



Manual for innovation platform facilitators in Africa RISING Ethiopia sites

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(ILRI)



Produced by

International Livestock Research Institute

Published by

International Livestock Research Institute

September 2014

www.africa-rising.net

The Africa Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation (Africa RISING) program comprises three research-for-development projects supported by the United States Agency for International Development as part of the U.S. government's Feed the Future (FtF) initiative.

Through action research and development partnerships, Africa RISING will create opportunities for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainably intensified farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base.

The three projects are led by the International Livestock Research Institute (in the Ethiopian Highlands) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (in West Africa and East and Southern Africa). The International Food Policy Research Institute leads an associated project on monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment.



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This document was made possible with support from the American people delivered through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the US Government's Feed the Future Initiative. The contents are the responsibility of the producing organization and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of USAID or the U.S. Government.

Contents

- Facilitation of innovation platforms 1
 - What is facilitation all about? 1
 - Objectives of facilitation 2
 - Benefits of innovation platforms 2
 - Who facilitates IPs? 2
- Functions and roles of facilitators..... 4
- Principles for facilitation 9
- Skills required by facilitators..... 10
 - Tools to facilitate IP meetings..... 10
 - 1-2-4-All..... 11
 - Troika consulting..... 13
 - Open space..... 15
 - Fishbowl 18
 - What I Need From You..... 21
 - Buzz groups 24
 - Brainstorming..... 25
 - Speed dating 27
 - World café..... 29
 - Writeshops..... 31
 - Study visits 32
 - Peer assists..... 33
 - Market place 35
- Characteristics of a good facilitator 36
 - Ten handy tips for effective facilitation 36
- References 39

Facilitation of innovation platforms

Innovation Platforms (IPs) have been established in Africa RISING sites as an approach to involve a range of local key stakeholders, often with different backgrounds, who brought together to address common challenges and opportunities in agricultural sector. Members represent farmers, development agents, extension, local policy makers, NGOs, private sectors, universities and research institutes who have different but complementary objectives and interests working towards the development of the agricultural sector sites to bring change in the agricultural sector. These stakeholders don't naturally want to cooperate or share information as they have their own individual mandate and activities to deliver. They have different interest or even compete with each other.

Partners on IPs are not homogenous including those who know better than others, yet every partner is a stakeholder expected to have a shared vision of the task as well as a "working knowledge" of the topic (Tukahirwa, *et al.*, 2013). Bringing them together in Innovation System and maintaining their individual interest and commitment is a challenging activity for facilitators. These require a skillful facilitation so the platform members focus on issues that matter to its stakeholders. The stakeholders need to understand that how their individual roles representing their institution contribute to the large whole and the collective action towards common goals benefits all (van Rooyen *et al.*, 2013).

Experiences show that the effectiveness of IPs in achieving the stated outcomes depend much more on the facilitators. IPs often go through different phases that include initiation, management and sustainability. IP members have to be guided through each of these phases. These requires a range of skills, some interpersonal and others more technical in nature. These training notes present key issues and principles of facilitation that are important for Technical Group (TG) members. It also discusses issues related to facilitation as a key function for IP related to skills and principles as well as tips required for facilitators. Literatures for these notes are cited as a reference at the end of this note.

What is facilitation all about?

Facilitation can be defined as a process to bring about lasting and positive change, an innovation platform needs to address issues on and off the farm. When we say the on-farm issues in Africa RISING context it refers to those identified and prioritized specific research issues as a bottleneck to the development of the small holder farmers in the site. Off farm issues are here referring to crosscutting issues that include gender, institutional, policy, technology, capacity, knowledge management (communication, learning and sharing) and others that hinder the innovation for bringing change in the agricultural sector.

Facilitation has moved away from its usual role in meetings and groups to that of knowledge and innovation brokering with a wider set of stakeholders. Facilitation involves directing teams to a common goal and yet maintaining the interest of the participants. Facilitation therefore works like a hub through which several ideas are brought together and later beamed back for the entire group to hear and share for action. Hearing and sharing of ideas from numerous people of different background needs a person

or team with facilitation skills such listening, team building, dialogue, feedback to appreciate each contribution and make it fit in the on-going discussion. Facilitation is a challenging task that needs a creative and flexible facilitation team (Tukahirwa, *et al.*, 2013).

Objectives of facilitation

Multi stakeholder interactions are important characteristics of IPs aimed at generating solutions require thorough and efficient facilitation. Experience shows that there is a direct link between impact of participatory approaches and the quality of facilitation. The main objectives of facilitation are to:

- I. Develop individual and organizational capacities to be able to deal with dynamic challenges and opportunities;
- II. Catalyze self-organization and empowerment to enable articulation of needs;
- III. Develop and spread technical and social innovations in a process of joint learning; and,
- IV. Link individuals and organizations to external service providers, markets and sources of innovation in order to create functional innovation systems.

Facilitation of IPs include trust building, creating discomfort as precondition for change, creating a vision for development and enabling critical situation analysis. Facilitation also includes among others, creating ownership of the process and self-reliance, enabling self-discovery of behavioral patterns and hidden potentials, understanding the big picture of a challenge, creating norms and values. Further, facilitation aims to create linkages, simulate creativity, and establish culture of feedback and reflection, catalyze information sharing, catalyze appreciation of facts as well as data.

Benefits of innovation platforms

Innovation platforms present cost effective opportunities as partners synergize while bringing more resources and knowledge for sharing as well as new ideas to the platform. Innovation Platform creates a strong coalition, a stronger voice for advocating, cooperation on the ground as well as strategic partnerships (leveraging) partners' strength. Innovation platforms also bring to the forefront, the need to build the innovative capacity aimed at generating new ideas and approaches as well as strengthening.

Who facilitates IPs?

Different writers agree that IPs can be facilitated by a person or a team who needs to be neutral and objective, able to encourage group discussion without losing track of the main topic. The facilitators must have a good understanding of the subject matter being tackled and should not push any particular agenda. As the platform matures, the original facilitator may allow someone else from the TG members to take on the role. Some tasks may rotate among the members. During IP meetings or small group meetings or while a facilitator should determine the direction and flow of the discussion. During the interactions with partners, a facilitator should build and encourage an atmosphere conducive to learning and sharing of ideas, an atmosphere where every participant feels welcome and important.

A suitable facilitator for IPs is a person or team who is able to encourage group discussion, without losing track of the main topic. The facilitator must have a good understanding of the subject matter being tackled and should never be content with their skills and knowledge but should always be aware that his or her capacity for learning is endless. A facilitator is NOT a teacher, but opens doors or effective understanding of a subject matter such as scaling process. Although a facilitator must be firm, he or she also must be flexible and receptive. The key tips of an effective facilitator are illustrated in Fig. 4 In addition; the following are some basic skills of a good Facilitator.

My thoughts how IPs in Africa RISING should function (Zelalem Lema)

During diagnosis phase of Africa RISING in all of the sites, research problems have been identified and prioritized. There are seven (7) themes that have been identified so far across the sites and based on the specific site problems different protocols have been designed to address issues under each themes. Now each site have more than ten (10) research protocols, that required to establish the same number of Farmers Research Groups (FRGs) at kebele level, which are beyond the capacities to follow up and monitor by IP members.

Now all IPs have been established and all members have been aware of all the protocols who have activities on farmers land level. As to my knowledge little have been done around engaging IP members by SG partners who have designed their specific protocols. In order to increase the sense of ownership at local level we need to bring the platform members to re-consider the different protocols and select the most appropriate ones based on their local specific issues. In order for the different IPs to function well there is a need to re-select the top four (4) protocols, manageable, that are pertinent to their site specific problems. Then the different functions will be formulated around the four protocols that can be accomplished by the IPs which will be easy for M&E. These activities require the scientists or researchers (CGIAR partners) who have develop the four protocols to share back the concept to the platform members formally for feedbacks as well as to define shared roles and responsibilities in implementing the protocols. If we do so we will clearly define the role IPs can play in implementing the protocols on the ground with farmers. If IPs have a clear work and defined role of each partner around the four protocols which includes issues identification, farmer selection, technical backstopping, input supplying, capacity building for farmers, organizing field days and learn and share lessons every year then it is easy to do M&E IPs. We will use the selected four (4) protocols who have four FRGs as a control group and compare with other protocols done outside the IP approach to measure the effectiveness of IP in changing the livelihood of the small holder farming communities.

