Conflict Resolution Policy

Intent. The intention of this policy is to provide a guide for how to resolve conflict amongst staff, between staff and volunteers, between staff and customers, or between customers and volunteers. This is an internal policy and does not address complaints from anyone other than staff, volunteers and customers.

Definitions.

Staff: a person employed by PEDAL currently or in the past.

Volunteer: a person who has completed volunteer orientation and has volunteered at Our Community Bikes. Members of the board of directors are also volunteers.

Customer: A person who has entered Our Community Bikes regardless of whether they have used our services or resources, and is not a staff or a volunteer.

Conflict: two or more people reach a point of incompatibility or non-reconciliation.

Mediation: a tool used to reach a reasonable agreement.

Resolution: an agreement has been reached and documented.

Stages of conflict resolution.

1. Conflict Occurs.

2. Attempt clearing + feedback.

3. File an incident report.

4. Bring conflict to the collective for assessment.

5. Designate a mediator within the collective to attempt resolution.

6. Designate a professional mediator outside of the organization to attempt mediation.

1. Conflict Occurs. Two people have pursued different goals or interests, and reach a point of incompatibility or non-reconciliation.

2. Attempt clearing + feedback. One person approaches the person they have a conflict with and asks them if they are open to a clearing and / or feedback. If the person responds that they are open to clearing and / or feedback, a conversation may occur wherein non violent communication is used to clear the issue(s) raised. The responding person can also do the same (ask for a clearing or to deliver feedback.) The point of this step is to encourage people in conflict to resolve the issue directly and quickly if possible. This helps the staff to avoid channeling energy and resources into mediated conflict resolution. However if two people in conflict do not have success with this method then they can proceed to 3.

3. File an incident report. If the conflict escalates or is not resolved through clearing and feedback, both parties are encouraged to submit a written incident report outlining the nature of the conflict from their perspective. This can be done using the paper Incident Report filing system in the office.

4. Bring conflict to the collective for assessment. Submit documentation (incident reports) to the next staff meeting's facilitator for discussion at the next staff meeting.

5. Designate a mediator within the collective to attempt resolution.

The facilitator of the staff meeting should help assess who might be an appropriate internal mediator. When all parties in conflict agree on a mediator they can set up a time and neutral place to hold the mediation.

 6.   Designate a professional mediator outside of the organization to attempt mediation.

If none of the above steps have produced any meaningful resolution, you may have to look outside of the organization for support.

What should happen during the mediation:

-define the problem rather than trying to find a solution
-document the agreement

Some notes for the mediator:

Conflict generally stems from people operating with:
-Different facts
-Different experiences
-Different values
-Different assumptions

-Different constraints

When it becomes apparent to you that a conflict is emerging, these areas are a good place to start in figuring out how to resolve the difference. Check with the differing individuals to see if: Facts need to be clarified, Experiences need to be compared and sorted out, Values need to be aligned, Assumptions need to be aligned, Constraints need to be understood, words used need defining/clarification.

Conflict deriving from these sources can generally be resolved with little difficulty, particularly if it is addressed as soon as it appears.

In this source lie differences of mechanical technique/knowledge. We have agreed in the past that such differences can easily be resolved by referring to the Blue Book. Another rational source of conflict lies in differences of facts/assumptions regarding policy. This can be resolved by referring to the policy/procedure manual. Difference of values is a bit trickier but referring to the organizational mission statement may be useful.

Emotional Sources Of Conflict
Dinosaur Brains

...[I]nside each human brain lurks the brain of a dinosaur -- irrational, emotional, easily enraged -- waiting to take control. . . . [H]umans don't always act like humans. One minute they're normal, rational people; the next, they're little better than reptiles. Trouble comes when they use the Reptile Response -- their primitive thinking patterns -- instead of the rational part of their brain.

