Commission & Executive Team Retreat

1/10/2026

Welcome and Opening Remarks

AGENDA

Welcome & Introductions

Governance & Management
Trust in Effective Governance

DiSC: Communication Map
Draft Shared Agreements

Learning Priorities Moving Forward
Closing & Next Steps

Purpose of Retreat

★ Build a shared foundation for how the Commission works together as a governing body

★ Clarify the Commission's role and its working relationship with executive leadership & staff

★ Increase understanding of different communication preferences and how they show up in Commission work

★ Create shared expectations for how the Commission engages, deliberates, and collaborates

What You'll Leave With

★ Clarity about the Commission's governance role and its relationship to management

★ Greater awareness of how communication styles shape trust and collaboration

★ A draft set of shared agreements for working together

★ Potential priorities for continued learning together

Retreat Norms

- Listen to understand

- Speak from your own perspective

- Name differences respectfully

- Make space for other voices

- Assume positive intent and attend to impact

- Stay present and engaged

Today's Learning Approach

Brief framing and shared context

Pair or small-group conversations

Full group discussion & reflection

Debrief with themes captured

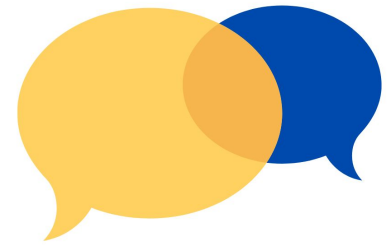Facilitated to support forward movement

Introductions

Your name

Share the object you brought and how it

represents what you love about Traverse City

Pair Reflection

Think about a time when a team, group, or governing body was working at its best.

What were two behaviors that helped the group work well together?

What difference did those behaviors make?

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Governance and Management

A Shared Framework for Working Together
* Handout

Form of Government

Commission-Manager Form of Government
as defined in the City Charter

*Clear role distinction supports effective decision-making
and public trust*

What Governance Is

- Sets vision and direction

- Establishes policy, ordinances and priorities

- Focuses on long-term outcomes and impact

- Provides oversight & accountability

- Asks the right questions

What Governance Is Not

- Day-to-day management

- Operational problem solving

- Directing staff on how work gets done

- Intervening in administration outside the City Manager

Core Responsibilities

- Set vision and strategic direction

- Approve policy, ordinances, and budgets

- Hire, support, and evaluate the City Manager and City Attorney

- Provide oversight and accountability

- Represent the community and ensure accountability

- Support decisions made by governing body

How Authority is Exercised

Authority is exercised by the Commission as a body

Once a decision is made,

Commissioners speak with one voice

Governance in Action

- Policy-level questions

- Focus on direction, priorities, and outcomes

- Discussion framed around impact and alignment with applicable regulations, policies and plans

- Respectful disagreement and clear decisions

- Unified support after decisions are made

Governance

Management

Sets direction & priorities

Implements & executes

Healthy governance is built on role clarity and follow-through

Governance and the Strategic Plan

- Guides priorities and decisions

- Anchors Commission action

- Provides a shared point of reference

Initial thoughts
(on the governance role as framed here)

More discussion to follow in breakout exercise

Management

Turning Direction into Action

What Management Is

- Executes the vision and direction set by the Commission

- Manages day-to-day operations and service delivery

- Translates policy and strategy into plans and action

- Provides professional expertise and recommendations

- Ensures effective and efficient implementation

What Management Is Not

- Setting governing policy or strategic direction

- Acting independently of Commission-approved goals, ordinances or budgets, etc.

- Substituting management judgment for Commission authority

- Ignoring Commission decisions once made

Core Responsibilities of Management

- Implement Commission-approved vision, policies, and priorities

- Manage city operations and staff

- Develop budgets, policies, and recommendations

- Identify risks, opportunities, and emerging issues

- Ensure compliance with laws and regulations

- Carry out decisions, even when viewpoints differ

- Maintain clear communications with the Commission

Management in Action

- Operational planning and execution
- Using data to inform recommendations
- Managing people, systems, and resources
- Advancing Commission priorities
- Carrying out approved decisions
- Adjusting operations to meet goals
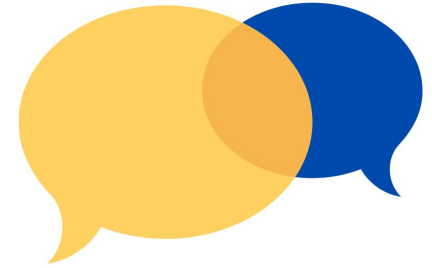- Inspiring innovation aligned with approved direction

