



The Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration (MOPC) is a statutory state-funded institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston (formerly within ANF). The office was established to provide more effective forums for conflict resolution, public decision-making and community involvement on contentious public issues, and to build capacity within public agencies.

For over 25 years, MOPC has been a “neutral forum” and state-level resource providing mechanisms that enable government officials to engage public and private institutions and citizens in inclusive, deliberative, and consensus-oriented approaches to planning, problem-solving and policy-making (*now referred to as “collaborative governance”*). The office focuses on inter-organizational collaboration, between public agencies and levels of government and across sectors.

MOPC’s core public functions include:

- Consultation and training for public officials as sponsors and conveners of collaborative processes
- Conflict assessment and process design for mediation, public participation, and joint problem-solving
- Qualification and procurement of experienced neutral practitioners for service on state contracts
- Program design, evaluation, and fundraising to increase impact and resources to address public needs
- Policy development, systems design and research to strengthen evidence-based best practices

MOPC currently deploys *three proven approaches*:

- a) mediation and multi-party dispute resolution
- b) collaborative problem-solving and consensus-building
- c) deliberative dialogues and public engagement

Examples of MOPC Programs & Projects

Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture

- **Forest Futures Visioning Process:** facilitation of state-wide public engagement process convened by MA Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) to create 100-year vision for stewardship of MA forests
- **Zebra Mussels Task Force:** facilitation of cross sector planning group convened by the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EEA) to inform regulations on managing aquatic invasive species in MA
- **National Forest Stakeholder Assessment:** facilitation of focus groups and interviews with stakeholders and members of general public regarding potential designation of national forest in Western MA
- **Off-Highway Vehicle Working Group:** facilitation of cross-sector consensus recommendations on regulation of off-highway vehicles convened by EEA and DCR; legislation passed into law in 2010
- **Agricultural Mediation Program:** mediation of farm/rural housing loans disputes and consultation and training for local agricultural commissions, with support from USDA and MA Department of Agriculture

Transportation & Land Use

- **Longfellow Bridge Task Force:** facilitation of collaborative stakeholder process to develop consensus recommendations for MA Department of Transportation on bridge rehabilitation and restoration project
- **Public Engagement Capacity Building Initiative:** consultation on agency-wide policies and practices and program design for development of in-house training teams for MA Department of Transportation
- **Green Line Extension:** Facilitation of public meetings with Metropolitan Area Planning Council regarding the possibility of adding a station at Mystic Valley Parkway as part of the planned Green Line extension into Somerville and Medford.
- **Affordable Housing Mediation Program:** mediation of disputes involving local decisions on Ch. 40B comprehensive permits for Housing Appeals Committee, Dept of Housing & Community Development

Health & Human Services

- **Eldercare Workforce Coalition:** stakeholder assessment funded by philanthropic foundations to determine feasibility of MA coalition to address shortage of trained workers to care for elderly residents
- **Capital Assets Visioning Process:** facilitation of visioning process convened by Division of Capital Asset Management to inform Master Plan for Executive Office of Health & Human Services capital assets
- **Dialogues on Healthcare Costs:** Moderation of deliberative dialogues to study stages of public judgment on healthcare cost policies in partnership with Kettering Foundation and JFK Presidential Library

Education

- **Strategic Planning for Educational Collaboratives:** facilitation of planning for state-wide organization of educational collaboratives serving school districts and facilitation regional organization for south region
- **Regional School District Planning:** facilitation of planning group exploring a regional school district for Chatham and Harwich; mediation school funding dispute involving 5-town school district in Western MA
- **Lower Cape School Summit:** facilitation of collaborative problem-solving and public engagement forums on financing and infrastructure issues for superintendents and municipal officials on Lower Cape
- **Early Education & Care Working Groups:** facilitation of consensus recommendations for regulatory reform and workforce planning working groups for MA Department of Early Education & Care

Children & Families

- **Parent Mediation Program:** mediation of child access and visitation disputes between parents in partnership with community mediation programs state-wide and the MA Department of Revenue

Public Safety

- **Agency-wide Mediation Capacity Building:** Design and delivery of training for agency-wide capacity-building initiative at the Department of Corrections to support a new workplace mediation program

University

- **Public Policy Institute:** Moderation of deliberative dialogues on national policy issues in Massachusetts communities, training and development of deliberative dialogue moderators and exploration of the use of the model for potential community building projects
- **Deliberative Dialogue Course:** Instruction of deliberative dialogue course based on the National Issues Forum model for the Osher Life Long Learning Institute at UMass Boston.