

Basic Facilitation Guide

The Role of a Facilitator

The role of a facilitator is to help the body move through their intended agenda, reach decisions that all participants can support, and help ensure that these decisions are in harmony with the principles of the NA program. A facilitator will need to know several basic pieces of information to be effective:

- Have a clear understanding of the purpose of the gathering, whether it is a GSF meeting, Local Service Planning Assembly, etc.
- Have a general idea of the experience level of those attending. For a group of less experienced individuals more explanation of basic information may be needed, while more experienced members may be able to move more quickly through the set up phase of a discussion.
- Have an awareness of any relevant resources, such as local guidelines, service handbooks, tradition and concept essays etc., and make these available when required.

Setting Up a Discussion Session

Remind all participants of what the meeting is intended to accomplish, and how everyone will work together to achieve that aim:

- State the purpose of the meeting, review the agenda and ground rules, and remind everyone how much time is available for the meeting.
- Ask everyone for their help in facilitating discussions and following the ground rules for the meeting.

Key Techniques

There are some simple ideas for facilitators that can have a positive influence on a session:

- Make eye contact, smile, be enthusiastic
- Be who you are – let your own style come through
- Remember that communication isn't just the spoken word – for example, try to avoid "closed" body language such as crossing your arms or turning your back on your audience
- Remember that listening is a key part of successful facilitation

There are several techniques that a facilitator can employ to aid in their process. These can be broken down into three main areas:

1. Gathering information:

- Make sure everyone has a chance to participate so all the necessary information is available, remembering that some participants are shy so may need encouragement

- Try to keep the discussion focused on the topic and get to the root cause of any issues, asking for more details in order to gain clarity if needed

Key questions include:

- What have we tried before that works?
- What would happen next?
- Is that what you mean?

2. Organizing information:

- Group common thoughts and ideas together
- Avoid repetition, but don't lose the details
- Don't lose good ideas that are off topic – record these for use in the future

Key questions include:

- Are these ideas similar?
- What would happen if we tried these ideas together?
- Can anyone add anything to these ideas?

3. Connecting ideas:

- Rephrase ideas so they relate to the issue we are discussing
- Combine ideas to build solutions

Key questions include:

- How can we use that idea to help with our issue?
- What can we do today that will make a difference?
- Can we see some solutions or next steps emerging from our ideas?

Wrapping Up a Discussion Session

Summarize any solutions offered or decisions made, making sure everyone is clear on what has been decided and what will happen next.

If more information is going to be sought outside those in attendance, be sure that everyone knows who is responsible for this and when it will happen.

Remind everyone how important it is to involve ourselves in these discussions and how we are a part of the solution today.

Don't forget to thank everyone for coming, and ensure everyone knows when and where the next meeting is.