How Management Supports the Governance Partnership

- Provides clear information and analysis

- Offers professional judgment and options

- Implements decisions once made

- Maintains clear, consistent communication

Pair Reflection

1. Where does the line between governance and management most often get blurry?

2. What impact does that have?

3. What helps keep that line clear?

We'll report out and capture key themes
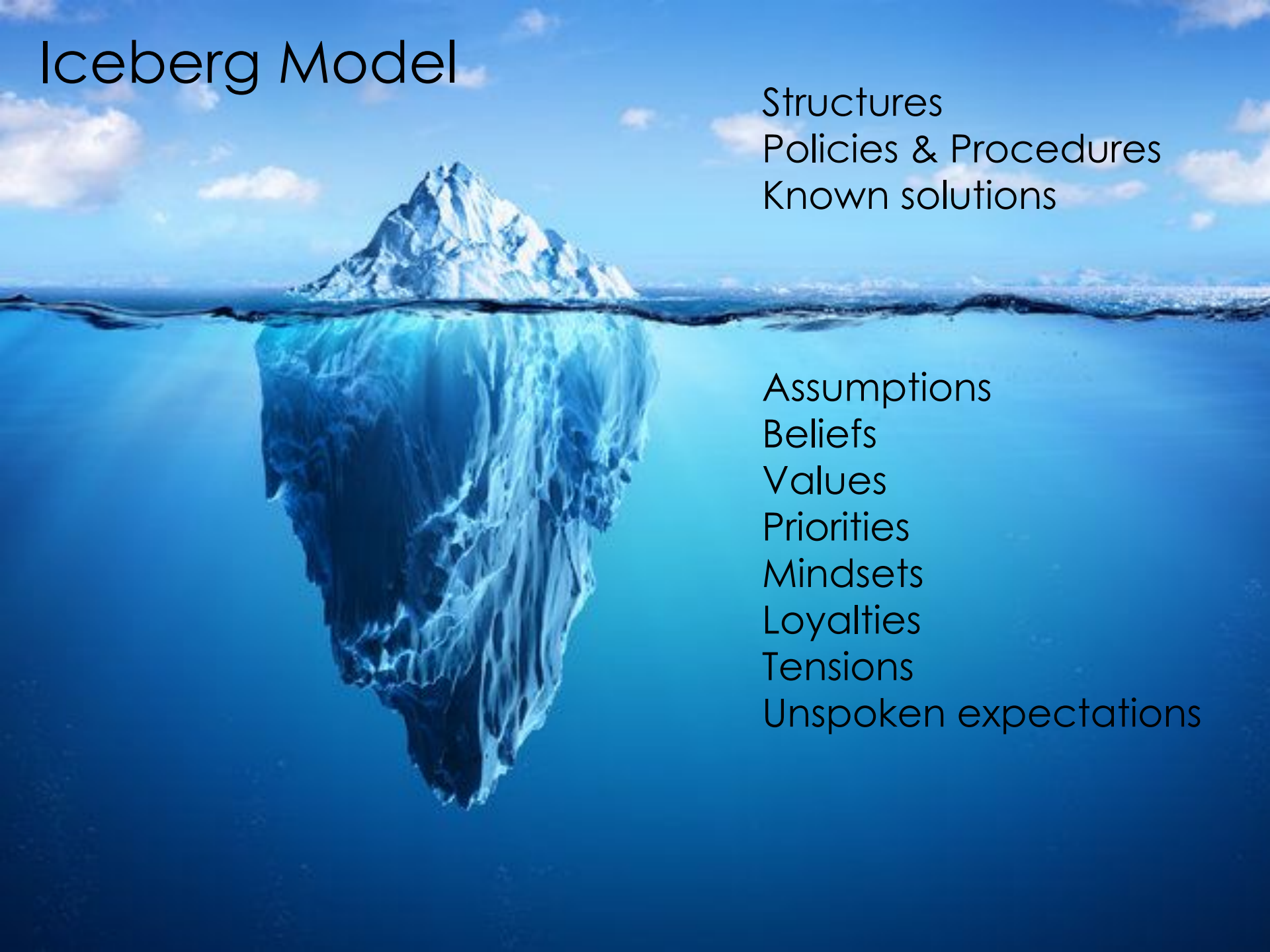
Balcony View Debrief

- What patterns are you hearing across the room?

