

**Practice Session on
Meeting Facilitation Skills**

Objectives:

- **To increase meeting facilitation skills.**
- **To apply facilitation techniques to promote participation, productive discussion, decision making, and action.**

	Program	Time
	Welcome, introductions, and overview of the workshop	20 minutes
	Mindset for successful collaborations, and facilitation mindset (review)	20 minutes
	Meeting simulation	60 minutes
	Simulation debriefing	35 minutes
	Evaluation and closing Final go around – one idea you learned and one idea you are going to use right away.	15 minutes

 *Note:* This module is shorter in length to accommodate a three-day training program. Time is available to reflect on the entire training program and to develop an action plan for returning to everyday work.

This curriculum is part of the *Building Comprehensive Solutions to Domestic Violence* initiative of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, funded by the Ford Foundation.



MODULE #6

Practice Session on Meeting Facilitation Skills

Trainer Instructions

Preparation

Prerequisite Modules: Collaborative Mindset Workshop
Negotiation Workshop
Meeting Facilitation Workshop

Number of participants: 5 minimum
30 maximum

Time requirements: 3 hours

Room arrangements:

Arrange tables for 5-6 participants per table.

Materials:

Flip charts & easels for each table, if available
Markers
Masking tape
Colored round stationery labels (dots) cut into strips of 3 and 5
(one strip of each per participant)
Various colored pipe cleaners or other arts and crafts materials
(see collaborative mindset review)
Extra pens (for participants)
Name tents (for participants)
Name tents for role-play (1 per participant)
Registration form
Participant handout packets

Participant packets:

Handouts #6-1 through #6-6
Workshop evaluation form (Handout #6-7)



❖ **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

Time: 20 MINUTES

The 20 minutes is based on starting 10 minutes late. If you start on time, you will have some flexibility with time during the workshop.

Welcome everyone.

Ask participants to introduce themselves, describe their work in domestic violence, and note briefly one favorite meeting facilitation technique.

Review the objectives for the workshop and the program (Handout #6-1), and deal with any housekeeping items.

❖ **MINDSETS FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION AND FACILITATION**

Time: 20 MINUTES

Ask participants to create something that symbolizes the mindset you need for successful collaboration and facilitation (Handout #6-2). Provide various colored pipe cleaners or other arts and crafts materials.

❖ **MEETING SIMULATION**

Time: 60 MINUTES

Use the meeting agenda voted most likely to succeed in the Meeting Facilitation Workshop. The group that developed the agenda will facilitate the meeting. [Note: If this is a stand-alone workshop, use the Case Study (Handout #6-6). Explain that you (the trainer) will be one of the facilitators, and ask for a volunteer to co-facilitate.]

Ask for six volunteers to simulate the meeting. Other participants will be observers. Their role is to observe the process – what helps make the meeting productive and what hinders it (facilitation and meeting participant action/inaction). They will be asked to report their observations at “stop-the-action intervals” and after the simulation.



NOTES 

Use a fish bowl arrangement, with those participating in the simulation seated together, and observers sitting away from the table.

Briefly review Handout #6-3 (Planning a Meeting) – what is needed for an effective meeting. Emphasize the importance of pre-planning. The observers are asked to consider how agenda planning helps the meeting and what other planning would have been helpful.

Next review Handouts #6-4 (Techniques To Promote Productive Discussion) and #6-5 (Techniques To Move a Meeting Forward). The observers are asked to observe the impact of use of these techniques.

Remind participants that we are supporting each other in this exercise and using the collaborative mindset characteristics in our work with each other and in our feedback.

During the simulation, interrupt the process a few times to bring attention to the facilitation process – particularly if you, the trainer, see something especially productive or unproductive occurring. Make notes about ideas that you want to emphasize during the debriefing.

❖ **SIMULATION DEBRIEFING**

Time: 35 MINUTES

Ask facilitators for their comments about the meeting. Then ask other meeting participants. Then ask observers. Ask for observations about how the agenda worked, the facilitation techniques, and the facilitator’s role. Ask what contributed to being able to maintain a collaborative/facilitative mindset and what, if anything, “hooked” you and pulled you out of this mindset?

Review the handouts again, noting the techniques used to promote discussion and move the meeting along. Emphasize again the importance of pre-planning.

Ask participants to develop three ideas – words of wisdom about facilitation which they feel are important to remember. Put these ideas on 3x5 cards. Conduct a round robin, with each person suggesting one idea until all the different ideas are given.



❖ **EVALUATION AND CLOSING**

Time: 15 MINUTES

Ask participants to complete evaluation forms and to select one idea from the workshop that was especially meaningful and one idea that they are going to use right away. Explain that after evaluations are completed, the closing will be a go around with each person sharing these two ideas.

Closing exercise –

Ask for a volunteer to go first and then go around the room. When everyone has shared ideas, add your own, and thank everyone for coming.

If this is the end of a 3-day program, allow additional time for reflections about the meaning of these three days – reflecting about collaborative mindset, negotiation, strategic thinking, and meeting facilitation. Go around the room and ask each participant to share what she/he has learned and how she/he will apply these ideas at home. Then ask participants to join in a circle, and ask each to share a symbol (an animal, image, object) of successful collaboration. As the trainer, share your appreciations, your symbol, and closing remarks.

Early in the 3-day program, emphasize the importance of everyone's staying for this closing time together. Emphasize it again in the morning session of the 3rd day.

