

FACILITATION TRAINING

MODULE 3

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Acknowledgements

Information included this curriculum was drawn from the following documents:

Hinkey, L. and Engleby, L. (instructors/editors). 2002. Navigating in Rough Seas: Public Policy Issues and Conflict Management. NOAA Coastal Services Center.

Gardner, L. 2003. 51 p. UNEP-Caribbean Environment Programme: Training of Trainers in Marine Protected Areas Management.

OVERVIEW

Good facilitation skills are important for successful MPA management. MPA staff members who work with participatory community-based processes need to have the skills to maintain a neutral role while bringing together diverse interests. The facilitator role is to build trust among stakeholders, bring recognition of common goals, and move the group towards a mutually satisfactory outcome. The facilitation role is not for personal gain but rather to reach a common goal—which for all MPA communities is the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems.

Modules 3 and 4 of the MPA Mentorship Program are designed to help you acquire the necessary facilitation skills to achieve two objectives:

1. Guide a small group during the training in developing a contract agreement with specific community-based goals, and
2. Continue working with this group on implementing this agreement when they return to their respective communities.

You will:

- ✓ Learn how to work with your respective small groups and their communities to achieve a cooperative and participatory outcome.
- ✓ Acquire management skills, knowledge and tools to plan for and conduct effective meetings.

IMPORTANCE OF FACILITATION SKILLS TO EFFECTIVE MPA MANAGEMENT

Facilitation skills will enable MPA staff to work effectively with groups, build productive teams, and come to agreement among individuals who might have very different perspectives. Facilitation skills are particularly important to MPA staff members who play a key role in coordinating regional network of MPAs that are part of diverse local communities with different indigenous cultures.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Learn the basic facilitation skills of staying neutral, actively listening, asking questions, paraphrasing and summarizing.
- ✓ Learn how to apply basic facilitation skills to effectively manage group discussions and public forums.

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LINKS TO OTHER EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AREAS

Community-based Management

Facilitation skills help MPA staff members plan for and conduct effective meetings that identify key stakeholders and interest groups, and then build and engage effective teams in a participatory approach to MPA management.

MPA Management Plan

In helping communities achieve a cooperative outcome, a strong facilitator supports the participatory planning process of planning, implementing, and monitoring the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources through collective action and sound decision making.

Effective Communications

Facilitation skills, such as active listening and dealing with difficult people, are essential to being an effective oral communicator—whether the MPA manager is addressing a small group of stakeholders, conducting a public meeting on a controversial issue or dealing with the media during the public issues management process.

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE FACILITATION

The effectiveness of a MPA manager's facilitation skills can best be measured by feedback from participants in a particular team meeting, group discussion or public forum, or any other activity for which the MPA manager served as the facilitator. At the end of the two-week *Management Capacity Training Program*, your team members will evaluate your effectiveness as a mentor and facilitator. You will be asked to complete the form first and then compare your self-evaluation with the evaluations completed by your team members. This exercise is useful in aligning self-perception with the perception of your team members.

The measure of continued success should be based on a participatory process in which you have your team members and other participants complete a *Facilitator Evaluation Form* at the conclusion of any meeting in which you act as a facilitator. You can modify the evaluation form provided at the end of this workshop or create your own form, which should include the following:

1. Basic communication skills
2. Ability to manage controversial topics
3. Time management

No amount of training is a substitute for practice and experience. This Module will provide you with tools, information, and practice. Your ability and comfort level will increase as you practice these skills and learn from the feedback you collect from your team members and stakeholders.

LESSON PLAN

Discussion- Experience and Expectations

Discuss your experience with facilitation and your expectations for this session.

Exercise 3.1 – Icebreaker

You have just found a magic wand that allows you to change anything at your MPA. For example,

- *How would you change an important project?*
- *What additional resources would you need to be more successful?*
- *How would you change yourself or your job?*

Discuss why making this change is important.

Exercise 3.2 – Visualization

Select three attributes of your mentoring role in coordinating a regional network. Prioritize the three attributes and discuss your selection with the group.

3.1 THE BASICS OF FACILITATION

Content vs. Process: The *What* and the *How*

Process and content are the two dimensions of any interaction between people—one-on-one groups or in groups.

