



Training in Essential Facilitation Skills for Engagement and Dialogue

Course information

3 day Essential Facilitation Skills for Stakeholder Engagement, Dialogue and Decision Making

All modules will normally be run in Bristol but we can travel to you for bespoke training.

Overview of the course

For anyone who is planning and facilitating community and stakeholder engagement, consultations, or events to engage internal and external stakeholders these courses offer you an invaluable grounding in the skills, techniques and process planning needed, making sure that your meetings run smoothly and you get the results you need.

Deliberative engagement is a distinctive way of talking together. It helps people think through issues and options and to build consensus about moving forward. It results in increased cooperation between participants, shared understanding that bridges differences, more ownership and commitment over agreements, and more effective implementation because individuals and groups take action on the project or plan. It is empowering for those involved because participation is inclusive and it equalizes the distribution of power in groups.

The following course outlines explain the principles, theory, skills and techniques you will take away from having attended the course.

“Being on this training has transformed working practices within the regionally based team that I manage. We have better quality debate and this is reflected in decision making. As a result our staff have greater ownership of the work, are more engaged and feel empowered, making it easier to implement decisions”.

James Cleeton
National Projects Coordinator (Communities) for a national environmental charity

Essential Facilitation Skills for Community Engagement – Days 1 & 2

How do I run interactive groups so that we listen to everyone and yet do not lose our focus and direction?

You've been asked to "facilitate" an event to engage people in discussion, or you know a new role will involve more meeting management than you've done before. The pitfalls are clear; "meetings" and group debates are fraught with possibilities for things to go wrong. In fact even getting people to come in the first place is a stretch. So how do you make sure you'll run interactive meetings in a way that is attractive and gets you an outcome that is widely understood, trusted and usable?

This course will give you the vital knowledge to involve people in a positive way, and confidence about your abilities to engage and manage people.

Who will benefit?

Anyone who has asked themselves some of the following:

- What are the key rules to always follow when running a good participative workshop or meeting?
- Where do I get practical ideas for what to do to make it interesting and engaging?
- When and where are good times and places to have meetings?
- Who are the right people to have at the meeting; how do I get them to attend?
- How am I going to deal with hierarchical differences in the group?
- How do I respond to different levels of experience and knowledge in the group?
- How do I run interactive groups and not lose control?

If these questions are familiar, then this could be for you – it will help you with the practicalities of running participatory events including conferences, workshops, consultations and meetings. Skills learned on the course will be transferable to many situations in both professional and personal life.

Learning Outcomes:

In terms of **principles for sound engagement and dialogue** participants will:

- Know where dialogue sits within a spectrum of engagement methods and when to use it
- Distinguish between managing a dialogue processes and being responsible for content
- Know the principles of how to plan effective conversations that build consensus and avoid conflict
- Have an appreciation of when and how best to use an independent facilitator and when to use in-house staff
- Understand the distinction between formal chairing and facilitation



“Meaningful community engagement should kill apathy as a concept”

Taken from “Developing your Comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy”

In terms of **skills and techniques**, participants will be able to:

- plan and prepare for supporting or co-ordinating interactive events and effective conversations
- discuss how to choose, manage and adapt some tools and techniques for group working and interaction
- put into practice the essential personal and practical skills required of a facilitator such as active listening and effective use of questions
- fulfil various roles in a facilitation team
- be more skilled at making telephone based meetings and conversations work well

The course is highly participatory and interactive with an emphasis on building confidence through practice in a supportive environment. Skills and behaviours needed for good facilitation are explicitly modelled and demonstrated by the trainers, as well as taught to and practised by the participants. Crucially participants tell us it is enjoyable – a feature of most successful dialogue processes and workshops!

Further facilitation and behaviour management – (Day 3)



It's the day of an important workshop and your heart sinks. You know there is going to be a person there who will be "difficult" and you're not quite sure how you are going to stop them putting a spanner in the works. Many of us experience these feelings, be it before a phone-call with an individual we find challenging, or with a group whose expectations are simply too high or rigidly fixed on a desired outcome. This master-class course includes some of the key advanced facilitation techniques and the most recent thinking on behaviour to help you overcome these challenges and enable you to maintain your composure and confidence.

