

**Facilitation/Mediation Services Proposal**

**RFP: Facilitation/Mediation Services –  
Ad Hoc Working Group for Police & Community**

**Submitting Facilitators:**

**Kristen M. Blankley  
Ashley M. Votruba**

## **Submitting Facilitators & Contact Information**

### **Kristen M. Blankley, J.D.**

Professor of Law, University of Nebraska, College of Law (teaches, among other things, Mediation)  
Visiting Faculty, Mitchell-Hamline School of Law (taught Facilitation)

Secretary, Council for Nebraska Office of Dispute Resolution

Affiliated Mediator, The Mediation Center (Lincoln, NE), The Resolution Center (Beatrice, NE), and  
Central Mediation Center (Kearney, NE)

Resolution Officer, Nebraska Commission of Industrial Relations (interest arbitrator)

Arbitrator, FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority)

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### **Ashley M. Votruba, J.D., Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor, University of Nebraska – Lincoln (teaches, among other things, Conflict & Dispute  
Resolution)

Faculty Associate, Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law (teaches Conflict Theory and The Psychology of  
Conflict)

Affiliated Mediator, The Mediation Center (Lincoln, NE)

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## **About Us**

Kristen Blankley is a Professor of Law at the University of Nebraska, College of Law. Professor Blankley had experience as a judicial clerk and as an associate at a large law firm before joining the University of Nebraska in 2010. Professor Blankley teaches and researches in the areas of alternative dispute resolution (including mediation, facilitation, arbitration, and other interest-based conflict resolution) and legal ethics. In addition, Professor Blankley has experience as a facilitator, mediator, and arbitrator. She has served as a lead or co-facilitator in over a dozen cases, primarily involving public policy and workplace matters. In addition, she has extensive service as a mediator. Professor Blankley has mediated for over a decade, including mediating over 50 cases over zoon since March 2020. She also has experience as arbitrator, including arbitrating securities disputes for FINRA and resolving collective bargaining disputes through the Nebraska Commission on Industrial Relations. Professor Blankley sits on the Council for the ABA Section of Dispute Resolution and is Chair of the Ethics Committee.

Ashley Votruba is an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She received her Ph.D. in social psychology from Arizona State University and her J.D. from the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. She also served as a Judicial Clerk for Justice Robert M. Brutinel on the Arizona Supreme Court from 2015-2016. Professor Votruba teaches courses on Social Psychology, The Psychology of Conflict, and Conflict Theory, as well as conducts research on the social psychology of dispute resolution. She has experience as a mediator, primarily in civil cases. She is an affiliated mediator with The Mediation Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. Locally, she participants in the Restorative Justice Training and Approval Policy Workgroup.

## Project Overview

This proposal is in response to the call for facilitation and mediation services by the City of Laramie (“the convener”) for the Working Group for Police & Community (“WGPC”) currently scheduled to meet from May 2021 through December 2021. We understand that the purpose of the WGPC is to complete the objectives outlined in Resolution 2021-18B section 1, including providing a series of recommendations to city leadership regarding community values and priorities concerning policing practices. We also understand that this should be achieved in a manner that aligns with Laramie’s mission statement and core principles of “*Building Community with Respect, Integrity, Teamwork and Stewardship.*”

With these objectives and core values in mind, we propose to act as co-facilitators to manage the WGPC. In our role as co-facilitators, we will gather information from the conveners and relevant stakeholders, craft agendas with input from the conveners, schedule and manage meetings, facilitate community dialogue, direct and mediate necessary community forums, and provide a written record of meetings while adhering to the desired timeline.

Our facilitation philosophy promotes constructive and meaningful dialogue through the principles of interest-based conflict resolution. Interest-based conflict resolution, popularized by the 1981 book *Getting to Yes*, moves participants away from their stated wants or demands by exploring their underlying needs, or interests. This practice also considers goals of the group and obstacles standing in the way of agreement. Once interests, goals, and obstacles are identified, the facilitators engage in option creation and decision making. Our philosophy draws not only from negotiation theory but also mediation theory and practice, as well as more recent developments in facilitation and strategic planning.

Our strategies include working in partnership with the conveners to understand the issues. After initial conversations, we will meet with stakeholders to identify themes, concerns, and interests. After identifying these important components, we will work with WGPC to craft meeting agendas. The meetings will include multiple types of participation formats to encourage sharing of information, perspective taking, and mutual understanding, resulting in option generation and decision making. Those participation formats may include, among other things, open forums for dialog, small group activities, and times for individual reflection with reporting out. Towards the end of the project, we will work to generate a robust list of options, followed by mechanisms and activities to reduce those options into concrete suggestions for the City.