The **content** of any meeting is what is being discussed. Content is listed in an agenda, and is expressed in what the participants say. Because content is the verbal part of any meeting, it is obvious and typically consumes the attention of participants.

Process deals with how things are being discussed, including methods, procedures, format, and tools. It also includes group dynamics and the meeting climate. The process is “silent” and so it is more difficult to pinpoint and is often ignored while participants focus on the content.

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CONTENT <i>The WHAT</i>	PROCESS <i>The HOW</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The subjects for discussion➤ The task➤ The problems being solved➤ The decisions made➤ The agenda items➤ The goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The methods and procedures➤ How relations are maintained➤ The tools being used➤ The rules or norms set➤ The group dynamics➤ The climate

Role of the facilitator: A team or group leader who participates in the discussion is acting as a content expert or content leader; a leader or an outside “neutral party” who manages the process and “orchestrates” the actions is acting as the facilitator.



An orchestra provides a good analogy to a particular way of approaching meetings. The participants are the orchestra members, and the team leader is the first “chair” or lead violin. The facilitator serves as the conductor—orchestrating the action and assisting with the outcome of his or her direction, but never contributing to it by playing an instrument. The facilitator, like the conductor, only organizes and directs the process.

Handout 3.1: Definitions

Key Skills

1. **Staying Neutral**
2. **Actively listen**
3. **Question**
4. **Paraphrase**
5. **Summarize**

Basic Facilitation Skills

Being proficient as a facilitator requires several basic skills:

1. **Stay neutral on content** — Facilitators *focus on the process role* and avoid the temptation to offer an opinion on the topic under discussion. Because the facilitator is typically standing at the front of the room, it is easy for participants to attribute a “leadership” role to the facilitator, especially if they do recognize that person as a content expert as well. By participating in the content discussion, the facilitator can reinforce this idea and potentially impede the flow of free ideas and open exchange of information as participants defer to the “expert.” If you must change roles, clearly and explicitly explain *when and why you are stepping out the facilitation role* and into a participating role, and then explain when you are returning to a facilitation role.
2. **Listen actively** — Look people in the eye, use attentive body language, and let them know you are paying attention to and what has been said. Try not to let your body language show either support or disapproval of any suggestions, comments, or ideas—or you may discourage open communication. Face the person who is speaking, take a step toward them to show interest, and use the other facilitation skills to encourage full participation.
3. **Ask questions** — This skill is the most important tool you possess! Questions test assumptions, invite participation, gather information, and probe for hidden ideas. Ask open-ended questions to encourage thorough discussion of all ideas the participants present.
4. **Paraphrase** — To paraphrase is to repeat what someone has said in your own words. This technique lets participants know that the facilitator has heard them, allows others to hear the point a second time, and clarifies ideas. Paraphrasing also provides the facilitator with an opportunity to determine whether he/she has “heard” or correctly interpreted what the speaker has said.
5. **Summarize** — After listening attentively to all that the participants have said, a facilitator should offer a concise and timely summary. Summarizing is a good way to revive a discussion or to end one when the discussion seems to be wrapping up.

What Does a Facilitator Believe?

- ✓ Two heads are better than one.
- ✓ Everyone’s opinion is of equal value, regardless of rank or position.
- ✓ People are more committed to the ideas and plans that they have helped to create.
- ✓ Participants can and will act responsibly in assuming accountability for their decisions.
- ✓ The **process**, if well designed and honestly applied, can be trusted to achieve results.

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Exercise 3.3 – Facilitation Skills

In groups of three, select a facilitator, a participant, and a process observer. We will go through the following activity three times, so each person will have the opportunity to play all the roles.

1. *The facilitator asks the participant the following questions:*
 - a. *What makes a good meeting?*
 - b. *What factors make a meeting “bad”?*
2. *Use the facilitation skills to gather additional information and a better understanding of the participant’s response (three minutes).*
3. *Spend one minute getting feedback from the process observer and the participant.*
4. *Change roles and repeat (two times).*

Rules for Giving Feedback

- Describe specific actions or practices
- Focus on what can be changed
- Check for understanding
- Describe strengths as well as weaknesses

Rules for Receiving Feedback

- Listen actively
- Don’t get defensive
- Work to improve
- Thank the person for his/her comments

Additional Facilitation Tools

Here are a few additional tools to help you effectively facilitate meetings.

