



Social and Economic Education for Development

Tips for Facilitators

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The Role of the Facilitator

The Facilitator ...

- Remains neutral.
- Establishes ground rules for the discussion and confirms participants' agreement with the ground rules.
- Monitors time to keep the discussion on track.
- Checks for clarification of what's recorded and consensus when necessary.
- Makes sure that everyone has a chance to participate.
- Defends participants from personal attacks.
- Makes suggestions on how to proceed.

The Facilitator does not...

- Contribute ideas or evaluate group members' ideas.
- Interrupt a speaker unless they are tending to dominate the discussion.
- Complete participant's sentences for them.
- Send negative nonverbal messages.

Remember that *to facilitate* means to make easy. Good facilitation makes it easier for the group to accomplish its purpose. Effective facilitators strive to bring out the best in people while moving them toward their desired outcome. Successful facilitators attend to the process of a group's work so that it can work with greater efficiency and effectiveness on its product. Successful facilitators accomplish this by suggesting options for moving toward the desired outcome and assisting the group in choosing from among options and implementing the preferred option.

Introducing the Role of the Facilitator:

"I'm here to help you share your ideas about the issue that has brought you together. I won't contribute my own ideas, but I will make some suggestions to keep the discussion moving. If anything I do gets in the way of the discussion, please let me know. This is your discussion and I want to help you make it work."

Introducing the Role of the Group Participant:

"It is important that everyone feel comfortable and be willing to participate in our discussion. It is also important that everyone be willing to listen to one another so we can build on each other's ideas. To be successful, this will take all of us working together."

The Role of the Recorder/Scribe:

In many situations it is useful to have a second person to assist in keeping the process moving efficiently. The recorder or scribe provides a visible written memory of the discussion. This validates the importance of all ideas, empowering participants.

The Recorder or Scribe will...

- Listen for key words to capture the basic ideas being expressed.
- Write legibly in large letter so everyone can see as you write down key words and ideas.
- Check with a speaker to be sure the essence of their ideas is captured on the paper.
- Paraphrase a speaker's ideas only when they indicate the paraphrasing does reflect the essence of their ideas.
- Make corrections as indicated by the speaker.
- Remain neutral and not interpret a speaker's ideas.
- Number each sheet and number ideas as they are written down.
- Record an accurate record of the discussion during the forum after the meeting onto the reporting form.

Introducing the Role of the Recorder/Scribe:

"I'm here to keep a record of the discussion. I won't contribute my ideas. Please stop me if I have left out something important or written something incorrectly. Please let me know and help me to record the ideas as you want them to be remembered."

Expecting the Unexpected: Dealing with Disruptive Personalities and Situations

Sometimes there may be an individual in the group that becomes disruptive by making personal attacks, trying to dominate the conversation or to force their ideas on everyone else, or diverting the discussion from the task at hand with side discussions or outrageous comments. When a disruptive individual or situation is preventing a group from making progress toward the goal of the meeting, something needs to be done.

"Doing something" is not always easy. However, the following suggestions are possible ways to avoid (PREVENTIONS) or control (INTERVENTIONS) disruptive problems. Included are ways to get the group back on task with as little confusion and hard feelings as possible.

Preventions

- ▶ Set up, agree on, and enforce ground rules by reminding participants that they are posted and everyone has agreed to follow the ground rules.
- ▶ Have the group agree on the agenda and a time frame for the discussion before your begin.
- ▶ Suggest a way for the group to proceed if the planned process is not working.
- ▶ Ask for suggestions on how to proceed if the planned process is not working.
- ▶ If there are set questions to be discussed, pose the first question and ask everyone to think about it in silence for a minute or two and to jot down their ideas. Then proceed with the discussion.
- ▶ Start the discussion by inviting a participant to comment and then move in a round robin fashion around the group to insure everyone has a chance to participate. Then open for a general discussion.

Prevention techniques can be used by the facilitator and the group members. They should be used at the beginning and during the meeting to keep a person or a situation from getting the group off track.

Interventions

- ▶ Maintain/regain the focus of the group and the discussion.
- ▶ Say what you feel is going on if there seems to be underlying tensions or hidden agendas in the discussion.
- ▶ Avoid battles over the process of the discussion by reminding everyone that they had agreed to process rules in the beginning.
- ▶ Don't be defensive.
- ▶ Use body language to discourage those who are disruptive and to encourage participation by all.
- ▶ Protect participants from personal attack.
- ▶ Seek to understand the motivations behind the disruptive behavior by asking clarifying questions such as: *"Can you slow down? I want to make sure I understand what you're saying."* Or, *"Will you help me get this recorded as you want it? Did I get this right?"*
- ▶ Invite more positive participation by guiding their comments into constructive channels. For example, ask *"What do you think we should do? How could we accomplish this?"*
- ▶ Use every opportunity to model constructive behavior for the participants. For example, remain open to all ideas and continually remind participants that all ideas are worthwhile.

Effective interventions begin with accepting that it is not possible to control everything all of the time. It is important not to define challenges to the process or the substance of the discussion as personal attacks. It is also important to not try to battle problem people alone. Since the group as a whole has already agreed to the process to be followed and the ground rules for the process, seek group support in controlling or modifying the behavior.