
IAP2 AUSTRALASIA
CERTIFICATE IN ENGAGEMENT

# Engagement Facilitation

iap2
international association
for public participation

The heart of facilitation is the capacity to manage conversations that:

- test assumptions
- allow new ideas to surface, address new needs or needs not easily articulated
- put unlikely things together and see new connections and patterns
- provoke and stimulate new ideas
- tolerate and respect uncertainty and anxiety before an authentic solution emerges
- harness different skills and personalities and encourage robust dialogue.

Ian Colley. Make Stuff Happen

# IAP2 Australasia

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an international federation of member affiliates, that seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation, or community engagement, incorporating individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest.

IAP2 Australasia is the affiliate for Australia and New Zealand, and is the leading public participation association in the world.

As an international leader in public participation, IAP2 has developed the IAP2 Core Values for Public Participation for use in the development and implementation of public participation processes. These core values were developed with broad international input to identify those aspects of public participation, which cross national, cultural, and religious boundaries.

The purpose of these core values is to help make better decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities.

## IAP2 Australasia Certificate in Engagement

IAP2 Australasia offers a Certificate in Engagement which comprises five days training consisting of:


- Engagement Essentials (a one-day prerequisite)

and either

- Engagement Design OR Engagement Methods (each course is two days)

The two additional days can be comprised of either:

- Engagement Design, OR
- Engagement Methods, OR
- two one-day modules provided by IAP2 Australasia, and approved to contribute towards the Certificate. Current modules include:
  - Conflict in Engagement
  - Engagement Facilitation
  - Engagement Evaluation
  - Engaging with Influence.

### Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

IAP2 Australasia also offers an annual conference, a leadership forum, master classes and networking events throughout Australia and New Zealand.

IAP2 has introduced a Quality Assurance Process and will be consulting members on a model of membership certification.

# Acknowledgements

Engagement Facilitation is owned by IAP2 Australasia. It thanks the members of the Project Panel who contributed to the development of this course:

- Ian Colley, Author, Make Stuff Happen PL NSW
- Martin de los Rios, principal, Martin de los Rios Vic
- Rachael Edington, principle, Plum Communications PL Qld
- Debbie Gee, The Finishing Touch NZ
- Claire Paddison, Landom WA
- Tanya Vernes, Local Government Vic
- Karen Wilden, ACT Government

Grace Leotta CPM, trainer and accredited facilitator, acted as Peer Reviewer.



# Disclaimer

The aim of Engagement Facilitation is to introduce the key concepts and process in IAP2 Australasia’s Engagement Model. The copyright is owned by IAP2 Australasia.

These materials are provided as support reading to develop the concepts in the course and do not purport to provide sufficient information to act, or to give advice. The emphasis is on broadening perspective, providing examples and developing a sense of what to look for, what to questions and from whom to seek guidance.

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# Aim Objectives and Learning Outcome

## Aim

The aim of Engagement Facilitation is to develop the skill and confidence to facilitate live events.

## Objectives

- Examine the framework and purpose of facilitation
- Build your repertoire of tools and processes
- Practise core skills
- Troubleshoot specific challenges

## Learning Outcome

By the end of this module you will have enhanced your ability to respond appropriately, generating confidence in, and support for, your facilitation approach.

## Who should do this course?

Engagement Facilitation is designed for those who are new to facilitation and may find themselves having to respond ‘in the moment’ to facilitate live group events as part of a broader engagement project.

## Key benefits

- Engagement Facilitation has been developed by a recognised and qualified facilitation practitioner and validated by the Project Panel who are IAP2 Australasia trainers, participants and stakeholders
- You will develop a repertoire of facilitation-specific processes and skills
- You will work with a group like-minded practitioners who will share their experiences and tips for success
- You will develop confidence to lead other internal stakeholders towards deciding on a more effective process.

# Introduction

Engagement Facilitation assumes that larger questions of context and purpose have been (or will be) explored or considered in appropriate detail.

This course addresses concepts and skills relevant at the precise point where someone is leading face-to-face live meetings or events with a group of stakeholders. For example, it could be a community street meeting, or an event to introduce a change or reform to staff within an organisation, or a collaborative workshop with decision-makers from a range of government departments.

While completion of IAP2 Australasia's Engagement Essentials is not a pre-requisite for this course, it is likely that the key models - IAP2 Spectrum and the Community Engagement Model - will be referenced.

This course assumes that participants already understand the broader context for an engagement project, and this meeting is part of that larger project. It also assumes that critical activities like stakeholder identification have been addressed.

The skills reviewed here are also of benefit for those interested in facilitation skills generally (team leaders, managers, project managers) and for whom meetings are an important aspect of their role.

"If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the question to ask."
- Albert Einstein

# It's just a conversation

A good place to start thinking about facilitation is by discussing:

## What makes a 'great' conversation: one to one, or a small group?

In the course of a 'great' conversation, something shifts, for all parties. Something surprises us. New meaning is created. Future directions become clear. Needs are met and commitments are made.

Good conversations enter unknown territory. When you start, you don't actually know how it will turn out with your partners. You may have a purpose, or an end in mind. But this purpose must allow for other voices and other expectations. If you are just pushing for a specific result or change in the other person, it's a lecture, or a form of discipline. It will be resisted.

The best conversations go beyond discussion or debate. The very best requires an open mind, and authentic and honest sharing. They enter the realm of dialogue.

Dialogue is more than a mere exchange of ideas, as useful as that is. Dialogue is not just about information, data, and facts; dialogue encompasses at least three more aspects: empathy, intention and non-judgmental dialogue:

## 1. Empathy or feelings

Do we have a sense that we are open to another's emotional universe? When someone is angry, moved, or delighted by an insight, do we step into their shoes to sense the full implication of that emotion? By contrast, do we acknowledge the danger of getting coerced by someone else's passion?

## 2. Intention

There is almost always some forward movement in someone else's words. We are heading somewhere (however vague or short term). For each of us, gathering in a group, there are multiple intentions available, intentions that have, potentially, coalesced for the brief moment of this meeting. Is there something that might emerge between us that creates a collective insight that has some mutual forward movement?

## 3. Non-judgmental dialogue

Free flowing, non-judgmental dialogue is considered a tool for social transformation that generates new meaning between the parties in the discussion.

Dialogue implies an openness of heart and intention that, from your careful sharing and listening, allows new meanings to emerge that are actually created between you all in this group discussion. Imagine, if every conversation was seen as an opportunity for this kind of dialogue? Dialogue with depth and delight: What would be different?

"The etymology of 'conversation': to 'turn together."

- Ian Colley

# Content *versus* process

A fundamental distinction in facilitation is that between content and process.

| Content - the 'what' and the 'why' | Process – the 'how' |
|---|---|
| **The subject being discussed - the topics** | The methods through which content is explored |
| **The task to accomplish** | How healthy relations are maintained between group members |
| **The problem to solve** | How decisions will be made, how problems will be solved |
| **The decisions to be made** | The rules and norms being set - the group culture |
| **The agenda items** | The emotional tone of the meeting, the feelings being expressed, the group dynamics that influence this tone |
| **Advice, expertise, ideas offered by participants** | Activities that stimulate imagination and learning |
| **All the information presented and shared throughout the event** | Drawing the group's attention to opportunities for deeper and more authentic conversations. |

Most of us understand content. We plan for it, set agendas to cover it, and account for the results of meetings in terms of it. But good facilitation is alive to the process dimension. We care about who is reluctant to share, we notice that the group is losing focus because they need a break, we hear when a participant is cajoling or brow-beating other members.

"The facilitator's main task is to help the group increase its effectiveness by improving its process."

- Roger Schwartz

## The classic 'facilitator' role - 'neutral' on content

Using this distinction, it is useful to articulate the classic role of the facilitator as 'neutral' on content. The role of the facilitator is NOT to offer content suggestions, or subject expertise on the topic at hand. Their role is to plan and manage the process through which participants will explore and reshape the content. This is the 'pure' facilitator role.

At its extreme, the content of the topics under consideration are unknown to the facilitator, who is encouraging the group to draw on its collective knowledge and wisdom to create new insights and recommendations. While there are many circumstances in which facilitators can and will make valuable contributions on content matters, it is important to highlight the value of the 'neutral' position. In a high-stakes context, both neutrality and independence may be essential for a successful outcome.

## Turn on your 'process radar' - observe, check-in

Facilitators need to monitor group process continually. The facilitator needs to 'read' the room; sense the level of energy and interest; identify if intervention is necessary; make a hypothesis about what is going on and then test it with the group or individuals.

The process elements can be very concrete and practical, such as "Is the air conditioning turned on?" or "Can everyone hear over the noise of that jackhammer?" or perhaps a more abstract issue, such as assessing how engaged the audience is.

The kind of questions facilitators need to ask themselves are:

- "Is everyone involved?"
- "Has anyone slumped or lost interest?"
- "Are they all thinking about lunch now?"
- "Is there something essential here that people are afraid to say?".

> Identify if intervention is necessary, make a hypothesis about what is going on, then test it with the group or individuals.

# Skills in facilitation: the dance between ‘tell’ and ‘ask’

There are two separate skills that capture the essence of effective communication in groups.

1. Honest expression - our ability to express, assert, speak or show something to others
2. Empathetic listening - our ability to hear, listen, understand and respond to these others.

It is useful to consider these skills on a spectrum of communication behaviours between ‘tell’ and ‘ask’: ‘presenting’ with known content at one end through to ‘facilitating’ with unknown content at the other end, as shown following.


In a ‘presenter’ mode, you need to consider how to pace a presentation: in digestible ‘chunks’ and in a meaningful sequence because the emphasis is on making sure the participants can absorb and use the content.

The information must be clear and accessible, address the different levels of expertise and knowledge among participants and also consider how to address different preferences for receiving information, such as using visual aids, summary handouts, activity instructions, or just talking.

In the ‘facilitator’ mode, you ask questions, listen to responses, seek comments from others, probe for alternative views and encourage dialogue. The role is highly interactive: a two-way communication. An effective facilitator is expected to establish and maintain an environment that is conducive to healthy discussion; managing group dynamics and providing feedback on how well members are working together. As well, a facilitator needs to foster, assist, support and/or help with accomplishing the meeting tasks.