NOTES 



Characteristics of the Mindset You Need for Successful Collaboration

- ◆ **Proper Facilitation.** Accept your role as facilitator and understand that you are not the decision-maker, boss, or rescuer.
- ◆ **Vision.** Define your vision and goals – what you want to accomplish to achieve a successful outcome.
- ◆ **Positive Attitude.** Focus on possibilities – what you can do together – while understanding limitations that may exist. Avoid being cynical – don’t decide in advance that nothing can work.
- ◆ **Willingness.** Be willing to create a recommendation, agreement, and/or plan of action with the other parties involved.
- ◆ **Openness.** Be open to being influenced by others. There may be more than one right way. Be neither doormat nor immovable object.
- ◆ **Curiosity.** Maintain a curious/investigating attitude about others’ needs, power, mandates, mission, barriers, and opportunities to move forward. Avoid blaming, “shoulding,” and/or making assumptions about others’ motives and meaning.
- ◆ **Connections.** Look for connections rather than differences – the “fit,” meeting your needs and others’ needs.
- ◆ **Confidence.** See yourself as a significant partner with confidence in your ability to “hold your own” when situations are confusing and complex.



Planning a Meeting

Define the desired outcome of the meeting – keep this in focus as you plan the agenda. If, right now, you were at the end of the meeting you are planning, what would have made the meeting a productive use of people’s time and energy?

- List all agenda items in these categories:
 - ✓ Information items:
 - ✓ Brainstorm items (brainstorm only and refer to committee/individual for more work):
 - ✓ Discussion items (refer to committee/individual for more work):
 - ✓ Decision items:
 - ✓ Next steps:
- Decide what items must be covered. Create a time allocation for each item to ensure that you have time for all items. Develop a written agenda with the items and time allocations.
- Define meeting roles and who will fill them.
- Decide what information people need in advance to make this a productive meeting.
- Define meeting logistics and who will handle them (e.g., place/equipment, refreshments, and meeting notice & agenda/materials to participants).
- Next steps: Define tasks you know in advance will need to be assigned. (Add others at the meeting as you proceed, and summarize at the end of the meeting.)



Techniques To Promote Productive Discussion

Discussion questions

- ?? *What is our vision for (e.g., services, for this coalition, for this initiative)?*
- ?? *What are criteria for a good decision?*
- ?? *What are options for?*

Brainstorming and “Dots” Exercise

For agenda items requiring an initial list of ideas, options, recommendations.

Use Right Brain Activity To Tap Creativity

During the meeting, create some activity that engages participants’ “right brain” in order to tap creativity. For example, ask participants to select a symbol of your goal (e.g., an animal, image, or object). Or give participants materials to create something to symbolize a positive outcome or your problem solved.

Participation Techniques

- No one speaks a second time until everyone has a chance to speak once.
- In meetings of fewer than 15 participants, go around the table and ask each person to suggest one idea (or pass if they choose to) or to state an opinion on a subject under discussion.
- Work in small groups for a short period of time – give groups a specific task.
- Use a round robin report back – one idea from each group until all ideas are presented.

To Debate Options and Build Consensus

- One-minute promotion – one option at a time (all who want to promote the option get 1 minute each to promote it; then move to the next option).
- Alternate pro and con 1-minute statements for each option – one option at a time.
- If most are in agreement and a few disagree, ask those who disagree to suggest another option.
- If one or two participants continue to disagree, ask, “Can you go along with the consensus? I’m not asking you to change your position. I’m asking if you are willing to go along with the consensus?”
- Vote by super majority, if it becomes necessary to vote (for groups that do not have consensus decision making).



Techniques To Move a Meeting Forward

- Written, timed agenda – keep referring to it and proposing to move along as the time limit nears.
- Introduce agenda items by defining the desired outcomes (e.g., provide information, brainstorm ideas and refer to committee, discuss committee work/send back to committee, make a decision.)
- Send to committee/small group for further development.
- If the group gets stuck on one item, proceed to the next item and come back to the stuck place later in the meeting. Make sure you return to the item later.
- Pay attention to the group's energy - you will see when the group is ready to move ahead.
- Respond firmly to any disruptions. Avoid blaming or personal attacks.
- If someone persists in disrupting the meeting, ask the group to decide - to move on or deal with the issue being raised.



Case Study

In a meeting of the education committee of the local domestic violence coalition, representatives of the police, county attorney’s office, and judges suggest that they launch a community education initiative on domestic violence.

The representative of the local domestic violence program explains that they (domestic violence program) already are engaged in community education and this would be duplicative. Other committee members respond that there never can be too much community education.

The domestic violence program representative then suggests that training be conducted for those who will be doing community education. The others reply that they don’t need any training.

The domestic violence program representative responds that she can’t put her stamp of approval on the education program because she doesn’t trust what people will say about domestic violence unless they are trained.

The education committee decides to launch the education initiative. At the next meeting they will discuss ideas about what should be included in the initiative.

The agenda for the meeting includes these items:

- Introductions and announcements
- Suggestions for the education initiative
- Next Steps

We will simulate this meeting with co-facilitators. Three participants will be from the domestic violence program. Other participants will decide their roles.



Evaluation Form
Practice Session on Meeting Facilitation Skills

- 1. What was the most useful part of the workshop for your work?**

- 2. Please rate the following using a scale of 0-5 (5 = very helpful and useful)**
Presentations _____
Relevance/usefulness of case studies _____
Handouts _____
Role plays, if used _____
Other comments/ratings:

- 3. Please rate trainer's teaching/coaching on a scale of 0-5 (5 = excellent)**
Rating: _____
Comments:

- 4. How can the workshop be improved?**

- 5. What is one idea you will begin using immediately?**

- 6. Other comments.** (Please use the other side of the page for additional comments.)

Thanks!

