OVERVIEW OF FACILITATION

What is facilitation?

Facilitation is the design and management of structures and processes that help a group do its work together and minimize the problems they have working together.
(Justice and Jamieson, *The Complete Guide to Facilitation*, 1998).

One way of looking at facilitation is as "enabling groups to succeed."

What is the difference between a facilitator and a leader?

If you look up leader in the dictionary, it will say something like, "Someone who leads others, is in charge of others." People often think of a leader as a person at the top who passes on information or tasks to those below them (this is known as top-down, or formal, leadership).

If you look up facilitator in the dictionary, it will say something like, "A person who assists, aids, or makes something easier for people." People often think of facilitators as the neutral guides that help groups do their work (this is the leader-as-facilitator model). The chart below compares the two types of leader.

TOP-DOWN, FORMAL LEADER	LEADER AS FACILITATOR
ASSUMES authority	ASSUMES many diverse perspectives
KNOWS what to do	KNOWS how to do it
SEEKS the right decisions	SEEKS a decision that the people make and will act on
RELIES ON individual ability	RELIES ON group ability

Institute of Cultural Affairs, *Group Facilitation Methods, 2000*

THE KEYS TO GOOD FACILITATION

OVERVIEW

A participatory activity to develop a list of the roles of a good facilitator.

OBJECTIVES

To understand the difference between leaders as facilitators and top-down leaders

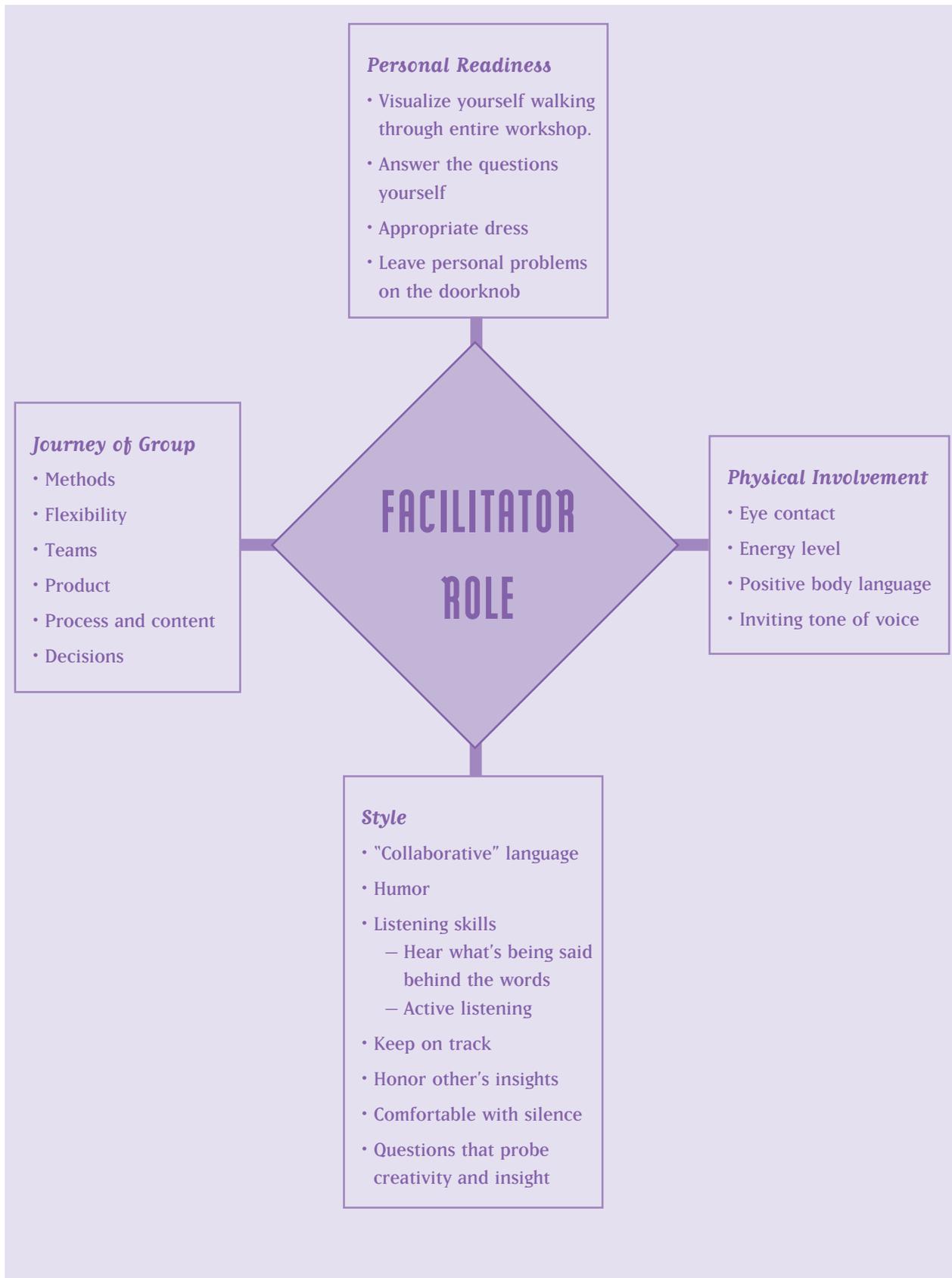To develop a list of the roles of a successful facilitator

