



Facilitation Resources

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**Volume 2.
Contracting and Handling Logistics**

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**Hubert H. Humphrey
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Introduction to Facilitation Resources

During the 1990s there has been a renewed interest in citizen involvement in community decisions. While many issues are still decided by powerful and financially strong networks, the ability of the average citizen to collect relevant information, address issues with intelligence, and initiate public meetings has made the public influence greater.

Those who work with organizations have learned the need for effective facilitation skills. In the Foreword to *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making* by Sam Kaner, Michael Doyle presents two important lessons learned. "Lesson one: if people don't participate in and 'own' the solution to the problems or agree to the decision, implementation will be half-hearted at best, probably misunderstood, and, more likely than not, fail. The second lesson is that the key differentiating factor in the success of an organization is not just the products and services, not just its technology or market share, but the organization's ability to elicit, harness, and focus the vast intellectual capital and goodwill in their members, employees, and stakeholders. When these get energized and focused, the organization becomes a powerful force for positive change in today's business and societal environments."

Facilitation Resources, available as a set of eight volumes, is an effort to enhance volunteers' group facilitation techniques. The participants will be able to use the skills in facilitating nonprofit groups and organizations through important discussions vital to the organization and to the community.

Limited Permission to Photocopy Worksheets

Facilitation Resources is designed for personal use and as curriculum for educational sessions. We encourage you to make copies of the worksheets in this guide for yourself and for use by those involved in educational processes. Additional copies of *Facilitation Resources* can be ordered by calling (800) 876-8636 or by completing the enclosed order form.

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Overview: Agreeing to Facilitate and Handling Logistics

Contracting: Agreeing to Facilitate

The questions in this section are designed to help the facilitator in several ways. They put some “structure” to initial discussions and to the decision on whether or not to accept the facilitation. They are also a guide to working with the group or organization. The word contracting as used here is not meant to suggest a rigid or formal agreement, but rather a planning process.

Included are questions for the facilitator to use with representatives of the group/organization in meeting(s). There is also a worksheet on logistics and arrangements to be used as the next follow-up step. Also included are some questions relating to ethics. These are designed to serve as the facilitator’s personal checklist, to help decide whether or not to take on the project. In addition, they should help the facilitator spot any “red flags” during the planning process. You will find more on ethical decision making and use of power in Volume 7: Diversity, Power, and Ethics.

The evaluation and activity report pieces in *Volume 8* should be thought of as part of the contracting process. They can also be helpful because in this work we call *facilitation* one never quits learning.

In *Volume 8* you will find case studies. We recommend you review them as practice in contracting. They vary in complexity and difficulty. They can also be used as a format to create examples specific to your own situations.

Handling the Logistics

Good facilitators know that the success of a meeting begins with good planning before the group gathers. The contracting will help to clarify roles and expectations. However, additional planning is needed to set out the agenda, communicate with participants, make room arrangements, and gather supplies and equipment. Time spent in preparation will increase the chances of a successful meeting.

Pre-meeting work may include collecting data, laying out the agenda, determining the group process to follow, and possibly having a couple of alternatives in case flexibility is required.

Know the room. This may mean going to look at the space ahead of time, or at least, arriving very early so you can make sure the seating arrangement is appropriate for the room, the size of the group, and the work that is to be accomplished. There are many different room arrangements; select the one that will create an atmosphere of openness and encourage group involvement.

Develop a checklist to review the needed equipment for the meeting. Resources may include name tags, flipcharts, AV equipment, markers and tape, table tents, etc. Have extra supplies on hand.

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Tools

Four tools are included to make handling the logistics of group meetings easier:

- **Advance Planning for Inclusive Facilitation**—Use this checklist to ensure that participants in sessions feel welcome and included. Logistical considerations include interaction with the group requesting facilitation, resource assessment, participant support, site accessibility/safety, etc.
- **Meeting Organizer**—Keep this worksheet master on file to organize important information for each facilitation opportunity.
- **Equipment and Material Checklist**—Keep this worksheet master on file to attach to the meeting organizer to plan for supplies needed.
- **Room Arrangement** —Use these principles of room arrangement to guide your decision on how to set up your meeting room.



Contracting: Diagnosing the Situation

Contracting is “an agreement that reflects clear expectations about how the facilitator and group will work together” (Roger Schwarz, *The Skilled Facilitator*). Schwarz emphasizes, “Ineffective contracting almost invariably results in problems later in the facilitation process.”

He gives three reasons for contracting:

- To ensure that both the facilitator and group understand and are committed to the conditions that would govern their working relationships.
- To create an early opportunity for each to observe how the other works.
- To build trust and a solid psychological foundation between the facilitator and the group.

The worksheet on page 2.10 suggests questions to help you diagnose the situation and decide whether to accept or decline a facilitation opportunity.

