

Facilitation skills for community education and training

(A resource for community advice offices and community-based paralegals brought to you by NADCAO, from the Paralegal Manual published by the Education and Training Unit and the Black Sash.)

Community education usually takes place in interactive workshops where the person running the workshop acts as a facilitator rather than a trainer.

Basic guidelines for running a workshop

- Everyone must understand the aim of the workshop

Ask the question: 'What are you trying to achieve with this workshop?'

- Build on people's own experience and understanding

People want to have a better understanding of things that are a part of their lives and their own experiences must be part of what they learn. So when you introduce a new idea, you must link it to things that people know about.

- Formal inputs should be kept very short

Formal inputs, which are too long, can become very boring. There are many interesting ways of passing on information to people, for example, role-plays, problem-solving exercises, debates, videos and demonstrations.

- Everyone must understand the language used

It is much better to talk to people in their home language. If this is not possible, use plain language and translate if necessary.

- Everyone must have a chance to talk and participate

People learn better when they take part in the action. It is harder for people to participate in big groups. To keep people's concentration, use methods that involve people, such as small group discussions and buzz groups.

- Let participants give direction on follow-up work

After the workshop you may need to do follow-up work or more workshops. All the people taking part should help you assess the workshop to decide whether there is a need for follow-up work or workshops, and how this should happen.

Planning a workshop

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You can plan and structure a workshop according to the following guidelines:

1. Aims

Why are you running the workshop?
What are its aims?

Workshops must be planned so that they have direction and also so that something practical comes out at the end.

2. Participants

Who is the workshop for?
How many people will come?

If it is a big group, then you need to plan for smaller group sessions during the workshop. A group of more than 30 people is difficult to handle and makes it harder for everyone to participate in a way that is meaningful to them.

3. Language

Which language or languages will you use?
What level of language will be best for the workshop?
Will you need translation? Who will do the translating?

Translation takes a lot of time and skill. It must be planned and not left to the last minute.

4. Time and venue

When is the best time for running the workshop?
How long should it run for?
Where is the most suitable venue?

Work out what facilities you will need, for example enough room or quiet smaller spaces for small group work. People should always be able to sit around in a circle at the venue. Make all the practical arrangements, for example, booking a venue, catering, seating arrangements, transporting the participants, having a crèche for children, and so on.

5. Content

What will you cover in the workshop and in how much detail?

You can divide your workshop into the following sections:

- a. The beginning: This includes your welcome, your own and the group introductions, establishing ground rules for the workshop, looking at peoples' expectations.
- b. The middle: This is where you deal with transferring knowledge and/or skills to people. Remember, people learn by practicing what they have heard or learnt. You need to make time in your workshop for people to practice using the information they have been given or shared. For example, if you are running a workshop on mediation skills, then you need to explain the theory to people and then give them time to practice the mediation process.
- c. The end: This includes your summary of the workshop, evaluation by participants and your own concluding remarks.

6. Methods

How will you get the message to people?

What workshop methods will help you to achieve this?
Decide how much time each part of the workshop will need.

7. Facilitators and resources

Who will run the different parts of the workshop?
What resources will they need to run the workshop effectively?

Prepare the resources you will need in the workshop, for example, inputs, small group questions, handouts and charts.

Workshop methods

These are some examples of workshop methods.

- Introductions

Go-arounds - In a go-around everyone in the circle gets a chance to speak, for example, to introduce themselves, saying their name and organisation.

Wordwheels - Ask people to stand in two circles of equal numbers, one inside the other, so that each person in the inside circle faces someone in the outside circle. Ask people to introduce themselves to each other. After a minute or two, you ask the outside person to move one place to the right. Then ask people to do a second introduction or to say something about themselves or their work.

Icebreakers - Icebreakers are ways of getting people to loosen up and relax. For example, ask people to shake hands and introduce themselves to everyone in the group in two minutes. You can also try things like singing, playing games or warm-up exercises.

Expectations - Ask people to say what they want out of the workshop (their expectations) using the go-around or wordwheel method.

Finalising the programme - After hearing the expectations of the participants, summarise the aim of the workshop. Then go through the workshop programme (structure) which should already be written up on newsprint on the wall. Allow some time for questions or changes that people may want to make.