How we work:

This deliberative workshop will work "through the lens" of designing your own event or helping someone else with theirs. As well as discussing contextual and cultural factors that may contribute to difficulties with (public) engagement, we encourage you to examine your own behaviours, the things that "set you off", and your skills and challenges when it comes to managing difficult behaviour in groups or within processes. Based on this knowledge you will come up with a number of strategies to ensure ease and flow in workshops and get the best out of your participants and colleagues.

Who will benefit:

If you've ever felt:

- that you need to get people to listen and cooperate better
- that an event or conversation is getting "out of control", or someone is taking over or acting obstructively
- unable to work out what a participant or colleague wants (they're not saying what's *really* concerning them)
- that certain people are using their personal or positional power inappropriately
- that you didn't handle a situation as well as you wished to because someone "pressed your buttons"
- that you don't know how to work with uncertainty or different cultures to those you are familiar with

During this course you will appreciate being able to share and get feedback on the issues you face, whether you work with local stakeholders, the public, or within an organisation. The learning from this course can be applied both to work and home situations.

Cathy Williams is a very positive and engaged trainer and facilitator who I have had the pleasure of working alongside on several occasions for different audiences.

Chris Church
Director, Community
Environment Associates

Learning Outcomes:

Participants will learn how to:

- identify problem behaviour in workshops or processes and consider its effects on others and yourself
- know what motivates people to behave in different ways and how to use this to encourage more productive behaviours
- identify your own challenges and which kinds of behaviour you find most difficult to deal with, and learn ways to cope and remain constructive and unruffled
- come up with strategies to deal with most kinds of difficult behaviour
- know how to reframe difficult language to expand possibilities
- understand some of the cultural differences and diversity we encounter when running processes and consider strategies to help processes run smoothly
- design individual events / meetings which include aspects likely to encourage positive behaviour and “manage in” factors that contribute to successful engagement and dialogue

Booking

“Great facilitation modelled by Cathy and Rowena. You guys have so much experience of doing this work in real life. Your great examples and stories bring it to life, which makes it stand out from other training.”

Community Projects Officer
Bristol

For more information
contact us:

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Facilitation Skills for Stakeholder Engagement, Dialogue and Decision Making

£750 (corporate rate)

£475 (government and larger charities)

£300 (individual and community / small charity)

Individual / Small charity rate is for those with a turnover of less than £50,000 p.a.

The fee includes training / tuition, course materials and hand-outs, all refreshments and lunches.

Places are limited to ensure you get a good quality experience through a high trainer to participant ratio. We allocate on a first come, first served basis based on confirmed bookings.

To make sure of your place you should contact Cathy Williams at:

cathy@indras-net.co.uk

01454 238800

We will confirm with you once your order / payment has been received.

Trainer Biography

Courses are run by Cathy Williams and Rowena Harris.



Cathy Williams

Cathy Williams has been passionate about nature and people since her childhood. After university, she worked as an environmental manager for many years encouraging conservationists, local communities, businesses and planners to co-create solutions to the seemingly intractable issues raised by attempting to live more sustainably. Setting up Bath Farmers market with a group of other committed individuals is one of her proudest achievements, demonstrating the success of a model where food, farming, environment and people come together for mutual benefit and enjoyment.

Now a business and environmental consultant, Cathy's specialism is using a solutions focused approach to helping people see all sides of an issue, find the common ground and move forward constructively. The combination of a scientific training with an interest in psychology has led to her unusual ability to utilise natural science and logical analysis with a deep and lived understanding of human behaviour.

Cathy has a degree in Environmental Sciences, a Post Graduate Certificate in Business and Personal Coaching and is a qualified and licensed user of the MBTI (Myers Briggs Type Indicator) psychometric instrument. She is a committed meditator and loves hiking and wild places especially when accompanied by her cheeky Irish Terrier.

Since 1999 Rowena has been an independent facilitator and trainer specialising in participatory approaches to decision making and strategy development. Her personal belief is that people have the potential capacity and right to understand and participate in making the decisions that impact upon their lives. This conviction is based on her accumulated experience of working with community groups, national Government Agencies, local authorities and in the voluntary and commercial sectors.

She spent many years developing partnership projects for Bristol Community Education, the Workers Education Authority and the Basic Skills Agency, involving health workers, librarians, schools, colleges, community workers, local employers and parents to encourage Family Learning Projects – precursors of the Sure Start Initiative. During this time she became interested in the challenge of working towards sustainable solutions with groups of people from very different backgrounds and interests and trained with the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation in Planning for Real then with The Environment Council in Stakeholder Dialogue.