Contracting: Ethical and Process Questions

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to see whether the group that is requesting a facilitator meets the ethical and process standards of quality facilitation. If it doesn't, decline the facilitation opportunity. Sam Kaner in his *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making* lists four functions of a facilitator:

Encourage and ensure full participation

Promote mutual understanding

Foster inclusive solutions

Teach new thinking skills

The worksheet on page 2.11 suggests questions to help you consider ethical and process questions and decide whether to accept or decline a facilitation opportunity.



Some Initial Questions—Diagnosing the Situation During Contracting

1. Why is your group/organization looking at this issue now?
2. What kinds of changes are you looking for? What do you personally hope will happen?
3. Who are the people that will be involved?
4. What other types of communications or processes do you usually use?
5. What are the climate and culture (mission, vision, and goals) of this group/organization?
6. What experience has this group/organization had in working with other facilitators or consultants?
7. Have you tried other approaches to address this issue?
8. How will you make changes that the participants decide on during this process?
9. What types of report or summaries are you planning to share with participants and others affected by the outcomes?



Some Initial Questions—Ethical and Process Considerations in Contracting

1. In your judgment, is there value for everyone involved in committing the needed time and effort?
2. Are the organizers open to all possible outcomes, or is this a “done deal”?
3. Will all of those impacted by decisions be represented at the table?
4. Will the power structure allow for open and honest dialogue?
5. Will we be able to deal with the real issues versus “symptoms”? Are there any hidden agendas?
6. Is the outcome(s), as you see it now, doable in the time the group/organization is willing to commit to the process?
7. Will participants have the background knowledge and resources they need to make decisions?
8. Will outcomes/results be shared with everyone impacted or affected?

Worksheet: Make copies for use at future meetings.



Worksheet: Logistics and Arrangement

Initial Contact Person(s)

Group/Organization

Brief Description of the Request/Issue

Stakeholders *(participants in the facilitation and those potentially impacted by the process)*

Primary Planning Committee

Name

Telephone Number

Worksheet: Make copies for use at future meetings.



2. Contracting and Handling Logistics

Logistics and Arrangement, continued

Steps in the Process *(including a timetable)*

Responsibilities

- A. Contacting participants?

- B. Facility/room arrangements?

- C. Recording discussion, summarizing, and follow-up with participants?

- D. Media involvement (if relevant)?

- E. Anticipated expenses?

- F. Others?



Advance Planning for Inclusive Facilitation

Interaction with Requesting Group

- What is the best way of interaction: Do you approach an elder first?
- Do you begin with personal contact (via phone or in person), or do you begin with printed communication?

Resources

- Have you allocated/considered budget line items for the resources it might take to accommodate various participant needs?
- Is an interpreter(s) needed? Is there money to pay for them?
- Have you allowed for the additional time it might take to interact using multiple methods of communication?

Participants

- Do you know what organizations or agencies your participants are connected with and what services are located locally?
- Do you investigate the communication needs/modes (hearing impairments, reading levels) of your potential participants?
- How are participants being invited? Are invitations being mailed out? Do you check for “reader friendliness”? Do you call, or conduct home visits if they do not have a phone? Have you or could you talk with “representatives” from your target populations to seek out preferred ways for recruitment?
- Have you made transportation arrangements? Childcare arrangements?

Site

- Is the place accessible? Have you done a walk-through or verified the degree of accessibility (e.g., complicated entry)? Are rooms and restrooms wheelchair accessible and identified with tactile symbols? Are there accessible restrooms on the same floor as the meeting room?
- Are telephones equipped with Text Telephones (TT) for people who are deaf or have speech difficulties? If not, are there electrical outlets near public phones for individuals to plug in their own TT?
- Is there an area for guide dog relief?
- Is there enough space in the room for people who use wheelchairs?
- Is there an available route for public transportation to the meeting?
- Is there accessible parking?
- Does the meeting facility have alarm systems that alert both visually and audibly?
- Does the site make special accommodations for dietary needs?
- Do you attempt to use resources (hotels, conference centers, etc.) that demonstrate culturally competent practices (e.g., employing people with disabilities, ethnic differences)?



Room Setup

Do you have:

- Assistive listening devices?
- Program materials in alternative formats (Braille, large print, computer disk, audiocassette)?
- Reader and/or notetaker? Ample lighting on speaker's face? Preferential seating?
- Interpreters (spoken, sign)?
- Accessible electrical outlets for audiotape or computer? Captioned films or videos?

Planning for Delivery

- How can you deliver activities to accommodate the heterogeneity of your participants?
- Are there pictorial materials and audio presentations to complement printed materials? Does the printed material need to be in Braille or multiple languages? Interpreters needed?

Are you, as facilitator, prepared to:

- Describe visual aids, including text on boards, flipcharts, overheads, or slides? Speak clearly and face the audience as much as possible?
- Provide alternative formats for printed handouts?

Source: Cultural Competence Outline Draft, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota.



Meeting Organizer

Meeting Title _____

Date _____ Time: Start _____

End _____

Meeting Location _____

Group Contact: Name _____ Phone _____

Purpose

Desired Outcome:

Participants

Who

Interest Represented

Materials/Equipment Needed

Item

Person Responsible



2. Contracting and Handling Logistics

Agenda

Item

Facilitation Method

Meeting Outcomes

Follow-Up

What

Person Responsible

Facilitator's Notes

Worksheet: Make copies for use at future meetings.