- Big group (plenary) methods

Formal inputs (talks or lectures) - A talk by one person should not go on longer than 15 or 20 minutes. The input can be split between two people. Inputs should be kept as simple and practical as possible, and use charts, handouts and plenty of examples.

Big group (plenary) discussions - There are different times in a workshop when you can have a big group discussion, for example, after small groups report back, or when the big group must decide on something. In a big workshop, it is better to keep the time for big group discussions short and to make more use of different small group methods

Speaking from experience - Ask one of the participants to talk about his or her direct experience of the issue or problem you are discussing in the workshop.

Case-study input - Give a short input on how a particular problem or issue was handled before and on what lessons can be learnt from this experience. If available, use photos, press-clippings or videos to explain the case-study.

Drama - A prepared and well-practised play (drama) is a good way of highlighting particular issues or processes, for example, acting out the steps involved in a forced removal.

Role-play - The role-play can also be used to act out everyday problems. A role-play is different from a drama because you get people in the workshop to act a part without letting them practise beforehand. Afterwards you assess their responses to being thrown into a situation. For example, role-playing a house being raided.

Debate - In a debate you make people take up different positions on a particular issue or proposal. Have a discussion after the debate and give each side an equal chance to answer the points that came up in the debate.

Buzz groups - In buzz groups you ask each person in the circle to turn to their 2 neighbours and to discuss something for a short time (usually 5 or 10 minutes). Then from the chair you do a quick go-around to get feedback by asking someone from each group to report back one point, and then other groups to only add on new points.

Wordwheels - You can also use the wordwheel method to discuss questions in a big group.

Small group methods

Small group discussions are an important part of all workshops.

After any long presentation (for example an input, role-play or drama), break people up into small groups to discuss what they saw or heard. Small groups should have no more than 8 people. Give small groups at least 30 minutes for discussion. It is better to give groups one or two clear questions to discuss rather than a long list of questions.

- **Facilitating small groups** - A facilitator is a 'group leader'. Each group should have a facilitator who has been part of the workshop planning and who is clear on the questions the group has to discuss. Ask someone else in the group to take notes and to report back in the big group later on. The facilitator makes sure that everyone gets a chance to speak, that people stick to the topic and that people do not interrupt each other or get involved in one-to-one discussions.
- **Floating** - While people are discussing in small groups, it is a good idea to have one or more of the workshop organisers moving about from group to group checking if everyone is clear on the questions, and, later on, reminding people how much time they have left.
- **Reporting-back** - There must always be a full report-back from each of the small groups. Ask the report-back person to report back in a lively way. The main points only should be summarised.

Write on newsprint the main points that each group reports. You can also ask each group to write a very short summary of their discussion on newsprint. Put this up for everyone to see.

These are methods you can use to improve small group discussions:

Go-arounds - The go-around method works very well in small groups. Go around in the circle giving each person a chance to talk. Do not let people interrupt or disagree with each other until everyone in the group has had their chance to speak.

Problem-solving and tasks - Give each group a very practical problem or task to work on. Ask the group to give a step-by-step approach to the problem and to write this down on newsprint. Write out the problems or questions for each group on a piece of paper beforehand and give this to the group facilitator. For example, you can ask small groups to develop a short drama around the issue, or to draw a map to explain the layout of an area, or to draw up a chart or pamphlet to simplify some problem or law.

A listening exercise - This is like a debate. You divide the group into two sides. Side A has to motivate for a particular solution, Side B has to motivate against it. Side A presents its argument. Before Side B responds, someone from the group must summarise Side A's argument. Then Side B gives its first argument. Side A must then summarise this point before giving the next argument. The exercise then continues in the same way until the time is up. The main aim of this exercise is to encourage people to listen to the arguments of others and to learn how to summarise important points in a short time.

Guidelines for facilitating small groups

- Be very clear on your role
- Seat the group in a circle
- Get people to introduce themselves
- Check if translation is needed and get a volunteer to help
- Ask someone in the group to take notes for reporting back later on
- Explain how much time you have and how the small group discussion will work
- Introduce ideas and questions - don't enforce your own views
- Keep looking at everyone in the group (eye-contact)
- Be aware of your own voice - don't talk too much or too loudly
- Be aware of the way you approach people in the group - for example, don't intimidate people
- Don't get into arguments or allow them to develop
- Allow and encourage different opinions
- Don't allow people to interrupt each other
- Be firm with dominant people and say that they should allow others a chance to speak
- Give people time to think and to explain what they mean
- Explain or summarise briefly where necessary, for example, with difficult words or concepts
- Check if people understand before going on to the next topic, and allow for further questions
- Use the go-around method to encourage participation from everyone in the group
- At the end, ask the report-back person to summarise to check if everyone is happy with the report

Language

The two main problems concerning language in a community workshop situation are what language to use and the level of the language.