Functions and roles of facilitators

Technical Groups have been established in all Africa RISING IPs as a team to facilitate the main functions of each platform in their specific sites. During the initiation phase of Africa RISING IPs, different functions have been identified for the different IPs. These are identified as functions that the TG members should play step by step together as a facilitation team to make sure that their specific IP have their own common agenda to address that can be monitored and evaluated based on indicators.

Establishment of IPs builds on a recognized institution ideally research organization that acts as a facilitator and positioned to provide intermediary activities including providing information about potential collaborators, acting as mediators and steering team dynamics. The facilitator will not only restrict themselves to intermediary functions but also cover research, technical back stopping, mentoring and coaching.

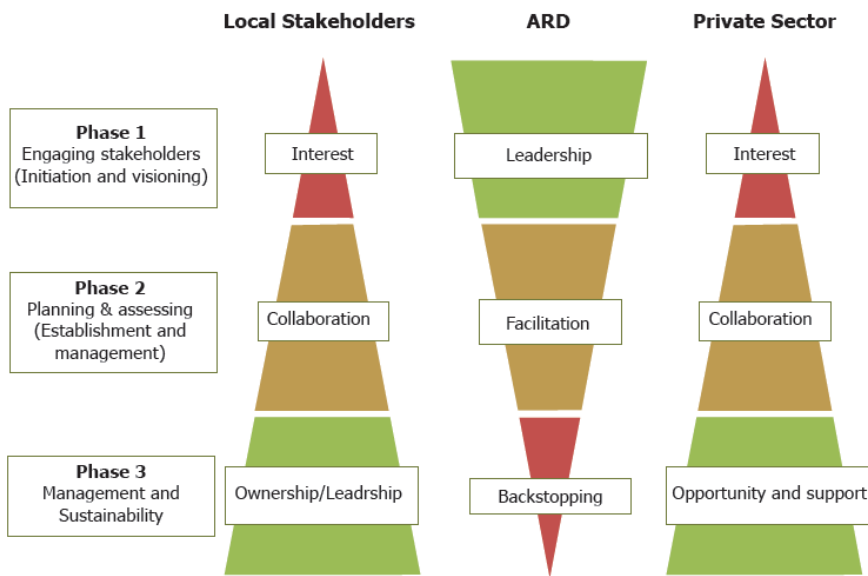
The main functions of the Facilitators (Technical Group members) are:

- Mobilizing partners to share a vision towards addressing a challenge of scaling Sustainable Land Management (SLM);
- Explaining innovation needs visions and corresponding demands in terms of knowledge, funding and policy;
- Providing linkages between relevant actors and;
- Guiding and backstopping establishment of working procedures, fostering, learning, managing conflicts.

In different literature it is agreed that there are three main phases identified as Innovation Platform processes. These include the initiation phase, management and sustainability phase where the facilitators have to play an important role to set up functional IP.

The following figure is adapted from Devaux., *et al* (2005) explaining changing roles of different stakeholders at the three phases.

Figure 2: Changing roles of various stakeholders at different phases



(Adapted from Devaux, A, Ordinola, M., Manrique, K, Lopez, G. and Thiele, G. Stimulating pro-poor innovation within market chains of native potato: The case of Peru)

Phase 1- Initiation. Under this phase there steps to be followed that will lead to the second stage of setting up of the platform. There are no as such standard steps to be followed under this phase but from experiences and different literature the following are presented as key steps by the facilitation team.

Step 1.1 - Diagnosis activities. This first step comprises of a scoping study or process to determine and understand the compelling challenges and opportunities on the topics formulated by the initiator. The initiator of the IP can be an organization or individual. If the organization initiating the IP is new for the site selected identifying and engaging the local key stakeholders and experts are very important for the diagnosis phase as they are well aware of the local context and have the knowledge of the local issues. A small facilitation team can be established at local level who will do the diagnosis activities through using participatory approaches to identify the challenges and opportunities to address by the platform members. The local facilitation team with backstopping from the organization who initiated the platform play a significant role in defining problems specific to the sites through a participatory approaches. Different researches including PCA and FEAST have been conducted in all the sites and with the engagement of key local partners to identify the challenges and opportunities that Africa RISING project should address.

Outputs: at the end of these steps the following should be achieved:

- Site level key partners identified and engaged in all diagnosis studies;
- Site specific list of identified and prioritized research problems and opportunities;
- Intervention strategy streamlined;
- Identified stakeholders to establish the platform at different level;

Step 1.2 - Establish the innovation platform. Once problems requiring an innovation process is identified, facilitators convenes an initiation meeting of stakeholders. Formally establishing the platform through launching of the project, presenting of the diagnosis, defining functions of the platform, selection of TG committee as a team to facilitate their own specific platforms, defining roles of partners (ToR), and create commitment of members.

Outputs: at the end of these steps the following should be achieved for each IPs:

- All members of the platform aware of the project goal, focus and scope;
- Refining representation to ensure relevant agencies, constituencies, and organizations are brought on board
- Technical Groups as a Facilitation team elected, consolidated and empowered to perform including defined, duties, roles and responsibilities;
- A tentative work plan and frequency of meetings;
- Shared understanding of problem, challenge and the issues all articulated;

Phase 2 – Management. This is the long process for IPs that uses a holistic approach to deal with challenges in a farming system. This stage is where the management of the process takes place including the innovation and learning through consecutive years. The facilitators help the platform to define the objectives, implement joint actions, organize regular meetings, conduct activities outside the regular meetings including field day, communication, capacity building, M&E and gender activities to make sure that new ideas, practices, technologies and approaches are generated and applied at scale. The following steps are some of the key activities that the facilitators will have important role to play.

Step 2.1 – Identify Issues. Facilitators as at team help members define challenges and opportunities it will address. In the case of commodity based IP the problem is defined around the commodity across the value chain but for IPs that focus to address a system as one entity it requires to address more than one commodity. In a mixed farming system like Africa RISING sites it is a holistic approach that is applied in trying to transform small holders farming agriculture through sustainable intensification. All problems can't be addressed at a time and need to be prioritized in a way that the issues selected to be tackled first, as an entry point, are those paving the road for the other issues. Therefore, IPs in Africa RISING can consider challenges and opportunities around a main crop specific to their sites as a commodity to address with inclusion of other manageable key issues within the majority of the small holders farming system. These need to be carefully selected and prioritized with the criteria that the issues selected to be addressed should solve the problems of the majority of the small holders farming community in the specific sites for future scalability of the innovations within the region. The facilitation team should make sure that the platform focused on the priority tasks as identified by the platform.

Outputs: at the end of these step the following should be achieved:

- Challenges and opportunities articulated around the main commodity
- Complementing issues specific to the sites identified and prioritized
- Defined roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in addressing the prioritized issues through designed protocols (in Africa RISING case the national level CGIAR partners, Woreda and kebele level IP members, and FRGs)
- Clear indicators for M&E

Step 2.2 - Manage Regular Workshops. After the platform is established and issues are identified the facilitators arrange and manage regular workshops. The workshop should be facilitated by skilled professional to ensure the discussions are guided and set targets are achieved. The facilitator should ensure all relevant stakeholders are invited and facilitated to participate. In Africa RISING IPs key members of the platform agrees to host the regular workshops in their institution. These is important in increasing the ownership as well as collaboration among the members. There are different tools that are available for the facilitators to apply in a workshop/event to increase the participation of participants and energize the groups. Some of the different tools selected will be presented with when and how to use during facilitating workshops/events is discussed under the Workshop/Event Facilitation Tools topic in this training manual.

