



Neighbours, Friends & Families

## Facilitator Tips

### 1. Read the NFF Community Action Kit thoroughly:

This will provide you with knowledge, ideas and *Frequently Asked Questions* that will help you to prepare beyond the basic Facilitation Guide Notes.

### 2. Encourage a learner-centered environment:

Your role is to facilitate an interactive learning atmosphere, invite participants to use their own experience and problem-solving skills, and present information in such a manner that it can be easily applied, (see also *Community Action Kit* pg 7)

### 3. Create opportunities for group work:

This Facilitation Guide suggests a variety of small and large group interactive activities. Your role is to ensure that instructions are understood and necessary handouts are available. When facilitating small group activities, make sure to leave time for the groups to report back or debrief with the larger group.

### 4. Practice effective communication:

Asking questions, posing problems, using appropriate humour, and addressing sensitive issues and differences of opinion are all part of a facilitator's communication toolkit. Active listening and reflecting comments back to participants are also important skills to practice. Effective communication also includes using your voice, facial expressions, gestures and body language to communicate your feelings about what you are presenting (see also *Facilitation Skills Checklist*).

o Different forms of questions include:

a) **Factual questions:** (who? what? when? where? why?)

b) **Reflective questions:** (What did it remind you of? What were the key words? Was this helpful for you and why?)

c) **Interpretive questions:** (What were the most important points? How would you do things differently?)

d) **Decisional questions:** (What do you need to do to apply what you learned today?)  
You can also ask these types of questions to reflect on individuals or families they have dealt in the past to explore what might be done differently in the future.

### 5. Examine Personal Bias:

Participants will be coming to the workshop with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. It is important to encourage respectful dialogue and discussion on the various topics that will arise from cultural and socio-economic issues and gender bias and, especially, to be aware of your own cultural context or social location.

## **6. Familiarize self with various media and technology to enhance learning:**

The NFF Presentation materials have been designed to include the use of variety of audio/visual aids so getting familiar with and comfortable using the media involved is important. The NFF video and PSAs are in DVD format and will require a DVD player (either a television or a laptop with DVD software or an external line to the web) and the Presentation Materials require a laptop, and a projector and screen for PowerPoint use.

Practice working with the equipment so that you know how it functions (i.e. power, start, stop, pause, and switching from DVD to PowerPoint during your presentation).

- o If participants are also using worksheets, make sure there is enough light for them to see.
- o Ensure that the volume is high enough for all to hear.

## **7. Working with translators and interpreters**

If you are presenting with language translators or ASL interpreters, make sure they have had a chance to view the DVD and review the PowerPoint materials ahead of time.

## **8. Practice facilitating alone and with a co-facilitator:**

NFF Presentations can be delivered alone or with a co-facilitator. Presentations can be used to help mentor new facilitators who have finished the training day but feel they need more practice. Here are some hints to review before working with someone new:

- o Discuss previous experiences with co-facilitating. Review what worked well and what you found to be some of the challenges.
- o Make a comparison of your differing styles and see if you can troubleshoot any possible difficulties in advance.
- o Review the materials in detail and decide who will facilitate which portions and what the other facilitator will do while this is taking place. Try to balance your speaking times to avoid one facilitator being perceived as more of an assistant. Your ability to work as a team sets an example for participants.
- o Connect briefly at the beginning of each break and take the time to debrief at the end of each day.
- o Offer each other respectful constructive feedback

## **9. Use Flipcharts for clarity and to enhance group participation:**

- o Write down the agenda for the day.
- o List points that participants identify in discussion.
- o Give flipchart sheets to the groups to list their answers during group work and then post sheets so that they can be referred to again.
- o Use lots of bright marker colours
- o The size of your letters should be big enough to be seen at the back of the room
- o If writing or spelling is difficult, prepare your flipchart ahead of time or periodically call on one of the participants to write down the answer.
- o Practice tearing sheets off and taping them on walls so that you can do it easily.