In a ‘pure’ facilitator mode, the content is genuinely being created by the group in the course of a meeting.

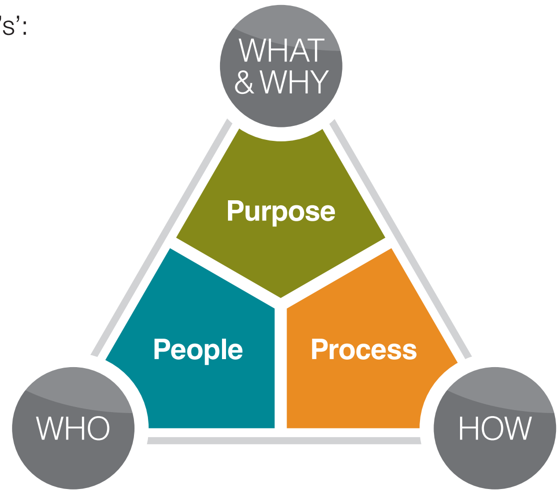
# A Model for Facilitation Practice: the 3 'P's'

In Engagement Facilitation we structure our learning under 3 'P's':

1. Purpose: **What** and **Why** of planning for a facilitation?
2. People: **Who** are in the room?
3. Process: **How** are you going to approach the facilitation?

Our reference model of the '3 P's of facilitation' is shown here.

Each of these 'P's will now be examined.

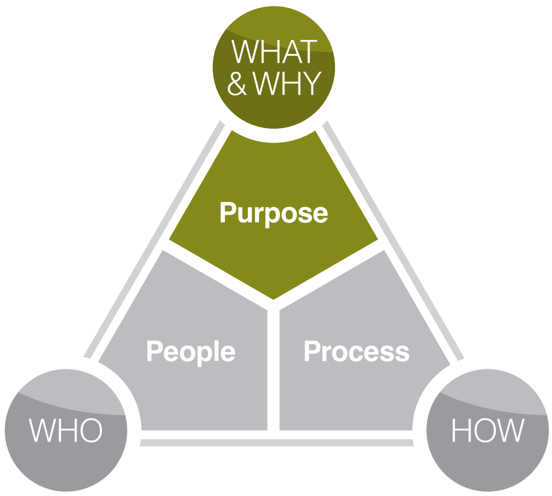



## 1st 'P'- Purpose: the WHAT and the WHY

The purpose of a meeting is sometimes unclear, hidden or assumed. It is important to clarify:

- What you are aiming to achieve. Think in terms of Covey's[1] 'Begin with the end in mind'. The purpose should be sharp, succinct and provided to the group BEFORE the meeting.
- The outcomes, by asking:
  - What are the outcomes you expect to produce?
  - What would success actually look like?
  - What is the product, service, agreement you need to see at the end?

Be bold about defining what a very successful outcome could look like. Before the meeting, ensure your client and representative stakeholders are clear about what the end result should be. Ask for detail: What is the size, shape and feel of the result? For example, a 'strategic plan' can be a 10-page dot-point list of details, or a succinct paragraph with three clear directions.




[1] Covey, S (1989): The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

## Key context for IAP2

A key concept that IAP2 Australasia training references is the 'Spectrum', shown following.

**Increasing impact on the decision**

| | Inform | Consult | Involve | Collaborate | Empower |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Public Participation Goal** | To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. | To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. | To place final decision making in the hands of the public. |
| **Promise to the Public** | We will keep you informed. | We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible. | We will implement what you decide. |

Consider the 'goal' of each position on the spectrum and more importantly, the 'promise'. This will influence your purpose and subsequent decisions because it is important to link the Purpose with the Outcomes and manage expectations.

# 1st 'P'- Purpose: the WHAT and the WHY

## Skill practice: Start strong

In the first few minutes you need to 'warm up' the participant group:

- to each other
- to the topic
- to their own interests
- to talking and sharing
- to moving
- to feeling
- to you

| Identify the context |
|---|

| Define the Purpose |
|---|

| **List the three most important aspects of this facilitation for you** |
|---|

| **Notes from the debrief** |
|---|

## Crafting a purpose statement

In your briefing with the client, be sure to clarify what can be negotiated and what can't, and other issues such as jurisdictions (the level of government or organisational authority in this situation).

Identifying what is non-negotiable gives clear boundaries and helps manage expectations. Be tough-minded in shaping expectations about what this event can accomplish within the constraints of larger political and social systems. Be ambitious but clear-eyed about the power and limits of dialogue in this meeting by:

- **Writing your Purpose**

  Use an active verb with an observable and specific outcome.

  For example:

  > "The purpose of this meeting is to decide on a preferred option for siting the new library in the Town Centre."

  Avoid verbs like "explore", "understand" or "know" because they are not observable outcomes.

  Articulate the aim or aims if there is more than one.

  If there is one main aim and then some specific objectives within this main aim, add these as separate objectives underneath your main purpose.

  For example:

  The purpose of the meeting is to align activities of the two branches before we amalgamate next quarter. The discussion will get agreement on:

  1. annual business planning processes
  2. communication protocols between the branches, and
  3. staff rotation.

  Note: if there are specific objectives, number them as it will help the clarity of discussion. You can say, 'We'll discuss that at Point 3'. Using dot points (bullets) tends to suggest 'these are some ideas' and conversation can become confused.

  Keep working on the statement; aim for fewer, clear words. Craft your Purpose.

- **Articulating the Context**

  It is valuable to add a 'context' statement that helps people to understand the purpose and why participants are meeting on this day to address the challenge.

  It explains the *why*:

  - Why is it important to achieve this purpose and does this work?
  - Why are we doing this now? What is the urgency?
  - What is the deeper, bigger paradigm that would motivate us to achieve the purpose of this meeting?

  Where possible, the Purpose should create an appealing invitation - it should attract involvement, drawing people into this conversation. Remembering the non-negotiables, what is the 'Big attractor' to this event? Confirm this with your client or organisation as it is an important aspect of managing expectations.

- **Communicating the Purpose before the meeting**

  Provide a copy and ask your client or organisation for feedback. Revise it as appropriate in response to feedback.

- **Opening the meeting**

  State the Purpose at the start of the meeting and test everyone's expectations. There are different ways to do this, depending on the scale and location of the meeting. One way is to invite participants to imagine what success could 'look like' in concrete, practical and specific outcomes.

  A strong and agreed Purpose gives the facilitator power to confront the group assertively when things are not going well:

  > "It seems we are getting off track. Can we check in about how strongly this current discussion is related to our Purpose today. Is this helping us get there?".

  Restate the Purpose if you think that things are getting off track. This is why it is crucial to make sure people are clear and committed to the Purpose at the beginning of a session. You then have a stronger foundation for pulling them into line.

- **'Fleshing out' the detailed design**

  Once the Purpose is clear, you can begin to flesh out the detailed meeting design. This helps to anticipate the likely/probable issues by consulting with your client and a sample of stakeholders about the issues that are likely to emerge or need to be addressed.

  - Write an agenda that notes the most important issues, as topics for substantial discussion
  - Order these in a sequence that would make sense, or be realistic, to participants.

## Skill practice: Craft a purpose statement

1. Start with the end in mind
2. Where are you on the IAP2 Spectrum?
3. Write the Purpose VERB
4. Articulate Assumptions
5. Negotiables, Non-negotiables

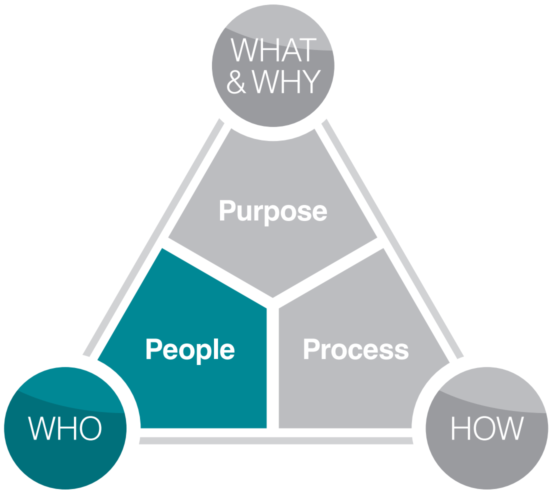
Testing the parameters:

- Is it clear?
- Is it feasible?
- Is it desirable?
- Is it observable?
- Is it what the client wants?
- Is it their Purpose (not yours)?

Make your Purpose: short, sharp and shared.

# 2nd 'P'- People: the WHO

Our reference model of the '3 P's of facilitation' is shown following. The People issues are now examined.




It is important to have the right people to achieve the Purpose. Be clear who needs to be invited to the meeting as it is preferable to have fewer, relevant people than others who are only somewhat interested.

Are representatives of the 'whole system', who are relevant to the Purpose of the meeting, available?

US Engagement sector leader, Marvin Weisbord[2], uses the acronym **"ARE IN"** to make sure the meeting has all the necessary participants. They are the people who have the appropriate:

- **A**uthority
- **R**esources
- **E**xpertise
- **I**nformation
- **N**eed

## Context matters

There are two common contexts: internal engagement or community engagement:

- In a large organisation, where the Purpose is addressing a significant problem, those invited should include representatives from all the relevant sub-groups:
  - affected by the problem or
  - capable of influencing it.
- For community-based initiatives and collaborative programs across multiple agencies and individuals, those invited should include:
  - those affected by this change
  - those capable of influencing the likely success of the proposal?

Then invite a sufficiently - broad audience to represent all the components of the 'system'.

If a critical member is not available, consider rescheduling the event. Alternatively, reshape the Purpose of the meeting to achieve something realistic in their absence. For example, if the person with final decision-making authority cannot attend for a major decision, the Purpose could become "Create a recommendation for approval by x" instead of making the decision itself.

Remember that there are other important support roles that need to be in attendance, such as note takers, table facilitators or subject matter experts and you need to think about how you will make these roles clear.

[2] Wesibord M and S Janoff (2007): Don't just do something, stand there.