Outputs: at the end of each regular IP meetings/workshops the following should be achieved.

- Clear sense of ownership created by members on the issue under discussion;
- Good environment created for all to participate, learn and share on issues under discussion;
- Action have been identified and agreed with shared responsibilities;
- Good representation of the right stakeholders;
- Next steps clearly identified and create ground of the up-coming consecutive meetings;
- Documentation including IP meeting report and workshop evaluation sheets collected from participants.

Step 2.3- Support activities outside meetings. Innovation platform regular meetings are only taking place three/four times per year in Africa RISING project. Much of the innovation process and platform's work happen outside the regular meetings. The facilitation team is coordinating these activities by establishing working groups, appointing champions, coordinating the allocation of tasks, engaging key members as needed, help set objectives and ensuring they are implemented, documented and followed up. The facilitation team builds relationships with other stakeholders and invites them to collaborate with their platform. Outcomes of the activities are demonstrated at farmer's field level through organizing field days every year. The progress of the activities and lessons also shared at consecutive IP meetings.

Outputs: the following are some of the outputs achieved at the end of activities outside the meeting.

| Activities outside the meeting | Out puts |
|---|--|
| - TG meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting minute with agreed list of action - Defined roles of stakeholders |
| - Technical backstopping to FRGs during planting, management and utilization | - Farmers received technical backstopping and |
| - Organizing Field days to share experiences to other farmers (farmers to farmers approach) | - Field days organized and all stakeholders (including new farmers) participated and seen the progress of interventions at field level |
| - Capacity building for farmers on new approaches, technologies and practices | - Training provided for farmers involved in the action research (during planting, management and harvesting/utilization) |

Phase 3- Sustainability.

This is where stakeholder dynamism occurs as issues are solved and new issues arise, old stakeholders leave and new ones join as need arises. These new issues can be championed by an individual or organization with the expertise in that new area or has knowledge to bring relevant interventions to solve the new challenges. Learning and innovation continues in this stage. The facilitators can play a role in sustaining IP by identifying a key potential partner at the local level and hosting the IPs. It depends on the hosting organization and members of the platform to continue working in the same challenge area after, for example Africa RISING project phase out, or new one.

Principles for facilitation

There are several principles that govern IP formation and management. According to International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) manual 8 (guidelines for setting up IP) there are at least five principles to be seen important principles for facilitating IPs at different level.

1. Building on existing structures and activities

Assess to what extent existing activities and forums at the local level can be used as a starting point for the site level IPs.

2. A participatory approach and local ownership

Local ownership is one of main factors that should determine the success and sustainability of IPs. Although project staff at site and national levels may have to take a leading role in the formation and facilitation of the IPs, the work plans and activities have to be developed together with other actors of the platforms and opportunities for transferring ownership in time should be explored.

3. Building capacity for facilitating IP formation and functioning

Forming and facilitating the IPs require intensive and skilled facilitation and brokering by the process facilitators, and involves training and personal coaching. In addition, periodical reflection and learning meetings have to be organized between project staff to learn from experiences and guide further actions.

4. Monitoring and evaluation of IPs

Monitoring and evaluation of IPs is a crucial element of the IP implementation process. It is critical to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of IPs as mechanisms to achieve the intended outcomes of the project and learn which strategies work and which do not.

5. Communication between IPs

Linkages/mechanisms need to be established between IPs at the site level and the (sub)-national level to enhance coordination, sharing and learning, and institutionalization. To optimize this process, a well thought-through communication strategy needs to be developed by the communication team working on IP. These needs to be embedded in the communication strategy of the innovation system in the project.

Skills required by facilitators

In order to increase the cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders the facilitators should have to acquire the critical skills. We discuss below two main issues around the skills of the facilitators. The first topic focusses on the different tools selected to facilitate IP meetings and events. The second focuses on topics discuss and summarizes the bullet points of what a good facilitator should possesses as well as 10 tips for facilitators. One of the activities that a good facilitator should have is the different tools to use during IP workshops and events.

Tools to facilitate IP meetings

Regular IP meetings have been agreed by the woreda and kebele level IP members to be organized 3-4 times per year. These meetings are considered as the hub for the innovation process that aimed to engage all members at each level to come together for learning and change. It has a consequence of planning, be used as a space for identifying. A common misconception is that good results will be achieved simply by getting right stakeholders in IP meeting venue. But getting the right stakeholders is certainly important and a challenging work but that is just a first step. Skillful facilitator is required to support the meeting process by keeping the group on track to produce the desired objectives. IP meetings are regularly build on from the previous meetings which requires the majority of the members to participate and continue contributing to the efforts to address the complex agricultural problems identified by the members.

The facilitators need to acquire and have access to different facilitation tools to increase interaction, learning and participation of all members and make the meeting or event is to the interest of all.

1-2-4-All

Engage Everyone Simultaneously in Generating Questions, Ideas, and Suggestions (12 min.)

You can immediately include everyone regardless of how large the group is. You can generate better ideas and more of them faster than ever before. You can tap the know-how and imagination that is distributed widely in places not known in advance. Open, generative conversation unfolds. Ideas and solutions are sifted in rapid fashion. Most importantly, participants own the ideas, so follow-up and implementation is simplified. No buy-in strategies needed! Simple and elegant!

Five Structural Elements

1. Structuring Invitation

- Ask a question in response to the presentation of an issue, or about a problem to resolve or a proposal put forward (e.g., What opportunities do YOU see for making progress on this challenge? How would you handle this situation? What ideas or actions do you recommend?)

2. How Space Is Arranged and Materials Needed

- Unlimited number of groups
- Space for participants to work face-to-face in pairs and foursomes
- Chairs and tables optional
- Paper for participants to record observations and insights

3. How Participation Is Distributed

- Everyone in the group is included (often not the facilitator)
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute

4. How Groups Are Configured

- Start alone, then in pairs, then foursomes, and finally as a whole group

5. Sequence of Steps and Time Allocation

- Silent self-reflection by individuals on a shared challenge, framed as a question (e.g., What opportunities do YOU see for making progress on this challenge? How would you handle this situation? What ideas or actions do you recommend?) 1 min.
- Generate ideas in pairs, building on ideas from self-reflection. 2 min.
- Share and develop ideas from your pair in foursomes (notice similarities and differences). 4 min.
- Ask, "What is one idea that stood out in your conversation?" Each group shares one important idea with all (repeat cycle as needed). 5 min.

WHY? Purposes

- Engage every individual in searching for answers
- Avoid overhelping and the overcontrol-dependency vicious cycle
- Create safe spaces for expression, diminish power differentials
- Express "silent" conversations and expand diversity of inputs
- Enrich quality of observations and insights before expression
- Build naturally toward consensus or shared understanding

Tips and Traps

- Firmly facilitate quiet self-reflection before paired conversations
- Ask everyone to jot down their ideas during the silent reflection
- Use bells for announcing transitions
- Stick to precise timing, do another round if needed
- In a large group during “All,” limit the number of shared ideas to three or four
- In a large group, use a facilitator or harvester to record output not shared
- Invite each group to share one insight but not to repeat insights already shared
- Separate and protect generation of ideas from the whole group discussion
- Defer judgment; make ideas visual; go wild!
- When you hit a plateau, jump to another form of expression (e.g., Improve, sketching, stories)
- Maintain the rule of one conversation at a time in the whole group
- Do a second round if you did not go deep enough!

Riffs and Variations

- Graphically record insights as they emerge from groups
- Use Post-it notes in Rounds 2 and 3
- Link ideas that emerge to **Design Storyboards, Improv Prototyping, Ecocycle Planning**
- Go from groups of 4 to groups of 8 with consensus in mind. Colleague Liz Rykert calls this Octopus!

