

Facilitator Competencies

- Attitudes
 - Positive and supportive of the **process** with which you are involved (you believe that the process adds value)
 - Motivated to accomplish objectives
 - Tolerant and interested in the ideas of others, recognizing that “having your opinion heard” is not the reason to facilitate
 - Display enjoyment of the process

- Skills and behaviors
 - Patience
 - Pays attention to the dynamics of the group to make certain that everyone has an opportunity to participate. Methods to limit the impact of the domineering members and encouraging ideas from the shy ones
 - Thoughtful and creative in moving along on an agenda without being heavy-handed with the participants.
 - Make the process enjoyable for all
 - Analysis
 - Be able to separate content (what is said) work from process (how things are said and how members interact).
 - Be able to frame issues
 - Communication skills:
 - Choice of words
 - Ability to listen, summarize and reframe
 - Using questions to stimulate thinking

- Knowledge
 - Understand the goals of the dialogue
 - Techniques to manage group and encourage participation
 - Understands the agenda for the day
 - In-depth, content- specific knowledge is not as important

Guidelines for Successful Meeting Facilitation

- ❑ Start the meeting promptly as possible, but be flexible
- ❑ Welcome everyone
 - Be positive, regardless of the number of participants
- ❑ Introduce people
- ❑ Review the schedule
 - Explain the purpose of the discussion groups
- ❑ Explain or set the rules of participation
- ❑ Encourage participation
 - Encourage people to both listen as well as speak
 - Draw out those who are not participating
- ❑ Monitor and stick to the identified focus...the relationship
 - When people get off the topic. Bring them back... "That is an interesting issue, but we should not get too far off our main topic"
 - Maintain the group's focus
- ❑ Don't get immersed in details
- ❑ Generate ideas
 - Summarize, clarify
 - Ask questions to stimulate thinking
- ❑ Meeting maintenance
 - Reconcile disagreements/ Resolve conflicts
 - Coaching
 - Build relationships with and among participants
 - Record information as needed
- ❑ Respect everyone's rights
 - Facilitator is the protector of the weak in the meeting
 - Encourage shy and quiet people to speak: "Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet."
 - Do not allow domineering people to ridicule other's ideas or to embarrass them in any way...
- ❑ Be flexible
 - If issues arise that are so important, alter the agenda to discuss them prior to returning to the prepared agenda
 - Talk with other leaders if necessary
- ❑ Summarize the main issues of the dialogues and follow-up
- ❑ Thank people
- ❑ Close the meeting on or before the designated ending time

Meeting Facilitation

Every meeting should be enjoyable, run efficiently, and build comfort and trust. Although these characteristics may be difficult to measure, they are terribly important. No one wants to attend meetings that are boring or poorly run. Efficient meetings respect people's time as their most valuable resource. They also build trust by generating a sense of unity and helping people respect and support one another.

Being a good facilitator is both a skill and an art. It is a skill in that people can learn certain techniques and can improve their ability with practice. It is an art in that some people just have more of a knack for it than others. Some positions in organizations, such as board presidents, require them to facilitate meetings; thus, board presidents must be trained in how to do this. Because other meetings don't require that particular people act as facilitators, you can draw upon members with the requisite skills. Facilitating a dialogue requires someone to:

- Understand the goals of the dialogue and the nature of the relationship between consumers and providers
- Keep the group focused on the relationship issues and moving forward
- Involve everyone in the meeting, by reigning in the domineering members and encouraging the shy ones

A good facilitator is concerned about both a meeting's content and its style. By having the other roles suggested, such as notetakers and timekeepers, the facilitator has some assistance in moving the agenda along. Here are some guides for meeting facilitation:

Start the Meeting Promptly. Few meetings actually begin on time these days, but you do not want to penalize those who did come on time. For large group meetings, plan to start within ten to fifteen minutes of the official beginning time. For smaller meetings, particularly regular organizational meetings, start exactly on time.

Welcome Everyone. Make a point to welcome everyone who comes to the meeting. Do not, under any circumstance, bemoan the size of the group. Once you are at a meeting, the people there are the people there. Go with what you have. (You may want to analyze the recruitment plans after the meeting.)

- *Introduce People.* If just a few people are new, ask them to introduce themselves. If the group as a whole does not know one another well, ask people to answer a question or tell something about themselves that provides useful information for the group or the chairperson. The kinds of questions you should ask depend upon the kind of meeting it is

It is important to make everyone feel welcome and listened to at the beginning of a meeting. Otherwise, participants may feel uncomfortable and unappreciated, and won't participate well in later parts of the meeting. In addition, if you don't get basic information from people about their backgrounds and involvement, you may miss golden opportunities.

