

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

In a recent article entitled *Engaging Federal Employees Through Their Union Representatives To Improve Agency Performance*, Dr. Marick Masters, Professor Christina Sickles-Merchant, and Professor Robert Tobias wrote that guiding principles are essential factors contributing to the success of any labor-management forum. The authors also wrote that labor-management engagement “cannot work if either party pays only lip service to the process. No one can force engagement down someone’s throat, but the right kind of environment can be created.”

With this in mind, the author’s recommended the following guiding principles as a framework to help labor and management leaders develop an effective and efficient labor-management relationship<sup>1</sup>

- Engagement should contribute positively to the performance of the agency
- Engagement should Promote the economic and workplace interests of employees and managers
- Engagement should Operate with a clear charter that grants the parties broad authority to address issues that fall outside the scope of bargaining
- Engagement should Address issues in a pre-decisional manner wherever possible
- Engagement teams should receive training in interest-based problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Engagement teams should use skilled facilitators at appropriate times
- Engagement teams should set goals, measure performance, and communicate results
- Managers and union representatives at all levels, especially high-ranking, should be committed to making engagement work, which means being personally engaged
- A cooperative approach to collective bargaining should be taken wherever possible so that adversarial relations at the negotiating table do not jeopardize the larger engagement process
- Engagement teams should include middle managers and labor relations specialists with the understanding that the role of the latter is not to obstruct but rather to contribute to the cooperative conduct of all forums of labor-management interaction

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<sup>1</sup> Note. From “*Engaging Federal Employees Through Their Union Representatives To Improve Agency Performance*,” by M. Masters, C. Sickles Merchant, and R. Tobias, 2010, p. 31.