

Ten reasons to use an external facilitator

1. **The right preparation.** Good preparation is one of the keys to successful workshops. It takes at least a full day to prepare for a single-day workshop.
2. **Effective agendas.** Expert facilitators have deep experience constructing agendas which ensure that sessions flow, that each session builds on the last, and that the overall structure will result in objectives are achieved.
3. **Strategy expertise.** Facilitators are experts in strategy and planning disciplines, bringing new thinking and best-practice strategy frameworks to help guide meeting conversations.
4. **Independence.** An external workshop facilitator brings an independent perspective which allows them to better resolve alternative viewpoints among workshop members and keep meetings on track.
5. **Attention to detail.** Facilitators pay attention to the small details that often get overlooked and can coordinate materials, projector, whiteboard, and discussion templates as well as bringing along props to create more engaging and effective group sessions.
6. **Full engagement.** Most people find it almost impossible to guide a discussion, record key points and make a meaningful contribution. Hiring an external facilitator for meetings and workshops means committee members and staff can be fully engaged in discussions rather than focused on the process and documenting discussions.
7. **Managing personalities.** Managing meeting dynamics can be difficult, especially when if the person leading the meetings knows the people in the room. Keeping a meeting on track and managing conflict is core to producing useful outcomes, and so facilitators are trained to ensure that everyone has a say, and no single view-point dominates the discussion.
8. **Action-orientation.** Facilitators ensure meetings and workshops are valuable by providing actionable documentation of workshop outcomes. This could include a summary of the discussion and outcomes of each session and the agreed next steps, so that no decisions get lost and plans can be implemented immediately.
9. **Risk reduction.** External facilitation reduces the risk that the investment of staff and committee members' time will be wasted. Workshops have an opportunity cost; and using a trained facilitator reduces the risk. Spending a day out of the office for senior team members is costly. Facilitators ensure getting the best results out of everyone by harnessing the skills and expertise in the room.
10. **Unlocking additional value.** A well run, well facilitated workshop will have side-benefits far greater than meeting and exceeding workshop outcomes. These can be thought of as the serendipities of workshop.

When Should A Facilitator Be Used?

If you lead important group meetings, you know how difficult it can be to get a group engaged right from the beginning, to keep them focused and on track, to build consensus when people disagree, and to ensure that full commitment is gained for follow through.

A facilitated session is a highly structure meeting in which the facilitator guides the participants through a series of predefined steps to arrive at a result that is created, understood and accepted by all participants. The role of the facilitator is to use interactions and techniques that engage the hearts, minds and souls of the participants in the work.

At their best, facilitators are able to help members excel as a committee in focusing on the issues, building a common vision and committing to the actions that will bring that vision into reality. If you have to consider two or more of these items, definitely consider using a facilitator:

- **Critical Results.** If the results of the meeting are critical to the success of the project, and there will be a variety of views in the room.
- **Strong Opinions.** If there are many strong opinions in the room and consensus is required.
- **No Good Answers.** If the situation is such that there are no apparent good answers and new, creative solutions are called for.
- **Meeting Leader is Vested.** If the meeting leader is strongly vested in a particular position, but wants to be open to other possible alternatives.
- **Committee Ownership Required.** If the committee – not just one or two people – needs to feel ownership of the solution.
- **Neutral Party Needed.** If the discussion is best guided by a neutral party to engender trust or participation.
- **Lack of Expertise.** If there is a lack of experience or expertise in managing a group through the work process.
- **Undefined Approach.** If the product of the meeting or the work process needed to create the product is unclear or ill-defined.

It's also important to understand the circumstances when it doesn't make sense to engage a facilitator. You do not need a facilitator when:

- the decision has already been made
- decision makers are not open to alternatives other than their own
- the meeting is information only and requires no engagement of the group
- the group is very small
- there is a commonality of opinion on how to proceed

Meetings are expensive. When you have the right facilitator with the corresponding skill set you tremendously enhance the quality of your meeting deliverables and make them much more cost-effective.

IAP2 Federation - The P2 Pillars

As an international leader in public participation, IAP2 Federation has developed three pillars for effective public participation (P2) processes. Developed with broad international input, these pillars cross national, cultural, and religious boundaries and form the foundation of P2 processes that reflect the interests and concerns of all stakeholders.

- 1 Spectrum
- 2 Core Values
- 3 Code of Ethics

Spectrum

IAP2 Federation has developed The Spectrum of Public Participation to help groups define the public's role in any public engagement process. The IAP2 Federation Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

	inform	consult	involve	collaborate	empower
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fact sheets• Websites• Open houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public comment• Focus groups• Surveys• Public meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workshops• Deliberate polling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Citizen Advisory committees• Consensus-building• Participatory decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Citizen juries• Ballots• Delegated decisions

Core Values

IAP2 Federation's [Core Values](#) define the expectations and aspirations of the public participation process. Processes based on the Core Values have been shown to be the most successful and respected.

Core Values for Public Participation

- 1 Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- 2 Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- 3 Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- 4 Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- 5 Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- 6 Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- 7 Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.



Code of Ethics

IAP2 Federation's [Code of Ethics](#) is a set of principles that guides the actions of P2 practitioners and enhances the integrity of the public participation process.

Purpose

We support public participation as a process to make better decisions that incorporate the interests and concerns of all affected stakeholders and meet the needs of the decision-making body.

Role of Practitioner

We will enhance the public's participation in the decision-making process and assist decision makers in being responsive to the public's concerns and suggestions.

Trust

We will undertake and encourage actions that build trust and credibility for the process among all the participants.

Defining the Public's Role

We will carefully consider and accurately portray the public's role in the decision-making process.

Openness

We will encourage the disclosure of all information relevant to the public's understanding and evaluation of a decision.

Access to the Process

We will ensure that stakeholders have fair and equal access to the public participation process and the opportunity to influence decisions.

Respect for Communities

We will avoid strategies that risk polarizing community interests or that appear to "divide and conquer."

Advocacy

We will advocate for the public participation process and will not advocate for interest, party, or project outcome.

Commitments


We ensure that all commitments made to the public, including those by the decision-maker, are made in good faith.

Support of the Practice

We will mentor new practitioners in the field and educate decision-makers and the public about the value and use of public participation.

IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
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