Examples

- Use after a speech or presentation, when it is important to get rich feedback (questions, comments, and ideas), instead of asking the audience, “Any questions?”
- A group of managers used two rounds of **1-2-4-All** to redesign their less-than-stimulating weekly meeting.
- For a spontaneous conversation that starts after the topic of a meeting has been announced
- For a group that has been convened to address a problem or an innovation opportunity
- For unlocking a discussion that has become dysfunctional or stuck
- In place of a leader “telling” people what to think and do (often unintentionally)
- For a group that tends to be excessively influenced by its leader
- Read Craig Yeatman’s story in Part Three: Stories from the Field about using **1-2-4-All** to help manage a merger decision, “Inclusive High-Stakes Decision Making Made Easy.”

Attribution: Liberating Structure developed by Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless

Troika consulting

Get Practical and Imaginative Help from Colleagues Immediately (30 min.)

To listen is very hard, because it asks of us so much interior stability that we no longer need to prove ourselves by speeches, arguments, statements or declarations. True listeners no longer have an inner need to make their presence known. They are free to receive, welcome, to accept. – Henri Nouwen

You can help people gain insight on issues they face and unleash local wisdom for addressing them. In quick round-robin “consultations,” individuals ask for help and get advice immediately from two others. Peer-to-peer coaching helps with discovering everyday solutions, revealing patterns, and refining prototypes. This is a simple and effective way to extend coaching support for individuals beyond formal reporting relationships. **Troika Consulting** is always there for the asking for any individual who wishes to get help from colleagues or friends.

Five Structural Elements

1. Structuring Invitation

- Invite the group to explore the questions “What is your challenge?” and “What kind of help do you need?”

2. How Space Is Arranged and Materials Needed

- Any number of small groups of 3 chairs, knee-to-knee seating preferred. No table!

3. How Participation Is Distributed

- In each round, one participant is the “client,” the others “consultants”
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to receive and give coaching

4. How Groups Are Configured

- Groups of 3
- People with diverse backgrounds and perspectives are most helpful

5. Sequence of Steps and Time Allocation

- Invite participants to reflect on the consulting question (the challenge and the help needed) they plan to ask when they are the clients. 1 min.
- Groups have first client share his or her question. 1-2 min.
- Consultants ask the client clarifying questions. 1-2 min.
- Client turns around with his or her back facing the consultants
- Together, the consultants generate ideas, suggestions, coaching advice. 4-5 min.
- Client turns around and shares what was most valuable about the experience. 1-2 min.
- Groups switch to next person and repeat steps.

WHY? Purposes

- Refine skills in asking for help
- Learn to formulate problems and challenges clearly

- Refine listening and consulting skills
- Develop ability to work across disciplines and functional silos
- Build trust within a group through mutual support
- Build capacity to self-organize
- Create conditions for unimagined solutions to emerge

Tips and Traps

- Invite participants to form groups with mixed roles/functions
- Suggest that participants critique themselves when they fall into traps (e.g., like jumping to conclusions)
- Have the participants try to notice the pattern of support offered. The ideal is to respectfully provoke by telling the client “what you see that you think they do not see”
- Tell participants to take risks while maintaining empathy
- If the first round yields coaching that is not good enough, do a second round
- Beware that two rounds of 10 minutes per client is more effective than one round of 20 minutes per client.
- Keep the spaces safe: if you share anything, do it judiciously
- Questions that spark self-understanding or self-correction may be more powerful than advice about what to do
- Tell clients to try and stay focused on self-reflection by asking, “What is happening here? How am I experiencing what is happening?”
- Make **Troika Consulting** routine in meetings and conferences

Riffs and Variations

- Meld with 15% Solutions: each client shares a 15% Solution, asking for coaching
- Inviting the client to turn around and sit facing away from his or her consultants once the question has been shared and clarified deepens curiosity, listening, empathy, and risk taking for all. The alternative of not turning around is an option.
- Restrict the coaching to generating only questions to clarify the challenge: no advice giving (aka Q-Storming)
- String together with Helping Heuristics; Heard, Seen, Respected; Nine Whys

Examples

- For the beginning or end of staff meetings
- After a presentation, for giving participants time to formulate and sift next steps
- For students to help one another and to promote peer-to-peer learning
- In the midst of conferences and large-group meetings
- As a self-initiated practice within a group

Open space

Liberate Inherent Action and Leadership in Groups of Any Size (90 min. and up to 3 days)

One day a student asked, “What is the most difficult part of painting?” The master answered, “The part of paper where nothing is painted is the most difficult.” – Painting Zen

When people must tackle a common complex challenge, you can release their inherent creativity and leadership as well as their capacity to self-organize. **Open Space** makes it possible to include everybody in constructing agendas and addressing issues that are important to them. Having co-created the agenda and free to follow their passion, people will take responsibility very quickly for solving problems and moving into action. Letting go of central control (i.e., the agenda and assignments) and putting it in the hands of all the participants generates commitment, action, innovation, and follow-through. You can use **Open Space** with groups as large as a couple of thousand people!

Five Structural Elements – Min Specs

1. Structuring Invitation

- Invite people to come and address a complex problem
- Invite participants to co-construct the agenda by posting sessions that they will convene on topics they are passionate about
- Invite participants to join any session that they care about

2. How Space Is Arranged and Materials Needed

- Chairs in concentric circles for 10–1,000 people in a large room or open space
- Microphones needed for groups larger than 40
- Large blank agenda posted on easels and flip charts, long tapestry paper, or whiteboard
- Agenda to include slots for enough concurrent sessions to accommodate what is likely to emerge given the challenge and the number of participants. (One rule of thumb is that 3 out of 10 participants will post a session, e.g., there will be 15 sessions posted from 50 participants.)

3. How Participation Is Distributed

- Everyone who cares about the challenge at hand and accepts the organizers’ invitation is included
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute
- The “Law of Two Feet” governs the participation of all attendees in the various sessions. It says: “Go and attend whichever session you want, but if you find yourself in a session where you are not learning or contributing, use your two feet!”

4. How Groups Are Configured

- Start together in one large circle (or as many concentric circles as needed)
- Continue with groups of various sizes self-organized around agenda topics

5. Sequence of Steps and Time Allocation

| | Short Form | Long Form |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| | 90 minutes total time | Up to 3 days |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leader and/or facilitator introduces the concept and mechanics of Open Space, including the Law of Two Feet and its Four Principles. | 5 min. | 20-45 min. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Marketplace” opens: participants propose topics plus a time and place for groups to meet. | 15 min. | 20-30 min. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conveners facilitate sessions; groups develop recommendations and action plans. Notes are taken and published or posted. | 2 rounds of 30 min. sessions or 1 round of 60 min. | Several rounds of 60-90 min. sessions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debrief, proceedings distributed, and closing. | 10 min. | 60 min. Daily |

WHY? Purposes

- Generate action and build energy, commitment, and shared leadership
- Address intractable problems or conflicts by unleashing self-organization
- Make sure that ALL of the issues that are most important to the participants are raised, included in the agenda, and addressed
- Make it possible for participants to take responsibility for tackling the issues that they care about and for what does or doesn't happen

Tips and Traps

- To get started, we recommend reading *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide* by the founder of Open Space, Harrison Owen. All the elements to try **Open Space** for the first time are included and described very clearly.
- A compelling challenge and attractive invitation are key requirements.
- Write up the entire proceedings in a single document, completed and distributed/shared immediately during the meeting.
- The facilitator should introduce the Law of Two Feet, Four Principles, and the mechanics of **Open Space** in a seriously entertaining fashion.
- As the facilitator, notice when you form a judgment (about what is right or wrong) or an idea about how you can help, then “let it go”: do one less thing!

- A meeting without the Law of Two Feet—namely, one where the agenda is created by the participants but people are not free to attend the session of their choice—is NOT **Open Space**!