To set the context for how a group will work together

TIME REQUIRED

Approximately 45 minutes

WHAT	TIME	HOW	MATERIALS
Step 1: Setting the context	5 min.	Using the chart on the previous page, review the differences between a facilitator and a top-down leader.	Flip chart with facilitator and top-down leader descriptions
Step 2: Brainstorming	5 min.	Say to the group, "Take a minute to think about an experience you have had where there has been a facilitator. What did that person say? Do? What were the things that person did to make them a successful facilitator? "Take a minute to write down on a piece of paper as many of those things as you can think of."	Paper and pen for each person
Step 3: Synthesis	15 min.	Break the group into teams of 3 to 5 people. Say, "With your team, share some of your ideas about what makes a good facilitator. As a team, create a flip chart that represents the elements of successful facilitation. You may draw, write, or both. Be prepared to share your flip chart with the group."	Flip chart paper and markers
Step 3 adaptation		Instead of writing the qualities of the facilitator on a flip chart, each group could develop a role play or skit that shows successful and unsuccessful facilitation. As each group performs its skits, the other teams can take notes and develop a collective list of the keys and pitfalls for facilitation.	
Step 4: Sharing	5–10 min.	Allow each group about 3 minutes to share its work and answer any questions	
Step 5: Reflection	10 min.	Ask the group the following questions: ■ What words stand out for you from these presentations? ■ What were the key things that all of the groups had in common? ■ What were the differences? ■ What are you still worried or confused about? ■ What would you like to learn more about? ■ How will we make sure that our group has successful facilitation? Share Handout 5F with the group.	Copies of Handout 5F

Building Community Toolkit

Notes for the Facilitator

THE ELEMENTS OF FACILITATION

Handout 5F

Personal Readiness

- Visualize yourself walking through entire workshop.
- Answer the questions yourself
- Appropriate dress
- Leave personal problems on the doorknob

Journey of Group

- Methods
- Flexibility
- Teams
- Product
- Process and content
- Decisions

FACILITATOR ROLE

Physical Involvement

- Eye contact
- Energy level
- Positive body language
- Inviting tone of voice

Style

- "Collaborative" language
- Humor
- Listening skills
  - Hear what's being said behind the words
  - Active listening
- Keep on track
- Honor other's insights
- Comfortable with silence
- Questions that probe creativity and insight

Used with permission from the Institute of Cultural Affairs

GETTING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Different cultures define effective gatherings and meetings differently. For one group, starting and ending at a preset time might be an essential element. For another, making sure that everyone leaves with a sense of direction might be the most important element—regardless of when the meeting begins and ends.