**Interests, styles and preferences**

There are many questions you might have to ask to prepare for the meeting, such as:

**About them:**

- What do you know about the individuals?
- Is there anything you need to prepare to address specific needs or interests?
- Do they have a clear WIFM (What's In It for Me)?
- Is there anything that people need to do to prepare for the meeting?
- Do they know why they are coming?
- Have they done the necessary preparation?
- Have they had an opportunity to give feedback on the Purpose of the meeting?
- Are there people who are strangers to each other?
- What will you do to 'Warm up' the group?

**About you:**

- Have you developed approaches that will cater to different learning styles and personality preferences for sharing information and discussion?
- Is your facilitation style biased toward the fast responders and likely to discount the quiet, more reflective participants?
- Do you have people in the room with widely different power or status?
- Is there a risk that the discussions will be distorted by these power differences?
- Is the boss (most senior representative of the client) in the room? What does this mean for how attendees participate and for how you will conduct the meeting? If you have a chance, talk to the proponent beforehand and set up some appropriate ground rules for behaviour, if appropriate or necessary.

**Watch out for quiet, specialist people**

The Facilitator has a fundamental responsibility to manage the group in a manner that makes it safe and appropriate for all to participate. Sometimes this means you have to protect the weak and constrain strong personalities but this does not necessarily mean 'equal time' for everyone. There may be someone with expertise that needs to be brought forward. There may be decision-makers present who have greater responsibility for the outcomes and they may want to clarify comments or allow the conversation to continue.

The facilitator needs to be aware of power issues in order to manage expectations and group dynamics. In your role, you have power by virtue of your formal authority as the facilitator that should be used to focus the group on its Purpose, protect the weak and constrain the dominant. Give all participants - however noisy or quiet, fast or slow, high status or low status - an opportunity to offer their view.

## Skill practice: Prepare for those who ARE IN the session for whom you crafted the Purpose statement.

### Authority

- Be ready for: ..............................................................................................................................................................

..............................................................................................................................................................................

- Help them by: ...........................................................................................................................................................

..............................................................................................................................................................................

### Resources

- Be ready for: ..............................................................................................................................................................

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- Help them by: ...........................................................................................................................................................

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### Expertise

- Be ready for: ..............................................................................................................................................................

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- Help them by: ...........................................................................................................................................................

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### Information

- Be ready for: ..............................................................................................................................................................

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- Help them by: ...........................................................................................................................................................

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### Need

- Be ready for: ..............................................................................................................................................................

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- Help them by: ...........................................................................................................................................................

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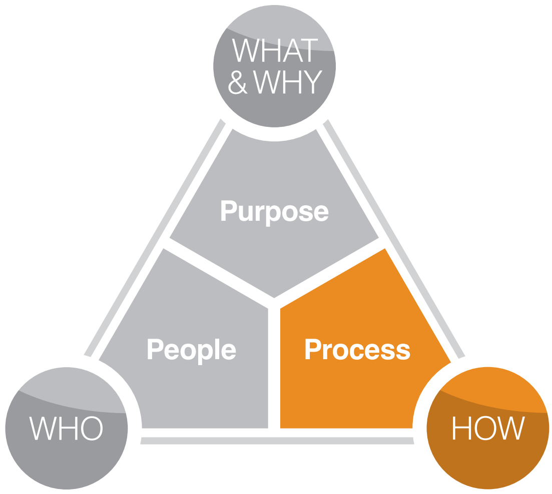
# 3rd 'P'- Process: the HOW




How the meeting is run is a design issue: you often have much more freedom to shape Process than you do for Purpose and People. Take the opportunity and use it thoughtfully. Give explicit attention to the tone and feel of the meeting. The aim of good process design is to provide an opportunity for your participants to engage meaningfully in the event.

**What does this look like?**

This typically looks like a group of people happily and energetically creating something together. The room is buzzing with productive and satisfying conversations. A plan is being sketched out on the wall. New members of the team are bringing great ideas into play. People are excited and highly motivated. Sometimes it looks scarier – a reluctant member, with some trepidation, tremulously voicing an issue that no-one has dared to express before.

**How do we get to a high level of engagement?**

While it can just happen, it is more likely to happen if the design is crafted deliberately to foster, allow, nourish and celebrate such engagement and not make basic mistakes like loading up the session with an excess of one-way presentations.

Instead:

- Use your 'process radar' – observe carefully, track everyone's participation, check-in regularly ("How are we going...?", "Do we need to move on now…?").
- Develop your skills in moving the group from 'discussion' to 'dialogue'.

  Encourage close listening for what lies beneath different views, as the first step to deeper understanding. Then work towards common ground and creating shared meaning.
- If the Process does not run to plan, quickly adapt.

  Are people frustrated because the aims of the meeting are too ambitious? Have you spent too long on one issue using the same process, and people are getting bored?

## Guiding principles for a successful process

The two principles, safety and choice, are simple (and interrelated):

1. Safety
2. Choice

- **Safety**

  People feel secure about sharing their best ideas and more of their ‘real’ selves when they are not constrained by fear of embarrassment. Create an environment that is safe for people to express their views by:

  - ‘Warming people up’ to each other and the process as part of the introduction.
  - Giving attention to the ‘weak signals’ projected by those who are reluctant to push themselves forward but who may have the best idea on the day.
  - Establishing ground rules, where appropriate, that encourage people to take responsibility for behaviours that support or hinder collaboration.

  Author of seminal facilitation guides, Roger Schwarz[3], reminds us that ‘Facilitators do not change people’s behaviour. Facilitators provide information that enables people to decide whether to change their behaviour.’ Again, it is up to us and our skill.

- **Choice**

  Roger Schwarz identified three core values in facilitation:

  1. Valid information
  2. Free and informed choice, and
  3. Internal commitment to the choice

These values should inform process design. Choice creates stronger ownership of, and commitment to, the results - people come to the meeting with a realistic expectation that the meeting will address something of concern or interest to them personally. At each step in the process, all are free to choose to ‘own’ the results and can be expected to be fully responsible for these results. They also have the right to choose to participate, or not, in certain activities.

You can enhance constructive choice by:

- Inviting people to undertake activities (but don’t cajole them).
- Giving them some discretion about how they respond to instructions.

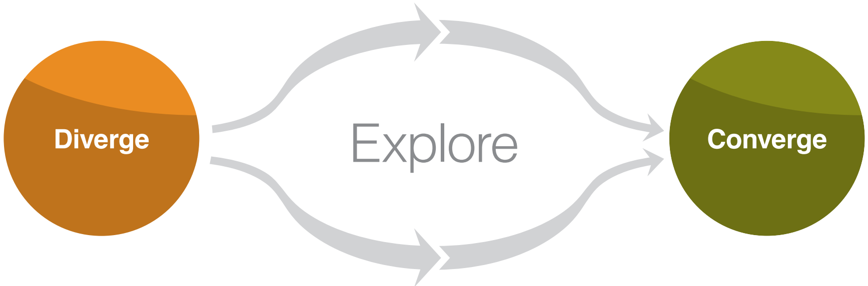
  For each activity, allow choice about how participants respond. For example, small group discussion allows a lot of autonomy for the level of participation.
- Giving allowances for those who are tired, needing a break, seemed quiet (perhaps they like to watch, reflect, think about it).

The best sessions work on an assumption that we are dealing with enthusiastic volunteers. This is especially true for high-stakes activities (like role plays, or public presentations, or plenary report-backs where a few members perform in front of a larger group).

- Inviting volunteers to speak, lead...
- Asking permission
- Negotiating process activities
- Giving due time. Not everyone has to have ‘equal time’ in the meeting. Sometimes the relevant expertise on a specific issue lies with just one or two people.

[3] Schwarz, R (2016): The Skilled Facilitator.

## The planning process: ideas diverge, then converge




Specialist in gaming techniques, David Gray[4], argues that you need to allow ideas to diverge and then your role is to guide participants to converge their ideas. Marvin Weisbord[5] uses a more subtle description: *allow ideas to 'differentiate' before they 'integrate'*. Obviously, it is more constructive to have more ideas that are different in some way rather than many of the same.

**Suitable methods to assist divergence of ideas**
Methods such as brainstorming and 'go-rounds' help different views to be expressed. Encourage and support the expression of nuances and clarification so that people feel comfortable to express their real views, and to put more perspectives into the conversations.

Invite people to form small groups to work their ideas through ("Who else supports that proposition?") or create functional groups within the larger plenary group.

When it is time to 'integrate', do the opposite; bring people with different views or roles or functions together in small groups to find the common ground. This can help everyone understand the context for the different views and they may find linkages.

**Get participants working to model (demonstrate) their ownership**
Don't do everything yourself; get other people involved in meeting tasks: flip chart recording, mind mapping, short presentations, managing small group discussion (facilitating, recording, reporting). The less you do for them, the more people take responsibility for the process and the outcome. Most of your real work is done in the preparation phase.

Whatever you do, DON'T talk all the time. Each time a facilitator does something for a group, he or she deprives others of a chance to be responsible. Invite self-management and personal responsibility for action. Groups are capable of doing a great deal more than they customarily are asked to do.

**Keep it simple**
If your instructions are complex or lengthy, display them in another form: on a PowerPoint, flip chart or handout. Many people miss something on the first telling, so give them an alternative way of getting the instructions.

[4] Gray, D, S Brown and J Macanufo (2010): Gamestorming.
[5] Weisbord, M: op cit

**Location or 'place'**
The location or 'place' is a major process variable. Factors that contribute to comfort include:

- The look and feel of the room - is it comfortable and stimulating?
- Access to windows and natural light – is there a pleasant outlook?
- Can people access fresh air?
- Space - is there enough space to get up from chairs and do various activities?

How is the room laid out? Factors that contribute to effectiveness include:

- Do you want everyone gathered around a board table?
- Is it better to have smaller groups on different tables?

Don't underestimate the value of the 'café' or 'cabaret' style of layout which promotes small group discussion.

- Would it be useful to create a circle of chairs for a really warm and open discussion?

If the room and resources are available, and the group is not too large, a warm and powerful beginning would be to start the group in a circle of chairs, then move to small groups for specific activities early in the course of the session. The very first conversation, however, should not be in plenary mode, but in stand-up pairs, just to warm up the participants to talking and sharing. Then sit them down for a circle plenary.

With groups that are not too large, don't be afraid to invite them to change the furniture and layout, where it is possible and appropriate.