- What helps a Commission stay in governance when emotions or urgency rise?

- What should staff and Commissioners be able to count on from each other?

Iceberg Model

Structures
Policies & Procedures
Known solutions

Assumptions
Beliefs
Values
Priorities
Mindsets
Loyalties
Tensions
Unspoken expectations

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Trust

Strength for Effective Governance

What Trust is Not
(in Governance)

Trust is not agreement
 You can trust each other and still disagree strongly

Trust is not harmony
 Healthy governance includes tension and debate

Trust is not personal liking
 It's about working relationships, not chemistry

Trust is not assumed because of role or position
 It is earned through behavior over time

Trust is not about avoiding hard conversations
 It allows hard conversations to happen productively

What We Mean By Trust

Trust is about how work gets done together

Trust shows up in observable behavior

Trust allows disagreement without damage

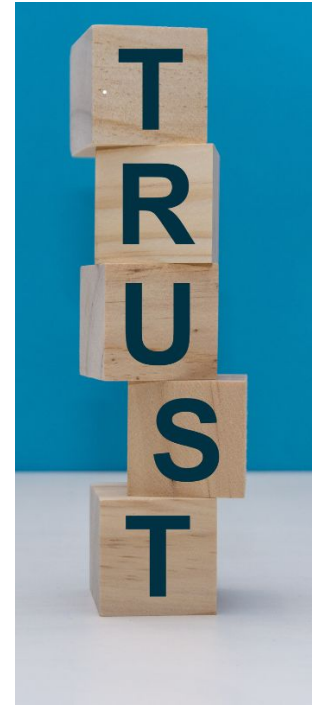Trust is a working condition, not a personality trait

Trust is built over time with consistency

Why Trust Matters

Trust supports:

- Clear deliberation

- Productive disagreement

- Consistent follow-through

- Public credibility when decisions are supported once made

TRUST $=$

Credibility $+$ Reliability $+$ Connection

Sound judgment & clear reasoning

Consistency & follow-through

Psychological safety & respect

$$\overline{}$$

Low Self-Orientation

Focus on public good over personal agenda

Adapted from David Maister, Charles H. Green and Robert M. Galford, 'The Trusted Advisor', 2000

Trust Is Visible in Governance

Trust shows up in:

- Tone, pacing and nonverbal cues during discussion

- How questions are asked and received

- How disagreement is expressed

- Whether decisions feel settled or reopened

- What the room feels like under pressure

Brainstorming Together *(keep in mind)*

- Observable behaviors - not intentions/personalities

- Not individuals or past situations

- Looking for themes, not stories

Brainstorming Prompt #1:

What behaviors help build trust?

Brainstorming Prompt #2:

What behaviors weaken or undermine trust?

Balcony View Debrief

Which one or two behaviors
would make
the biggest difference if practiced consistently?