Examples

- For management meetings of all stripes
- Read “Turning a Business Around” in Part Three: Stories from the Field. Alison Joslyn launched a business transformation by inviting all employees to a three-day **Open Space** meeting.
- Read “Inventing Future Health-Care Practice” in Part Three. Chris McCarthy uses Open Space to set direction for collaboration among the creative members of the Innovation Learning Network.
- Immediately after a merger, for bringing together all the employees of both companies to shape next steps and take action together.
- To share IT innovation prototypes and unleash collaborative action among widely distributed grantees.

Attribution: Invented by Harrison Owen (see *Open Space Technology: A User’s Guide*). Short form developed to fit in Liberating Structures milieu by Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless.

Fishbowl

Share Know-How Gained from Experience with a Larger Community (35-70 min.)

A subset of people with direct field experience can quickly foster understanding, spark creativity, and facilitate adoption of new practices among members of a larger community. Fishbowl sessions have a small inside circle of people surrounded by a larger outside circle of participants. The inside group is formed with people who made concrete progress on a challenge of interest to those in the outside circle. The fishbowl design makes it easy for people in the inside circle to illuminate what they have done by sharing experiences while in conversation with each other. The informality breaks down the barriers with direct communication between the two groups of people and facilitates questions and answers flowing back and forth. This creates the best conditions for people to learn from each other by discovering answers to their concerns themselves within the context of their working groups. You can stop imposing someone else's practices!

Five Structural Elements – Min Specs

1. Structuring Invitation

- Ask those in the fishbowl to describe their experience—the good, the bad, and the ugly—informally, concretely, and openly. Invite them to do it in conversation with each other as if the audience wasn't there and they were sharing stories around a watering hole or stuck in a van on the way to the airport. Firmly, ask them to avoid presenting to the audience.
- Invite the people outside the fishbowl to listen, observe nonverbal exchanges, and formulate questions within their small groups.

2. How Space Is Arranged and Materials Needed

- Three to 7 chairs in a circle in the middle of a room
- Microphones for inner circle if whole group is larger than 30 to 40
- If possible, a low stage or bar stools make it possible for people in the outer circle to better see the interactions
- As many chairs as needed in an outer circle around the inner circle, in clumps of 3 to 4 chairs
- In large groups, have additional microphones ready for outside circle questions

3. How Participation Is Distributed

- Everyone in the inner circle has an equal opportunity to contribute
- Everyone in the outer circle has an equal opportunity to ask questions

4. How Groups Are Configured

- One inner circle group of 3–7 people
- One outer circle in multiple small satellite groups of 3–4 people
- 1-2-4-All configuration for the debrief

5. Sequence of Steps and Time Allocation

- Explain the fishbowl configuration and steps. 2 min.
- Inner circle conversation goes on until it ends on its own. 10 to 25 min.
- Satellite groups in outer circle formulate observations and questions. 4 min.

- Questions submitted to the inner circle are answered, and back-and-forth interaction between inner and outer circles goes on as needed until all the questions are answered. 10 to 25 min.
- Debrief using W³ (What? So What? Now What?) and ask, “What seems possible now?” 10 to 15 min.

WHY? Purposes

- Get down-to-earth field experience and all the questions and answers about new endeavors out on the table for everyone to understand at the same time
- Create conditions for new ideas to emerge
- Make space for every participant’s imagination and experience to show up
- Build skills in listening, storytelling, pattern-finding, questioning, and observing
- Celebrate early adopters and innovators who have gained field experience (often failing forward and vetting the prototype)

Tips and Traps

- For inner circle, pick only people with direct personal experience (without regard to rank)
- Pick people for the fishbowl (inner circle) who are representative of the distinct roles and functions that require coordination for success
- Encourage inner-circle people to share concrete, very descriptive examples rather than opinions
- Advise inner-circle people to imagine being in a car or a bar sharing stories and having a conversation
- Encourage everyone to share both successes and failures, “the good, the bad, the ugly”
- Enforce the “no speeches” and “talk to each other, not to the outer circle” rules!
- Have fun and encourage animated storytelling

Riffs and Variations

- Leave an open chair or two in the inner circle for someone unexpected to jump in
- With virtual groups, people in the outside circle use the chat function to share questions “to all” or in “pairs” as the conversation unfolds among “the fishes of the inner circle.”

Examples

- For transferring on-the-ground knowledge from officers returning from Afghanistan to those replacing them (see “Transforming After-Action Reviews in the Army” in Part Three: Stories from the Field).
- During a Liberating Structures workshop, a few experienced practitioners share stories to deepen the understanding of new users about how to get started and how to get practical results
- During a doctors’ meeting, an inner circle of specialists discussed a challenging case in the middle of a group of primary-care physicians, sparking a discussion of the case from specialist and primary-care perspectives

- A pilot group of salespeople shared with the rest of the sales force their experience with a new handheld reporting device. The **User Experience Fishbowl** helped everybody become comfortable that they knew all they needed to know to adopt the innovation.
- For a public-sector organization trying to expand beyond “hidden” pockets of uplifting service
- Members of an executive management team conducted their meeting in a fishbowl surrounded by all their managers.

Attribution: Liberating Structure developed by Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless and inspired by immersing ourselves in many different kinds of fishbowls over the years.

What I Need From You

Surface Essential Needs Across Functions and Accept or Reject Requests for Support (55-70 min.)

People working in different functions and disciplines can quickly improve how they ask each other for what they need to be successful. You can mend misunderstandings or dissolve prejudices developed over time by demystifying what group members need in order to achieve common goals. Since participants articulate core needs to others and each person involved in the exchange is given the chance to respond, you boost clarity, integrity, and transparency while promoting cohesion and coordination across silos: you can put Humpty Dumpty back together again!

Five Structural Elements – Min Specs

1. Structuring Invitation

- Invite participants to ask for what they need from others (often in different functions or disciplines) to be successful in reaching a specific goal
- Invite them also to respond unambiguously to the requests from others

2. How Space Is Arranged and Materials Needed

- Large room to accommodate 3 to 7 functional clusters of participants in different sections
- Chairs for a group of 3 to 7 people to sit in a circle in the middle of the room
- Paper for participants to record needs and responses

3. How Participation Is Distributed

- Everyone is included in his or her functional cluster
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute

4. How Groups Are Configured

- Three to 7 functional clusters (no limit on number of participants in each cluster)
- One group of 3 to 7 spokespersons to speak on behalf of each functional cluster

5. Sequence of Steps and Time Allocation

- Explain the process by describing the steps below. Reiterate the goal or challenge being addressed to make sure that the context is the same for all. Emphasize that requests must be clear and specific if they are to receive an unambiguous yes or no response. Make it clear that no answers other than *yes*, *no*, *I will try*, and *whatever* will be allowed. Position the functional clusters around the room. 3 min.
- Functional clusters use 1-2-4-All (or 1-2-All) to make a list of their top needs from each of the other functions in the room. Needs are expressed as requests that can be delivered with care and nuance in the following form: “What I need from you is ____.” Clusters reduce their lists to two top needs, write these down in their expected form, and select a spokesperson to represent the cluster. 5–15 min.
- All spokespersons gather in a circle in the middle of the room.

- One by one, spokespersons state their two needs to each of the other spokespersons around the circle. At this stage, spokespersons take notes of requests, but no one gives answers or responses. 15 min.
- Working individually (or by conferring with others in their functional cluster), each spokesperson writes down one of four responses to each request: *yes, no, I will try, or whatever* (whatever means the request was too vague to provide a specific answer). 5–10 min.
- Addressing one spokesperson in the group at a time, every spokesperson in the circle repeats the requests made by him or her, then shares his or her responses (*yes, no, I will try, or whatever*). *No discussion! No elaboration!* 10 min.
- Debrief with What, So What, Now What? 15 min.