The chair of a meeting may need to introduce him or herself and tell why he or she is speaking or facilitating the meeting. This is especially true when most people are unfamiliar with the chairperson. It never hurts for chairpersons to explain how long they have been a part of the organization, how important the organization is to them, and what outcomes they hope for from the meeting.

Review the Schedule. Go over what's going to happen in the meeting. Ask the group if the agenda is adequate. While it will be fine 90 percent of the time, someone will suggest an additional item in the other 10 percent. Either the item can be addressed directly in the meeting, or you can explain how and when the issue can be addressed.

Explain the Meeting Rules. Most groups need some basic rules of order for meetings. If you choose to use a formal system, such as Robert's Rules of Order, make sure that everyone understands how to use them. If not, a few people can dominate the meeting solely based upon their better understanding of Robert's Rules.

Encourage Participation. Every meeting should involve the people who come. Encourage leaders and organizers to listen to people. Seek reports on what people have done and thank them. Urge those with relevant background information on past decisions and work to share it at appropriate times. Draw out those who seem withdrawn from discussions.

Stick to the Agenda. Groups have a tendency to wander far from the original agenda. When you hear the discussion wandering off, bring it to the group's attention. You can say, "That's an interesting issue, but perhaps we should get back to the original matter of discussion."

Avoid Diversions frequently it is easier for a group to discuss the color of napkins than it is the real issues it is facing. Have a group not get immersed in details, suggesting instead, *Respect Everyone's Rights*. The facilitator is the protector of the weak in meetings. He or she encourages quiet and shy people to speak, and does not allow domineering people to ridicule others' ideas or to embarrass them in any fashion. Try one of these phrases for dealing with domineering people: "We've heard a lot from the men this evening, are there women who have additional comments?" (assuming the domineering one was a man). Or, "We've heard a lot from this side of the room. Are there people with thoughts on the other side of the room?" Or, "Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet."

Sometimes people dominate a discussion because they are really interested in an issue and have lots of ideas. There may be ways to capture their interest and concern, without having them continue to dominate the meeting. For example, consider asking them to serve on a taskforce or committee on that matter.

In other situations, people just talk to hear themselves. If a person regularly participates in your organization's meetings and regularly creates problems, a key leader should talk with him or her about helping involve new people and drawing others out at meetings.

Be Flexible. Occasionally, issues and concerns arise that are so important, you must alter the agenda to discuss them before returning to the prepared agenda. If necessary, ask for a five-minute break in the meeting to discuss with the key leaders how to handle the issue and how to restructure the agenda. Be prepared to recommend an alternate agenda, dropping items if necessary.

Summarize the Meeting Results and Follow-Up. Before closing a meeting, summarize what happened and what followup will occur. Review the commitments people made to reinforce them, as well as to remind them how effective the meeting was.

Thank People. Take a moment to thank people who prepared things for the meeting, set up the room, brought refreshments, or typed up the agenda. Also, thank everyone for making the meeting a success.

Close the Meeting on or Before the Ending Time. Unless a meeting is really exciting, people want it to end on time. And remember, no one minds getting out of a meeting early.

The person who takes on the role of facilitator is responsible for guiding the participants toward the desired outcomes. Good meeting design is the first step towards a successful meeting, but facilitators will use many techniques to keep the meeting moving, to include everyone in the conversation, and to handle difficult situations. Good meeting design is the first step towards a successful meeting, but facilitators will use many techniques to keep the meeting moving, to include everyone in the conversation, and to handle difficult situations. They will remind people of the time and point out when the conversation gets off track.

Often the team or project leader is the one who facilitates meetings. Although they may not think of themselves as the facilitator, they should be attentive to the process of the meeting as well as the content. Even meeting participants can act in facilitative ways by asking a question or making a suggestion to get the meeting back on track or to draw out a person's idea.

Key Meeting Facilitation Skills. Effective meeting facilitation requires skill in three capacities:

(1) Analysis

- Separating content work from process work

- Identifying interests

- Framing problems

(2) Communication

- choice of words

- ability to listen, summarize and reframe

- using questions to stimulate thinking

(3) Familiarity with process models

- leadership

- techniques to keep the meeting on track and moving

<p>Task Functions :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Setting and monitoring the agenda and meeting goals-Defining problems-Establishing procedures-Generating ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Soliciting information-Giving information (i.e., providing expert content)-Identifying alternatives-Synthesizing ideas-Summarizing-Checking for consensus <p>Maintenance Functions :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Encouraging and balancing participation-Reconciling disagreements-Resolving conflicts
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	Gatekeeping -Setting the right climate -Coaching -Building relationships
--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Identify a facilitator for the meeting. Let the facilitator know his/her responsibilities, which are to:

- Remain content neutral by not contributing, judging or evaluating ideas generated by the group
- Listen actively to all group members
- Navigate the way by guiding the process toward desired outcomes
- Seek involvement and participation from everyone