



FMCS | FEDERAL MEDIATION & CONCILIATION SERVICE

Relationships-by-Objectives

Repairing Broken Relationships

Is your labor-management relationship characterized by frequent grievances, broken trust, poor communication, or a lack of joint L-M vision?

The mission of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) is to assist and train labor and management partners in building stronger working relationships. Put our more than 65 years of experience to work for you, with the implementation of FMCS relationship development training programs focused on achieving results in today's workplaces with new approaches to cooperatively addressing mutual problems.

What Is Relationships-by-Objectives (RBO)?

RBO is an in-depth, conflict resolution program designed to improve relationships between labor and management by mutually identifying action steps to address production, training, communication, and relationship needs within an organization.

How Does It Work?

RBO leads participants through the steps necessary to identify problems and solutions, and to develop an action plan to be executed when they return to the workplace. Program topics will be determined by discussions with potential participants and a needs assessment. Incorporating the needs and goals of the participants, program delivery will include:

- ◆ Introduction to the RBO process
- ◆ Identification of viewpoints, concerns and conflict
- ◆ Skills building
- ◆ Transforming viewpoints and concerns into action
- ◆ Developing an action plan
- ◆ Identifying mutual next steps



To succeed an RBO program requires proactive parties, as well as a declared commitment from and involvement of key officials at all levels of labor and management. This program is not an opportunity to renegotiate contract terms although extensive discussion of the parties' collective bargaining agreement will occur during the program. Upon the completion of a RBO program, parties will have developed a platform from which they can begin to address day-to-day challenges with value-added labor-management collaboration.



The Role of the Mediator in an RBO

The role of the mediator(s) is to ensure that the participants explore relationship issues and address expectations, work toward understanding, and commit to establish mutual goals and follow through on a shared action plan. They are also there to work out “parking lot” problems which may arise during the course of the meetings. The mediator(s) primary objectives during RBO are to help the parties to develop problem-solving skills; develop mutual trust and respect; foster communication and listening; and focus the parties on relationship building.

Is RBO Right for My Organization?

RBO is designed as a joint training for an organization's labor-management leadership, supervisors, and stewards. An organization's labor relations professionals and union representatives, individuals who handle labor issues face-to-face, should be involved. Additionally, due to the visioning and planning components of the program it is essential that an organization's top labor and management decision makers participate in the entire program.

Labor-management relationships characterized by the following are ideal candidates for RBO:

- ◆ Fractured Relationships
- ◆ Heavy Grievances
- ◆ Low Morale
- ◆ Limited Trust
- ◆ Costly Arbitrations
- ◆ Apathy
- ◆ Miscommunications
- ◆ Lack of Joint Vision

“The RBO training the FMCS provided was absolutely invaluable in helping both sides get behind the process that led to our contract. FMCS and the RBO program helped us work through anger, bad practices, and mistrust and to start to set objectives and work together to realize them. It has turned things around enormously. Both sides now believe we can work together on important issues so that BOP will not only be a safer and better place to work, it will also be better able to achieve its mission. This never would have happened without the intervention and assistance from the FMCS.”

– J. David Cox, National President AFGE

What Are the Costs of RBO?

There is no cost for FMCS services related to an RBO program. Costs of an offsite venue (required) are to be shared between labor and management.

For More Information

Please contact your local FMCS office or visit our website, www.fmcs.gov.