WHY? Purposes

- Learn how to articulate functional and/or personal needs clearly
- Practice asking for what functions and/or individuals need
- Learn how to give clear answers to requests
- Reestablish and/or improve communication inside functional clusters
- Make progress across functional silos
- Mend connections that have been broken
- Get all the issues out on the table at the same time for everyone to see
- Reduce frustration by eliminating preconceptions and rumors
- Build trust so that group members can share accountability with integrity

Tips and Traps

- Remind participants that a *whatever* response means their request was too vague to provide a specific answer
- Strictly enforce the “no immediate response” rule
- Strictly enforce the rule that the only responses are *yes, no, I will try, or whatever* (no further elaboration is allowed)
- Encourage everyone to ask for what they truly need to be successful
- Have fun and encourage a safe amount of drama
- Don’t include more than 7 roles/functions (the waters get too muddy)
- In debriefing, try to draw out that people are good at complaining and not so good at asking for what they need. **WINFY** helps you move from complaints to valid requests.
- Use question-and-response cards to help groups sharpen how they express their requests

Riffs and Variations

- Consider a second round if too much appears to be unresolved or unclear: making concrete and clear requests is an essential skill!

- In the debrief, give participants a chance to articulate what was not asked of them: something neglected that would help achieve the groups' purpose but was not requested
- Instead of functional clusters, use the same **WINFY** sequence with a group or a team of individuals who are interdependent

Examples

- For a global technical group (with members in multiple countries) facing the need to make decisions in a fast-changing market (see "Getting Commitment, Ownership, and Follow-Through" in Part Three: Stories from the Field).
- For three top executives who are struggling to give consistent direction to the next level of leaders in the organization
- For hospital executives and managers launching a patient-centered care initiative that requires multi-specialty collaboration
- For helping one-on-one relationships become more generative

Attribution: Liberating Structure developed by Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless. Inspired by consultant Kathie Dannemiller and Professor Dan Pesut.

Buzz groups

A buzz group is a small, intense discussion group usually involving to 3 persons responding to a specific question or in search of very precise information. The full plenary group is subdivided into the small groups. It's called a 'buzz' group because it mimics the sound of people in intense discussion!

When to use

A buzz group has many applications and benefits, as listed below:

1. It is a creative process
2. Recalling/reviewing previous learning
3. Linking elements/concepts/ideas together
4. Reflecting back to what was previously discussed
5. Probing issues in greater depth
6. Transition from one issue to another
7. Evaluating learning
8. Connecting life experience with theory
9. Helping the trainer to discover missing data or misunderstandings and make corrections
10. Raising unsuspecting issues that must be addressed to make progress.

This technique can be used any time throughout the program, particularly when you want trainees to become actively engaged with the issues. For example, you can give a short lecture, follow it with a Q&A session for clarification and then follow that with a buzz group discussion to connect what you were talking about to their job and life experiences.

The intensity of the discussion lasts for up to 10 minutes, less if the task is completed in a shorter time period. There's nothing more mysterious than that! With many small groups working on a common issue, many options and contributions are offered.

Benefits

1. Highly participative
2. Very focused and direct
3. Very frequently it integrates theory with experience
4. Short, intense and using trainees own information so there is ownership of the output by trainees.

How to use

The learners are divided into small groups, usually twos or threes. These small groups meet for a short period to consider a simple question or problem. The ideas, thus exchanged, may then be presented to the other participants by each of the small groups in turn, so promoting further discussion.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a technique to generate ideas. Participants are asked to think and quickly generate ideas around a question, problem or opportunity. The only rules are "no idea is too crazy" and "generate ideas, not critique." Without these barriers the oddest and most unexpected ideas can lead the discussion to something very constructive. It is often used as a divergent process to stimulate creativity and innovation and paired later with convergent processes to cluster and evaluate the ideas.

The initiator of the brainstorming method is Alex Osborn. The method was first presented in 1948 in the book called "Your creative power". According to Osborn: "Brainstorm means using the brain to storm a creative problem and to do so "in commando fashion, each stormer audaciously attacking the same objective."

When to use

Brainstorming is used when you want a group of people to share their ideas with you on a particular topic or question. This would be to help you define an idea, an approach, a strategy. It can also be used to help a group break out of entrained or patterned thinking that is blocking the development of new ideas. (Also called "getting out of your rut!") Because brainstorming is fast, easy and can be very inclusive, it is useful when you need to harness the energy and "brain power" of a group of people that you foresee working together on an issue.

Size of group impacts how brainstorming is done. In groups of 15 or less, it is easy to capture the flow ideas as they are generated. In larger group you may wish to break into smaller groups for the brainstorming, then compare results across groups.

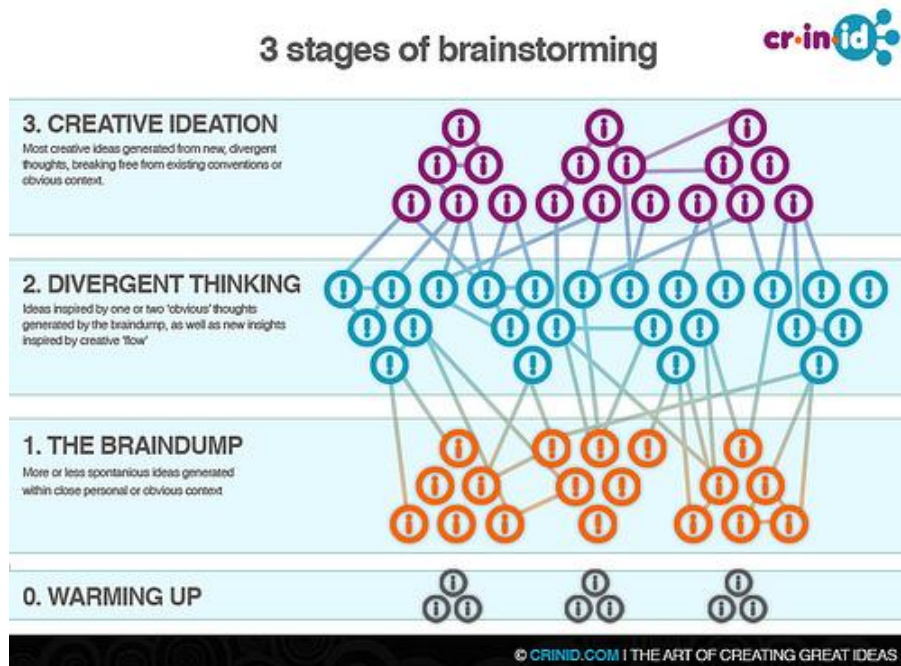
How to use

The facilitator sets out the two rules of brainstorming:

1. There are no bad or ideas that are too crazy. Let your imagination loose. Sometimes the craziest idea is the seed of a fabulous idea
2. Offer only ideas, not judgment of the ideas. That comes later. Judgement during brainstorming can stop the flow of ideas and creativity.

- The facilitator asks the question or states the brainstorming challenge.
- Participants speak out their ideas or write down their ideas to share them later. If spoken aloud, a facilitator captures the ideas on flip charts or white boards. Use of cards to write down individual ideas can be useful. Importantly, you let the brainstorming take and follow its own course, without directing it.
- When people stop offering ideas, let there be silence for a minute or two. Sometimes there are a few more ideas that come up out of that silence.
- Signal the end of brainstorming and, if appropriate, move on to the sorting and evaluating of the ideas produced. The ideas can be collated and processed through subsequent methods such as grouping (i.e. Card Collection), and evaluating (ranking, voting, Dotmocracy, etc.)
- This can also be a good point for reflection on the experience. People are often exhilarated and surprised by the creativity that was unleashed.

There are three (3) Stages of Brainstorming and it is illustrated in the following diagram



Tips and lessons

- Brainstorming can cause people to laugh. Use that spirit of playfulness to ignite people's creativity.
- Some people feel that brainstorming can dilute ideas by moving too quickly. Notice if seeds of ideas need to be taken and nurtured after the brainstorming.
- Where people are reluctant to speak up, use written brainstorming, asking people to write down one idea per card or post it note.

