



THE RETENTION PROJECT

A WASHINGTON/OREGON CAMPUS COMPACT AMERICORPS PROGRAM



GROUP FACILITATION

PROJECT FUNDED BY



SECTION 1: Group Facilitation
Module Curriculum Information Sheet for Participants

Intended Audience

Mentoring Program Staff
Program/Project supervisors and coordinators
AmeriCorps Members
VISTA AmeriCorps Members
SIS AmeriCorps Members
Retention AmeriCorps Members
Student Leaders

Group Facilitation (GF)

Learning Objectives

The training participants will:

- Understand basic principles when engaging with adults as learners.
- Identify effective strategies to facilitate groups.
- Identify techniques to address and manage conflict in group dynamics.
- Gain self-awareness about existing and needed group facilitation skills.

Curriculum Outline

Participants are guided to work through the curriculum and materials in this order:

1. Read Article Titles: Basics of Successful Group Facilitation with Adults
2. Complete Praxis Activity
3. Engage in Reflection Activity
4. Complete assessment/evaluation

Definitions

Praxis: “Praxis is the process by which a [theory](#), lesson, or skill is enacted or practiced, embodied and/or realized. It is a practical and applied knowledge to one's actions.”

~[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praxis_\(process\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praxis_(process)), May 13, 2010.

Reflection: Reflection is an active process of discovery, meaning-making and connection between what is being learned and how the knowledge or skill is relevant to the learner on any number of levels—including professional, personal or societal. Reflection can be done in any number of ways—thinking, speaking, writing, visual representation, creative movement or other artistic expressions. Reflection relies on critical thinking to identify, analyze and synthesize the connections made during any reflective activity.

Group Facilitation
Praxis Activity: Focused Attending and Active Listening

To complete this praxis activity you will need to recruit the help of a colleague, friend, or family member. It is best to find someone who has a solid understanding of what it means to do focused attending and to demonstrate active listening skills. Often a supervisor or experienced professional will provide you with the best feedback.

The purpose of this exercise is to practice, hone or polish your ability to demonstrate mental and physical awareness of what others are saying verbally and through body language. This skill of focused attending requires you to be fully present in the unfolding experience—immersed in the dynamic interaction between yourself and other participants. In this praxis, you will only have one person to focus on, whereas, in facilitation you can have anywhere from two to two-hundred others to which to attend.

A Review: Remember the acronym S.O.L.E.R

S: Sit or Stand Squarely—you body facing the person or audience.
O: Open Posture—keep your arms, hands, legs, feet uncrossed and to your sides and your head upright.
L: Lean Forward—when people speak to you, move your body forward either by leaning in if you are sitting or my moving closer to the speaker if you are standing.
E: Eye-Contact—maintain comfortable eye contact taking into account cultural differences in use of eye contact.
R: Relax—keep your body posture relaxed. Breathe! Lower your shoulders, unclench hands, calm jittery legs, feet and hands. Be aware of how your body responds to stress and work to avoid falling into your nervous habits.

Directions:

It is highly recommended that you videotape yourself conducting this activity for your own learning. Videotaping is optional, but should you plan to videotape, make sure that your partner is aware of this in advance and has given permission. Most campuses have a media center that makes videotaping equipment available to students, departments, and programs on campus.

Select a partner to assist you.

Determine and communicate to your partner the topic of the discussion.

In advance of the actual practice session, schedule a 30-minute meeting with your partner. (Ensure that you stick FIRMLY to this time frame.)

Create an agenda and timeline for the session. Include time to welcome your partner into the setting, to introduce what you are doing and why. Schedule time for the questions and dialog, which should include you validating feelings, verifying statements, restating ideas or comments, and reflecting emotions or concepts. Leave time at the end for you to summarize and time to ask your interviewee for

feedback about how they think you did showing them your ability to hear, understand, interpret and clarify what they were saying. Ask if they feel heard and understood?

Develop a set of between 7 to 10 open-ended questions that are specifically focused on the topic you have chosen to discuss.

(This practice emulates the work you will do to organize and focus a facilitated group session.)

Meet with your partner as scheduled.

Do your best to give full mental and physical attention to your partner.

SECTION 2: Group Facilitation

Reflection Activity: Focused Attending and Active Listening

SELF-REFLECTION:

Immediately after, the interview—REFLECT on the experience by doing a 10-minute free write to capture the things that you believe went well, that you would like to improve on, what sticks out to you about the feedback your partner provided to you, what questions you have about doing a better job.

If you videotape yourself doing this interview, watch the tape after doing the above free write. As you watch it make notes about what went well, what you would like to change or improve on and the self-awareness you leave with after viewing yourself facilitating a discussion. Compare and contrast what you thought of your facilitation skills versus what you can actually see and hear yourself doing.

