worthless for navigation.
15. Box of matches (1)
No oxygen on moon to sustain flame; virtually worthless.

★ Inform participants that after entering NASA's rankings on

Experiencing the Collective Wisdom of the Group, continued

their individual rankings sheets, they should subtract the smaller number of the two rankings from the larger number. For example, if they ranked “signal flares” as “1,” and NASA ranked it “10,” they earn 9 error points.

- ★ Have participants total the error points for all fifteen items to get a final score. The lower the total score, the better the solution.
- ★ After participants finish scoring their individual rankings, have them then copy NASA’s rankings on their group decision making sheet and score their group rankings.

5. Comparing individual and group scores (10 minutes)

- ★ Ask each group to report their group score and all the individual scores of the group’s participants. Write these on a flip chart or board under two headings: “Group scores” and “Individual scores.”
- ★ Invite comments about the differences in the scores between individuals and groups.
- ★ Make a comment about the amount of time involved in individual decision making vs. group decision making.

Note to facilitator: The expected outcome is not that 100% of the group scores will be higher than the scores of individuals in the group. Social science research indicates that roughly 75% of the time the group score will be higher but not invariably.

- ★ You may choose to mention that social-psychological research in group dynamics, e.g., Kelley & Thibaut (1969), compares individuals and groups concerning which of these generates optimum solutions to problems. The answer depends upon the nature of the problems themselves. If a problem is routine, simple, or someone is an expert at solving it, then that individual is better than a group at solving it. However, if a problem is complex, novel, and no one is an expert at solving it, then groups are better than individuals. It seems evident that the majority of problems that Assemblies are called upon to solve fall into this latter category.
- ★ You may ask participants to suggest reasons why group scores are sometimes lower than the scores of individuals in the group. One common reason is that the groups had non-

Experiencing the Collective Wisdom of the Group, continued

consultative dynamics, such as quiet people not being encouraged to share their thinking or belittling comments causing some members to quit participating. Another possibility is that the majority of the group held a common but mistaken point of view.

★ Share the dictionary **definition of consultation**: to ask advice or opinion of; to deliberate together. (also on Participant's Handouts, pg. 10)

★ **Ask:**

- In what ways is the “Lost on the Moon” exercise consultation?
- Since it demonstrates “the collective experiences and wisdom” of group analysis and decision-making, is it Bahá’í consultation? Why or why not?

Note to facilitator: The expectation is not that this activity is “Bahá’í consultation” simply because its participants are Bahá’ís. At its best, this activity is an example of the value of group vs. individual decision making. As such, it is a process used by non-Bahá’ís as well as Bahá’ís. We will next look at elements which distinguish Bahá’í consultation from other forms of group decision-making.

Defining True Consultation (35 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To identify elements which must be present for group decision making to be Bahá'í consultation

Activities:

1. Share the following quotations: (2 minutes)

“It is important to realize that the spirit of Bahá'í consultation is very different from that current in the decision-making processes of non-Bahá'í bodies.”

(The Universal House of Justice in a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada dated March 6, 1970)

“. . . it is difficult to grasp the distinguishing elements of the mature society to which Bahá'u'lláh beckons all humanity. The models of the old world order blur vision of that which must be perceived. . . .”

(The Universal House of Justice, letter on “Individual Rights and Freedoms in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,” paragraph 21)

- ★ Comment that we have been heavily influenced by the assumptions and models of our culture. Our ideas about consultation are influenced by the decision-making bodies that we may belong to in our work life or community boards that we may serve on. The differences between these and Bahá'í consultation are more than just not using “Roberts Rules of Order.” There are differences of goals as well as means to achieve the goals as can be seen in the aforementioned quotes.

2. Small group discussion (15-20 minutes)

- ★ Divide participants into groups of 3-5.
- ★ Refer participants to the handout “True Consultation.” (see Participant Handouts, p. 9) Ask each participant to take a moment to silently read through the quotations and highlight key phrases.
- ★ Explain that after individuals share the key phrases they identified with their group, the groups should develop a one-or-two-sentence **definition** of Bahá'í consultation that embraces these concepts and goes beyond the dictionary definition. Groups should write their definition on the handout “Defining True Consultation.” (see Participant Handouts, p. 10)
- ★ Inform them that the groups should then also make a list of the results or **outcomes** of consultation, as found in these quotations. There is also room on the form to note these.