Speed dating

Speed Dating is a large group method to quickly expose participants to a new information about any topic: programs, theory, technology, etc.. It can be adapted to other types of content as well, but the focus is on short exposure to something new as presented by someone with deep, practical experience in the topic area, tool or method.

Speed dating comes out of a long-known group process known as the "Gallery Walk" where outputs from small group sessions were viewed by the rest of a larger group, split into small, roving groups, visiting the results of the work done earlier.

When to use

Speed dating can be used when there is limited time and there are many things to look at and discuss. The limited time (normally between 10 - 15 mins) keeps the presentations short, focused and to the point.

How to use

- For each topic an experienced practitioner is asked to provide a 5-10 minute overview of their topic. These presenters can be selected in advance or from the group, depending on experience and context. (Variants to the method)
- Presenters should be briefed on the process. Coach them to focus on key points. Advise them they will probably get better with each round, so this is a good presentation training opportunity for them. Also give them water. It can dry your mouth out fast!
- Each presenter is stationed at a table or flip chart with pens around the room. If they are demoing a technology, they would have a laptop and appropriate power/internet connections.
- The group is divided into groups - the number of groups determined by the number of presenters. An easy way to do this is to simply count off around the room (1,2,3,4... 1,2,3, 4..etc) or pre-number name tags for large groups.
- The facilitator gives a brief instruction that each round is X minutes long (anywhere from 5-20 depending on the size of group and number of stations and time available). When a signal is given, the groups rotate around the room to the next station. The intent is that everyone visits every station.
- Proceed through all the rounds. Towards the end, people will be getting tired and perhaps loud and rowdy. You may need to intervene.
- At the end, do a short debrief of the experience. Some questions might include: what did you learn that you did not expect to learn? What do you want to learn more about? What did you learn that you might apply tomorrow in your work?
- Thank the presenters and conclude the session.

Variations:

- Have the group select the topics: Use techniques such as democracy to highlight the main topics of interest to all audience. For each of these topics of common interest, identify experts and distribute them around the room. Rotate the audience every few minutes. For example, if you have one hour to discuss six topics, rotate the audience every ten minutes.
- Do topics other than technology topics
- Allow people to go to the stations of their choice rather than rotating in a fixed group (good for very large groups)
- As the groups doing the rounds to take key notes at each station for the debriefing. This involves them more actively in the process beyond being an audience.

Tips and lessons

- Make sure that for each topic that will be discussed during speed dating, you identify a knowledgeable person. Given that there is limited time, it is important that explanation is given by an expert.
- If there are lots of notes to be taken, assign a facilitator/note taker to each presenter/station to capture key questions or observations on a flip chart. This is useful then for reporting out at a debrief, if that is used

The method

- Line participants up in two rows, facing each other
- Ask them a question and get them to record key points on a large post-it
- After 2 mins, stop the discussion, get one row to move two persons to the left
- Ask another question and give 2 mins to record the discussion (repeat this as many times as you like - he did it 3 times)
- Go back to table and at each table group the "expectations" into clusters
- Once the groups were done, we posted our groups expectations (5) onto a large board. When we were posting to the board, we looked for ideas similar to ours that may have come from other groups.
- Create a mind-map of the expectations

The three questions we were asked were:

1. What's our KM background and what are our expectations for the next three days?
2. What do we think are good examples of inter-agency KM activities?
3. What are our learning needs and motivation for participating for the three days?

World café

The World Café is a whole group interaction method focused on conversations. A Café Conversation is a creative process for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action in groups of all sizes. The environment is set up like a café, with paper-covered tables for four supplied with refreshments. People sit four to a table and hold a series of conversational rounds lasting from 20 to 45 minutes about one or more questions which are personally meaningful to them. At the end of each round, one person remains at each table as the host, while the other three travels to separate tables. Table hosts welcome newcomers to their tables and share the essence of that table's conversation so far. The newcomers relate any conversational threads they are carrying -- and then the conversation continues, deepening as the round progresses.

When to use:

- Sharing experiences, stories or project results.
- Problem solving.
- Planning.

How to use:

From the CGIAR KS Toolkit: Cafe Conversations at a Glance

- Seat four or five people at small Cafe-style tables or in conversation clusters.
- Set up progressive (usually three) rounds of conversations of approximately 20-30 minutes each.
- Questions or issues that genuinely matter to your life, work or community are engaged while other small groups explore similar questions at nearby tables.
- Encourage both table hosts and members to write, doodle and draw key ideas on their tablecloths or to note key ideas on large index cards or placemats in the center of the group.
- Upon completing the initial round of conversation, ask one person to remain at the table as the host while the others serve as travelers or "ambassadors of meaning." The travelers carry key ideas, themes and questions into their new conversations.
- Ask the table host to welcome the new guests and briefly share the main ideas, themes and questions of the initial conversation. Encourage guests to link and connect ideas coming from their previous table conversations, listening carefully and building on each other's contributions.
- By providing opportunities for people to move in several rounds of conversation, ideas, questions, and themes begin to link and connect. At the end of the second round, all of the tables or conversation clusters in the room will be cross-pollinated with insights from prior conversations.
- In the third round of conversation, people can return to their home (original) tables to synthesize their discoveries, or they may continue traveling to new tables, leaving the same or a new host at the table. Sometimes a new question that helps deepen the exploration is posed for the third round of conversation.
- After several rounds of conversation, initiate a period of sharing discoveries and insights in a whole group conversation. It is in these town meeting-style conversations that patterns can be identified, collective knowledge grows, and possibilities for action emerge.

Tips and lessons

1. Think very carefully about the question you use to convene the cafe conversations. Like many interaction methods, the question is at the heart of the interaction. It has to be clear and it has to MATTER to the participants, because World Cafe is about "**conversations that matter.**" If it isn't important, don't do it.
2. Don't let anybody talk you into using large tables and groups over 6 people. Cafes thrive in conversation sizes of 4-6. When you go beyond that, you move back to speech making and less chance for everyone to speak and be heard. So if a facility only has large round or rectangular tables, skip the tables and just huddle up chairs and put the flip chart paper and pens on the floor in the middle. Or if it is culturally acceptable and physically comfortable, people can sit on the floor. But the intimacy of a small group is critical.

Writeshops

Writeshops are face-to-face workshops or meetings with the specific objective of writing a document/publication. There isn't much talking and discussions, but participants write the document individually or in a small group (if it is a joint publication).

When to use

It is particularly useful if you want to have authors concentrated in writing a particular document in a short time, following an outline that is well explained on the first day of the writeshop. The document authors will be preparing can be based on an existing publication or something totally new.

How to use

Once you have selected the participants of the writeshop, do a pre-workshop discussion (usually on the phone) and explain the process, what is expected from them, the outline of the publication (developed in advance and shared with the participants), and the authorship and disclaimer of the publication to be produced. It is also useful to develop ToR for participants.

On the first day of the writeshop, go through the outline again and the authorship disclaimer, so participants are aware of any copyright issues. Also discuss the publication audience and writing style to match the audience.

Participants prepare a first draft of the publication and share it with facilitators and with peers (2 or 3 people). After receiving feedback (prepare a guideline on how to give feedback), participants prepare a second draft, which will be shared again with peers and facilitators. Once the draft is improved, facilitators send the document to a professional editor, who will provide feedback on language and content flow, always having in mind the audience of the publication. When the document is edited, it goes back to authors for accepting or rejecting changes and it is ready for layout.

What is needed?

Individual laptops, access to wifi and a printer, USB sticks for each participant, flipchart stands and paper, colour cards and markers.

Tips and lessons

If the content of the publications is too specific, you need two types of facilitators in the room. The first type is the facilitator who knows well the process of writing, the outline and the language in which the document will be written. The second type of facilitator is the expert in the content, to verify if what is written is accurate.

