



Facilitation Tips

Collaboration is necessary to reduce problem gambling. Good facilitation fosters successful group dialogue and leads to better collaboration. Merriam-Webster defines facilitate as *“to make easier or to help bring about.”* It’s important that you can help bring about a rich conversation about gambling. Facilitating a group, whether it be a coalition meeting, a community conversation, or even a staff meeting, can be tricky, and honing these skills is critical. You do not need to be an expert or have all the wisdom in the room. The goal is to draw from the wisdom and expertise of the group. Consider the following tips as you facilitate meaningful dialogue.

Be prepared.

- Understand the goals and outcomes of the meeting
- Select a location that is:
 - Accessible to all participants
 - Conducive to conversation
 - Comfortable (ex: chairs, temperature, outside noise, etc.)
 - Adequate size for the size of group
- Arrange the room for conversation
 - Place chairs in a circle or have small groups for discussion
 - Avoid classroom style set up
 - Consider creating a seating chart to mix up the participants
- Bring the appropriate materials
 - Copies of the agenda and any other documents
 - Sign-in sheets
 - Poster paper and easel to capture themes and questions
 - Microphone(s)
 - Computer and AV equipment if necessary
 - Extra pens and paper
 - Refreshments
- Create ground rules
 - Start and end on time
 - Be on time from breaks
 - One person talks at a time
 - Raise hands to talk
 - Respect each other
 - No attacking others’ ideas

The meeting.

- Create an agenda that allows plenty of time for discussion and questions. Avoid cramping the agenda with too many tasks.
- Start with introductions and consider an ice breaker to help the group get to know one another.
- Review the agenda, objectives, and ground rules with the group.
- Be aware of yourself:
 - Speak loudly or wear a mic when necessary.
 - Use appropriate language.
 - Watch your body language. Are you sending unintentional messages by how you're sitting or how you're reacting to comments?
 - Talk to the group, not the agenda in front of you.
 - Remain a facilitator. Contributing as a meeting participant can put the meeting's process at risk.
- Encourage participation from everyone. The more people that contribute, the better the outcome!
- Respect everyone's opinions and welcome all contributions.
- Stick to the topic. Avoid the group veering in directions unrelated to the topic. Tell the group that any new conversations can take place at a future meeting or during a break.
- Be aware of the time for the conversation and notify participants when the time is running out.
- Be flexible. Some topics may require more time than allotted. Check in with the group to see if spending more time on the topic is agreeable.
- Be responsive to the room. Do people need a break? Is the conversation getting heated where they might need you to step in?
- Make sure decisions are made with consensus.
- Bring closure to each item – avoid leaving important tasks/ideas unresolved.
- Seek commitments from people if necessary.
- Thank participants for their contributions to the conversation.

Difficult participants.

People can do a variety of things that can disrupt the conversation in the room. They may interrupt others, push their own agenda, change topics, dominate the conversation, or even be disrespectful to others. Being prepared for these situations is key. Seek agreement on the agenda and on each of the ground rules early. When the discussion goes off course, revisit them. These can be used to regain control and stay on task.

Reference:

Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. (2018). *Section 2. Developing Facilitation Skills*. Retrieved from <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/facilitation-skills/main>