Instinctual response

- Get it now! *(Impulsive)*
- Fight, flee, or freeze *(Threatened)*
- Be dominant *(Competitive or controlling)*
- Defend the territory *(Defensive)*
- Get the mate! *(Sexually competitive)*
- If it hurts, hiss! *(Complaining)*
- Like me, good; not like me, bad! *(Intolerant)*

Sometimes--especially in stressful situations--a short-circuit occurs and people have difficulty re-channeling their response from their dinosaur brains to their reasonable brains, and to shift from instinctual, emotional behavior to thoughtful, rational behavior. It is important for us to understand and accept that everyone reacts from his or her dinosaur brains sometimes. Although it is easy for one dinosaur brain to bring forth other dinosaur brains (for one person's emotional reactions to stimulate others' emotional reactions), we must avoid the temptation to respond to impulsive, threatened, defensive, or other emotionally-based behavior in like emotional ways and to respond instead in rational ways.

Approaching a conflict:
Appropriate behavior
-communicate that conflict is/has been present.
-try talking when the conflict begins.

-Use "I" statements both in talking to the person you are disagreeing with and your coworkers.

Inappropriate behavior

-ignoring that there has been a dispute (which is not the same as consciously trying to calm down and deal with the problem later)

-verbal or physical violence

-gossip or talking shit about the person you are in conflict with to staff or customers

-trying to get people on "your side"

-exaggerating

Ground Rules

What to try to do (if you're involved):

-listen and be open to suggestions (even the ones that imply you have been wrong or have fucked up)

-be solution centered

-be concise and practice assertive communication

-use I statements to define your needs

-give reasons behind your thinking

-remember it's ok to differ and all ideas should be treated with respect. Disagreement does not mean rejection.

-restate what you are saying using different words/language when you feel that you're not being heard

-take responsibility

-be aware of non-verbal communication

-think about your needs but do not ignore the needs of the collective.

What Not To DO:

-blame people (this leads to guilt, defensiveness, and alienation)

-avoid addressing conflict (this impedes resolution)

-resort to verbal or physical violence

-Gossip (and if you do find yourself gossiping, ask yourself "why?")

-get people onto your "side" of the conflict

-perpetuate or fall victim to groupthink which is a mode of group behavior in which ideas, even ideas which are not well thought through, may prevail despite the individual group members' ability to know the ideas are not useful, or worse, actually harmful to the group's goals.

What to try to do (if you're not involved):

-gently ask those involved to work out their differences

-talk about it or let it go

-express how the conflict is affecting you/your work environment/the group

-ask the individuals involved to meet with you or another person who will act as a mediator

-ask yourself or your coworkers how you can help the process

What Not To Do (if you are not involved):

Subcommittee

When are they necessary?

-Either when those involved feel that a subcommittee would be beneficial or when coworkers feel it to be necessary.

Made up of:
- at least 2 people (each person involved has a say as to who 1 of the people in the subcommittee is), others can volunteer.
Goals:
-must meet no more than 1 week after the issue is raised (what step!???)
-to simplify and expedite the conflict resolution process
-to support those involved in the process
Roles may be:
-Mediating meetings between the parties involved.
-to identify or clarify problems
-to figure out effective ways of communication between parties
-to provide an objective perspective (as much as that is possible) on the situation
-to communicate to the parties involved what the needs/desires of the collective are
-to provide feedback on the conflict resolution process
-Enforce repercussions, timelines and the like. When staff are asked for feedback a time line must be set, and must be quite short so that the process isn't put on hold. Repercussions for tardy responses must be established.

And last but not least, these motivating words from the UN:

"Throughout the Western democracies, administrative processes, which some once thought to be purely technical, are more clearly recognized as having political dimensions. Many decisions thought to be purely technical are actually political, that is, they affect the distribution of values throughout society. Most managers in administrative agencies are actually managing the gray area between technical and political. While asked to be technically competent, they must be politically realistic. The process approaches have become a means for managing this gray area between the technical and the political." UNESCO

6. <u>Designate a professional mediator outside of the organization to attempt mediation.</u>

If none of the above steps have produced any meaningful resolution, you may have to look outside of the organization for support.

References
- policies consulted
- mediators available (date last updated)