Beyond this general overview, more specific targets and objectives will be determined in collaboration with the City of Laramie leadership and other stakeholders.

## Schedule

In consultation with the City of Laramie leadership and other stakeholders, we will adhere to the suggested timeline and ensure that the working group meets not less than monthly for six months.

### **Stakeholder Interviews (5-8 interviews)**

We recommend beginning the facilitation process (weeks 1 through 3) with a series of stakeholder interviews to determine specific needs, interests, perspectives, and goals. We will begin by

interviewing City of Laramie leadership (the convener) for 2 to 3 hours. In this initial interview, we will also identify other WGPC members to interview individually (or in small groups) to gain a fuller understanding of the situation from various vantage points. In addition to setting the stage for the WGPC Meetings and Community Forums, these interviews provide us an opportunity to build rapport, answer questions, and address specific concerns. We anticipate each of these interviews should take around 1 hour.

**WGPC Meetings (6-12 meetings)**

We propose facilitating the WGPC meetings, to be held 1 to 2 times per month for 1.5 to 3 hours for six months. The specific format and objectives of each meeting will be determined following the stakeholder interviews and may change from meeting to meeting. These meetings will address the specific objectives and interests identified in the stakeholder interviews. Within the scope of these facilitation services, we will provide a written record of these meetings.

**Community Forums (3 minimum)**

In addition to the standard WGPC Meetings, we will facilitate a minimum of 3 Community Forums (maximum of 4). Like the WGPC Meetings, the specific format and objectives of each meeting will be determined following the stakeholder interviews. Within the scope of these facilitation services, we will provide a written record of these meetings.

**Confidentiality**

Our preference is to offer confidentiality to participants, subject to applicable open records laws. Confidentiality is most important in stakeholder initial interviews, as we determine the items to be discussed and the participants' interests. We expect fewer (if any) expectations of confidentiality for meetings open to the public. We look forward to discussing confidentiality with the City and working within applicable state and local law.

**Meeting Platform**

As facilitators, we are prepared for and experienced with facilitating in-person and via remote attendance platforms such as Zoom (our preferred remote attendance platform). We will work with the WGPC and the City of Laramie Leadership to determine the best options for meeting that comply with State public Health Orders and best practices recommended by the Centers for Disease Control for mitigating the spread of COVID 19.

**Estimated Costs for Facilitation Services**

These services will be charged on the basis of the hourly rate (\$150/hour per facilitator) and reimbursable expenses. No additional services or costs shall be incurred without proper written authorization. Below is an estimate of the billable hours based on the facilitation services described in this proposal.

**Part 1: Stakeholder Interviews**

- Initial meeting with City of Laramie
- Initial interviews with stakeholder groups
- Prepare initial report to City of Laramie
- Work collaboratively with the City to craft agendas for WGPC meetings

*Estimated 30 Total Hours (\$4,500)*

**Part 2: WGPC Meetings**

- Maximum 12 meetings over 6 months
- Meetings estimated at 3 hours, including preparation, facilitation, and documentation

*Estimated 72 Total Hours (\$10,800)*

**Part 3: Community Forums**

- Estimated 3 forums
- Meetings estimated at 3 hours, including preparation, facilitation, and documentation

*Estimated 18 Total Hours (\$2,700)*

The total payment for the described facilitation services shall not exceed \$18,000.

**Estimated Travel Costs for Reimbursement**

For meetings that occur in person, we estimate the following travel costs:

- Estimated flight costs: \$350 round trip
- Estimated hotel costs: \$150 per night
- Travel costs for each trip estimated at 2 people for 2 nights and 1 day

*Estimated travel costs reimbursable for each trip: \$1,300*

**Selected Experience/References**

Professor Kristen Blankley taught Facilitation at Mitchell Hamline School of Law Dispute Resolution Institute. For more information, contact Kitty Atkins, Associate Director, Dispute Resolution Institute, St. Paul, MN 561-290-6427.

Professor Blankley served as the sole facilitator for large group discussions between the University of Nebraska Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the University of Nebraska Administration. For more information, contact Karen Griffin, University of Nebraska Faculty Senate Coordinator, Lincoln, NE 402-472-2573.

Professor Blankley, as an Affiliate with The Mediation Center, has co-facilitated large group conversations within the public and private sectors – including a facilitation among Nebraska State Senators to discuss complex issues of taxation and school funding. For more information, contact Casey Karges, Executive Director, The Mediation Center, Lincoln, NE 402-441-5740.

Professor Blankley facilitated multiple community discussions for the City of Lincoln when it faced budget cuts. The program was run by the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center. For more information, contact Tarik Abdel-Monem, Senior Researcher, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, Lincoln NE 402-472-3147.