

# Union Pre-Decisional Involvement (PDI) Planning Checklist

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON  
FEDERAL LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

*The goal is informed decision making and eliminating surprises*

\* Please note this checklist is just an example. Labor and Agency representatives are encouraged to change and adapt this list in a way that suits your needs.

## Step 1-Background for the PDI Session

| Questions  | Explanation  | Notes |
|--|--|-------|
| 1. What is the proposed change(s)? Is it new or is it building on something already in place?  | Commitments may have already been made by both parties at a different level of the organization, or issues that are ongoing may already have a PDI process initiated with different union representatives. Duplication of work or inadequate hand-off of PDI topics is not efficient for either party. Awareness of the history of a project and an understanding of any PDI process the union and management have agreed to follow will help promote continuity and clarify expectations. |       |
| 2. Why is the agency making this change or proposing this initiative? Is the initiative or change based on external mandates or on internal management decisions?  | Knowing the why behind an initiative assists in identifying potential solutions to facilitate the change while minimizing adverse impact on unit employees. Understanding why the agency is considering the initiative or change(s) also promotes openness and transparency.   |       |
| 3. Is the intent of the meeting to discuss conditions of employment or other types of information? Is there any concern which may inhibit the union from participating?, e.g., internal union concerns, the PDI subject is already addressed in PDI at a higher level or in the collective bargaining agreement, etc.? | Answers to these questions help the union determine if PDI is of value or if it is more effective to engage in bargaining. Levels of representation may be a consideration when a PDI invitation is initiated. To avoid overlap and duplication of efforts, the union may need to share information and coordinate among multiple representatives. This may require the union to notify management of a change in representation.  |       |

Preparer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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| <p>4. Confidentiality Concerns: Are there aspects of the initiative that involve confidential information? Are there aspects of the information that cannot be widely shared? Identify which information may be confidential and why. If confidential information is utilized in PDI, will you want to establish expectations in your PDI invitation or PDI response?</p> | <p>Legal requirements, policy restrictions, and higher-level mandates may affect management’s ability to openly share information, but the union may have its own reasons to maintain confidentiality of information pertaining to the union’s organization or information that the union has received from bargaining unit members. The union should consider whether it is to its benefit to provide assurances of confidentiality requested by management, as well as what similar assurances it may request from management. In either case, the parties should clarify expectations on confidentiality prior to engaging in PDI discussions. Like toothpaste, once information is out of the tube it can’t be put back.</p> |       |
| <p>5. What are the timeframes associated with this type of PDI; e.g. a committee meeting date, or a working condition implementation requirement?</p>   | <p>Timeframes described by management may influence the Union’s decision whether to accept an invitation to engage in PDI or whether to engage in negotiations. If PDI is a possibility, even though a decision has been made, deadlines may affect who will be available with relevant subject-matter expertise to serve on the Union’s team. If the timeframe described by management would not allow for meaningful PDI input, then the Union must weigh whether a later PDI effort or negotiations would better serve the interests of bargaining unit employees.</p>  |       |

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| <p>6. Is it a long-term or short-term initiative? Does the invitation identify union involvement for each phase?</p>  | <p>This type of information helps the union to plan and to identify the most suitable type of PDI options. If a union representative is not part of each phase, the union may wish to request management to maintain open lines of communication to help promote discussion at the next PDI phase. Moreover, union resources may be limited. If it is a long PDI initiative with multiple phases, union representatives may wish to evaluate whether there are enough time and personnel resources to dedicate to long-term PDI discussions.</p>       |       |
| <p>7. How do you see this change impacting the bargaining unit? (Note: the absence of impact on the bargaining unit does not preclude engaging in PDI.)</p> | <p>Identifying and evaluating the impact on bargaining unit employees may help determine the union's approach, whether PDI is proposed by management or the union. For the union, bargaining unit impact is the focal point for PDI engagement or for deciding whether it would be better to engage in collective bargaining over the change. This saves time, and helps the union to determine the tools and resources it needs to successfully participate in PDI, for example, whether to involve Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in the process.</p> |       |

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| <p>8. Who does the Union have available with background related to this topic to take the lead in PDI discussions? What authorities will these individuals have? Will they have the authority to commit the union if an MOU is reached, authority to reach a tentative agreement or authority to represent the interests of the union for discussion purposes.</p> | <p>Successful PDI relies on all parties having common expectations of the roles of the PDI participants and of the PDI outcome (MOU, consensus, other agreement or recommendation). The parties are encouraged to involve representatives who can adequately represent them in each phase of the PDI process. It is detrimental for one party to have the expectation of a PDI outcome only to find out in the end that the other party's expectation was different.</p>  |       |
| <p>9. How do you see the initiative being communicated to the employees?</p>   | <p>The union should develop a joint strategy with management how best to inform and gain feedback from bargaining unit employees regarding the discussions and decisions reached in PDI. Examples include web-link, live meetings, jointly drafted memoranda or email messages, etc.</p>  |       |
| <p>10. Are there any issues that may create a barrier to constructive and successful PDI efforts? Is the union able to identify the steps it can take to try to mitigate or eliminate the potential roadblocks?</p>  | <p>To promote successful PDI, unions may want to honestly evaluate whether there are union representatives who have stronger skills and a greater interest in collaborative communication techniques. To best prepare for the meetings, union representatives should evaluate whether there is a lack of trust between the management and Union representatives for that unit.<br/>Does the local representative have the needed expertise on the topic?<br/>Is there another more experienced Union representative who could participate and either lead</p> |       |

