

FACILITATORS: TASKS, ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS



Dialogue Facilitators are critical to the success of any Dialogue. At the heart of every Dialogue is the Discussion Group and without good facilitation, Participants may circle around a topic or lose focus. Facilitators are identified, approached and appointed by the Dialogue Curator, usually in conjunction with the Convenor. However, while Facilitators play an integral role, if it takes time to identify them – don't worry. A good Facilitator should be able to get up to speed within a few weeks. As a last resort, someone from the support team or a Participant you know well could step in on the day. Keep a hard copy of this Manual handy on the day for support!

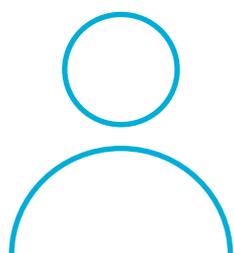
FACILITATOR CHECKLIST

PRINCIPAL TASKS	DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTES	SKILLS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that Discussion Groups address the Discussion Topic and prompt questions • Ensure that each Participant in a Discussion Group has an opportunity to contribute meaningfully and have their perspectives listened to by others. • Ensure that everyone has an equal voice and is heard • Report briefly to the plenary on the progress and the feeling in the Discussion Group. • The Facilitator may benefit from the appointment of a rapporteur or note-taker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mediator: Communicate easily with all Participants, managing differences of perspective with confidence and respect, guiding discussion and ensuring a balance of contributor input. Succinctly providing feedback on discussion outcomes to other Participants. • A Catalyst for conversation • Curious: An open mind is essential in order to foster a supportive and inclusive forum for open Dialogue. • Empathetic: Quick to connect with other people or groups. This is particularly important in multi-stakeholder settings. • Consistently neutral • Able to connect with the mood and energy of the Group. • A Radical Listener 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an open and trusting atmosphere in Discussion Groups so that everyone has a voice. • Comfortable with silences and knows how and when to move the conversation on. • Combine and weaves multiple perspectives. • Catalyse the conversation by noticing who is taking the floor and who could be brought in. • Mediate convergences and irreconcilable differences. • Manage dominant personalities to allow everyone space. • A radical listener • Observes, stimulates and encourages conversation. • Keep to the clock.

I'm not sure how to prepare to facilitate when I don't know which way the conversation will go on the day...

Don't worry! The Orientation and Training Session for Curators and Facilitators comes with an extensive Power Point Presentation that gives a summary of all the key tips and guidance you need.

This includes tips for opening up group discussions, how to stay neutral and information about the patterns and structures that most dialogues take



FACILITATORS: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDANCE FOR FACILITATORS

PREPARATION WITH THE CURATOR AND CONVENOR

- Familiarise yourself with the Discussion Topic allocated to your Discussion Group.
- Work with the Curator and Convenor to ensure your group is made up of diverse stakeholders to ensure a breadth of perspectives on the day.
- Connect with your note-taker.
- Prepare Prompt to help members of a Discussion Group explore their Discussion Topic. The prompt questions help the Discussion Group to focus on what can be achieved in the current context. Without the prompt questions and careful facilitation, the members of a Discussion Group may find themselves talking at cross purposes or caught up in hypothetical scenarios.

Examples of general prompt questions:

- Who will need to be involved?
- What actions might be needed?
- How will these actions come to fruition?
- What impact could these outcomes have throughout the whole food system?
- How could my organization support these changes?
- What are the tensions we have identified and how can we manage them?
- Where must we focus our efforts?
- What may be the necessary trade-offs?
- Who needs to be involved to achieve this?
- How must they relate to each other to be successful?
- What will be the impact of any outcomes throughout the whole food system?
- Where does consensus exist?
- Which issues do we need to explore further?
- What differences do we have that are currently unresolvable?
- What will be our real breakthroughs?
- Who is committed to participate in this work?

TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- Connect with all involved to finalise the Run of Show and roles.
- Use social media to celebrate your involvement with an upcoming Dialogue.

TWO DAYS BEFORE

- Review your Facilitator Discussion Group Template. Take time to find out about your Participants – what their experiences are, local language, customs. Know how much time you have for Plenary feedback.

- Read any briefing materials, understand the process and technology, greet group members, brief note-takers.
- If Discussion Groups are virtual, ensure that you have correct and working links.

ON THE DAY

- Arrive early in order to meet and welcome Participants.
- In the Discussion Groups:
 - » Set the frame – Request Group members to make brief introductions, make sure the task is easily understood, introduce prompt questions for each discussion topic.
 - » Hold the discussion – Observe, encourage, stimulate, stay focused and remain neutral.
 - » Stimulate exchanges if this seems necessary and curb those who are dominating.
 - » Encourage Group members to work towards outcomes in a timely manner.
 - » Help Group members to stay focused, inclusive and empathetic.

During the Summary Session report back to the Plenary in a way that is concise and fair. It can help to pick out a maximum of three main points from the discussion and to tell it as a story. What are the challenges? Where did you go? Reflect on the feeling of the Group and how it may have shifted.

Avoid making assumptions about the Group and using phrases such as 'our group agreed that'. Instead, own your take on it.

A note on introductions

It is important that the Facilitator invites each Participant in the Discussion Group to introduce themselves briefly at the start of the discussion and to say goodbye at the end. This is referred to as checking-in and checking-out and is an important way of encouraging respect and clarity of purpose.

A note on facilitation

When facilitating it can be helpful to consider: What is behind what somebody says? How do you feel? How is the Group feeling? What is the body language of the speaker? Are people excited or agitated? Is this the same routine pitch? Why does this person enter this conversation now?

Radical listening means listening to the mood and energy of the Group – listen to unspoken messages and invite in those who have not yet spoken.

Both Convenors and Facilitators need to avoid prejudicing an outcome. If you raise questions, own them as your view and don't assume a position for everybody. Good facilitation of discussion groups requires a neutral approach.

Remember – this is the Discussion Group's conversation, not yours. The Facilitator doesn't lead, teach or coach – Facilitator speaks 10%; Participants 90%. If the conversation sticks, use open questions to release responses.