- **Choice of language** - Part of your planning for the workshop, should include the language you are going to use and whether you need translation. Translation could be in full, in other words, point by point, or it could be a summary after a whole section.

- **Level of language**

The success or failure of a community workshop can rest on the level of language used. When planning the workshop it is important to identify your workshop audience and what level of language you should aim for. These are some basic guidelines:

- Structure your input - have a clear introduction, a list of main points, and a summary or conclusion at the end. Structure your sentences and keep sentences short and simple.
- Don't use difficult words - For example, jargon (difficult words that are usually only clear to a certain group of people), abbreviations (words that are shortened), legal words, foreign words, difficult expressions, and so on.
- Never be impatient or make people feel that they don't know anything.

Written materials should be easy for the audience to read and understand. These are some of the ways to make written materials easier to read:

- Use short, clear sentences and avoid long paragraphs
- Use point-form, numbering and subheadings
- Use pictures, maps, diagrams, charts - have summaries of main points and even use pictures and charts as a way of summarising
- Use questions and answers
- Use a typeface and print that is easy to read

Workshop resources

These are examples of workshop resources which can be used during workshops or after workshops for people to take away and read:

- plain language booklets, pamphlets and handouts
- diagrams, charts, pictures, cartoons and maps
- plenty of newsprint to write on and stick on the wall
- videos and other visual material like slides, photographs and press-clips
- training manuals, handbooks and resource packages

Evaluation and assessment

Evaluation is a process where a facilitator gets feedback from participants about how they experienced the workshop. **Assessment** is a process for measuring what participants have learnt and whether they have achieved their objectives (for the workshop).

Evaluation

Evaluation is about judging the overall value or worth of your workshop. By using various evaluation tools you can get information from participants that will tell you how they experienced the workshop, what contributed to the learning process and what hindered it. This information will help you decide whether the workshop was successful, whether it achieved what you wanted it

to, and what the problems were. In this way you can build on your strengths and learn from your mistakes. So, workshop evaluations can be used for different purposes:

- To find out whether workshop aims have been achieved (from the participant's perspective)
- To find out how things can be improved during the workshop or for future workshops
- To show participants that their views are valued
- To give feedback to donors or other interested parties

- What are you evaluating?

Your evaluation will provide you with information about one or more of the following aspects:

- Were the participants satisfied with the workshop?
- Did the workshop meet their expectations?
- What did participants believe they learnt in the workshop?
- How participants experienced specific aspects of the workshop, such as:
 - general flow of the workshop plan (do the activities flow / are people keeping up?)
 - facilitation methods
 - materials
 - practical issues (such as the venue, accommodation, food and transport)
 - the content (is it too complex or should it be simpler / is it relevant to the participants?)

- When do you evaluate?

As a rule, you should always include some form of evaluation in your workshop plan, either as an ongoing evaluation throughout the workshop, or at the end of the workshop.

The most common form of evaluation is probably the questionnaire handed out at the end of a workshop for participants to complete and hand in. However, evaluation can be included at different stages of a workshop. For example, a 'Mood evaluation' can be done at the same time each day to evaluate participants' moods. This can help you pick up any negative feelings about the workshop early on, and you can try and deal with the issues that are creating the negative feelings.

Assessment

While evaluation looks at the overall value and worth of the workshop, assessment has to do with measuring what participants have learnt at the workshop. Assessment measures what participants have learnt against set standards. 'Set standards' in a workshop programme are the learning

objectives defined at the beginning of the programme. The learning objectives should say clearly what the participants should be able to do at the end of the workshop and the assessment helps to see whether they have actually achieved this.

Example

In a workshop on child abuse and human rights protection mechanisms, the learning objectives are for participants at the end of the workshop to be able to:

- Identify different types of abuse suffered by children
- Define the rights that protect children from abuse and neglect and the laws that give effect to these rights
- Describe the steps to follow in dealing with cases of child abuse

So, by the end of the workshop, participants should be able to do what is described in the objectives. They could write a test or complete an assignment to determine whether or not these learning objectives have been achieved.

