

Facilitator Guidelines

Thank you for agreeing to participate as a Facilitator for *Reality Check Plus* – a series of regional growth visioning exercises that promise to provide information important to the future of the state of Maryland. Between May 25 and June 15, 2006, nearly 1,000 Maryland citizens – elected officials, business, environmental, real estate, civic and other community leaders – will be invited to participate in four exercises designed to raise awareness about the growth that is projected to come to Maryland in the next 25 years. By 2030, Maryland’s population is expected to reach 7 million – 1.5 million more than it was in 2000. The fundamental question posed by *Reality Check* is: Where will all of these new residents live and work?

As a Facilitator, you will be one of the primary leaders of this neighbor-to-neighbor, citizen-to-citizen discussion. Thank you for your willingness to help.

Reality Check *Plus* Goals:

Reality Check strives to create useful outcomes that could be reflected in future local and state policies and practices. The exercise is designed to accomplish four tasks:

- Promote a region-wide and statewide awareness of the level of growth that is coming;
- Recognize the legitimate points of view of different stakeholders;
- Envision where future growth can be accommodated in a more resourceful manner;
- Lay the foundation for the next steps to take in order to assure quality growth over the decades to come.

I. General Information About Reality Check *Plus*

a. Date and Location of Each Event:

May 25 – Eastern Shore – Cambridge Hyatt

June 2 – Western Maryland – Hagerstown Community College

June 9 – Central Maryland – Baltimore Convention Center

June 15 – Southern Maryland – St. Mary’s College

b. Time of Each Event: Approximately 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

c. Training Dates: Training for facilitators will be held the evening before the event in each region, beginning at 7 p.m.

d. Hotel Rooms provided for Volunteers: Double occupancy or \$50 in assistance for room charge.

II. Context for Exercise

While the economy booms, regional quality of life measures—namely the amount of time spent traveling on congested roads and transit systems, housing affordability, and the quality of the environment—continue to send warning signals about the future health of the state. A look at the development patterns in each of our regions reveals that our land as well as our natural, and fiscal resources could be used more prudently.

We need to work together at the state, regional and local level to plan for the future. We can learn from and expand successful regional cooperative efforts in other regions of the Mid-Atlantic area, or in other states. At the *Reality Check Plus* event, you will have the opportunity to take a bird's eye view of your region and your local resources, and to discuss where and how your region should grow.

III. Roles and Responsibilities of Facilitator

Facilitators are the “captains” of each table at the growth visioning exercise. You will give instructions, guide the discussion, help the participants reach consensus, keep the exercise moving, assure that the Scribe records appropriate information, and assist in the counting of blocks after the game is concluded. As such, facilitators will play a critical role in *Reality Check* and will work closely with the Computer Operator/Scribes assigned to each table throughout the course of the exercise.

- a. You will also be expected to participate in the “dress rehearsal” to be held the night before the event in your region. This should last about two hours.
- b. You are expected to review the *Participant Guidebook* prior to event, which can be found on the website, www.realitycheckmaryland.org
- c. You also are expected to acquire a good understanding of the geography of your region. (A map will be available at the training in case there are questions.)

IV. Effective Facilitation Skills

- a. **Maintain neutrality** — A facilitator must be a neutral servant of the group. Being involved causes a loss of objectivity.
- b. **Clarify role** — A facilitator's job is to keep the group on task, encourage participation, and monitor time and progress.
- c. **Gain buy-in on agenda and process** — A facilitator must have the group's agreement on what will be done and how it will be accomplished.
- d. **Set the ground rules**—Be clear about parameters, objectives, and rules of the exercise.
- e. **Manage the process** — A facilitator must be skilled and knowledgeable in using effective processes to get things done.
- f. **Use effective questions and summaries** — A facilitator must skillfully use open-ended questions and be able to quickly summarize key themes and ideas.

- g. **Avoid being "the expert"** — A facilitator must keep out of the limelight by allowing the group to find the answers they need.
- h. **Handle difficult people skillfully** — A facilitator must tactfully know when to intervene and what to say in order to keep the group working effectively.
- i. **Make it easy** — A facilitator's work should be transparent, literally "making it easy" for others to succeed.

V. Facilitators are responsible for:

- a. Completing the exercise within allotted time.
- b. Ensuring that each participant has an equal voice.
- c. Including everyone's ideas and try to reach consensus.
- d. Working cooperatively with Scribe/Computer Operator.
- e. Having strong command of regional geography.
- f. Being prepared to answer questions about anything about the conduct of the exercise or information in the *Participants' Guidebook* – source of data, source of software, organizers, other.

If you do not know the answer, raise your "help" flag or write it on the easel and request assistance from a roving monitor.

VI. During the Event:

- a. Arrive at the location of your regional exercise by no later than **8:00 a.m.** to meet your Scribe/Computer Operator and ensure that all tools for your table are in order.
- b. Facilitate introductions of all table participants, including at least name, county and organizational affiliation.
- c. Provide orientation regarding objectives, rules, and outcomes of the exercise.
- e. Describe how the exercise will be played and introduce group to tools [Legos, markers, etc.] A complete script will be provided at the training exercise.
- f. Facilitate discussion concerning the **guiding principles** that will be used to allocate the projected growth. Scribe/Computer Operator is to record these principles on a large flip chart at each table (and then reproduce the list on a small sheet of paper that will be picked up early in the exercise).
- g. Ask each participant to suggest where growth should be allocated in accordance with the principles established and seek group's consensus before asking individuals to place LEGO's.

- h. Fine tune your collective vision, making changes as needed.
- i. Review and finalize your team's development scenario. Review your decision-making to assure that placement of growth was consistent with the group's guiding principles and policy guidelines.
- j. Once the exercise has been completed and all Legos have been played, engage all table participants in a **discussion of the implications** of the growth coming to your region. The Scribe/Computer Operator is to take notes on the flip chart regarding any consensus reached regarding the implications for the region. The specific questions you are to ask to stimulate this discussion are listed in the Facilitator Script.

VII. Conclusion

- a. Make sure the Scribe/Computer Operator has recorded the major points from the discussion of growth implications.
- b. Thank those at your table for their participation in the morning exercise and invite them to move into another room for lunch, a keynote address, the presentation of the morning exercise results, and a broader discussion of next steps.
- c. Assist the Scribe/Computer Operator at conclusion of exercise by reading aloud the number of blocks played on each numbered grid on the map so the Scribe/Computer Operator can input that information electronically. [This will be practiced at the Facilitator training the night before the event.]

VIII. Materials/Tools

Each table will be supplied with the following:

- Regional Map representing current conditions (without jurisdictional boundaries)
- Dry erase markers and paper towels for erasing.
- Lego's (See Facilitator Script for details)
- Flip Chart
- Laptop
- Calculator
- Flag—to indicate need for assistance

Updated: May 23, 2006