

SIX THINKING HATS

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Coastal professionals often bring stakeholders together to examine a situation, consider options, and provide input before making decisions about building coastal resilience. While this often leads to high quality solutions and increased buy-in, wrangling this process can be a challenge. How do you get stakeholders to consider all perspectives of a proposed solution? How can you increase the potential for collaboration and creativity in community meetings? Getting stakeholders to direct their thinking can be fun and productive using the Six Thinking Hats approach, developed by Edward de Bono, a leading international authority in the field of conceptual thinking.

Six Hat Thinking starts with an idea; to fix something, to start something new, or to change the way things are done. Together, team members put on a “hat” of a particular color that represents a single viewpoint, allowing them to analyze the idea collaboratively without feeling a need to defend their personal ideas or feel like they are criticizing an individual.

During this On-the-Spot session, I'll introduce Dr. de Bono's concept of lateral thinking by presenting the basic framework and providing a fun, easy example so participants can see how it works. I'll share the story about how an Office for Coastal Management project team applied this approach during the recent development of the Using Flood Exposure Maps blended webinar. Then we'll break into small groups so everyone can try using each of the six hats to analyze a real-world coastal management issue.

We'll come back together as a large group and share the thoughts identified while wearing each of the six hats. I'll facilitate a discussion on the benefits and potential pitfalls of lateral thinking. Participants will consider opportunities to apply this approach in the workplace, and will walk away with a hard-copy handout and a link to an on-line Six Thinking Hats job aid.