In the following pages, we'll examine different elements of group facilitation and meetings—think of "four Ps":

- PLANNING—creating the agenda, managing logistics, distributing materials

- PROCESS—facilitating the gathering and reflecting on it

- PEOPLE—acknowledging contribution and participation, managing conflict, following up with people who didn't come

- PAPERWORK—keeping documentation and getting it out to key people.

(Adapted from Winer & Ray, *Collaboration Handbook*, 1997)

What we are covering in this kit is a small fraction of the materials and tools out there related to meetings and facilitation. On the final page of this section is a list of other tools and resources.

PLANNING

Of all of the stages of facilitation and group process, this is probably the one that people focus most on. Planning is key! Putting together a meeting or event is similar to drawing an animated cartoon— for every minute of meeting time, many more minutes are needed ahead of time to ensure that every- thing goes smoothly!

A Checklist for Planning

_____   Does the meeting have a clear purpose?

_____   Do the people coming know what the purpose is?

_____   Is there an agenda for the meeting?

_____   Is the meeting scheduled at a time when youth can come?

_____   Have people had an opportunity to contribute to the agenda?

_____   Is there an activity planned to involve all the participants and make them feel welcomed?

_____   Is the facilitator prepared?

_____   Is there someone who will record or document the meeting?

_____   Is the setting appropriate? Casual? Businesslike? In a "neutral" spot? Do we have permission to use the building or room?

_____   Do people know how to get there?

_____   Do we have an emergency contact number?

_____   Are there refreshments?

_____   Is there child care, or are people welcome to bring children? Do people know that ahead of time?

_____   Do we have supplies? (flip chart paper, markers, name tags, sign-in sheets, handouts)?

_____   Have arrangements been made for clean-up?

Handout 5G

PREPARING THE AGENDA FOR A MEETING

THE SITUATION

You are leading the core team in preparing the agenda for a meeting with a larger community group.

OBJECTIVES

- To create an agenda that will enable the group to deal with its upcoming issues and other items

- To release anxiety about and create anticipation for the meeting

HINTS

The length of the meeting is an important factor. A short meeting may consist of several brief items; a longer meeting requires more careful planning.

OPENING

Say to the group, "We need to develop an agenda for the upcoming community meeting and develop a list of items that we need to deal with."

QUESTIONS

What do we want to leave with at the end of this meeting?

What agenda items are carried forward from the last meeting? (List these on flip chart)

What other items have we heard of? (Add these to the list)

Which of these items are most critical to deal with at this meeting?

Where is a logical place to start?

Approximately how much time will be needed to deal with each item?

Who will facilitate this meeting?

> ### *Where Should You Hold Your Meeting?*
> The meeting site depends on what type of meeting it is and how many people you expect to attend. An important consideration is the kind of environment that the meeting place creates. Think about spaces that will be comfortable for the people who will be coming to the meeting. For example, adults might not be comfortable meeting around the table of a teen hangout, and youth might not be comfortable meeting around the table at the meeting room at the Town Hall. Don't meet at a place that has a reputation of being unwelcoming to some people. Meetings held outdoors can be tough because of distractions and noise.

Notes for the Facilitator

CHECKLIST FOR FACILITATORS DURING A MEETING

_____ If the group members don't all know each other, does everyone have a name tag?

_____ Did everyone get greeted when they walked in?

_____ Do people know where bathrooms/pay phones/refreshments are?

_____ Did we tell people how much time the meeting should last and whether a break is planned?

_____ If it is not a very large group, did people who walked in late have a chance to introduce themselves to the group?

_____ Did we thank everyone for coming? Did we thank the others who helped organize the meeting?

_____ Did we do an icebreaker, if needed?

_____ Did we create a list of ground rules if the group did not already have them?

_____ Do people have a clear sense of the meeting's purpose?

_____ Did people have an opportunity to add to the agenda?

_____ Did we indicate that input is appreciated?

_____ Is there a "bin" where we can record and "save" ideas that we don't have time to deal with today?

_____ Is there a sheet where people can record their "burning questions" during the meeting? Did we go back to answer those questions?

