

Howard County  
Local Health Improvement Coalition

# **Tips for Effective Collaborations**

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Strong facilitation creates the difference between effective meeting outcomes and failure. The definition of facilitate is “to make easy” or “ease a process”. Always keep that as your focus.

## Eye always on the prize



The facilitator sets the parameters for the dialogue and always is mindful of the main goal for the group as well as for the target population. They always remember WHY they are here.

# Facilitator's Skill #1:

## *Building Trust & Team*



Building a cohesive team that trusts each other can be a challenge. It is the first step of facilitation because without trust, things can easily go awry. The facilitator is honest, kind, respectful and accountable.

## Facilitator's Skill #2: *Set and follow ground rules*



Ground rules help keep the group on task and provide directions to follow when the going gets tough. The facilitator is responsible for keeping track of and enforcing ground rules. Team members may actually call you out on this if you don't follow them carefully. Don't herd cats, be practical and logical.

## Facilitation Skill #3: *Read the indirect language*

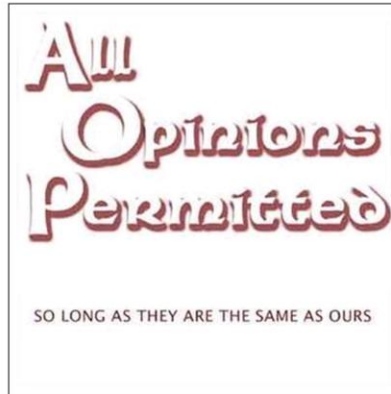


"Rich, are you sure you tried hard enough  
to get to the meeting on time?"

Body language tells a story by itself. Watch the group. Is there eye rolling? Sleeping faces? Crossed arms? Frowns? Whispering? Watch the group and take action to maintain trust and push towards the outcome. Don't allow high-jacking. Politely acknowledge the thing that everyone is feeling.

## Facilitator's Skill #4:

*Respect the opinions & manage the dialogue.*



There is a fine balance between allowing the dialogue to cultivate and going around in circles. Allow people to express their opinions without a hostile takeover. Read body language of others, watch the nodding heads or frowning faces.

## Eye remains on the prize



Always have the good of the target population in mind. Remind the group of this as you make decisions and complete agenda items.



## Facilitator's Skill #5 : *Listening carefully and re-directing*

Snapshots at [jasonlove.com](http://jasonlove.com)



Imagine how much work we could get done  
if we weren't always sitting around talking  
about how much work we could get done.

Listening carefully is one of the greatest assets of the facilitator. Do whatever you can to understand the messages being delivered by participants and re-direct with respect when necessary. Simply because you have a ground rule to allow everyone to be heard, doesn't mean that the group can get hijacked by the person who speaks most comfortably in public.

## Facilitator's Skill #6: *Balancing gregarious with taciturn*



There are those who are most comfortable speaking in front of other groups and while at meetings. Make sure there is a way for everyone to contribute. You may need to do things in pairs of two, or have people write their thoughts on paper to be read aloud by the facilitator. You may need to ask someone if they have anything to add. Don't allow only the brave to contribute.

## Facilitator's Skill #7: *Follow up, Follow through*



Everyone looks at the facilitator to be the source of accountability of the group. Track decision items carefully by writing them down and bringing the group back to what has already been decided. Start every meeting with a recap of what has been done and the connection to the day's agenda. Don't allow anything to slip through the cracks. If it happens, acknowledge the mistake.

# Eye never strays from the prize



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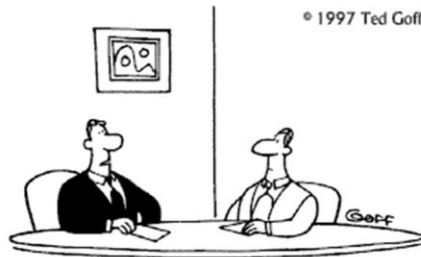
Always keep in mind where the group is headed and what their charge is. Don't forget to keep the target population in the forefront of the participant's minds.

## Facilitator's Skill #8: *Agreeing to disagree*



It is perfectly acceptable to not agree. Allow voices to be expressed, especially dissent. Use the ground rules and the voting procedures to keep this from spiraling out of control. Facilitator's understand the voting mechanisms well and always call them into action when necessary.

## Facilitator's Skill #9: *Encourage many perspectives*



"How can I listen to you if you don't  
say the things I want to hear?"

The purpose of the work group discussions are to hear the varying perspectives that affect the issue. All of these are needed to inform any decisions that are made. Encourage people to share their perspective, even if it is not the popular one. Then make sure you encourage respect for each perspective.

## Facilitator's Skill #10: *Encourage new voices*



New voices are critical to the work groups. Invite them to participate, call on them to hear their perspective.

## Facilitator's Skill #11:

*Listen, observe, protect, persevere*



*"I'm right there in the room, and no one even acknowledges me."*

**Listen:** listen carefully to track the dialogue. Keep notes if necessary.

**Observe:** observe the process, watch dominating participants and swells of discourse that may be brewing in the background

**Protect:** protect the process and the purpose of the work group. Always remember why you are here and the bigger picture.

**Persevere:** keep moving forward and pressing the group to achieve the outcome. With respect first, the group will always manage.



## Facilitator's Skill #12: *Be thoughtful, clear and wise*

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The facilitator is thoughtful, clear and wise. They are watching the process from a bird's eye view to make sure that goals are met, people are heard and plans are developed---all while remembering why we are here.

# Realize the Vision



There is a pot of gold, and you can get there.