**Equipment**
The equipment you need should be ready and tested. It is always valuable to get into the room and check the layout and equipment well before the start time. It is disrespectful of people's time (and the client's money) for people to be held up waiting for the data projector or microphone to work.

How will you track and display the group's thoughts and contributions? If you are using post-it notes, get BIG ones that people can read from a distance. Consider the value of graphic recorders in your work, especially if you can afford some professional assistance.

With groups that are not too large, don't be afraid to invite them to change the furniture and layout, where it is possible and appropriate.

# Template: Preparation Using the 3 'P's

Use the '3 P's' to make your own checklist. After each event, review your list and add your own points or questions which you may have overlooked.

## 1. Purpose

Notes

Indicative prompting questions

- Have you got a Purpose that can be clearly achieved on the day? How would you know?
- Have you checked with the stakeholders to see if they all agree?
- What is negotiable/non-negotiable?
- What would success actually look like?
- Why are we doing this now? What is the need? What is the urgency? What is the 'WIFM' for participants?

**Issues that might arise**

- Have you identified likely issues?
- Is all the information you need ready and accessible?
- If you want explicit discussion of an issue, have you turned it into a question to pose for the group?

## 2. People

Notes

- Who needs to be in the meeting?
- What are the range of perspectives that should be present in the room?
- Have you catered for different personality styles and preferences (fast/slow, shy/outgoing, practical/creative)?

**Power**

- What is the scope of the meeting for making recommendations?
- Does this group have the authority, skills and motivation to fulfil its Purpose?
- Do you have significant power differences in the room?
- How will you ensure the less powerful feel secure enough to say what is necessary in front of their more powerful leaders?
- In the bigger political context beyond this meeting (and the participants' reach), is this meeting positioned to be of influence?

| 3. Process | Notes |
|---|---|
| ▪ What can I do to make the meeting more interesting, more engaging?<br>▪ What is the sequence of the discussion - does it make sense, does it flow, is it logical?<br>▪ Have I built in sufficient variety to keep everyone involved?<br>**Place**<br>▪ How should the room be set up?<br>▪ How will participant contributions be tracked and displayed? | |

# Facilitation Process - Essentials

The following notes outline some essential processes and tools:

- Prepare a strong start
- Plan variety
- Hone your skills

## Prepare a strong start

- **Script and practise** Have your initial introduction (the first one or two minutes) well-scripted so you commence with strength and confidence. Create an appropriate, not divisive, headline for the session. Be prepared to adjust it in the course of the session if the group finds a better one.
- **Warm up the group** to a healthy meeting culture in the first few minutes, especially if most participants are strangers to each other (See below on 'Warm Up').

  It can be useful for the facilitator to give a short introduction that touches on some aspect of authenticity and vulnerability early in the meeting (preferably based on a personal experience so it models both of these aspirations). This frames the session in a way that subtly gives permission for people to feel comfortable about expressing themselves.
- **Be clear about the purpose of the meeting and the agenda** and then clarify participants' expectations on this purpose.

  Revise the Purpose and agenda if necessary or appropriate. Test out your assumptions with the group.
- If necessary, **establish group rules** for how the meeting will be conducted. Clarify in order to be specific about what participants like and need from each other in terms of behaviour.
- **Introduce yourself in your role as facilitator**. Don't talk too much about yourself in the first couple of minutes: it's about THEM not YOU.

  Once people have done the warm up, you can add something, such as a short story, about your background and give a sense of your personality.

  A recommended sequence is:

  1. Introduce the meeting and your role
  2. Do the icebreaker
  3. Announce the purpose and agenda
  4. Do the expectations check
  5. Discuss the ground rules
  6. Introduce the first substantive item.

**The warm up**

A good introduction process will shape behaviours and attitudes that foster high engagement. It will create a climate that is open, warm and welcoming. It is helpful to think about the first session of a workshop as having a number of warm-up aims. Think about the three P's: People, Purpose and Process.

Warm them up to:

- each other
- you, and your role as facilitator
- the topic, and their own interests in the topic
- talking and sharing
- moving and feeling, and
- the venue.

**Icebreakers, warm-up exercises, and energizers**

In choosing an icebreaker, it is really important to know the characteristics of your participants and consider their diverse needs. A good facilitator establishes a learning environment that creates mutual respect, openness, trust, and equality, a sense of belonging, so that open and warm communication is possible.

Consider this example:

'Paired Circles' (an inner and outer circle) or 'In the Queue' (two lines facing each other, then one-line shuffles along after each paired discussion). This means that everyone meets at least half the other participants.

Each pair is asked to respond to a specific question (A and B introduce each other, then answer the question, then one of the lines or circles moves on, so that a new pair is created, then the next question is asked).

Here are possible questions:

- What did you get up to on the weekend?
- What is your favourite hobby?
- Why did you decide to... (something related to the Purpose of the meeting)?
- What do you most enjoy about... (something related to the Purpose of the meeting)?
- What do you find most challenging about... (something related to the Purpose of the meeting)?
- What are your expectations of this meeting?

A more simple version, often used, is just to ask them to pair up with a stranger and respond to one question or instruction, then ask them to pair up with another stranger for another question. Do these three or four times, very quickly (1-2 minutes each).

**For a group that knows each other but still needs a warm up**

Your approach could be:

- "Tell us one surprising thing about yourself".
- "Tell us about something interesting you have done/ seen recently".
- "Tell us what you got up to last weekend, and you can be as honest or dishonest as you like."

Alternately, run this exercise in pairs, or smaller groups – interview a partner, discover surprising things, or the most embarrassing moment. Then introduce the partner's surprise to the group (so they get to practice their listening skills as well).

Energizers are valuable for longer meetings, especially kinaesthetic activities given that most meeting environments are very constrained physically.

What would work in your context?

# Plan variety

There are a handful of robust processes that can be used in most events in order to stimulate variety and spirited interaction. Take care not to bore people: you may be a charismatic presenter or you may just think you are. Create stimulation through variety in your process, and let the participants do the work. You can cause this by:

- Shifting between the **four levels of interaction** – from individual, to pairs, to small groups (table groups) to plenary ('all-in').
- Introducing some form of **'kinaesthetic'** activity in addition to visual and auditory engagement. Bodies need to move and stretch so don't leave people sitting in one position for too long.
- Using **head, heart and feet** (facts, feelings, forward movement).

**Variety in the levels of interaction**

Create variety in the process to keep people engaged by planning different types of activities over the course of the event, to allow for different personality preferences or just to stimulate fresh attention to the content.

A simple way of injecting variety is to design how each section of the meeting will be physically conducted. There are four levels of interaction that are straight forward to employ:

1. from individual work, such as filling in a survey or walking to place a post-it note on the wall
2. to pairs, such as discussion with the person sitting next to you or walking to find a person who has a similar attribute
3. to small groups or a table discussion, which helps you interact with, say, up to eight other people
4. to plenary or 'whole-of-the-room' activities.

**Moving between the 'levels'**

Think through the whole process to see if you have significant shifts in where participants are or whether, for example, they sit or move. Think of how the following changes can add variety to energy and interest from:

- table group discussion to plenary (whole-of-room) reports
- visual stimuli to moving or 'feeling' activity
- fast-paced and noisy to quiet and reflective
- individual writing activity to mixed table discussion.

**Head, Heart and Feet**

Many issues can be considered across three aspects:

- Head – the facts
- Heart – the feelings
- Feet – actions, intentions, next steps.

Try to address each of these dimensions. In general, start with facts, then address feelings, then end with action. You can use this model to structure questions for generating discussion or to review issues.

An outline for using a 'Head, Heart and Feet' approach follows.

## Head, Heart, Feet

**Moving between the 'levels'**

- Set the context for the meeting: Why are we here? What is the big picture?
- Outline the structure and agenda clearly
- Present compelling data
- Encourage people to notice, report what is clearly the case (not interpretations or evaluations in the early stages)

**Heart**

- Get people comfortable with you (tell a story)
- Get them comfortable with others (ice breakers)
- Acknowledge feelings along the way and use this language in the conversation
- Create a safe, secure culture that gives people permission to express their feelings
- Check their motivations, then address them
- Build rapport: Ask questions when you sense problems (confusion, negativity)
- Acknowledge the constraints, challenges, concerns
- Encourage storytelling ("Tell us about a time when…") but keep it succinct

**Feet**

- Ask how they will apply the concept or insights?
- Advise people to not jump to conclusions

Lastly, ensure that the meeting has a result, there is a clear sense of forward movement and pragmatic results, from the discussion.

**Variety in record keeping**

Don't underestimate how valuable it is to create a visual record of critical discussion points as the meeting progresses. These techniques can help you keep track of issues:

- use flip charts and invite a volunteer participant to take notes on the flip chart while you are facilitating.
- put up notes on white boards or across the walls. Write BIG and in colour, use pictures. Remind people how to write BIG on Post-It notes. This allows you to focus and not turn your back to the group so you can pay more attention to the participants' views and watch reactions.

  Putting up notes also 'activates' the whole group who see they have a more active role in the process. Encourage the writer to do short summaries but using the participants' words.
- use mind maps to track complex issues. Write up the idea and involve the group to make the connection.
- use the space well.

**Variety of questions to generate discussion**

Instead of presenting a topic or issue in the 'third person', turn it into a question, using 'you' (What do you think? What would you prefer?) so it moves into a conversation. Sometimes the best answers are just better questions.

**Synthesize and then Summarise**

After important discussion activities, it is valuable to be able to draw together (synthesize and summarise) critical points in the discussion. Two ways this can be achieved include:

1. Choose a few elements to highlight and report these back to the group (either reading from flip charts or your own notes if there is no public record of the discussion).

   Then ask the group for any additional insights that help summarise the session.
2. A very useful habit is to take short notes, just in dot point form, of key insights, lessons, contributions from participants in the course of a meeting, or each session within a meeting. Then you can present these back "Does anyone see some common elements in this discussion that draws the threads together?"

**Variety of resources - include evidence, relevant information and data**

It is important to have useful information on hand, prepared so that it can be read and understood quickly:

- Delegate someone to be responsible for bringing and organising by-laws, policies, budgets, minutes, and other organisational documentation to be easily referenced.
- Display critical information in a way that will readily inform the discussion.