_____ Did the meeting close with clarity on next steps and commitments?

_____ Did we provide an opportunity, verbal or written, for people to give feedback about the meeting?

Handout 5H

GETTING THE PROCESS STARTED

The first few minutes of each meeting are some of the most important: They set the stage for the tone of the meeting, communicate (both verbally and nonverbally) norms for the meeting, spark thinking, and set a welcoming tone.

It is important to get a feel for what the traditions and culture of the group is related to meetings. It may be important to start meetings on time, because doing so sends the message that the meeting will follow the time schedule. If you start late, people will have more of a tendency to ignore other time directions in the future, such as when to come back after lunch or coming on time to the next meeting. In other situations, it may be appropriate to leave 15-20 minutes after the official meeting start time to let people talk and get settled before getting to business. If you are not sure, ask questions about this beforehand, and get the group's feedback related to timing.

Things to Remember in Setting the Stage

1. Everyone coming to the meeting should get a personal welcome from a member of the team when he or she enters the room—a handshake, hug, hello, etc. Thank the person for coming, say why you are glad he or she came, and how you think that person will be helpful.

2. Make sure the room is set up (enough chairs, supplies, flip charts prepared) well before participants arrive. You should be spending the last few minutes before the meeting starts by welcoming people, not pulling your stuff together.

3. Make sure that everyone is introduced and that they have an opportunity to speak first thing in the meeting. It is important for everyone to get his or her voice out right away! If participants speak early, it helps break the ice early. Make sure the tone is set to welcome all voices. The facilitator should let the group know that everyone's input is welcome and that when they have something to say, it will be welcomed.

4. Make sure that everyone had a clear orientation to the purpose of the meeting beforehand.

5. In introductions, connect the meeting to prior work. Set the context and recognize people and accomplishments who helped get us where we are today.

6. Involve as many people as possible in helping to set up the room and handle other details.

"Raggedy starts" are a good way to engage people who come early and to instantly engage people who come in to join the group. Raggedy starts should begin about 5 to 10 minutes before the meeting and continue for about 5 to 10 minutes after the "official" start time of the meeting. Raggedy starts should be inclusive, mix people, be active, and relate to the focus of the work. For example, if one of the values of the group is to promote youth—adult partnerships, then the raggedy start should be designed to also promote that value.

On the next few pages are some examples of raggedy starts: BINGO, Reporters on the Street, and Name Tag Games. Each activity is designed for a specific purpose.

BINGO

As you know, BINGO is usually played with cards that have numbers on each of 25 squares; the winner often gets money. In BINGO as a raggedy start, the rules are slightly different. First, the squares on the cards are filled with the task to "Find someone who. . . ." (e.g., "Find someone who was born in the 1980s" or "Find someone who has more than 3 pets"). In raggedy start BINGO, you get a square by finding a person who fits what is in the square and having them sign it. The objective is to get ALL of the squares, not just 5 in a row. After you have someone sign your card, you have to move on to a new person. You can stop the game even if no one has all the squares—have people raise their hands if they have at least 10, or at least 15, until you find a winner. You can decide on a prize—usually something small like candy works fine. At the end, make sure the group has a short time to process the experience. Below are some specific ways to do that.

As people walk in the room, you will need to share the rules with them. Have two or three people designated as greeters to hand out BINGO cards and explain the rules as people walk through the door. You can also write the main rules on a flip chart, as shown below.

> Once you find someone, have them sign that square.
>
> After that person signs the square, move onto someone new.
>
> Try to get as many squares as possible.
>
> Yell BINGO if you fill out your whole card.

Reporters on the Street

Ask participants to interview two people whom they don't know. Tell them, "Think as though you were a nightly news reporter—'We're here on location today to get people's feelings on. . . .'" Ask participants to ask each other questions designed to help foster and set the tone for the day, such as the following:

- What's your wildest dream for this community?
- What's one thing you love about working in a youth–adult group?
- What is your idea of a great event?

If there is time, you can have people introduce the people they interviewed and share what they learned. Process the game by having people share the responses they got that stood out for them. Ask the following questions:

- How did it feel to be interviewed/interview others?
- If this was a news story, what would it be called?
- What does this say about our work for today?