- What do you assess?

In order to see whether participants have achieved the objectives, you will measure one or more of the following:

- what knowledge was gained
- what skills were developed
- what attitudes were changed

Example (1)

At the end of a workshop on managing an advice centre, participants should be able to:

- Define a budget (knowledge objective)
- Draw up a budget (skills objective)

Your assessment of the learning in these workshops could be to set a test where participants have to draw up a budget for a specific case-study set or do an assignment where they draw up a budget for a specific project.

Example (2)

At the end of a workshop on the rights of refugees, participants should be able to:

- List the rights that apply to refugees (knowledge objective)
- Apply these rights in the work that they do (skills objective)

- Explain attitudes of xenophobia and describe how they can change negative attitudes in their community towards refugees (attitude changes)

Your assessment of learning in this workshop could include a test where participants have to list the rights that apply to refugees, explain how they would apply these rights in their own case work and define positive steps that can be taken to stop discrimination against refugees in their own community.

- When do you assess?

You do not always have to include assessment in your training workshop. It all depends on the nature and the purpose of the workshop.

Note

You need to be cautious if you do decide to include assessment in your workshop. Adults are not used to being assessed and may feel threatened. So, if you are planning to do an assessment you should discuss this with the participants at the beginning of the workshop - they need to understand why it is necessary and how it can help them.

Types of evaluation and assessment

There are two basic kinds of evaluation and assessment: formative and summative.

- Formative evaluation and assessment

Formative evaluation and assessment take place **during** the training programme. This provides you with information about how participants are experiencing activities and other aspects of the workshop (formative evaluation) and what they have learnt up to that point (formative assessment).

The results will help you to make necessary changes to your training programme while it is still in progress. It also allows participants to see and reflect on their own progress.

Example of formative evaluation

If you are conducting a 2-day workshop, you could allow time at the end of the first day to reflect on what has been covered during the day and how participants are experiencing the workshop.

This can be conducted in an informal group discussion by asking open-ended questions such as:

- what did you enjoy most about today?
- what did you enjoy the least today?
- what improvements would you like to see?

You can also ask if there are any issues that they want to include in the programme for the following day.

Example of formative assessment

Formative assessment is conducted as the learning process takes place, for example, after certain sessions during the workshop. At a computer skills training workshop participants do a practical test to demonstrate what they have learnt from the session. If they have not yet learnt enough to complete the task successfully, the trainer should repeat what is necessary from the previous section.

- Summative evaluation and assessment

Summative evaluation and assessment take place at the end of the workshop. The results will tell you about the overall workshop experience (summative evaluation) and whether the participants have achieved the learning objectives (summative assessment).

Summative evaluation

This is conducted at the end of the workshop to see whether the overall aims of the workshop have been achieved. When you are planning a summative evaluation you need to be clear on the purpose of your evaluation: which aspects of the workshop do you want to get feedback on.

The most common way of doing a summative evaluation is to ask participants to complete a questionnaire at the end of the workshop.

A questionnaire used for summative evaluation could include questions on the following aspects of a workshop:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. The content | What do you consider the most important and worthwhile content of this workshop? |
| 2. Methodology | Which kinds of presentations or activities did you find most effective and why? |
| 3. Materials | Did facilitators create a good learning environment?
Which of the material and resources you received seem most useful and why? |
| 4. Practical details | Comment on these aspects of the workshop: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accommodation• Food• Venue• Free time and relaxing activities |
| 5. Applying what has been learnt | What aspects of this workshop can you apply to your work, community and/or personal life? |
| 6. Additional comments | Do you have additional comments about any aspect of this |

workshop?

Summative assessment

Summative assessment takes place at the end of a training workshop and its purpose is to determine whether the participants have achieved their objectives. Practical or written tests, assignments and examinations are examples of summative assessment and are probably the most objective way of assessing learning.

The following chart summarises formative and summative evaluation and assessment:

	Formative	Summative
Evaluation		
During the workshop:		
For example:		
After sessions		
After breaks		
After the end of a day		
At the end of the workshop:		
Questionnaire		
At the end of the workshop:		
Discussion		
Assessment		
During the workshop:		
After learning sessions		
After the workshop:		
Assignment, test		