You will also need a good language editor, who will work from home, sometimes overnight. Some people come to the workshop thinking they know how to write and in 1 or 2 days they will have it ready. Our experience shows that most of participants are used to write academic papers. When asked about writing to a non-technical audience, they have a lot more difficulty than expected. Some people were not able to finish in 3 days as planned.

Study visits

A study tour is a visit by an individual or group to one or more countries/areas for knowledge exchange. Study tours provide an opportunity for key stakeholders to learn relevant, good development practice from their peers. Study tours allow for a high level of interaction among participants and exposure to the topic of study. Consider using a study tour if you are looking for a personal and in-depth learning experience.

Study tours require in-depth planning, not only in terms of the venue and logistics, but also in terms of the overall assembly of activities and participant engagement before the actual visit. For a study tour to be successful, it is best to involve all participants (hosts and visitors) in the planning, in order to understand the expectations of both knowledge recipients and providers, and reach consensus on the objectives of the exchange. This requires sufficient lead time as well as appropriate activities that support the identified capacity development goal (Source: World Bank).

When to use

- There is a need for in-depth interaction among participants.
- Decision-makers need to see first-hand what is possible.
- Technical people need to learn first-hand how to do something

How to use

Study tours and exchange visits can facilitate horizontal learning and networking between a range of people working on rural development at different levels. This is particularly useful for people to see how others have undertaken to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and overcome some of the challenges involved, with opportunities to discuss, debate and question approaches. (Source: IFAD/FAO)

Peer assists

Peer Assist brings together a group of peers to elicit feedback on a problem, project, or activity, and draw lessons from the participants' knowledge and experience.

When to use:

Peer Assists may be useful when:

- You are starting a new job, activity or project and you want to benefit from the advice of more experienced people.
- You face a problem that another group has faced in the past.
- You had not to have to deal with a given situation for a long time.
- You are no longer sure what new procedures to follow.
- You are planning a project that is similar to a project another group has completed.

How to use:

Learning from your peers; someone has already done it:

- Communicate the purpose. Peer Assists work well when the purpose is clear and you communicate that purpose to participants.
- Share your Peer Assist plans with others. Consider whether others have already solved the problem; they may have similar needs.
- Identify a facilitator external to the team. The facilitator is responsible for managing the process so that meeting participants reach the desired outcome.
- Schedule a date for the Peer Assist. Ensure it is early enough to do something different with what you have learned.
- Invite potential participants who have the diversity of skills, competencies and experience needed for the Peer Assist. Avoid the usual suspects. Peer Assist works well with six to eight people; break up larger groups so everyone has the opportunity to voice experiences and ideas.
- Be clear on what you want out of the Peer Assist (usually options and insights) and plan the time to achieve them.
- Allow time to socialise in order to develop rapport.
- Spend time creating the right environment for sharing.
- Plan the event to allow a balance between telling and listening.
- Listen for understanding and for how you might improve your own activity.
- Consider others who might benefit from this knowledge, then share it with them.
- Commit to actions and keep the Peer Assist team updated.

Timing (at least 1 hour 30 minutes)

- Introduce the session and divide into groups (10 minutes)
- Facilitator explains process and roles (5 minutes)
- Peer assistee presents the case (5-10 minutes)
- Discussion and facilitation (45 minutes)
- Validate notes and plan follow-up (5 minutes)
- Plenary debriefing (after multiple Peer Assists) (15 minutes)
- Close the session (5 minutes).

Tips and lessons

- In order to save time in producing a record of the session, have the facilitators of each group record the ideas and insights directly into an accessible format, such as a previously opened wiki, blog, forum, or simple document. The facilitator must be able to type at a reasonable speed for this to be useful.
- Avoiding the use of flip charts saves a step and minimizes waste. However, this can create difficulties for visual learners. This can be dealt with if computers and projectors are available for each group. In this case, ensure each group is close enough to a screen or a white wall.
- Arrange Peer Assist groups by language if required.

Market place

A market place aims to be a meeting place where exchange can happen informally around an exhibition with technical booths, posters, demonstrations, training sessions and more. This is also a place where participants can organize informal meetings. In addition to exhibits, which may include booths and posters, it is useful to include informal seating and meeting points (sofas, chairs). A coffee/tea point should ideally be available. The market place can be the heart of a knowledge share fair.

The market place sessions should be well organized to stimulate the exchanges and interaction. Presentations or animation around a theme, thematic coffee sessions, training sessions and story-telling can be organized. This interactive and participatory process will be facilitated by a team of facilitators. A quiz can be organized so that people look more carefully at the various tables.

Characteristics of a good facilitator

According to Tukahirwa, *et al.*, (2013), the following are identified as skills and characteristics that a good facilitator should have:

1. Listening and able to give feedback
2. Respect opinion of others; not imposing ideas,
3. Understanding audience and group dynamics
4. Practice in creative and innovative thinking
5. Trust in other people and their capacities
6. Ability to create an atmosphere of confidence among the participants
7. Have patience and good listening skills
8. Flexibility in changing methods and sequence; not always sticking to a pre-set sequence of techniques
9. Self-awareness and openness to learn new skills
10. Knowledge of group development including the ability to sense a group's mood and change methods or adjust the agenda on the spot
11. Confidence without arrogance
12. Presentation skills including writing and drawing illustrations
13. Positive and consistent skills including writing and drawing illustrations
14. A good sense for the arrangement of space and material in order to create an attractive physical arrangement for the participants
15. Positive and consistent

Ten handy tips for effective facilitation

As an effective Facilitator you must know when to stop, wait a while and go! You should be able to Stop, Look and Listen throughout the discussion. Give your participants room to talk and intervene when you feel there is urgency. The following ten (10) tips are adapted from Tanzania Commission for Aids (TACAIDS), 2004 as cited in Tukahirwa *et al.*, 2013.

1. Grasp Firmly



Have a clear understanding of the subject matter (Innovation System) you are talking about, know your direction and let the IP partners follow it. Prepare talk, rehearse and be Confident

2. Watch for the Point

By encouraging others to share and participate, the discussion may expand and deepen, thus, lose track. You should see the point and be able to summarize the discussion without discouraging the participatory spirit.



3. Share Ideas



Be open and sincere. Encourage an atmosphere conducive to learning and of ideas. Every stakeholder should feel welcome and important and that each has something to contribute and learn

4. Watch the Graph

Look out the graph of your IP partners.

See who are participating actively, how many are sleepy, how they frequently leave the IP and how many are no longer participating. You may need to change or adjust the approaches and methods to avoid monotony.



5. Know your Limits



Remember you cannot know everything. As a Facilitator you should know your limitations and those of your participants. Do not overload yourself. Know what is achievable and practical and what is not. Allow inputs from your IP partners.

6. Be aware of time

Do not be too tight or too liberal. Be flexible and yet handle your group so that the day ends up within a scheduled time. Always allow time for privacy and socialization on.



7. Be Artistic



As a Facilitator, you are an agent of land stewardship and if you are really committed to motivating the community to change, you are also an artist of passion. Remember creative approaches encourage participation.

8. Learn the Traffic Signs



As an effective Facilitator you must know when to stop, wait a while and go! You should be able to Stop, Look and Listen throughout the discussion. Give your participants room to talk and intervene when you feel there is urgency

9. Learn to Salute



Recognize everybody's contribution and learn to respect them. As a Facilitator you do not have the individual solutions. Joint solutions come from IP partners you are facilitating.

10. Weigh and See: Evaluate

After the encounter with the IP team, you must reflect on the entire work. You should evaluate; feedback should be prioritized. In so doing you can tell which areas are successful and where there was weakness. Remember there is no perfect score in Facilitation but there is always room for improvement.



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- For organizing workshops and events there is liberating structures with simple guide can be accessed here: liberatingstructures.com
- Knowledge sharing toolkits by CGIAR, UNICEF, FAO, UNDP and KM4DEV can be accessed here KStoolkit.org