Online
Facilitation: Remember everything

"A facilitator gives the gift of structure to a group of people so they can be a community of minds."

Model workshop plan

Starting well

- [ ] Welcome
- [ ] Acknowledgement of country
- [ ] Respected person introduces facilitator
- [ ] Facilitator self-introduction
- [ ] Ice-breaker questions
- [ ] Purpose statement + clarify negotiation space
- [ ] Practice "yes/no/unsure" gestures
- [ ] Chilled-out online orientation (see ahead)
- [ ] Practice physicality and movement
- [ ] Participant self-introductions
- [ ] Sketch the running order and available time.

Information and inspiration

- [ ] Data and research to inform judgements
- [ ] Inspiring ideas from other places (don't neglect!)

Group work (with slides)

- [ ] Questions (open, positive)
- [ ] Instructions for answering the questions
- [ ] Summarise results (or hear team reports)

Ending well

- [ ] A final word from all
- [ ] Thank all (celebrate)
- [ ] Commit to the next step.
- [ ] Anyone special to thank?

Fine tuning

(1) Purpose statement

"The purpose of this

[workshop/forum/meeting]

is to contribute to

[insert values at stake e.g. "a happy productive team"]

> Start with common values:
> "Values unite, interests divide."

by increasing/improving/establishing/devising

[insert desired outcomes(s) e.g. "better communication and a supportive environment"].

Together we'll create

[a plan/strategy/model/recommendations]

to be acted on by

[insert who is responsible for acting on the plan, if known e.g. "our team".]

[give an implementation time] e.g. "over the next 2 weeks"]

Check-off: [e.g. "Are we happy with that?"]

(2) Clarify the 'negotiation space'

Setting boundaries creates clarity and avoids conflict.

Clearly state significant matters which are outside the scope of deliberation.

For example:

- timetable and time span
- available budget
- statutory requirements
- who is the final decision-maker
- polices already set in stone that can't be altered.

Check-off: [e.g. "Are we happy with that?"]

Be prepared to explain why.

(6) Chilled-out online orientation

☐ Let's practice 'Yes' and 'No' and 'Not sure' hand signals. (The more theatrical the better!)

☐ Practice: Mute / Unmute: Gallery view / Presenter view: Chatting

☐ Please don't sit for more than 10 mins. You can walk away from the screen anytime you need to. That's OK! Let's practice: stand up, walk around, do air guitar and come back.

☐ We'll do 5 finger energy checks at intervals (1-2 fingers = low energy = time for a break!) Practice.

☐ You can chat anytime with a thought or question.

☐ Be more Italian. Be super-responsive and theatrical. Let's practice being more Italian.

☐ Please turn off your email app and silence phone.

☐ If you want to do something offline (like take an important text), then please "mute" and turn sideways, or walk away. (That's actually good manners - you're communicating clearly with the facilitator).

☐ PRIVACY Will recording occur? Seek permission. Will screen shots be taken? Seek permission.

☐ [NOW, to start people participating...]. Now, let's get practice talking: Please introduce yourselves and say a few words about what's "top of mind." [For groups of 10-plus,use breakout rooms.]

(4) Your information and inspiration stage

This is one of the secrets of great facilitated brainstorms!

What information and inspiration do your participants need to be able to deliberate accurately, without misconceptions, and INSPIRED by great examples?

Make a list. Think about baseline data, scenarios, social research, leading cases, inspirating videos, and innovations you've pulled off Google images.

Prepare this material and present it [say, as a 10-20 min slide show].

(5) Focus question(s)

Think carefully about the language of the focus questions: they're the crux of the whole event. The exact wording can have a big impact on the ideas, either enlarging or narrowing the range of possibilities.

Questions should be open and positive.

A good all-purpose questions is:

"What would make the biggest difference to the desired outcome?"

Check-off. If necessary, accept amendments.

(6) Choose your participation methods

☐ **Brainstorm using Chat or Online whiteboard**
One idea per item, written in concrete, specific words.

☐ **Brainstorm a drawing**
Have a sketcher in each group, visualising the ideas

☐ **Prioritise with dots/stars**
In Zoom use whiteboard Annotation stamps

☐ **Prioritise with a matrix** (use online whiteboard)
Select two criteria, for example urgent versus important; impact versus cost; passion versus ability to make a difference. A good way for people to learn from each other as they collectively position each idea.

☐ **Simply take turns addressing the group**

You might simply allocate time for each person to express themselves? Set time limits!

☐ **Select ideas from a checklist**
An illustrated list, with check boxes, is a great way to speed up consideration of multiple options.

☐ **Complete an information template**
A Word doc with pre-formatted questions that participants fill in.

☐ **Use/make a map**
Can the ideas be geographically organised by quickly sketching a simple line map in Whiteboard, then have people Annotate it?

☐ **Assemble a prototype**
Can participants assemble home-made solutions with scissors, paper, and stickytape, or Lego?

☐ **Roleplay or hypothetical**
A fun and engaging way for participants to learn about complex situations and systems before deciding on strategies.

(7) Mix silent time and talk time

Have a mix of silent, private activities and speaking activities.

☐ **Silence** is the best way to get ideas down quickly in a brainstorm.

☐ **Talking in pairs** helps people formulate complex ideas or clarify half-forgotten lessons.

☐ **Talking in groups of 5-6** helps people learn from each other, formulate their own positions, and make commitments. If commitment matters, let people talk!

☐ **Reporting to the whole group** at the conclusion of an activity or session.

Talk is time consuming and may lead to advocacy, with extroverts dominating. So set tight time limits. Appoint table facilitators to ensure fair discussion.

(8) Mix gravitas and hilaritas

Thinking and learning are exhausting, especially on a screen. Worrying about correct answers causes tunnel vision. Playfulness and light-heartedness are therefore vital. Think how you'll build lightheartedness into the event.

(9) Create physical motion

Take every opportunity to move people around: stand people up, take walking breaks, and invite them to stretch during the day. Air guitar?

Conflict and difficult participants

Let conflict come out. Acknowledge with respect: "Thank you, that's a good point." Park their ideas so all can see. Don't let it get personal. Make sure they are heard and understood "Is that what you mean?" Ask the group for a ruling: "Should we allow more time for this discussion?" Maybe take time out to cool off.

Remember your automatic practices

Safety: Protect every participant, without exception. Actively respond when someone is uncomfortable. Working in pairs helps shy people participate.

Make it physical: "Be more Italian". Practice theatrical hand gestures. Ask people to stand, dance, play games. Have frequent breaks.

Reflective listening: Bouncing participants' ideas back to the group checks-off that they've been understood and creates clarity for all.

Checking-off: "Is that OK?" "Does that work for you?" "Are we good?" And pause for a physical response.

Silence: Your silence impels others to respond. It gives them, and you, time to think. Practice often.

In-sync groups: When all intently participate, sit back and enjoy the moment.

When attentions lapse: When attentions lapse or withdraw: "Let's move on"; "Let's come back to the topic"; "Let's take a walking break."

Land on time: watch the clock and finish when you say you will.

Flexible: No plan is perfect. Always feel free to improvise on the fly.

Be thrilled by their ideas. If you're critical or take sides you'll lose authority.

Anyone can facilitate online!

It's a learned skill. Get practice. Start with small groups. Invest time into planning. Confidence comes with experience. You'll be amazed at what you, and your groups, achieve.

Online Facilitation Skills training (2 mornings)

What's the invisible magic behind great facilitation?

Check www.enablingchange.com.au/cocreate.php for the Onine Facilitation Skills one day workshop with Les Robinson.