

TIPS FOR COMMUNITY FORUM MODERATORS

The Moderator....

1. Remains neutral.
2. Establishes ground rules for the discussion and confirms the participants agree with the ground rules.
3. Monitors time to keep the discussion on track.
4. Checks for clarification of what's recorded and consensus when necessary.
5. Makes sure that everyone has a chance to participate.
6. Defends participants from personal attacks.
7. Makes suggestions on how to proceed.

The Moderator does not...

1. Contribute ideas or evaluate group members' ideas.
2. Interrupt a speaker unless they are tending to dominate the discussion.
3. Complete participant's sentences for them.
4. Send negative nonverbal messages.

Introducing the Role of the Moderator:

"I'm here to help you share your ideas about the future of this community. I won't contribute my own ideas, but I will make some suggestions to keep the discussion moving. If anything I do gets in the way of the discussion, please let me know. This is your discussion and I want to help you make it work."

Introducing the Role of the Forum Participant:

"It is important that everyone feel comfortable and be willing to participate in our discussion. It is also important that everyone be willing to listen to one another so we can build on each other's ideas. To succeed, this will take all of us working together."

As you or someone else records what participants say, you should....

1. Listen for key words to capture the basic ideas being expressed.
2. Write legibly in large letter so everyone can see what you write down as key words and ideas.
3. Check with a speaker to be sure the essence of their ideas is captured on the paper.

4. Paraphrase a speaker's ideas only when they indicate the paraphrasing does reflect the essence of their ideas.
5. Make corrections as indicated by the speaker.
6. Remain neutral and not interpret a speaker's ideas.
7. Number each sheet and number ideas as they are written down.
8. Record an accurate record of the discussion during the forum after the meeting onto the reporting form.

Materials Required for a Community Forum:

Flip chart or unwaxed butcher paper cut into large sheets
Masking tape
Four magic markers of different colors
Pencils and response sheets for participants
Refreshments

Tips for Moderators/Facilitators

Expecting the Unexpected: Dealing with Disruptive Personalities and Situations

Sometimes there may be an individual in the group that becomes disruptive by making personal attacks, trying to dominate the conversation, forcing their ideas on everyone else, or diverting the discussion from the task at hand with side discussions or outrageous comments. When a disruptive individual or situation is preventing a group from making progress toward the goal of the meeting, something needs to be done.

"Doing something" is not always easy. However, the following suggestions are possible ways to avoid (PREVENTIONS) or control (INTERVENTIONS) disruptive problems. Included are ways to get the group back on task with as little confusion and hard feelings as possible.

Prevention techniques can be used by the facilitator and group members. They should be used at the beginning and during the meeting to keep a person or a situation from getting the group off track. Intervention techniques serve to minimize the impact of certain behaviors on the group process.

Prevention Techniques

1. Set up, agree on, and enforce ground rules by reminding participants that they are posted and everyone has agreed to follow the ground rules.
2. Have the group agree on the agenda and a time frame for the discussion before your begin.
3. Suggest a way for the group to proceed if the planned process is not working.
4. Ask for suggestions on how to proceed if the planned process is not working.
5. If there are set questions to be discussed, pose the first question and ask everyone to think about it in silence for a minute or two and to jot down their ideas. Then have the discussion.
6. Start the discussion by inviting a participant to comment and then move clockwise around the group to insure everyone has a chance to participate. Then open for a general discussion.

Intervention Techniques

1. Maintain/regain the focus of the group and the discussion.
2. Say what you feel is going on if there seems to be underlying tensions of hidden agendas in the discussion.
3. Avoid battles over the process of the discussion by reminding everyone that they had agreed to the process rules in the beginning.
4. Don't be defensive.

5. Use body language to discourage those who are disruptive and to encourage participation by all.
6. Use humor.
7. Protect participants from personal attack.