  Make it easy for members to skim and reference information during the meeting.
- Use various ways to present information, not just stand-up presentations.

  Use a white board, flip chart, data projector to allow all participants to read and reference pertinent questions and information for the current topic of discussion. Where appropriate, have the information in a form that can be re-read by participants (handouts, posters). This will save time that might be wasted re-explaining information that is already available.
- Use concise point form in your documentation. Where possible present information in a range of different formats: printed handouts, pictures, slides and so on.

**Variety of scale - play 'BIG' and activate the room**

Get people up and posting BIG notes and drawings on the walls. Some activities are often done in small groups, with someone scratching with a biro on note pad. Get bigger. Get up. Get visual.

# Hone your skills

Core process facilitation skills include to:

- **Generate interaction**
  Even the simplest activity - such as table group discussion - will support interaction.
- **Observe (and intervene if necessary)**
  Use your ‘Process Radar’:
  - Do you need to speed things up, slow them down?
  - What is the tone of the group? Is there something you can do to adjust this tone?
  - If something is going wrong, do you need to intervene? You don’t always have to intervene when something is going wrong, but you do have to NOTICE it.
- **Be present**
  As a facilitator you must be 100% present to the group, the Purpose and the process. That means full attention, observing, giving feedback and all the while tracking the time and the Purpose.
- **Keep a light touch**
  Sometimes we get so anxious about our role and its responsibilities that we adopt a serious professional tone. This can inhibit the kind of playfulness and creativity that is open to fresh combinations, new ideas and emerging patterns. When something deep or serious emerges, however, don’t avoid it.
- **Summarise lengthy discussions**
  When you have had a lot of input from a range of participants, select a couple of points that have been mentioned, and comment on them. You don’t have to be exhaustive, or detailed. Just note a couple of things and thank the contributors for their valuable input. This helps you to move to the next section or activity.
- **Keep track of time**
  You may need to move things along in order to achieve your outcomes. Can you ‘cut’ the agenda because an item is less important than what is happening right now or has been addressed sufficiently before? While discussion time is flexible, the finish time is not. The only absolute is the closing time. Participants feel as though the session has been effective if time is managed well.

## Tips for time management

With regard to time, these are practice recommendations:

1. Set clear timing parameters at the start, gain agreement, then remind people of time if discussion seems to be going off track.
2. Set expectations early on. Explain ‘rubber time’ – where you will respond to the energy levels and give discussion more time or, if people are losing energy, wrap up sooner and move on to the next issue.
3. Create the culture for treating time as precious. Keep things moving.
4. Arbitrate using known tools, such as “Parking”, where issues that are not core to the purpose, or could be answered by a specialist, or are part of another project can be identified, written up on a flip chart and are acknowledged.
5. Sample and highlight. After a long discussion, don’t just repeat back everything you have covered in an exhaustive manner; sample a few highlights from the discussion. If you have captured issues or ideas up on a flip chart, don’t just read the whole thing out verbatim. Trust people to notice. Then just sample items to create a sense of completion about the discussion.
6. Be politely assertive as it is your role to guide the group to an outcome.
7. Defuse concerns, issues and anxieties. When there are ‘hot’ concerns that will derail the agenda, get them onto the table and properly acknowledged. Then identify which of these concerns CAN be influenced by the people in the room in this session. When you ask this question, people usually let go of the concerns. We all want to be effective.

   Use tools to clarify, such as Covey’s exercise ‘circle of concerns, circle of influence’.
8. Plan to use a variety of process tools so that people will not resist your time keeping.
9. Review your first schedule and, whatever activities you have planned, cut the time in half. There is almost always more need for further discussion on major items.

The key facilitation skills that you will hone over a lifetime are now outlined.

## Hone your skills
### Key skills: Listen *actively*

Listening is fundamental to facilitation. You don't need to use these all the time but certainly show these skills early in the meeting, then at regular points in the discussion. Your modelling of attentive, curious, empathic listening sets a tone for others in the group to do likewise. This builds on the well-known LACE model[6] (Listen, Acknowledge, Check, Explore).

**Ask:** The prompting question

**Mirror:** Mirror the body language and tone of the respondent

**Acknowledge:** Acknowledge the response, thank the respondent

**Paraphrase:** Reflect back the comment in your own words, and check with them that you have expressed it in a way that everyone understands

**Probe:** Probe gently for deeper underlying meaning, or further elaboration

**Build:** Offer an observation or clarification that builds on their comment, or invite others to do so

**Summarise:** When the specific conversation is finishing, summarise a couple of points, checking that it reflects participants' point of view.

People just want to be heard and their point-of-view understood.

## Hone your skills
### Key skills: Question *skillfully*

Questions are a fundamental tool in facilitation and your role as facilitator is to stimulate the group to produce its own content. An effective session will be designed to work through a range of questions.

A common sequence in facilitation might be:

**Purpose:** Are people clear about, and committed to, the purpose of this meeting?

**Problem:** What is the nature of this problem? What do we need to know to help define the problem?

**Possible solutions:** What are the possible solutions, strategies, to resolve this issue?

**Preferred solution:** What is the preferred, most viable solution?

**Next steps:** What steps do we need to take to implement this solution?

[6] https://www.lacelistening.com

These suggestions, in 'live' facilitation language are adapted from Ingrid Bens[7]:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Setting context and purpose** | What is our goal?<br>What are your expected outcomes?<br>What would success today look like? |
| **Inviting development** | Can you say more?<br>What else is connected to this?<br>Who else would like to offer their thoughts? |
| **Probing** | How did this start?<br>Who's involved?<br>What's the history of this?<br>Can you tell me more about that insight? |
| **Diverging** | What would be the opposite of that?<br>What would the competition do?<br>What are the alternatives? |
| **Linking** | What else fits in here?<br>Do these ideas seem familiar?<br>Can you see circumstances where something similar is going on?<br>What comes to mind that is similar?<br>When did this happen before? |
| **Inviting challenge** | Who sees it in a different way?<br>What would our competitors say?<br>Is this really feasible in our context? |
| **Testing** | What are the pro's and con's of this?<br>What are the main blocks and barriers?<br>What will make most impact, be most exciting? |
| **Overcoming resistance** | What concerns you about this topic?<br>What conditions or assurance will address these concerns? |
| **Building buy-in** | What's in it for you?<br>What do you stand to gain? |
| **Summarising** | What are the key ideas we can live with?<br>What we can say that will bring closure? |

[7] Bens, Ingrid (2005): Advanced Facilitation Tools

## Example of a Question Bank

The following list is drawn from resources developed for World Café.[8]

| | |
|---|---|
| **Questions for focusing collective attention** | ▪ What question, if answered, could make the greatest difference to the future of the situation we're exploring here?<br>▪ What's important to you about this situation and why do you care?<br>▪ What draws you to this enquiry?<br>▪ What's your intention here? What's the deeper purpose – the "Big Why" – that is worthy of your best efforts?<br>▪ What opportunities can you see in this situation? |
| **Questions for connecting ideas and finding deeper insight** | ▪ What's taking shape here? What are we hearing underneath the variety of opinions being expressed? What is in the centre of our listening?<br>▪ What's emerging that is new for you? What new connections are you making?<br>▪ What have you heard that had real meaning for you?<br>▪ What surprised you?<br>▪ What puzzled or challenged you? |
| **Questions that create forward movement** | ▪ What would it take to create change on this issue?<br>▪ What could happen that would enable you to feel fully engaged and energised in this situation?<br>▪ What's possible and who cares about it?<br>▪ What needs our immediate attention going forward? |

Further references for developing your skill and question bank are:

- Peavey, F (1995). Strategic Questioning: An approach to creating personal and social change[9]
- Strom, M: 2013: TedX talk://www.coachingconfidence.co.uk/tag/mark-strom

[8] www.theworldcafe.com
[9] Peavey, F (1995): Published in Creating A Future We Can Live With (IC#40)

## Hone your skills
### Key skills: Reframe

Don't underestimate your influence in shaping the culture of interaction with the group through the words you use. How authentic, how broad, how deep the group goes will be affected by your own communication and behaviours.

Consider:

- **your words** - they create an imaginative world for participants
- **your tone** - consider the impact of the tone you set. Dry and cynical, playful and provocative, smart and certain, or open and vulnerable
- **your scope** - what you want from your participants? What will you permit them - consciously or less so?

As you introduce each topic or activity, pay close attention to how you 'frame' or introduce the idea. Create a sense of openness, possibility, and excitement about what you are offering - an invitation to explore and experience.  At a really basic level, make sure that no-one is excluded or offended by your instructions or explanations.

Build on participants' language or jargon - notice the specific expressions that your attendees are using and then build on these. "You said that little spark made you happy. If that spark was a bonfire, what would it look like? What would be happening?"

## Hone your skills
### Key skills: Intervene – facilitator assertiveness

There are times when you will need to make an intervention to deal with a difficult participant, or to get a group back on track. Common examples include: side conversations, an excessively dominant participant, someone who is not listening or someone is being sarcastic or aggressive.

A facilitator must be assertive, ready to 'call out' unhelpful behaviour. Even for those who are afraid of conflict, this skill can be (and must be) learned and consists of the facilitator taking two simple steps:

1. **to notice.** Then it is useful to make a tentative 'diagnosis' of the issue. What is the likely cause of the behaviour that should be addressed?
2. **to decide** whether the issue is important enough to make an intervention. Is it really hindering the group's work? If not, you might decide to wait and see.

Often people are more difficult, 'twitchy', when they are getting bored, feeling hungry, needing to stretch. You might:

- shift from plenary mode into small group work or a pair activity
- introduce a physical energiser
- check in with the group about how they are 'travelling'. Are they comfortable? Is the pace right? Do we need a shift in the process?

**Addressing specific individuals**

The most challenging interventions are ones where a specific individual's behavior needs to be addressed. This is risky territory and needs to be carefully managed. Consider:

- Can you reduce the behaviour with a gentle shift in the process, without explicitly identifying or being seen to challenge the individual? Sometimes such a simple act as shifting to table group discussion can solve the behaviour.
- Can you address the behaviour in private first (often this option is not available and it does carry its own risk).

