

## **Andersen and Richardson (1997): “Scripts for group model building”**

The authors are summarizing different scripted techniques, which can be used to plan, structure and execute group model building sessions based on a decade of experience. It is emphasized that group model building is highly dependent from sophisticated pieces of small group processes. These scripts “build a continuous stream of small-group activity” that are generating products. All scripts together built a “catalogue of tested and refined procedures” in the established system dynamics coursework. Purpose of the paper is to initiate discussion on techniques and scripts for group model building.

### **Planning phase**

#### **Goal setting:**

- Interviews with key managers: Find gatekeeper to get a selection of appropriate people and to work together with the modeling team for preparation.
- Clarify Audience and Purpose: Get the right people together at the right time.

#### **Logistics:**

- Room layout: U-formed shape of chairs with whiteboard or projector on the open side.
- Roles in the room: Facilitator, modeler, process coach, recorder and gatekeeper.

### **Types of group task structure**

**Divergent tasks (Collecting many ideas)** → Let individuals or subgroups write down ideas or variables to collect some of them afterwards. (Avoid too fast anchoring.)

**Convergent tasks (Combine ideas)** → Group design parts of SD structure together, describing problem, create policy responses, identify problems, etc.

- **Ranking and evaluation:** Every group member get a fixed number of “important votes” or sticky dots to give parts of the structure more importance.
- **Presentation:** To give structured reflections to the group (recap insights).

### **Scheduling the day**

- **15 minutes blocks:** Change setting very often; involve people quickly.
- **Start with a bang and end with a bang:**
- **Clarify products:** Make clear what the outcome of the session should look like (SFD, CLD, Running model, Policy action steps, etc.)
- **Maintain visual consistency:** Use same symbols for the entire modeling conference.
- **Strive for visual simplicity:** e.g. provide a simplified and cleaned up version for the group.
- **Avoid talking heads:** Cut off monologues, which are longer than a few minutes.
- **Reflect after each major piece:** Summarize important mile stones.
- **Wield the power of the pen:** Take responses from the group into account.
- **Manage for group formation:** Develop a group sense, plan ice-breakers, hopes and fears

### **Scripts (2 examples):**

1. **Eliciting reference modes:** Give small groups a quarter of the time to path important key variables and complete their trajectory. Discuss results afterwards to find a reference mode of the problem behavior.

- 2. System archetypes templates:** From small groups and let them (after given them explanations) about typical SD-archetype behavior in their organization.