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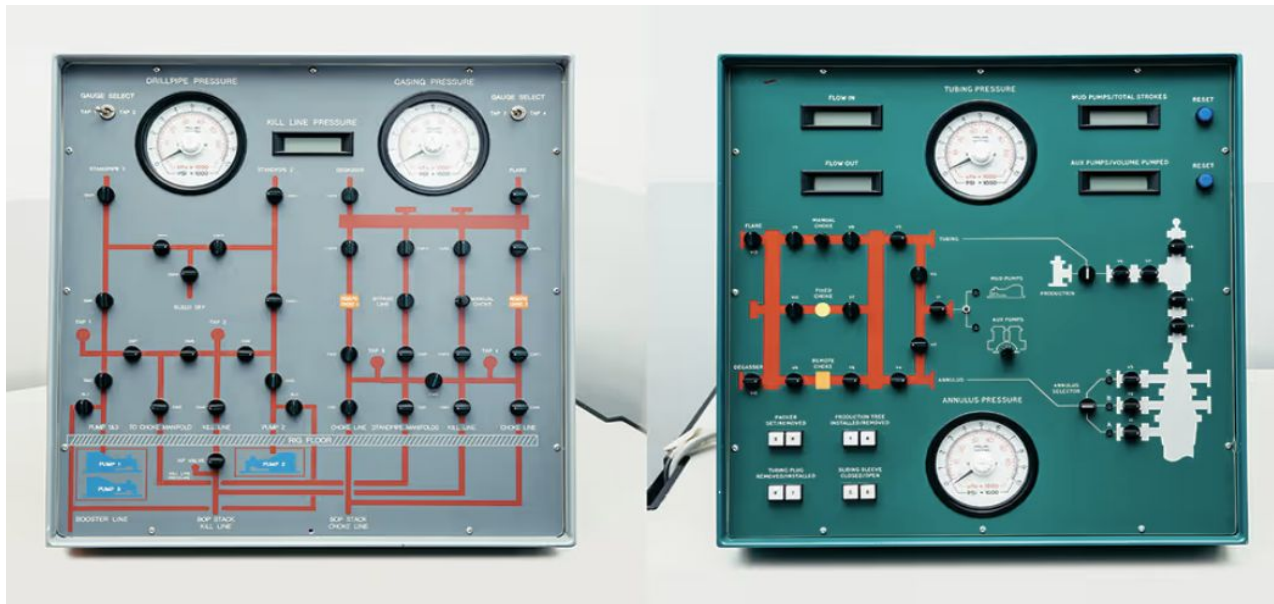
Learning Priorities Moving Forward
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DiSC

Making Work Styles Visible

DiSC Helps Us Appreciate Our Differences
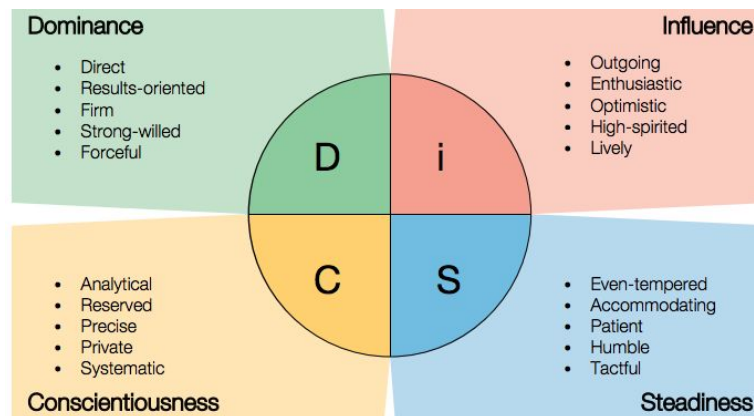We are wired differently with different internal operating systems

