



Illawarra Forum Inc

PO Box 53 Jamberoo NSW 2533

Tel 02 4236 1333 www.illawarraforum.org.au

The regional peak and resource organisation for community services in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven.

A brief for facilitators working with small groups

Small group facilitators often help in community workshops or planning sessions or consultations where participants work on a theme or issue. These small groups are an opportunity to gather ideas to plan creative strategies or to make recommendations.

Often the facilitator is drawn from the participants in the small group.

Here are some tips for the facilitator to enable the small group to work together effectively and dynamically.

1. Check the venue for the small group so the participants feel comfortable working together. Have paper or whiteboard ready for documenting the discussion. Have handouts ready if needed.
2. Invite the participants to introduce each other so they know the names, agency and role of others in the small group.
3. Assign participants to scribe and to present the feedback.
4. Define the aim of the discussion and the timeframe.
5. The facilitator's role is neutral and non-judgemental. Focus on the group discussion rather than expressing your own opinions.
6. Make sure everyone in the group has the opportunity to participate. Intervene if one or a few people are dominating the discussion or if an "us and them" division develops. If someone in the group is hostile, try to keep them connected in the discussion. Notice who is waiting to speak or has not spoken and engage them in the discussion.
7. Keep track of the "big picture". If the discussion gets confused, clarify the issues. Highlight issues that are being left out.
8. Summarise the discussion as it progresses.
9. Note if there is consensus. Or note the range of views (including disagreements) produced in the discussion.
10. Check with the participants that you have summed up the discussion accurately. Conclude with "Where to now?"