
Research and Evaluation

Funders, conveners, and participants want to know: Are groups collaborating effectively? Can they improve the way they work together? What will it take to produce better results? Similarly, academics and practitioners want to know: Are established consensus building techniques and institutional arrangements working effectively? Are innovations in the field achieving what was intended?

CBI engages in cutting-edge research and evaluation to answer these questions. We work in an interactive, participant-driven, adaptive way. We support practical studies to determine what works — and what doesn't — in the field of dispute resolution and consensus building. CBI does not conduct outsider-driven, academic studies. Instead, we engage stakeholders in multiple rounds of goal setting, data collection, analysis, reflection and practical problem-solving.

We utilize a range of tools, including Web-based surveys, 360-degree assessment tools, in-depth and confidential interviews, and careful reviews of bylaws and other governance documents. As professional mediators, we know how to ensure confidentiality. We aim not only to compare our findings with initially agreed-upon performance criteria, but also to help our clients consider whether they are measuring the right things, and how our findings can be turned their advantage. Our Board of Directors includes some of the United States' best-known researchers in the consensus building field. We are also linked to the MIT-Harvard Public Disputes Program at Harvard Law School and the Environmental Policy Group at MIT. We bring our well-tested theory of mutual gains negotiation, as well as decades of experience in diverse collaborative settings, to bear through rigorous analysis, hard-hitting question-asking, and sensitivity to personalities and politics. We help our clients understand what's working, what's not, and what adjustments ought to be made.