

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR IN DELIBERATIVE PROCESSES

The role of a facilitator in deliberative processes is different to that of traditional 'town hall' style meetings, focus groups and other workshops. The skills, knowledge and experience of facilitators in deliberative processes is key to the group achieving its outcomes.

Facilitators in deliberative processes:

DO	DON'T
Act as a servant to the room	Take centre stage/ act as star of the show
Emphasise learning, exploring common ground, collaborative decision-making	Lead, cajole to a pre-determined outcome in mind
Enable the group to find its way	Show the group the 'right way'
Enable respectful dialogue in often contested spaces	Filter input and ideas to fit predetermined views/ outcomes
Work with the group to move beyond tightly held positions, foster curiosity to explore the interests, principles, ideas which underpin them	Keep the discussion at face value and the level of positions without deepening understanding
Build participants' confidence in their capacity to deliver results	Assume lack of ability within the group to deal with complex issues
Carefully design processes to assist the group to achieve its objectives/remit	Design processes which manage and control input and results
Encourage the surfacing of differences to increase understanding of different perspectives	Smooth over or avoid differences and discomfort to keep people 'happy'
Provide a range of ways for participants to interact, take account of different learning styles, keep fresh so that all are able to do their best critical thinking	Utilise methodologies within the facilitator's comfort zone regardless of the membership of the group
Adapt flexibly to the group to offer whatever micro processes will prove helpful to the group; modify on the run	Stick to pre-determined processes that work for the facilitator whether or not they are working for the group
Lead from behind/ servant leadership- leadership is best when people say 'we did it ourselves'	Lead from the front- the facilitator seen as achieving the results
Focus on process for the group rather than the topic under consideration to avoid subconscious influencing	Take on an expert role in respect of the topic under consideration
Promote collaboration principles of diversity, equity, openness, common ground and courage to speak up in both practice and process	Feed into or ignore power imbalances, competition, discomfort with differences which get in the way of collaborative decision-making