2. Contracting and Handling Logistics

Equipment and Materials Checklist

Part of the preparation for a meeting is being sure you have the equipment needed. Below is a checklist of equipment you MAY need.

Meeting _____ Group _____

Date _____ Time _____

Location _____

Equipment	Number Needed	Acquired	Notes
TV/VCR			
Flipchart			
Overhead projector			
Screen			
Extension cord			
Markers			
Self-stick notes			
Name tags			
Scissors			
Masking tape			
Pencils/pens			
Blank paper			
Colored sticky dots			

Worksheet: Make copies for use at future meetings.

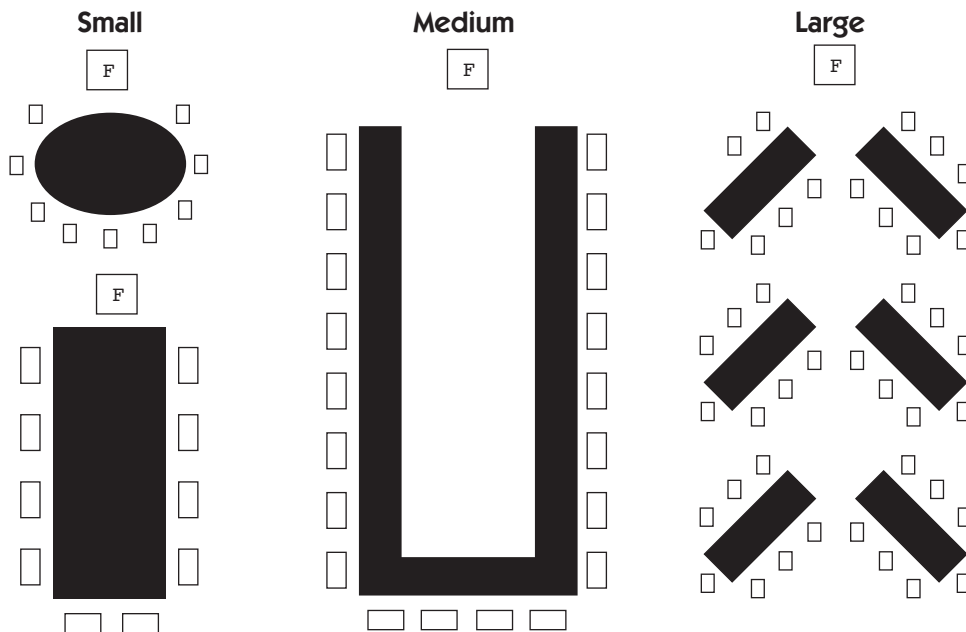


Room Arrangement

There are four principles that guide room arrangements:

- 1. All participants and the facilitator should be able to see and hear each other.**
- 2. The seating arrangement should enable members to focus on the flipchart (or other writing device) and the person or persons who will manage the group's process.**
Focusing the participants' attention on the flipchart helps people stay on task. Focusing participants' attention on the person managing the group process makes it easier for that person to work. Facilitators usually sit in a location that physically distinguishes them from group members. Except for the facilitator and chair, participants should NOT be assigned specific seats.
- 3. Seating arrangements should distinguish participants from nonparticipants.**
Groups often ask nonmembers to attend to provide information or just to observe. Seating the nongroup members apart from group members enables members to focus on one another without "psychological interruptions" from nongroup members. It also makes it easier for the facilitator to attend to group members without being distracted.
- 4. Seating arrangements should be spacious enough to meet the needs of the group, but no larger.**
Facilitation involves bringing people together to work. Seating arrangements that leave empty spaces between participants create unnecessary psychological distance for members. Empty spaces also make it more difficult for a facilitator to see at a glance whether everyone is present.

Seating arrangements for different sizes of groups:



Source: Roger M. Schwarz, *The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups*.



Finding More Resources

The educational and corporate community has dozens of marvelous resources available for the motivated facilitator wishing to find more resources. Also, the practical wisdom of gifted community facilitators should be tapped. This guidebook has drawn upon several excellent resources and those are listed in the following reference list.

In the search for more resources consider human resources, written resources, technology-enhanced resources, organizational resources, and other resources. Identify excellent facilitators and interview them. Practical wisdom is often not written but accessible through stories. Utilize libraries to search for materials. Search for organizations that support facilitator growth and learning, like the National Facilitators Network (has state-based groups, too). Contact your local Cooperative Extension Service for information and coaching.

Consider searching for resources under the general heading of facilitation as well as under each of the sub-topics important to facilitation (conflict, decision-making processes, etc.). Remember that the context in which facilitation is done is important—in board rooms, in community meeting rooms, in group retreat settings, etc. Evaluate the resource to see if it is more appropriate in one context than another.

Best wishes finding more resources to build upon your skills, understanding, and expertise as a facilitator.

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