In a public forum, where one participant is dominating the conversation, you might just need to say "Thanks for that. Does anyone else have something to add?" If you need to be more direct, start gently, low key, and address the individual concerned without an attribution about personality, or motive or other inference.

For example:

1. Describe the behaviour: "I am noticing that your comments to Karen seem terse."
2. Identify its impact: "The likely result will be that Karen will be less ready to engage in the discussion and offer ideas."
3. Request a change in the behaviour: "Would you please…" or "What do you suggest…?"

Consider whether a question might be better than a statement:

1. Describe the behaviour: "Iris, can I check in with you?
2. Identify its impact: "That last comment seemed quite critical of the design team. Are you unhappy with the recommendation or its likely impact?"
3. Request a change in behaviour: "Is there something else that would be useful to share at this point?"

If the behaviour is still disruptive after a number of requests, it may be legitimate to enlist the group in the intervention. This is a very powerful intervention. For example:

1. Describe the behaviour: "Mary and Frank, I have made a number of requests for you to cease the side conversations.
2. Identify its impact: "My strong sense is that it is disrupting the work we are doing. Can I check with everyone else in the group? Is anyone else experiencing this? What do we need to do about it? …
3. Request a change in behaviour: Mary and Frank, I ask that you refrain from side conversations so we can properly listen to each other and get some headway on our objectives today."

You can't actually change people's behaviour but you can call them to account, hold up a mirror to poor behaviours, identify the consequences, and make requests. With the group's permission you can also terminate the meeting.

You will have already set ground rules that should reduce poor behaviour and developed a strong, positive and very open rapport with the group, so that tough issues can be articulated with grace and humour. This will give you a lot of space to confront more challenging behaviours.

In general, you are on strong ground because you will:

- **Focus on the process, not the content**
  Plan, practice and refine your process. If you set things up well and involve people respectfully you will be forgiven even if you make a mistake. People respect honesty and persistence.
- **Clarify expectations**
  Be very clear about what your meeting is about and what participants can expect as a result of their participation. If you promise to provide follow up information, you must do it.
- **Negotiate ground rules early on**
  The longer the anticipated duration of the group, the more important it is to spend time negotiating ground rules. Even if the meeting is a one-off, it is important to establish rules.
- **Build rapport with participants**
  Pay attention to the interests and energy levels of the group - the 'Process Radar'. Start building rapport with participants from the beginning. How you respond to one individual will be noticed by others.
- **Address problems**
  Notice what is going on and make a decision whether it is important enough to deal with. Make a hypothesis and then an intervention. It may be a simple problem requiring a simple solution: e.g. a comfort break. Start with the least intrusive intervention and build up intensity as you need to.

- **Pause**
  If you are struck by an outburst or challenge, just pause. Take a moment to reflect on the situation and decide what to do (including doing nothing). If it is useful, acknowledge your dilemma and ask for clarification, or advice.
- **Don't humiliate**
  Avoid singling out people – if you embarrass a person it generally has a negative effect on the rest of the group, as well as the individual you identify. If it is necessary, you can call on the group to help you - "My sense is that this behaviour is making it hard for us to continue, what do others think?". Your primary responsibility is to make it safe for people to have important conversations.
- **Consider this: the difficult person might be you**
  Often the person you have the most problems with is the one who pushes your own 'hot button'. If you have a chip on your shoulder about a certain type of person, such as "They know more than me", "They have a PhD", "They are much older/younger than me" or "They are really cynical", you can be sure that someone will trigger it. Be aware of your own sensitivities.
- **Trust the group**
  In general, build solutions and keep the interests of the whole group and the Purpose uppermost. If the going gets rough, the rules are your mandate for intervention. If people are combative, seek to diffuse polarities by involving other group members and seeking different points of view.

You have formal authority to do this, it is your role.

# Planning Steps

The success of a facilitation – and your success as a facilitator – depends on the quality of your planning. These are the key steps.


1. **Clarify the outcomes.** First clarify the long-term outcomes for the organisation and then what this meeting needs to achieve.
2. **Craft the Purpose** (and share it, test it out with the client, a colleague and/or participant/s). Describe the context (why now, why is it important and so on) - just a few sentences.
3. **Identify the participants.** Who must be in the room to accomplish the Purpose?
4. **Design the process**

   a. **Develop a rough guide** for the sequence of content steps for your meeting (and check that it flows sensibly). Identify the list of 'probable' issues that should/could be covered.

   b. **Allocate an appropriate time** to each major item.

      Be tough-minded about your time estimates and question whether the aims of the meeting are achievable in the time frame. Allot time to each agenda item and allow sufficient discussion time. Keep an eye on your schedule – if you are ahead of time, you can use that time later or finish earlier!

   c. **Translate the major probable issues** into a sequence of questions for participants to resolve.

   d. **Do a mind map** of possible process activities appropriate to the meeting and choose a variety of activities to engage participants.

   e. **Develop an explicit agenda for your session** - Introduction, Body, Conclusion. Start with the Body of your session first, before you do the Introduction and the Conclusion.

   f. **Develop suitable activities for the start** - an icebreaker, setting expectations and ground rules (the last is not always necessary depending on the degree of difficulty that can be expected from participants, but even with well-behaved people, you will find it useful to hear what works best for them).

   g. **Script your introduction** - as succinct and powerful as possible.

   h. **Plan how you will conclude the meeting** - reviewing outcomes, declaring next steps, acknowledging contributions.

   i. **Test your design** with a sample of stakeholders or a colleague, if possible.

These steps will be taken in collaboration with your client (external or internal) - especially shaping the Purpose and selecting the participants. You can draft the process and then test its broad outlines with the client. Where possible test the Purpose, context and short agenda with a sample of participants to make sure you are on track or to help you anticipate challenges.

# Template 2: Process audits

| | Never | Sometimes | Always |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Expectations check:** Announce the Purpose and agenda, then formally check expectations about the meeting and adapt the agenda if necessary. | | | |
| **Questions:** Present each major issue under consideration as a question for the group to answer. | | | |
| **Four levels of interaction:** Design the event so that, at different times, you use individual activity, pairs, small group discussion, then plenary discussion. | | | |
| **Visual aids:** Use lively visual prompts and visual records (BIG, colourful, pictures and photos not just text). | | | |
| **Kinaesthetic activities:** Invite people to move around and use their bodies during the meeting - energizers, problem-solving games, stand up spectrograms, demonstrations, even just getting people up to put post-it notes on a display chart. Encourage participants to move about and use the space in the room to the maximum extent possible. | | | |
| **Heart warmers:** Plan activities that invite people to express feelings on the topic (motivations, shared stories, prompt expression of feelings, allow and encourage people to voice their own vulnerabilities – and model this). | | | |
| **Structured stimulus activities:** Encourage people to explore specific topics and use appropriate stimulus activities (brainstorming, visioning, mind mapping, round robins, affinity mapping, empathy maps, priority voting, games, creativity exercises, role plays etc). | | | |
| **Visual records:** As the meeting proceeds make sure you create a BIG and LEGIBLE visual record of the meeting's key insights and action items (an 'artefact' that will preserve the legacy of the meeting. People soon forget their agreements). Review this at the end, and check people's understanding and agreement. | | | |
| **Slow and fast:** Mix up slow and fast activities. In any moment of uncertainty or difficulty, slow things down and invite the group to reflect carefully on the issues being raised.<br>In other contexts, encourage people to do swift activities to create a high level of energy and momentum. | | | |

# Template 3: Event planning

| Time | Content – the 'WHAT' and the 'WHY' | Process - the 'HOW' |
|---|---|---|
| | **Introduction**<br>Warm-up<br>Purpose and agenda<br>Expectations/assumptions<br>Ground Rules - Culture | |
| | **Body**<br>Probable Issues | |
| | **Conclusion (OFF)**<br>**O**utcome - a summary<br>**F**eedback – expectations and culture<br>**F**uture – Next Steps | |

## An example

| Time | Content | Process |
|---|---|---|
| 9.00 | Welcome and Introductions | Introduce yourself with a story<br>Ice breaker to introduce each other |
| 9.05 | Purpose and Agenda<br>Expectations | Presentation by chair<br>Check expectations – small group discussion and report |
| 9.15 | Review the problem | Short burst summary from a team member using flip chart or PowerPoint with strong visuals |
| 9.30 | Check the motivations | Why is this important to each of us? How do we feel about the current situation? Pair share, then group discussion |
| 9.40 | Develop solutions | Brainstorm the issues (using individual post-it notes), then all post these up on a wall. Follow up with a plenary group discussion to clarify the ideas. Finish with a dot voting exercise to identify preferred solutions. |
| 10.30 | Summarise | Round Robin to summarise what we have learned<br>Agree on next steps and who is responsible<br>Capture results on a flip chart |
| 11.00 | Close | Thank you, acknowledgements |

It is useful sometimes to use a visual prompt to track the variety in your process. For example draw a heart next to the activity that asks for people's feelings about a topic, or draw an eye where an activity will use a strong visual prompt.

Then develop this plan in as much detail as necessary - specific questions, useful resources (e.g. handouts), and detailed activities.

# Specific Scenarios

## Scenario 1: Dealing with conflict

When conflict or conflicting positions have become obvious, parties may need mediation or more formal conflict resolutions. There are formal steps and methodologies for mediation and resolution. Overt conflict and vehement hostility are not that common in facilitation. It is our *anticipation* of it that creates anxiety. The natural response is to move quickly onto safer ground, to reduce the pressure. This response can actually foreclose discussion, burying issues that would be valuable once fully aired.

Where conflicting positions are apparent:

- dig deeper and have the position fully outlined for both - or all - positions
- invite participants to ponder both sides, and
- offer thoughts about possible alternatives, compromises or solutions.

**Tools**

If you need to consider more extensive methods, a couple of approaches can be of value:

- Don Dunoon[10] recommends an active principle or ground rule: "Attribute Reasonableness" in conflict situations. Even when someone vehemently disagrees with another, acknowledge that their position is 'reasonable'. Don't attribute the position to personality flaw. This ground rule is one of the three legs of Don's OBREAU tripod (Work from Observation, Attribute Reasonableness, Speak Authentically).
- The ORID method, that recommends spending the first section of a meeting just sharing Observations, before discussing Reflections and Interpretations, helps to lower the heat in a contentious discussion.
- Lewis's Deep Democracy[11] approach uses specific steps to flush out and flesh out conflictual positions - 'polarisations' - and have them fully voiced and explained by proponents in turns. The assumption is that a minority position holds a grain of truth or validity that is true for us all. Even positions held by tiny minorities are fully explored and then the whole group is invited to make a decision between competing positions.

