
What is a conflict assessment?

A *conflict assessment* is a document that spells out what the issues are as well as who the stakeholders are, where they disagree, and where they might find common ground. The assessment is usually prepared by a neutral outsider, based on confidential interviews with key stakeholders. Typically, after interviewing the obvious stakeholders as well as the less obvious participants suggested by the first group, a neutral party will suggest whether or not it makes sense to go forward with a consensus building process, and if so, how the process ought to be structured.

Such an assessment can be presented orally to the convenor, but it is better that it be written and distributed in draft to everyone interviewed, before it is finalized. The recommendations resulting from a conflict assessment are not the final word. Only the stakeholders themselves can decide whether or not they want to proceed, and, if so, how they want to organize the effort.