Defining True Consultation, continued

3. Groups report back (10 minutes)

- ★ Have small groups share their **definitions** with the larger group. When all have done so, verbally highlight 3-5 key elements of Bahá'í consultation which appear in these, such as atmosphere, purpose and means.
- ★ Ask each group to share its lists of **outcomes**. Make a master list on a flip chart.
- ★ When the list of outcomes is complete, focus in greater depth on one of these by going back to the quotation “Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude.” (Bahá'u'lláh, in Consultation: A Compilation, p. 3, #3)

Diagram on the board or flip chart the process of transmuting conjecture into certitude:

Conjecture

Examples:

Perhaps . . .
I wonder if . . .
What if we . . .

Certitude

Examples:

I know . . .
I understand . . .
We should definitely . . .

- ★ Comment that we begin with doubts, hesitations, uncertainty, questions, gaps in our knowledge, theories, and preliminary ideas about possible solutions. Through the consultative process, our awareness is increased, our understanding is enriched, and the right way to proceed becomes clear. We gain both knowledge and a sense of confidence and certainty about the next step before us.
- ★ **Ask:**
 - In addition to transmuting conjecture into certitude, what effect or side benefit does the consultative process have on unity of thought in a group?
 - What effect or side benefit does this process have on support for the group's decision?

Optional extension

- ★ *For an extended session, invite comments on the relationship between this process and the phrase in the opening prayer of the Spiritual Assembly “that our thoughts, our views, our feelings may become as one reality, manifesting the spirit of*

Defining True Consultation, continued

union.” (From the opening prayer for Spiritual Assemblies, Bahá’í Prayers, pp. 137-138)

Another optional extension

★ *Another option for an extended session is to go back to the quotation “The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.”(see the second quote on page 9 of the Participant Handouts)*

★ *Share the following passage of Bahá’u’lláh:*

“Know thou that, according to what thy Lord, the Lord of all men, hath decreed in His Book, the favors vouchsafed by Him unto mankind have been, and will ever remain, limitless in their range. First and foremost among these favors, which the Almighty hath conferred upon man, is the gift of understanding. . . . This gift giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation. Next in rank, is the power of vision, the chief instrument whereby his understanding can function.” (Bahá’u’lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 194)

★ *Ask for comments on the relationship between the gifts of understanding and consultation. Ask for comments on the role of vision in consultation.*

★ *Suggest that through consultation three powerful elements are brought together: 1) the gift of understanding, 2) the power of vision, and 3) the collective experiences and wisdom of the group.*

Note: *If you will be using Optional Extension Session One, which follows on page 23, it should be done at this point, before closing the activity.*

4. Closing the Activity (5 minutes)

★ *If these points have not surfaced, mention them as a summation:*

- *Suggest that consultation is a set of behaviors which reflect our thoughts, our feelings, our values – our reality.*
- *Share a quotation of the Universal House of Justice which refers to thoughts as “the reality of man”:*

Defining True Consultation, continued

“ . . . earnest consideration must be given to the reality of man, namely, his thought. To understand the relevance of this potent reality is also to appreciate the social necessity of actualizing its unique value through candid, dispassionate and cordial consultation, and of acting upon the results of this process.”

(The Universal House of Justice, in *The Promise of World Peace*, Section III.)

- Note that the process of consultation brings man’s inner reality into existence in the world of actions.
- Comment that the difference between consultation and “the decision-making processes of non-Bahá’í bodies,” lies not just in the behaviors (debate, partisanship, judging ideas based on their source rather than their merit) but in the beliefs and assumptions underlying the behaviors.
- Suggest that for true consultation to take place, profound change is required, not just verbal slight of hand, such as getting people to say “we” rather than “I.” The fundamental nature of the change may be one reason the Universal House of Justice says we are “tracing new paths of human corporate action.”

