

KHSP Networking Meeting

Open Space Description and Instructions

What is Open Space (OS)?

An OS session during the Networking Meeting is scheduled to give more time for attendees to collaborate and communicate within and across thematic groups and to network around new issues/activities raised by individuals and small groups.

OS is an innovative approach for facilitation of meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences, and other gatherings. The OS approach (sometimes called “Open Space Technology”) has proven effective in dealing with complex issues and decisions among groups with high levels of diversity and potential conflict.

The OS approach assumes that great things happen when people who genuinely care about a particular issue are provided opportunities to take responsibility for that issue. OS events can be just an hour or as long as 3 days and can work effectively with just a few people or a large group.

Learn more at: www.johnengle.net & www.openspaceworld.org

How can Open Space be useful in general and during the Networking Meeting?

OS can be used for many organizational or project purposes such as to identify, implement, or evaluate projects, facilitate change in organizations and communities, and make critical decisions in teams or systems.

OS could be used by small groups at the KHSP meeting to:

- Develop grant ideas, manuscripts, or conference panel presentation ideas
- Continue thematic group discussions around collaborative activities or policy issues that emerge on Thursday
- Raise cross-thematic group issues for discussion or action, such as publishing, presenting or grantwriting
- Raise new ideas for discussion or action

Instructions for Open Space:

The OS activity will be introduced at dinner on Thursday night, but participants can start proposing OS groups anytime before that on the OS Bulletin Board located by the registration table.

On Thursday night at the end of dinner, OS will be described and all proposed groups announced. Participants should convene near the Bulletin Board where all the proposed groups are listed to discuss and make choices about their own involvement. Interested people can negotiate about possibly converging themes and the scheduling of working groups. The person who proposed a given topic is the “convener” and decides how it should be scheduled and whether it should be folded into another similar topic.

Friday morning at breakfast from 7:15 - 8:30am is the designated time for the OS session and tables will have signs designating space for each OS groups. However, groups can also decide individually when and where to meet. A list of OS groups with the list of attendees, notes from the resulting discussion, and follow-up plans will be compiled with the help of conveners and made available to meeting participants as part of the meeting proceedings.

The Four Principles of Open Space:

1. ***Whoever comes are the right people.*** OS is based on passion and responsibility. The people who show up in a particular working group are those who are most interested in the subject. We assume such gatherings will have more energy, creativity, and commitment than traditional meetings where people work on something that has been imposed on them. Working groups can range from a single person to several hundred but usually consist of three to fifteen participants.
2. ***Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.*** Giving way to self-organization acknowledges that predetermined agendas have limited value and that potential for creativity and engagement is increased when participants are responsible for their own experience. What happens in an OS meeting is whatever the participants make happen: They determine the topics that have value and meaning, discuss ideas relevant to them, interact with people they have chosen, and decide on further action they wish to take. Therefore, a working group is as good as the passion and responsibility people are ready to commit. OS helps reveal where energy for change exists and what issues the sponsoring organization should take seriously.
3. ***Whenever it starts is the right time.*** Although the Bulletin Board indicates time slots for working groups, this does not mean they start on time. They may start earlier because people can't wait to begin addressing issues they see as critical. They might start late as a result of other, more important things happening. And they might not start at all, in which case Principles 1 and 2 apply.
4. ***When it's over, it's over.*** Although the planning committee has designated a time slot prior to the event (Friday morning, 7:15 - 8:30am), participants are encouraged to 1) conclude their discussion and adjourn early if everything significant has been said, or 2) schedule a time to continue their discussion beyond the specified time slot if more needs to be said. Because Scholar presentations will begin promptly at 8:45 a.m. on Friday, discussions can be planned to continue by email or conference call following the Networking meeting.

The Law of Two Feet/Mobility:

- If you find yourself in a group and discover that you are neither contributing nor learning (i.e. you are bored), use your two feet (or whatever means necessary) to go somewhere else.

It All Hinges On:

- **Passion** — OS assumes that if people are encouraged to work on what they are genuinely interested in, their passion and creativity will unfold. No passion, no issue.
- **Responsibility** — Those who convene a session in an Open Space event take responsibility for:
 1. Assigning time and space (i.e., announcing when and where their subject will be explored)
 2. Making sure notes from discussion are recorded and submitted.