

Tips for Facilitating

Role of the facilitator:

- Review the purpose and outcomes of a meeting
- Plan and design meetings
- Support good communication and full participation
- Keep the meeting on track and upholding good process
- Guide the group through conflict and difficult situations
- Manage and adapt process as necessary
- Stay neutral on content, not on process
- Serve the whole group

Facilitative Attitudes:

- Supportive of the group and process
- Show respect and compassion
- Positive presence
- Flexible
- Non-defensive and transparent
- Neutral and set opinions aside

Facilitator Skills:

- Intentional listening skills
- Strategic questioning and follow up skills
- Awareness of group development and dynamics
- Process skills
- Managing conflict, intervention skills
- Using silence (WAIT – Why Am I Talking?)
- Recording, note-taking skill

Facilitator Skills and Phrasing:

- Reflecting and clarifying – feed back or restating an idea or thought to make it clearer.
 - “Let me see if I’m hearing you correctly...”
 - What I believe you are saying is ...”
- Summarizing – briefly stating the main thoughts.
 - “It sounds to me as if we have been talking about a few major themes ...”
- Shifting focus – moving from one speaker or topic to another.
 - “Thank you Bev. Do you have anything to add, Dave?”
 - “We’ve been focusing on views 1 and 2. Does anyone have strong feelings about other views?”
- Asking probing or follow up questions – using questions to help explore disagreements, understand multiple perspectives, and uncover common ground.
 - “What are the key points here?”
 - “What would someone with a different point of view say?”
- Managing conflict – helping conflict and disagreement be productive.
 - “Let’s refer to the ground rules.”
 - “What seems to be at the heart of this issue?”
 - “What do others think?”
- Using silence – allowing time and space for reflecting by pausing between comments.

(Sources: Kelsey, Plumb, Great Meetings; NH Listens)