Share the hope of the Universal House of Justice that we Bahá’ís “may demonstrate the efficiency, the vigor, the access of unity which arise from true consultation and, by contrast, demonstrate the futility of partisanship, lobbying, debate, secret diplomacy and unilateral action which characterize modern affairs. (Wellspring of Guidance, p. 96)

- ★ **Optional:** *A short break could be taken at this point or, if no break is taken, we suggest that you have participants stand and stretch.*

Differences Between Bahá'í Consultation and Other Forms of Decision Making (15 minutes)

Purpose:

- ★ To perceive how Bahá'í consultation differs from other forms of decision making currently in use

Optional Extension Session One

Activities:

1. Individual reading of passages (5 minutes)

- ★ Have participants read through the quotations on the handout “Differences Between Bahá'í Consultation and Other Decision-Making Processes,”(see Participant Handouts, pp. 11-12) and underline specific ways in which these differ.

2. Discussion of findings (10 minutes)

- ★ List participants’ responses on a board or flip chart. Ask for specific examples that illustrate these principles.
- ★ **Ask:** What does “the investigation of truth” mean? (see the last quote on Participant Handouts, p. 9) Finding the one right answer? Discovering the Will of God? Finding practical applications of spiritual principles that best meet the needs of all concerned?
- ★ **Ask:** What objectives, other than investigation of truth, could there be?

(Possible answers: advocacy of a point of view, personal advancement, the emotional satisfaction of self-expression, private agendas.)

- ★ Make the point that there can be more than one right answer to many situations. Two groups of Bahá'ís consulting about the same situation might come up with very different solutions (outcomes) using the same process. Both solutions can be “the right one.”

The Art of Bahá'í Consultation (40 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To become familiar with the spiritual requisites of consultation
- ★ To recognize the behaviors which are expressions of these spiritual requisites

Activities:

1. Introductory Comments (2-3 minutes)

- ★ Comment that consultation is both the cause of certain outcomes, or conditions, and the result of certain conditions. We have looked at the outcomes of consultation. Now we will look at the conditions that are necessary for consultation to take place.
- ★ Point out that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has listed various qualities as “prime requisites” of consultation – conditions necessary to establishing and maintaining an atmosphere in which consultation can take place. If these are not present, whatever is taking place is not true consultation.
- ★ Have a participant read aloud the “prime requisites” from the handout “The Art of Bahá'í Consultation” (see the second quote on Participant Handouts, p. 13) as you write them on a flip chart.
- ★ Explain that the dictionary defines a “requisite” as a necessary or essential quality. “Prime” means “basic or fundamental, of the first importance, or having the greatest significance or relevance.”
- ★ Comment that one implication of these terms is that these qualities are not unattainable ideals. While they are lofty and poetic, they are also basic, essential and necessary qualities which everyone must cultivate in order to take part in true consultation.
- ★ Comment that this passage is not just a beautiful list of qualities but an outline of specific instructions requiring the close attention of each of us. Note that by speaking of being “aided to acquire” these qualities, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá implies that we do not automatically possess them.

Optional extension

- ★ *Invite the group as a whole to share thoughts on the meanings and implications of these requisites or divide into smaller groups which will go through each of the seven requisites and explore their meaning in depth.*

The Art of Bahá'í Consultation, continued

2. Small group discussion (20 minutes)

- ★ Divide into groups of 3-5. Have each group read the quotations on the handout “The Art of Bahá'í Consultation.” (see Participant Handouts, pp. 13-14) Groups will then fill in the chart “Requisites of Consultation” (see Participant Handouts, p. 15) with listings of the spiritual conditions, attitudes or behaviors required for “true consultation” on one side and on the other side, examples of what these requisites look like when they are manifested in behavior. Announce that each member of the group should make a copy of its listings.

3. Groups report back (5 minutes)

- ★ Have each group report back its findings, with succeeding groups only mentioning points that were not already mentioned.

4. Listening to others (5 minutes)

- ★ Refer back to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement, “Before expressing his own views he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others.”