1. **Play ping-pong** — Imagine yourself standing in the front of the group with a ping-pong paddle in one hand. When someone asks a question or makes a comment, bounce it back to someone else to answer and build on. This tactic engages participants with each other instead only interacting with you.
2. **Synthesize** — Do not simply record individual ideas of each participant. Have participants comment on and build on each other’s ideas by playing ping-pong, and then record the collective idea on a flipchart. This tactic builds consensus and commitment.
3. **Hold up a mirror** — Periodically tell the group how they look to you so that they can interpret their actions and make corrections. For example, you might observe, “I see two people who haven’t said anything for 10 minutes and three other people who are reading. What’s this telling us we need to do?” This tactic is particularly effective for drawing the group’s attention back to the meeting agenda or for dealing with disruptive behavior. It is also a good way to determine if the pace is too slow, too fast, or if the group needs a break.

4. **Label sidetracks** — Let the group know when it gets off track. The group can decide if it wants to pursue the sidetracked discussion or return to the agenda.
5. **Park it** — Have a flipchart or ask the recorder to keep a sheet labeled, “Parking Lot.” Put sidetrack items in the parking lot and review them later to determine if any of them should be included in a future agenda.

Handout 3.2: Facilitation Checklist

Handout 3.3: Selecting a Facilitator

Handout 3.4: Best Practices and Pitfalls

3.2 MORE FACILITATION SKILLS: WORKING WITH ADULTS

Specific Learning Needs of Adults

Although a facilitator is not a teacher or instructor, meetings frequently involve learning on the participants' part. In consensus building, the success of the process depends on participants' hearing, understanding, and learning about one another's issues and concerns. One part of the facilitator's job is to ensure that this learning occurs.

By understanding how adults learn a facilitator is better able to ensure learning occurs in meetings addressing controversial public issues.

Adults have unique learning needs in three key areas:

1. **Adult Motivation and Retention** — including the need for clear benefits, a resistance to change, and a reliance on their own experiences
2. **Adult Methods of Training** — including a preference for small group discussions, importance of discovery, and the need to practice
3. **Adult Learning Environment** — including the importance of time, the need for comfort, the climate

Handout 3.5: Principles of Adult Learning

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Adult Concepts of Learning

1. **Past experience** — What we learn is tied to what we already know. Give as many examples and analogies as possible to relate a concept to the participants' experience. Ask participants to apply new information to their current situation and past experience.
2. **Benefits and rewards** — We learn what we need to learn. We need to see the benefits and rewards. Answer—**“What’s In It For Me”** — to make participants learn more about the issue and the other participants' views. Encourage team members to participate in the agenda development. This tactic will focus the meeting on their *real world problems* and it will relate the meeting content to the goal.
3. **The practical** — The concepts, ideas, and methods must be logical and practical for participants to accept them. Explain what you are trying to achieve with the different processes. Allow debate and allow participants to challenge the ideas. These tactics will help participants discover and understand all of the issues. The facilitator must ensure that all participants listen to and respect the opinions of their group members during debates and discussions.
4. **Practice and teambuilding** — You should not be surprised if participants are initially hesitant to share information. They may not be accustomed to working in a public forum or with other participants in the process. With practice and over time, they will grow more comfortable with the roles they may play. By encouraging participants to share information and resources, the facilitator helps the group to work as a team.
5. **The setting** — People are more receptive to new information and messages if they are comfortable in their environment. The meeting site and room set up are important to making participants comfortable.
6. **Respect** — Always show respect to the group. Everyone has something valuable to offer.

3.3 TACKLING TIME

The Importance of Time Management

Time limits are an essential part of well-run meetings. Although time limits can create nervousness or anxiety, participants will appreciate starting and ending on time more than they will resent the pressure of time limits.

Tips on Time Management

Here are several strategies for time management of meetings.

1. **Give adequate time** — Ensure that each activity on the agenda is given a specific amount of time that is adequate to address the issue. Limit the number of agenda items to no more than four.
2. **Establish time limits** — Establish time limits for speakers, discussion, and less structured activities.
3. **Appoint a timekeeper** — Give that person authority to stop people, with ample warning when their time is up (such as holding up a “one minute” sign or some other signal).
4. **Have a visible clock** — Have a clock that is visible to both you and the participants.