**A last thought.**

The first point on our Process list was Safety. As the person with the responsibility for the meeting or event, you may need to have thought through the worst case: "At what point, in this tough meeting, will I be prepared to call the police?" and "Where is the emergency exit?" The safety of all in the room is a key responsibility.

[10] Dunoon, D (2008): In the Leadership Mode

[11] Lewis, M and D: https://deep-democracy.net

# Scenario 2: Dealing with large groups

Large groups pose particular challenges for generating high engagement and interaction. Here are some suggestions:

- set the room in cabaret style, so you can do table group work. This means a large room with suitable audio equipment. It is also advantageous to have breakout spaces so people can form smaller groups to work together.
- set concentric circles of chairs in the middle of a large room[12], then plenty of gathering spaces for smaller group discussion, with people moving their chairs to create small group discussion spaces if they don't want to stand up for a session. Create enough time on the agenda for appropriate 'report backs' from table groups - or break-out room - discussions. People are interested to hear about conversations that they did not participate in.

**When the space is not desirable**

When you only have the option of lecture-style/theatre -style seating, small group work can be difficult so consider these options:

- use pair discussions. Invite participants to turn to their immediate neighbour and discuss some issues, answer a question, tell a story.
- construct individual activities, such as tests, question and answer (Q&A), 'take a note', solve a problem, draw a diagram, share their most important insight on the topic.
- do a Q&A activity.
- ask questions and solicit responses. If too many hands go up, just sample the participants, then "Is there anything more that needs to be dealt with now? Is it OK to go on to the next item?"
- where possible, invite people to get up out of chairs and move around for specific activities, such as reading posters on walls, discussing things in stand-up small groups or doing a continuum/spectrogram.
- invite participants to talk to strangers in the session breaks on a relevant topic.
- invite small kinaesthetic activities in the early stages such as 'Hands Up'. For example, "Hands up those who have some knowledge of …" and do humorous ones as well "Hands up who comes to these kinds of events and has heard it all before…".
- a 'place the dot' exercise is very valuable as it can swiftly solicit a great deal of information about the group's views on a range of issues.
- ask individuals to do a piece of work, such as note-taking on the board, presenting an excerpt from the readings, doing a mind map on behalf of the group, joining a coaching dialogue with the facilitator.

When you can't do any of these, then think about how to enrich your presentation: Use stories, diagrams, photos etc. This is in the realm of presentation though, not facilitation.

[12] The format used in Open Space methodology

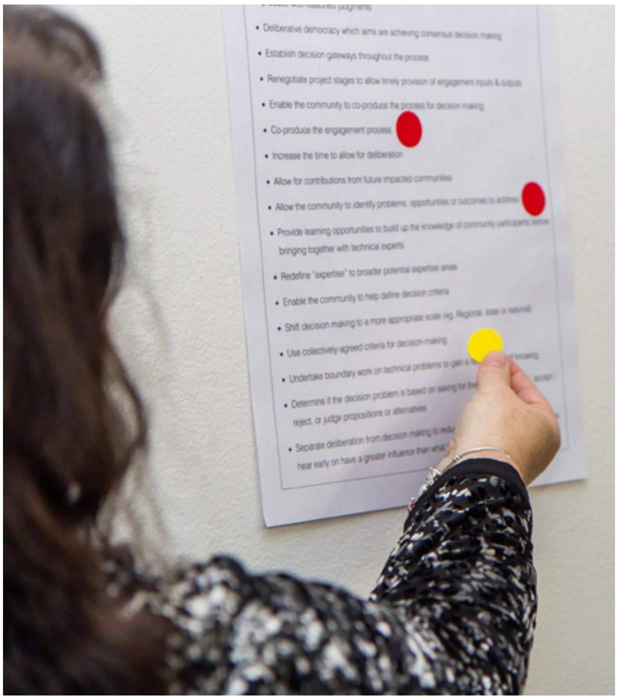
# Scenario 3: Community consultation

Community consultation often poses special challenges for facilitators. This is partly because members of the public, unlike organisational participants, have less constraints around behaviour. There are no direct consequences for disrespectful or even abusive behaviour. On the contrary, many of us, as participants in such consultations, have experienced token consultation from governments, councils and businesses many of whom do not realize the value of consultation early in a project.

If you feel you are to face a fractious consultation, the following ideas may help.

### Purpose

Be clear and honest about the scope of the consultation and where your client's intention is compared with the Engagement Model. The essence of the model's profile is the degree to which communities are granted decision-making power over the proposal. If a decision has already been taken and the community invited to attend a meeting, be clear that it is 'to inform'.




### Process 1 - Full and open exploration

The design of the meeting is also important. If you want to maximize collaboration from the community, then design a rich and varied event, with a variety of touch points for community involvement over the course of a day or weekend. This might include:

- Posters outlining the relevant information
- Experts on hand to explain fine details and respond to questions - one on one, or in small groups
- Cafe-style set-ups for small group discussion
- Post-it note spaces or 'graffiti' walls for participants to write their comments
- One-hour briefing/Q&A sessions scheduled throughout the day so people can choose to come and join them when they are ready
- Art materials and other equipment for people to draw or write their responses
- A clear entry point, where the options for participants are outlined as they arrive. For examples of this kind of approach, look at the Meeting Marketplace concept pioneered in Australia by Carla Rogers at www.evolves.com.au
- A Town Hall meeting is an expedient option but it can work against the purpose of the engagement process and can be fraught. Remember your first criteria for a facilitation process is security.

# Scenario 4: Town Hall Meeting

There are circumstances when the stakes are high, the constraints are fierce, and most of the community is hostile to the proposal. The only option available to you is a Town Hall meeting to elicit comments from the community (often because the client insists on this approach and there is pressure from the community). This is seldom a preferred approach, and you may choose to refuse offers in which community collaboration is so constrained. But these events are real, common, and often expected by many participants.

If you have little choice, the following points might assist:

- **Be clear and honest about the Purpose** of the meeting:
  - level of decision making the community has
  - what is negotiable and what is not negotiable
  - set clear boundaries for the scope of discussion. Publish the boundaries in the invitation to the meeting and then announce it clearly at the start of the meeting.
- **Explain your role** – as a facilitator whose role is to ensure an orderly and respectful discussion so that as many members of the community as possible have an opportunity to comment on the proposal. Remind people that, if they don't wish to speak publicly, there is an opportunity to present a written comment (and note how this can be done).
- As a minimum, **check participants' expectations about the meeting**. If you don't have time to do this as a discussion, just announce "Are we clear about the Purpose? [Restate it]. "Is there anything that I need to know at this point?" Pause. Then "Ok, let's proceed."
- **Lay out clear ground rules** for the meeting:
  - make it clear that speakers are free to agree or disagree with the proposal, or with each other
  - set limits on speaking times and have a very audible bell/gong to ring a one-minute warning then the final bell. Stick to the rules. Explain that the rule is to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to comment. If you are time-limited, indicate that each speaker will have **one** opportunity to address the meeting.

- Have **the relevant experts and decision-makers present** and prepared to explain the proposal in detail. Have all the relevant information in a form that is easy to understand. If you have formal presentations, then have these well prepared and reviewed beforehand with strict time limits. Do not be both a Presenter and the Facilitator. You must separate these roles.
- **Time the meeting** for a suitable balance between presentation and community comment. Make sure the presenters keep to their time limits. You must allow appropriate time for community comments and questions. A guiding rule is 50/50, but it is even better to have more time for community input.

  It is generally better to have each presenter do their full piece without interruption or questions, then invite comments and questions at the end. Sometimes the full presentation will answer questions that would have been asked.
- **Keep the presenter up front when you invite questions**. Do not debate with the community; your role is neutral on content. Take the comments, acknowledge them, have the questions answered, then move on to the next speaker or comment. When questions are asked, invite the presenter to answer them in a short and succinct manner. If a question can't be answered, record it for later response (post meeting) if that is appropriate.
- **Formally note each issue raised in a public way**, such as with a flip chart recorder capturing issues and comments. Don't do both of these roles - your job is to attend to the participants. If this is not appropriate or possible, have a minute-taker record the meeting and explain what will happen to the minutes. Be clear about whether and when the community will get a record of the meeting.
- **Use active listening skills** (receive the comment, acknowledge it, paraphrase it and record it).
- If you already know the issues that are likely to be raised, try and deal with them in a **structured, sequenced way** and visible way (flip chart or PowerPoint). Then invite comments on each issue as the meeting progresses.

In general, don't allow or encourage voting on the proposal. If necessary, you can explain that such voting privileges only the people who have come to the meeting, not those who cannot or will not attend. Voting – when not necessary – can cause disruptive political ramifications that can work against the spirit of the engagement event and project.

At the end of the meeting, summarise the major points, then outline the 'Next Steps': What the follow up process will be and whether there are other opportunities for input.

It is generally better to have each presenter do their full piece without interruption or questions, then invite comments and questions at the end.

# Skill practice - Ways to address specific behaviours

| Behaviour | Strategies |
|---|---|
| Dominating | |
| Withdrawing | |
| Joking around | |
| Having side conversations | |
| Rambling | |
| Know-it-all | |

# Example facilitation methods

## Brainstorming

'Brainstorming' is the label we commonly give to idea-generating activities in meetings. The common steps are:

1. **Generate multiple ideas**
   Ask each individual to write their own ideas first (or discuss in small groups). Invite them to be 'as wild as you please' and generate as many ideas as possible. The main rule is "no censorship" during the idea-generating phase.

   Create a visual map of all the ideas, such as post-it notes on a wall or whiteboard.
2. **Sort and group the ideas**
   Ask participants to sort the ideas (on the wall or whiteboard), grouping 'like' issues into separate clusters ('Affinity Mapping'), then give each cluster a suitable heading.