Key Cornerstone Principles of DiSC

All styles are equally valuable

We are blend of all 4 styles

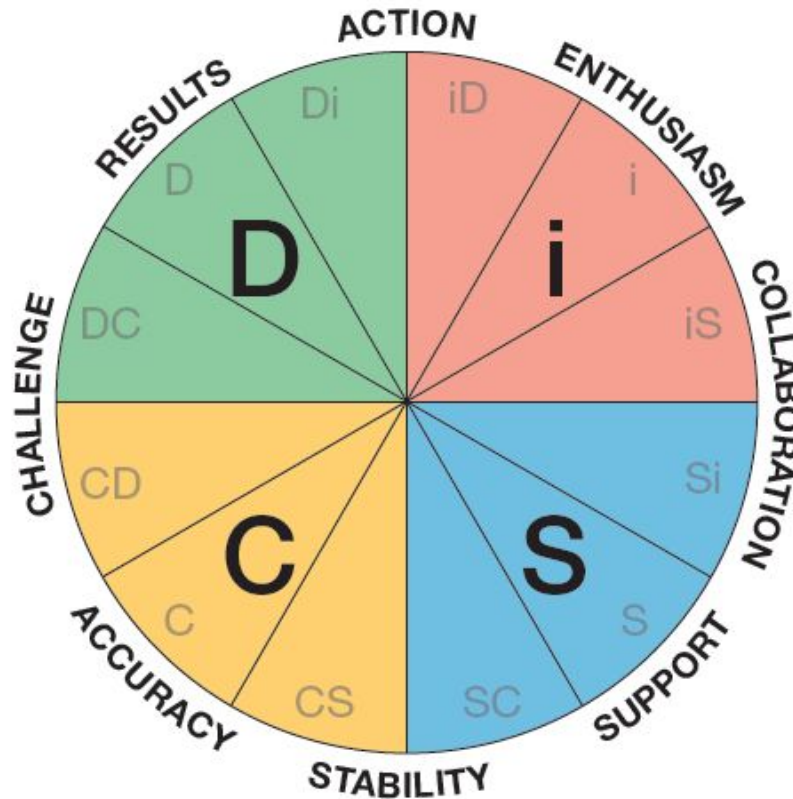There is no ideal dot placement

Intent ≠ Impact

Same behavior & intent

Yet…different impact

DiSC helps us understand why

Need	D Freedom From Control	I Social Connections	S Serving Others	C Being Right
Priorities	Getting results Taking immediate action Challenging self and others	Expressing enthusiasm Taking action Encouraging collaboration	Giving support Maintaining stability Enjoying collaboration	Ensuring accuracy Maintaining stability Challenging assumptions
Motivators	Making an impact Power and authority Competition and winning	Social recognition Friendly relationships Working with others	Stable environment Sincere appreciation Opportunities to help	Use of expertise Gain more knowledge Attention to quality
Fears	Loss of control Being taken advantage of Being vulnerable	Social rejection Being confined Disapproval or ignored	Loss of stability Change offending others	Failure Criticism Slipshod methods
Limitations	Controlling Impatience Insensitivity	Impulsiveness Disorganization Lose their cool	Overly accommodating Avoids conflicts Indecisiveness	Overly critical Overanalyzes Isolates self

Active, Fast-paced
Assertive
Dynamic, Bold

Questioning
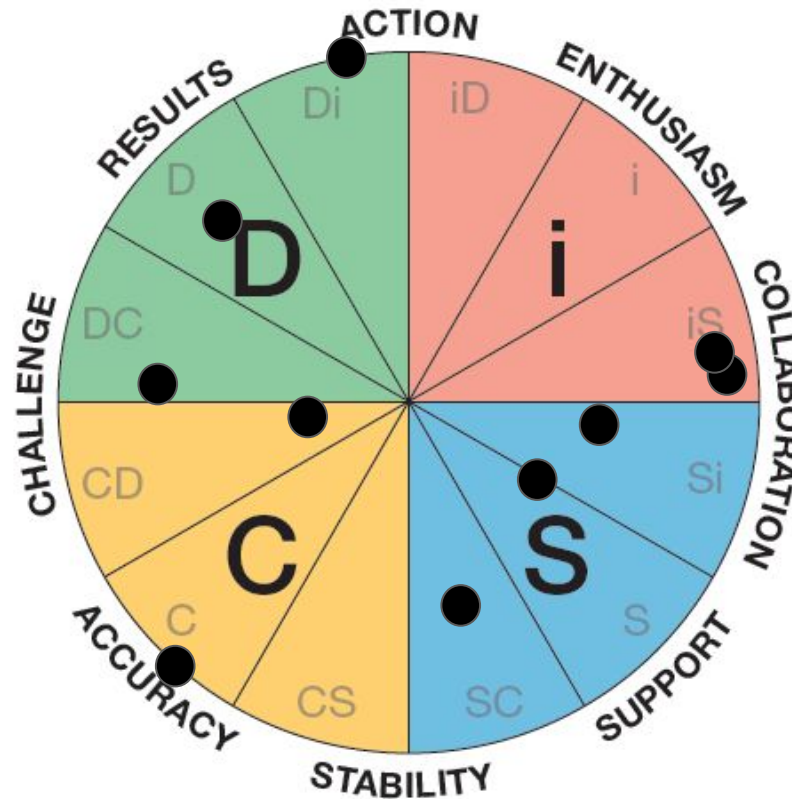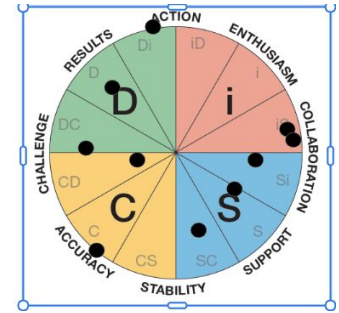Logic-focused
Objective
Skeptical
Challenging