Clocks with timers and alarms work especially well for this. At first, participants may find it distracting (or even annoying), but after a few meetings that finish on time, they will learn to watch the clock, stay focused, and work within established time limits.

5. **Practice** — Practice your part prior to the meeting to help you to get a “feel” for how long different activities will take.
6. **Plan ahead to be flexible** — Be ready to “tweak” your agenda during the meeting. Pre-meeting preparation is the key to knowing what topics must be covered immediately and what can be postponed. Know what agenda items can be put off to another meeting, what items can be decided quickly, or what items can be delegated to a participant or subcommittee to decide.

3.4 ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES

The Importance of Ground Rules

At the start of a meeting, a good idea is to establish some norms or ground rules that participants will agree to follow. This tactic is particularly important for meetings on issues that have the potential to become problematic. The norms or ground rules can be established:

1. By the facilitator before the meeting
2. By the group leader or a planning group for the meeting
3. At the meeting by the group members

When and How to Establish Ground Rules

1. Established by a facilitator before the meeting.

In non-contentious meetings or with established and cooperative groups, norms can be successfully given to the group by the facilitator. The facilitator still needs to present these to the group and ask if all participants agree to abide by these ground rules. It is often constructive to ask the participants to suggest additional norms or ground rules that the group would like to see added to the list. Any new norms that are suggested should be briefly discussed by the group and, the new ground rule could be added if there is general agreement that it would improve the meeting process or outcome (success).

2. Norms are prescribed by the group leader before or during the meeting

For meetings or groups with a clear leader and where some limits, rules, or standards are already in place, the group leader can determine the norms or ground rules. If necessary, the leader should explain briefly where the norms came from and why they apply to this meeting. Examples of when reiterating norms is appropriate include: when new participants join the group or when someone asks about the purpose of the meeting or how a particular group decision should be made.

3. Norms are determined by the group during the meeting.

For new groups with members who are not familiar with or who have never worked with one another, the norms should be established by the group at the start of the meeting (or a series of meetings). It is particularly important to spend time at the beginning of a meeting to establish some ground rules and to get agreement by the participants (consensus) about how everyone will behave, especially if the topic of the meeting or the issues to be addressed may be controversial. The time spent *early in the process*

establishing norms, or setting ground rules, will be well worth the time it takes to allow participants to discuss the norms for the increase in cooperation that can be gained from the exercise.

Exercise 3.4 – Ground Rules

Nominate one participant to serve as the facilitator of your group. Determine which of the three categories fits your group and then establish ground rules for the remainder of Module 3.

3.5 CONDUCTING SUCCESSFUL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

People spend a great deal of time in small groups. In today’s world, being part of a resource management, protection, or education organization inevitably means attending and often facilitating meetings that address controversial issues. Tomorrow’s session will focus on the skills necessary to minimize conflict and, if that isn’t possible, deal constructively with the conflict. This final session of today’s meeting will provide tips on how to be successful in managing group discussions—a common component of public meetings.

Potential Meeting Pitfalls and Perils

A successful facilitator is able to anticipate and address potential pitfalls and perils in facilitating a group discussion. While potential problems vary with the agenda for and the participants in any given meeting, here are some common pitfalls to avoid and ways to address them if they arise.

PITFALLS AND PERILS	TIPS FOR SUCCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A lack of confidence in the leader (i.e. the facilitator) ➤ Failure to consider alternatives ➤ An atmosphere of predetermined outcomes ➤ Failure to keep a good pace ➤ Poor word choice ➤ Failure to establish norms ➤ Lack of preparation ➤ Failure to summarize ➤ Failure to stop contentious situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide a written agenda or list of issues, points, problems ➤ Restate and paraphrase ➤ Use the “parking lot” technique ➤ Guide the group back to the agenda ➤ Ask questions that focus on relevance ➤ Call on a productive participant ➤ Focus on problem solving ➤ Ask questions that demonstrate the discussion is off target and/or be frank ➤ Take a break

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Handout 3.6: Improving Group Discussions

Exercise 3.5 – Solve the Murder Mystery

Split into two groups of approximately equal numbers. Each group will be given a set of cards. Each card contains one clue needed to solve the “Murder Mystery.”

Working in groups, you need to solve the mystery in the time allocated. Your instructor will provide additional information.