Optional extension

- ★ *Ask participants to **circle** all items on their lists that have to do with listening and hearing the views of others. Ask them to **underline** all items on their lists that have to do with expressing one’s own views.*
- ★ Comment that many of us have a tendency to think of consultation in terms of expressing our own ideas, opinions, and feelings. We often focus on developing skill in consultation through developing skill in expressing ourselves.
- ★ Suggest that listening skills are the essential, but often overlooked, “other half” of consultation.
- ★ Read a description of what listening is and what it isn’t by S. I. Hayakawa, a noted writer:

“Few people . . . have had much training in listening. Living in a competitive culture, most of us are most of the time chiefly concerned with getting our own views across, and we tend to find other people’s speeches a tedious interruption of the flow of our own ideas. Hence it is necessary to emphasize

The Art of Bahá'í Consultation, continued

that listening does not mean simply maintaining a polite silence while you are rehearsing in your mind the speech you are going to make the next time you can grab a conversation opening. Nor does listening mean waiting alertly for the flaws in the other person's argument so that later you can mow him or her down. Listening means trying to see the problem the way the speaker sees it. . . . Listening requires entering actively and imaginatively into the other person's situation and trying to understand a frame of reference different than your own."

- ★ **Ask:** What are the differences between hearing and listening?

If the point does not surface, suggest that hearing happens automatically, while listening is a choice we can make. Listening requires an openness of mind, a willingness to enter into another person's view of reality, and a willingness to be impacted by what we hear.

- ★ Comment that listening allows us to gain invaluable information, insights, and knowledge, but that in addition, listening is a profound form of acknowledgment and recognition. Listening with full attention makes a powerful statement about the worth and value of the speaker.
- ★ **Note:** *If the 15 minute Optional Extension Session Two, "The Example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá," will be used (see Facilitator's Guide p. 30), do it at this time.*

5. Expressing ourselves (5 minutes)

- ★ Comment that after first listening to others and carefully considering their views, then it is time for us to express our own thoughts in a manner described by the House of Justice as "an etiquette of expression worthy of the approaching maturity of the human race." (Letter from the Universal House of Justice, dated December 29, 1988, in Individual Rights and Freedoms in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, paragraph 37)
- ★ Ask participants to quickly read back through the handout "The Art of Bahá'í Consultation" (Participant Handouts pp.13-14) and identify all the modifying words which describe how we should express ourselves.

The Art of Bahá'í Consultation, continued

- ★ List these on the board or flipchart as volunteers call them out: devotion, courtesy, care, moderation, frankly, calmly, etc.
- ★ Invite any comments about these parameters which govern speech in the Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

Optional Extension Session Two: *The Example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* (15 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To become familiar with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s manner of listening
- ★ To recognize these behaviors and attitudes as the standard to which all Bahá’ís should aspire

Activities:

1. Setting up the activity

- ★ Explain that Howard Colby Ives, at that time a middle-aged Unitarian clergyman, met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on many occasions during His visit to North America in 1912. His book Portals to Freedom describes his impressions of the Master.

2. Studying how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá listened

- ★ Have a participant read aloud Howard Colby Ives’ descriptions from the handout “The Example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.” (see Participant Handouts, p. 16) Ask participants to underline, as they listen, key words and phrases about how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá listened.
- ★ Invite participants to share what they have underlined.
- ★ **Ask:** Have you ever been listened to as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá listened to people?

If there is a positive response ask: What did it feel like? What effect did it have on you?
- ★ Invite comments or observations on how the Master’s example applies to us.

Note: If time does not allow for this activity to be done during the session, it could also be used as a take-home exercise.

Optional Extension Session Three: Consultation as Spiritual Conference (20 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To observe the dynamics of true consultation in action
- ★ To identify behaviors which indicate the presence of the prime requisites of consultation

Activities:

1. Setting up the activity

- ★ Re-read aloud ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s definition of true consultation:
“In this Cause, consultation is of vital importance; but spiritual conference and not the mere voicing of personal views is intended. . . . true consultation is spiritual conference in the attitude and atmosphere of love.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 10, # 22)
- ★ Mention that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá cites as “the most memorable instance of spiritual consultation” the meeting of the disciples of Jesus after His ascension to discuss what they must do to be faithful to Him.

2. Individual reading and reflection (10 minutes)

- ★ Have individuals read through the handout “Consultation as Spiritual Conference” (see Participant Handouts, p. 17) and answer these focus questions:
 - What dynamics occurred between the members of the group?
 - Which of the prime requisites of consultation were present in this meeting?

3. Group discussion (10 minutes)

- ★ Ask volunteers to share their answers with the whole group, adding only items not already mentioned.
- ★ **Ask:**
 - How is this example of consultation different from “the mere voicing of personal views”?
 - Why is this account an example of “true consultation” even though it does not have a “clash of differing opinions?”