   If appropriate, combine and build on the ideas.
3. **Prioritize the most useful/valuable**
   - Use post-it note or dot voting.
   - Select the final ideas that you will put into action.

This sequence can be quick and simple, or made more elaborate and detailed. For example, before the prioritisation step, you may wish to identify a range of criteria that would guide the selection of choices. In the facilitation literature, a similar approach is often termed 'Nominal Group Technique'.

One useful variant on brainstorming is 'brainswarming' where the ideas are posted in a hierarchy of levels from high level strategic to concrete, practical detail.[13]

## Problem-solving

A classic problem-solving sequence runs as follows:

1. 'Shape the problem before you solve the problem'.

   Where appropriate, most often with complex issues, you may wish to take time to define the problem. Most design thinking sessions spend a significant amount of time in problem definition.
2. Use a 'cause and effect analysis' (or 'Fishbone Diagram') to help reveal causes.
3. 'Frame' the Issue

   For complex problems it is important to allocate time for 'framing the problem' in a way that makes it amenable to solution.

## Decision-making

Decision-making is an arena where power needs to be transparent. Participants may be thinking:

- Is the meeting for consultation purposes; can it make recommendations; or does it have authority to make the decisions?
- Who has the power for final decisions and allocation of resources?
- If the meeting has power to make decisions, do you have a clear process for such decision-making? Are the participants clear about this?
- Are the processes for decision-making transparent and agreed upon?
- (In a larger political context), is this meeting positioned in a way that it can usefully influence agendas beyond those in the room at the time. How will this happen? Does it need to happen?
- Are there participants who will be playing politics in the room, or running hidden agendas? How can you address this danger?

[13] Dr Tony McCaffery video on HBR: https://hbr.org/video/3373616535001/brainswarming-because-brainstorming-doesnt-work)

Be clear about who - in terms of individuals or groups - drives recommendations that are made, and by whom. A simple check-in, such as; "Have we got that issue resolved? Good enough? Is it OK to move on?" and move on if there are no strong objections.

Use 'Post-it note voting' to test priorities and identify major preferences.

### Good practice

In the planning phase:

- Be clear and transparent about the decision-making authority of the participants. Some groups do not have authority to make the final decision under discussion.
- Be clear about roles and responsibilities for making decisions in the room.
- Ensure the group has sufficient information, skill and time to make a good decision.
- Is consensus required? Note that consensus often creates strong buy-in but it takes time, skill and effort. It may also exhaust some participants who then just give in despite misgivings.

For important decisions, some suggested steps are:

**Step 1:** Identify the goal/purpose for the decision.

**Step 2:** Identify alternatives.

**Step 3:** Establish criteria for deciding between options.

**Step 4:** Compare the pro's and con's for each alternative.

**Step 5:** Choose among alternatives.

Each of these steps can have more or less elaborate activities.

## Storytelling

Invite people to share stories on the topic. Lead with an instruction such as "Tell me about a time when …". This is more likely to prompt a very specific personal memory rather than a general evaluative comment.

## Structured Stimulus Activities

Encourage people to explore specific topics using appropriate stimulus activities. There are many options[14] but the choice of activity should serve the specific objective in the session - for example, using a SWOT analysis to explore the landscape in a strategic planning session.

Examples of Structured Stimulus Activities, include:

- affinity mapping
- appreciative interviews, such as empathy interviews and empathy mapping
- creativity games, such as Edward de Bono[15] 'Six Hats'
- brainstorming
- debate
- dot placement to show preferences or where people live
- influence/alignment matrix
- mind mapping
- ORID (objective, reflective, interpretive, decisional)
- role plays
- root cause analysis, five whys, fish bone diagrams (all these are for defining 'the problem')
- stakeholder mapping
- SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (Note the appreciative inquiry version SOAR - Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results)
- visioning

[14] See Langford, D (2007): Tool Time

[15] deBono, E (1985): Six Thinking Hats. www.debonogroup.com/six_thinking_hats.php

## The Continuum (or Spectrogram)

Do a continuum on some topic-related issue. “Imagine the front of this room is a continuum – a line from 0-10 on the following issue …”

Then introduce the issue – for example:

“On a scale of 1-10 how confident are you on this topic?”

“How skilled and expert are you on this topic”

“How much do you agree with this proposition…”

Ask participants to come up and stand on the continuum at the point they identify. Then ask them to talk about why they made this choice. If there are too many people just sample participants at points along the line, such as 1,3,5,7,9.

The continuum is excellent for a quick snapshot of perspectives on the topic and makes their differences and similarities clearer and allows for more interesting discussions. It also gets people out of their seats – and is useful for keeping energy up.

**Options include:**

- Consensus
- Unanimity
- Voting (commonly with a rule in favour of majority support such as ‘more than 50% of the participants present’)
- Multi-voting, priority voting
- Multiple Criteria Decision Matrix

## Consensus

Most commonly, facilitators use ‘consensus’ approaches. They discuss the issues at hand, generate a proposal, check for consensus, and discuss any concerns. If concerns still exist, the proposal can be further modified to accommodate them. These steps are repeated until consensus is reached.

For low stakes decisions, the method can be very simple. “Are we reasonably comfortable with that option? Any objections? No? OK let’s proceed with that.”

Consensus readily aligns with participatory values, though it would be a mistake to see it as the only option. The risk is marginalising, or silencing, opposing voices.

Unanimous decisions occur when all participants agree on the proposal without reservation. Such decisions are easier for trivial matters, but more difficult for important, high-stakes situations.

Ask the group to:

- identify and agree on the criteria that will be used to evaluate options.
- identify a range of options.
- award a rating score to each option (for instance, on a scale such as 1-10) either by group consensus or individual ratings, and
- choose the option that has the highest score.

## Priority voting

This method invites participants to choose between alternatives by allocating each participant a fixed number of votes that they can award to their priority choice. For example, among a choice of 10 options, the participant can allocate three votes (using dots, or asterisk with a marker pen). The choices which receive the highest number of votes are selected for approval or further development. This method is quick and simple.

IAP2 Australasia’s Engagement Methods explores over 50 specific facilitation methods.

**Table groups (small groups)**

Small group/table group discussion is a flexible and highly adaptable process with a natural, organic tone and feel, and gives each participant opportunity to talk and share. Nominate a chairperson – or use one of the ‘choose a person’ techniques – to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to voice their view. The chairperson might nominate a ‘scribe’ and spokesperson who will report findings from each table to the whole group. When different topics or questions are allocated to a number of small groups, try to give people the choice of which table (which topic) they are most interested in, or have most relevant expertise.

### Post-it note voting

This is useful when the group has generated quite a few ideas, but there are too many to use, or you need to choose a few to work on further or the ones that are most important. Have the list up on a flip chart or a whiteboard. Ask participants to 'vote' by placing a post-it note (or colour dot, or texta mark) against their first preferences (allow 1-3 votes). Review the results. Usually the group will have reduced its options and the voting takes only a minute or so.

### 'Go-rounds' or 'round robins'

Ask everyone in the group, in turn, to comment on the topic. "Just one sentence on where you think we are up to", "Just one comment on how we are travelling at present".

### Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic modes

Use a range of modes for presenting and capturing information and appealing to different sensory preferences. The visual, auditory and read/write approaches are easier to come up with than kinaesthetic approaches.

### Kinaesthetic suggestions

- Use physical energizers (and try to link it to the topic)
- Use the spectrogram/continuum
- Use physical games, activities etc – be creative
- Get people to take active roles (such as writing up flip charts etc)
- Get people moving about the room to do new things
- Use games, activities etc
- Start early in inviting physical activities
- Go on-site
- Use props, tools, equipment
- Do a walking dialogue - inviting people in pairs to share their thoughts on the topic on a 20-minute walk together (10 mins each, one on the way out, one on the way back)
- Get them doing things.

# Managing yourself

It is worth acknowledging that managing yourself might be the greatest challenge in facilitation and, at the same time, the most interesting opportunity for personal and professional growth.

Facilitation is always about entering unknown territory so take comfort in reminding yourself that this is the heart of your work. If you are facilitating something where the content is already mapped out clearly, it's not really facilitation, it's communication or presentation.

Your own uncertainty or anxiety could be a symptom for something in the room that needs to be acknowledged and might in fact be valuable for the group. Try and distinguish this: "Is this just about me and my own lack of confidence or is there something here that others may be sharing". If it is the latter, consider voicing it and asking the group for advice. This is an authentic and a valuable offer to make.

Many facilitators struggle in our professional lives trying to achieve stronger alignment between our outer and inner selves ('our role and our soul'). Some resolve it by projecting a tough, no-nonsense professional demeanour; after all, we are being paid or, at least, endorsed as the facilitator for this event. More creative and open possibilities emerge when the facilitator provides a role model for open and honest sharing. This means, to an appropriate degree, sharing something of our own vulnerability. On the contrary, you will strike participants every now and then who are incapable or unwilling to remain within a respectful range of behaviours. To protect yourself and your group, some professional boundaries are necessary and appropriate. How you manage this balance between vulnerability and security, is a question all of us face in each meeting and moment.

When you feel a session is not proceeding well remember it is about a conversation. That's all. Not every conversation turns out as planned or expected - there can always be another one.

Facilitation is always about entering unknown territory so take comfort in reminding yourself that this is the heart of your work.

# Conclusion

Engagement Facilitation is one of the skill courses developed as an elective for IAP2 Australasia's Certificate in Engagement.

Designed for an engagement practitioner new to the role – and who may be required to step in and facilitate 'in the moment' – it explores the reason the event has been organised, preparing for the people likely to attend, and it provides tips to manage the process.

A key message throughout the course is that any event needs to be planned well but despite that, the process can be derailed by the unexpected. Hence, it is important to reflect on your performance after each event and ask for feedback from experienced practitioners who might have participated. Equally, you will now know what to watch for in others – the skills and confidence to hold a conversation.

A bibliography of recommended resources is provided to assist your further learning.

# Bibliography

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### Professional journals

Journal of Public Deliberation: https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd
National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation: htpps://ncc.org

### Resources

https://participedia.net: database/toolkit with methods

### Organisations

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Federation, USA https://www.iap2.org
Involve UK: www.involve.org.uk (community think tank/charity)