Things to consider:

- What did you notice about your awareness of and ability to interpret body language?
- What cultural elements (age, educational level, ethnicity, life experience, religion, etc.) did you notice may have played a role (positive or negative) in this interaction?
- Was there any conflict that occurred or any opportunity for you to assert yourself as a facilitator, for instance to refocus your partner on the topic of conversation or to adhere to the timeframe?

SECTION 3: Group Facilitation with Adults
Training Module
Curriculum Information for Training Facilitators

Intended Audience

- Mentoring Program Staff
- Program/Project supervisors and coordinators
- AmeriCorps Members
- VISTA AmeriCorps Members
- SIS AmeriCorps Members
- Retention AmeriCorps Members
- Student Leader

Learning Objectives

The training participants will:

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Evaluation Question Suggestions

- Do you understand at least three basic principles of adult learners?
- Can you identify at least four effective group facilitation strategies?
- Do you feel better prepared to manage conflict in group dynamics in the role of group facilitator?
- After participating in this module, do you have greater self-awareness about your group facilitation skills?

Curriculum Outline

Participants are guided to work through the curriculum and materials in this order:

5. Read Article Titles: Basics of Successful Group Facilitation with Adults
6. Complete Praxis Activity: Active Listening/Focused Attending Skills
7. Engage in Reflection Activity: Active Listening/Focused Attending Skills
8. Complete assessment/evaluation

Delivery Modes:

Outline how the curriculum was intended to be utilized. The original concept was that all modules should be able to be adapted for on-line, as well as face-to-face delivery.

Face-to-Face sessions or workshops: Facilitators are encouraged to utilize these materials to frame any length teaching-learning session. Facilitators will need to review the text and toolkit to pull out relevant topics or points to highlight according to need or interest. Facilitator must provide access to the text and toolkit as desired.

Suggestions:

It will be IMPORTANT that as YOU FACILITATE this module that you USE/APPLY the GROUP FACILITATION strategies taught within! Model what you expect of the training participants!

Ask them at the end of the session if they can identify the behaviors of an effective facilitator that you applied in the session. Ask them what they think you could have done better! (That ought to keep you on your toes!)

Discuss “Facilitation Nightmares.” Ask: Who here either dreads facilitating groups or who has experienced a really awkward situation while facilitating groups? Get a show of hands only. Ask for two people to share their feelings or experiences.

Brainstorm: List ideas about the fears participants have, or the issues and aspects they believe good facilitators need to be aware of and prepared for to enter into a group facilitation role.

Lecture on the key principles within the text in the session OR ask the participants to read it prior to attending the session.

If you have them read it prior, do a REVIEW of the key concepts when face-to-face. You could play a game like Jeopardy or do a team competition of some sort to make sure that the learners retained the information or can recall the key concepts.

Review and Model Focused Attending/Active Listening Skills. Actually SHOW participants what SOLER (Square, Open, Leaning In, Eye-Contact, and Relaxed) positioning looks like. Have everyone physically practice it as a group.

Engage in the Praxis activity: Pair participants up and have them take turns practicing focused attending and active listening skills for 15 minutes each. It may be easiest to choose a simple topic like, “What I did last weekend.” Ensure that each has an opportunity to reflect or summarize verbally to one another what they heard each other say. Also, ensure that they ask if they were accurate.

“What I heard you say, was that after working a long hard week that was full of additional stress, you used the weekend to relax, play and reenergize. You visited your best friend, went to the movies—a comedy called “1000 laughs” and ate Thai food on Saturday. Sunday you slept in, went for a run and then called your mom, which helped you feel reconnected to your family. Did I understand?”

Ask them to give each other feedback about what they appreciated about the others ability to listen or technique in attending.

If the group members know each other well, you can choose a more complex topic. The topic of “Getting to Know How You Think of Yourself Culturally” can be very interesting and help build the concept of cultural competency.

Group Discussion: How is this type of communication different than other types of informal communication? Why are the skills of Focused Attending and Active Listening Critical to Successful Group Facilitation? What is their role in addressing conflict in group dynamics?

Engage in Reflection Activity:

Set personal goals for facilitation skill development.
Sharing or Report Outs on strengths and areas for growth.

On-line, Do-It-Yourself session: Material may be placed onto any on-line platform (website, sent via e-mail) as information and resource for individuals who wish to cultivate knowledge independently. Links to text and toolkit must be provided.

On-line, Facilitated course: A facilitator can offer a one-time webinar style course or an extended session using an on-line teaching platform (Blackboard, E-Luminate—both available at WWU as of May 2010.) Links to text and toolkit must be provided.

Facilitator Monitoring Required for On-Line, Facilitated Course