### **Group Work Tips:**

- o It is frustrating for a group to believe they have wasted time.
- o Be attentive to groups while they work and offer assistance and clarification
- o Instruct the group to choose a recorder/presenter if content is to be shared
- o The purpose of debriefing is to create a forum for key points to be made available to the whole group. While affirming the work produced by the groups, this provides opportunities for facilitators to add key points that were not mentioned.
- o Several methods of organizing participants into groups can help to save time. Ensure random reorganizing in order to create new community connections and help group members share the tasks of group work (i.e. presenting, recording, timekeeping etc).
- o Before the Presentation starts, tables should be organized into small groups with equal numbers of chairs around each table if possible.
- o Helping groups to get organized into different configurations can help participants meet and work with more people in the room. There are several ways to rearrange groups if you choose:
  - a) When entering the room, participants can draw from a “pot” of slips of paper. Different colours or numbers direct them to corresponding tables for pre-workshop hellos and conversation while others arrive.
  - b) During the Presentation, when small groups are organized and reorganized a few times, participants can be asked to stand and quickly mill themselves into continuum lines:
    - q birthday order – earliest to latest in the year
    - q liking or disliking pizza toppings – mushrooms/olives
    - q alphabetical by first names
      - o Recorders or presenters can be chosen by the facilitator simply asking for the group member with the:
        - q longest sleeves
        - q most rings
        - q shortest/longest hair
        - q most green/blue on that day
- o Group presentations can also be facilitated by having each group answer a different question with each additional group adding but not repeating.

### **10. Brainstorm Activities**

- o Brainstorm activities are lively, creative exercises where everyone’s input is important.
- o Facilitators should tell participants that brainstorming is to be nonjudgmental in order to encourage creativity.
- o Groups using brainstorming to develop ideas should list as many ideas as possible and edit afterwards.
- o Using consensus to make group decisions is a good way to edit after a brainstorming session.

## 11. Consensus Decision Making

- Reaching consensus is reaching substantial agreement but not necessarily unanimity. Using a consensus process to resolve conflict that can arise during workshops will help form a basis of unity among participants as well as encourage and maintain respect for differing experiences and viewpoints.
- Consensus is reached by discussion, which continues until consensus is reached. The discussion can be brief when the facilitator helps to keep the groups focused
- There are four positions participants take while trying to reach consensus. The first three can be included in a consensus agreement:
  - a) this is what I want
  - b) this is not ideal but it's OK by me
  - c) this is not what I want but I can agree to support our task/group goals and not interfere with our task/group goals, etc
  - d) this is not what I want and I cannot agree to support our task/group goals

## 12. Dealing with Conflict

- o In a diverse group not everyone will agree.
- o Participants need to respect the right of others to have different viewpoints.
- o Facilitators also have viewpoints but should remain neutral unless facts are being misstated. In that event calmly explain the facts.
- o Conflict can lead to interesting group discussion.
- o When you sense that the issues have been expressed on both sides and some time allowed for discussion, suggest that the matter be left as "agreeing to disagree and willing to move ahead" (see position 3 in Consensus).
- o If a participant is still upset, a facilitator can take them aside at the break and try to find out why the issue is so important.
- o If an issue that has been thoroughly discussed is brought up again, state that you believe that the issue has been adequately addressed and ask participants if they wish to look at it again. Most of the time the group will say no. If they say yes, then ask participants to identify new information that needs to be addressed. If none is identified, you can calmly close the topic.

## 13. Dealing with Cultural Insensitivity

- o Advance reading: NFF *Guidelines for Working with Diverse Communities*
- o Sometimes statements are made that are experienced as hurtful to another participant. When this occurs, the participant whose feelings are hurt will find it difficult to remain engaged.
- o Our everyday language often includes words that have additional meanings attached to stereotypes about oppressed groups.
- o In dealing with these situations in a workshop setting, the following assumptions can be adopted by the group:
  - a) statements and comments that others find oppressive are the result of societal stereotypes and are not intended to be hurtful
  - b) the speaker would like to learn about how their language affects others in order to avoid using oppressive language in the future

- c) the person who has been hurt needs the opportunity to make mention of what was said in order to continue to participate
- o Many facilitators find the use of the “time out” technique a constructive way to deal with situations where language has been hurtful. This includes encouraging (any) participants who recognize the use of sexist, racist, homophobic, ableist or class related remarks to quickly call “time out”, mention the remark, provide a brief explanation of the problem and offer an alternate word or phrase.
- o Group Guidelines prepared in advance on a flipchart are a good way to create an atmosphere respect at the outset. (See NFF *Flipchart Samples*)

#### **14. Last General Tips**

- o Arrive early and check out the room for readiness of the training.
- o Arrange for refreshments.
- o Meet participants at the back of the room and greet them when they arrive.
- o Post a welcome sign where participants can see it as they arrive.
- o Use smiles, eye contact, head nods and positive reinforces to thank participants for involvement.
- o Have various flipcharts prepared in advance. (See NFF *Flipchart Samples*)