Accepting
People-focused
Empathizing
Receptive
Agreeable

Thoughtful, Calm, Methodical
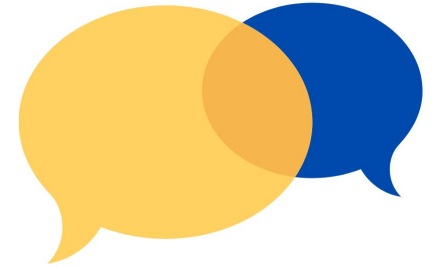Moderate-paced, Careful

ACTION
ENTHUSIASM
RESULTS
Di
iD
i
D
i
DC
iS
CHALLENGE
COLLABORATION
D
i
CD
Si
C
S
C
S
ACCURACY
CS
SC
SUPPORT
STABILITY

Active, Fast-paced
Assertive
Dynamic, Bold

Accepting
People-focused
Empathizing
Receptive
Agreeable

Questioning
Logic-focused
Objective
Skeptical
Challenging

Thoughtful, Calm, Methodical
Moderate-paced, Careful

ACTION

ENTHUSIASM

RESULTS

COLLABORATION

CHALLENGE

SUPPORT

ACCURACY

STABILITY

Di · iD · i · iS · Si · S · SC · CS · C · CD · DC · D

Collective Strengths
Based on Dot Locations

1. No single style dominates
2. Capacity for deliberate and thoughtful discussion
3. Range of questions being asked
4. Ability to surface multiple kinds of risks
5. Emphasis on standards, follow-through and quality
6. Range of styles supports steadiness moving forward
7. Shared responsibility for how work happens publicly
8. Balance between results, process and relationships

PAIR REFLECTION
Page 6

1. Share what motivates or helps you do your best work in this role and give examples

2. Share what stressors make this role harder for you, especially under pressure and give examples

NOTE: No reporting out from your conversation - this is an opportunity to learn about each other

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Shared Agreements

Turning Insight Into Practice
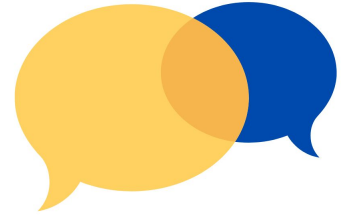
Shared agreements describe...

How you want to show up and work together
as a governing body

Provide shared expectations that support
productive deliberation, trust,
and effective governance

Why Shared Agreements Matter

- Protect the line between governance and management

- Support respectful disagreement

- Keep meetings focused and productive

- Operate effectively under public scrutiny

- Build trust and credibility with each other, staff and the public

Drafting Shared Agreements

- Draft **3-5 agreement statements** that feel most essential
- Start each statement with **"We will…"**
- Keep statements **behavioral and practical**
- This is a **starting point,** not a finished product

Assigned Topic Areas:

Group 1: Communication & Meeting Conduct

Group 2: Handling Disagreement & Decision-Making

Group 3: Engaging with Staff, Staying in Role & Public
Communication

Gallery Walk

*Which agreements **feel essential** to how you want to govern together?*

Place **one mark** next to each agreement:

GREEN = Strong support

YELLOW = Needs clarification

RED = Concerns

*Complete in Silence

Balcony View Debrief

What feels most important to include in this first draft?

What language needs adjusting so these reflect what is most important?

What feels missing?

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Learning Sessions

Next few months:
- Learning Sessions
- Leadership Reflection Circles

Learning Sessions Ahead

Purpose: Build skills to strengthen communication, collaboration and community engagement

#1: February 23, 2026 from 7:00 - 9:00 PM
- Further Exploration of Communication Differences (practical skills/tools for working together)
- Shared Agreement Draft II

#2: TBD (Topic area set by Commission)

#3: TBD (Topic area set by Commission)

Leadership Reflection Circles

Purpose: Practice skills/tools in real-time while reflecting together on what learning

Composed of:
- 3 small rotating groups
- (2 - 3 participants in a group)

Date/Time: TBD

Questions?

What's important to you to further explore and
learn about together?

Closing Reflection

What is one takeaway from today's session?

- or -

What is one thing you appreciate
about our time together?