



European Network for  
Rural Development

# Facilitation Techniques

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Funded by the



- **Encourage involvement** (body movement, state of mind, voice)
  - Tone is important
  - Make the participants feel comfortable
  - They should sense support, that you are listening
  - They feel free to speak up and should not be afraid of making mistakes
- Create a climate that encourages participants to feel responsible for their own learning & viewpoint



## 2

# Control the room



- **Presence** – Be comfortable with the content of the session and with the group
- **Timing** – Keep the discussion moving productively. Don't get bogged down by individual issues
- **Judgment and aggressiveness** – Discriminate between effective, productive discussions and tangents that are unimportant to the outcomes or topics
- **Poise** – Deal with challenges and unexpected situations in a positive manner
- **Physical movement** – Use body and eye movements to advantage

## 2

## Control the room

- Encourage discussion, but control it – **it's my room**
- Stimulate, guide, and summarise the discussion by asking questions, restating comments and remarks
- Ensure that participants understand and explore the comments
- Try to take out distractions
- Work with the group to identify key issues, discern patterns, ensure that all relevant considerations and interpretations are evaluated, and develop solutions



**"I brought in Leo to take care of  
the next person who sneaks a peek  
at their cell phone."**

# 3

## Presentation Techniques



### Speaking:

- Avoid telescoping or mumbling words
- Make yourself heard without shouting
- Watch out for repetitive phrases that may creep in every few paragraphs

### Eyes:

- Avoid “tying” your eyes to either your notes, the ceiling, or any one thing or person. Start with one person and then shift to other individuals.
- Avoid the “ping-pong” effect – looking in rhythmic fashion, side to centre to side and back
- Make contact with individuals through your eyes
- Avoid turning your back to the group

### Mannerisms:

- Avoid repetitive mannerisms, such as pulling at your ear or nose, handling keys, or jingling change
- Use gestures that mean something, such as indicating size
- **Posture or stance:** Stand erect but relaxed; avoid taking a position that may look “superior”
- Keep your hands out of your pockets at all times





Keep in mind the “Four Ps” of professional platform work:

- **Pitch** – Vary the pitch of your voice with high and low tones; avoid dull monotones.
- **Pause** – Stop at the end of an important phrase: let it sink in. Pause for effect.
- **Punch** – Drive key words home with emphasis and enthusiasm.
- **Pace** – Change your pace to add interest; slow down or speed up to give variety.



- When two people try to speak at the same time, recognise one and tell the other you will get to them in a minute. Then remember to get the second person's comments.
- Get both sides of a question. When two people are strongly opposed, call on others for opinions.
- If reference is made to an actual potentially ethical / politically charged situation, exercise great care. Deflect the discussion as soon as possible. Then, offer to speak with the participant off-line.





# 4

## Sensitivity

- When a participant tosses you a “hot” question (but one legitimate to the session), one technique is to hand it off to another participant
- Get a “quiet” participant involved by asking him or her an easy question or two at first
- Handle the person who talks too long with a comment asking for agreement from the group
- If a participant wants to pursue an issue that distracts from the focus of the session, indicate that you can follow that up afterwards
- If a participant seems to have an axe to grind, try to use the other participants to refocus the discussion



### Recognise the signs of resistance:

- Excessive questions to make a point rather than to gain understanding
- Side conversations
- Disinterest in team activities
- Questions or comments to trap or baffle the facilitator
- Sleepy, disruptive or inappropriate behaviour

### Deal with the resistance:

- Recognise that the resistance probably has nothing to do with you
- Speak to the individual(s) during the break; try to solicit support



### Exploratory questions:

- Probe participant experiences in a particular area
- Test the feelings of the group with respect to a particular issue

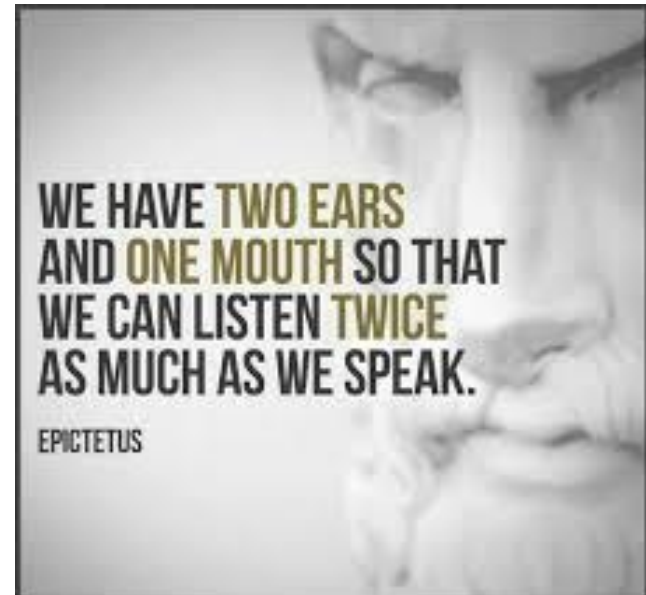
### Challenging questions:

- Probe the participants and their convictions on a particular topic
- Re-establish interest when attention is dwindling



### Try to understand:

- The words people use
- The different meanings words can have for different people
- People's feelings and actions – apart from their words
- Demonstrate a keen interest in what the speaker is saying
- Try to be impartial – listen to all sides of the issue
- Passive listening is wasted time and can have negative impacts
- An active listener picks up verbal and nonverbal cues



**Positioning** – Do not leave the room. Stay up front at the beginning. If you walk around, do not get too close to the teams. Avoid talking to the teams since it will distract from their task.

**Intervention** – Intervene only if the participants have misunderstood the task. If one team is confused, quietly repeat the task for them. If several of the teams are confused, repeat the task for the entire group.

**Noise** – Listen to the noise level. When it changes (either up or down), something in the room has changed. Listen for words in the teams and observe body language. If almost all of the teams have finished, it is time to move on.

**Timing** – Keep to time, and provide time checks during the exercise to help keep the participants on track.