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|           | or assist in moving the PDI forward? Some thought should be given to how some of these barriers may be addressed to achieve more productive meetings. |       |

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## Step 2: Preparing for the PDI Session

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| <p><b>PDI Invitation:</b></p> <p>1. Was there an information package provided with the invitation? If not, will you request information from management prior to the PDI session?</p> <p>Was there a timeline for responding to the invitation?</p> <p>Did you send the name of the designated union representative(s) for the PDI to management with your intent to participate?</p> <p>Did you identify in the response the authority that the representative(s) will have to speak or act on behalf of the union?</p> | <p>Coming into a meeting to discuss potential working condition changes or other issues without proper information is not conducive to collaborative discussions. It is essential that both sides are working with the same information. Preparation on both sides promotes efficiency and meaningful discussions, as opposed to delays until all parties gain the same level of understanding on a topic. Some parties' agreements or PDI invitations may have dates for the union or management to respond. The parties should agree on the dates and cooperate about response times to ensure successful PDI. Make sure the consequences of missing a deadline are understood.</p> |       |
| <p><b>PDI meetings:</b></p> <p>2. If there are meetings, will the union elect to participate in the meetings or choose to only provide input in written and electronic format?</p> <p>How will travel costs associated with the participation in meetings be covered?</p>  | <p>Planning prior to engaging in PDI promotes efficient use of both parties' time and resources, and thus promotes a collaborative environment to discuss an issue.</p> <p>Does the union representative selected to participate in PDI have the time to both prepare and engage in PDI?</p> <p>If the outcome expectation is for the parties to</p>  |       |

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| <p>What is the authority conferred on the union representative(s)? Will they need a written delegation of authority?</p> <p>Does the union rep have skill sets in PDI and interest-based problem-solving?</p>                  | <p>seek consensus and, if consensus is achieved, to put the agreement in an MOU, does the union have representatives with the authority to sign a binding agreement? The union should be prepared to provide the names of both the authorized representative(s) and any SME(s) it wishes to participate in the PDI sessions. Designations in writing keep the lines clear about who will and who will not be involved in the PDI meetings. This will facilitate any necessary arrangements for releasing employees on official time and/or arranging travel to participate.</p> |       |
| <p><b>Additional Information requests:</b></p> <p>3. Is there additional information the union feels is necessary, but that was not included in the PDI invite package? What is needed? Who will request it for the union?</p> | <p>Does the union have enough information that it feels ready to talk about options, suggestions or concerns? If not, a request for information to the management official initiating the PDI may be appropriate. This request should be made prior to the first meeting to give the union representative(s) engaging in PDI time to prepare.</p>   |       |
| <p>4. Does the union have SMEs for the PDI? Are they available to attend briefings and to review additional information? Did the union include this request in its response to the management PDI invitation?</p>              | <p>The union may wish to include in the PDI sessions unit employees who work in the program area, who use a system as part of their assigned duties, and who may have valuable information to offer to the discussion. The frontline employee often knows best the pitfalls and rewards for various approaches to solve a problem or address a change. If the SMEs are identified, the union will</p>   |       |

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|  | <p>want to contact the SMEs to prepare for the meeting. Also, if the union would like to include unit employee SMEs, any necessary arrangements for releasing employees on official time and/or arranging travel to participate should be coordinated with management as early as possible to minimize any potential impact to the mission.</p> <p>This is also an opportunity to evaluate reasons about whether a certain employee may not be the best candidate to serve as an SME. Questions to ask: does the employee have the right skill set to make a contribution in a collaborative environment? Is there anything that would prevent the employee from asserting his or her opinion honestly with agency representatives? Is there a history of a difficult relationship with other PDI group members that may inhibit successful PDI efforts?</p> |       |
| <p>5. What technology will be used for the PDI sessions? Does the Union have access to this technology? And are the Union representatives familiar with this technology? If not, is there a “plan B” that could be proposed to management?</p> | <p>Technologies used to conduct PDI should be available to all parties. If the parties are not familiar with using the technology efficiently, the comfort level for discussion could be affected. For example, if the parties decide to use video meetings does everyone have a laptop with the correct software and meeting access information?</p>  |       |

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|           | Has this system been tested in advance of the meeting to ensure it works and everyone has access? |       |

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## Step 3: During the PDI Session

- Have handy any information management provided in advance and review it prior to the meeting
- SMEs are on the conference line or have the call in number available and have blocked time on their schedules to assist when notified
- Union Rep with authority is present (if an agreement is being drafted, the Rep with delegated authority should be present)
- Introductions are made
- Management and the union share expectations for the meeting
- Clearly identify next steps - dependent upon the type of PDI and expectations identified in the invitation, this could result in one or more of the following:
  - Mid-term negotiations
  - Implementation of the PDI change(s)
  - Further PDI sessions/participation as a project moves forward
- Notes: capture those items discussed. Those items receiving consensus and those identified by the parties as needing negotiations are captured in writing.

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### Step 4: After the PDI session

- Meeting notes are completed and sent to all parties.
- If consensus or commitments were made by the parties not related to working conditions, these may or may not be captured in the meeting notes or a separate document signed by both parties. Follow up items from the meeting are monitored and updates provided to the parties as they are completed.
- If an agreement was made (e.g., an MOU) ensure it is signed and copies have been provided to all parties.
- If negotiations are still required, the union and management will normally follow their negotiated or statutory procedures for bargaining. The union may wish to provide its negotiator(s) with the information packages, any statement of facts, and any other information gathered during the PDI process. This gives the parties a platform to build upon for negotiations.

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Step 4: After the PDI Session