Note: If time does not allow for this activity to be done during the session, it could also be used as a take-home exercise.

Developing the Skills of Consultation

(20 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To self-assess current levels of skill in various aspects of consultation
- ★ To gain a keener sense of the importance of improved performance by Assemblies
- ★ To recognize the relationship between development of consultative skills by Assembly members and the maturation of the institution as a whole

Activities:

1. Self-assessment (5 minutes)

- ★ Have participants look over the list of consultative skills on the handout “Developing the Skills of Consultation” (see Participant Handouts, p. 18) and score themselves.
- ★ Explain the rating scale. Point out that a “3” on the 5-point scale used here does not indicate “average” skill but rather inconsistency.

2. Individual reading of quotations (5 minutes)

- ★ Comment that in 1985 the House of Justice offered to the world the experience of the Bahá’í community as “a model for study,” describing it as “a single social organism, representative of the diversity of the human family, conducting its affairs through a system of commonly accepted consultative principles. . . .” (Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*,” section IV)
- ★ Suggest that whether we feel ready to be observed as a model yet or not, we are already being observed more closely as the Faith has emerged from obscurity.
- ★ Have individuals silently read the quotations on the handout “Moving towards Maturity: Improving the Assembly’s Skill in Consultation,” (see Participant Handouts, p. 19) underlining or highlighting key words or phrases that answer these focus questions:
 - Why is it imperative that Assemblies improve their performance?
 - On whose efforts does the proper functioning of Assemblies largely depend?
 - What are the effects of our efforts?

3. Discussion of themes in quotations (10 minutes)

- ★ Invite volunteers to share their answers with the group.
- ★ Suggest that as we collectively improve our mastery of the skills of consultation, they become our “group norms,” or the Assembly’s normal way of behaving. Improvement obviously helps consultation proceed more smoothly and creates the

Developing the Skills of Consultation, continued

results mentioned in the Writings. In addition, as the gap between theory (what Bahá'u'lláh has in mind) and practice (what we normally do) narrows, it becomes easier to accustom new Assembly members to these “new paths of human corporate action” because Assembly meetings become living models of both the spirit and tangible behaviors of consultation.

Closing (25 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To consolidate what has been learned
- ★ To make individual action plans to translate knowledge into behaviors

Activities:

1. Developing a personal action plan (15 minutes)

- ★ Refer participants to the handout “Personal Action Plan” (Participant Handouts, p. 20) and its focus questions:
 - What attitudes and behaviors related to consultation will require great self-discipline on my part?
 - What do I need to subjugate to improve my skills of consultation?
 - What do I need to cultivate to improve my skills of consultation?
 - How will I increase my reliance on the power of Bahá’u’lláh to make these changes?
- ★ Ask a participant to read the quotation at the top of the handout.
- ★ Give dictionary definitions of “**subjugate**” (to bring under dominion; conquer; subdue) and “**acquiescence**” (passive assent or agreement without protest).
- ★ Share the analogy of gardening: gardeners both weed out what isn’t wanted and nurture what is wanted.
- ★ Ask participants to reflect privately on the focus questions and to pick 1-2 goals in areas that they feel are most critical and develop a plan of action to be practiced between now and the second module on consultation or, if that is not being taken, by some specified date.
- ★ Quickly offer highlights from the handout “Developing Plans of Action.” (see Participant Handouts, p. 21)
- ★ Play soft background music while participants work on their plans.

2. Closing (10 minutes)

- ★ Invite any closing thoughts or observations.
- ★ Check to see that all questions raised at the beginning of the workshop have been answered or that the questioner has been referred elsewhere.

Closing, continued

- ★ Refer participants to the handout page “Summary of Key Points.” (see Participant Handouts, p. 22) Encourage them to use this summary in whatever ways would be most helpful. Possibilities include using it as: review during private meditation, preparation before consultation, and/or a part of continuous personal goal setting.
- ★ Close with a previously selected devotional passage or piece of music.
- ★ **Optional:** Give each participant a beautiful card or calligraphy version of the “prime requisites” of consultation.

The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá shall be vouchsafed to them

'Abdu'l-Bahá