



VIKĀRA
I N S T I T U T E

Interactive Stakeholder Dialogues

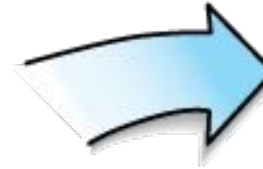


Facilitator's Handbook

*"You cannot solve a problem within
the same thinking that created it."
Albert Einstein*



A structured, facilitated discussion with participants from various parts of the industry / market system



Encouraging a more healthy, better functioning market!

Interactive Stakeholder Dialogues are structured, facilitated discussions, which involve various stakeholders, from within a particular market sector and from related sectors. These stakeholders may share common interests, however they don't usually interact or have in-depth discussions about specific market challenges and opportunities.

Essentially it is about getting people to cooperate within a system.

What is the Purpose of Interactive Stakeholder Dialogues?

The purpose of Interactive Stakeholder Dialogues is to encourage a more healthy, better functioning market, through:

- Bringing people together who don't usually interact, to explore a common interest.
- Building shared interests around challenges or opportunities in the market, or communicating potential shared interests.
- Igniting potential for collaboration and better working relationships.
- Gaining an up-to-date, systemic understanding of a market sector.

Interactive Stakeholder Dialogues would not be an option under the following conditions:

- There is a tangible animosity or history of violence between different market actors.
- Producers and market actors are in a very busy period (e.g. harvest time).

The set up and facilitation of these dialogues can be challenging, and require specific skills and expertise. This guide is to support the facilitation of Interactive Stakeholder Dialogues.



**Strengthen
Market
Sectors**

**Overcome
Market
Challenges
through
Cooperation**

**Identify
business models
and other areas
to partner on
and test**



**Conditions
for Success**

Market actors have the potential to recognise similar issues that hinder the efficiency of the market system.

There is a high possibility that market actors may be willing to work in collaboration to improve the whole sector.

For an effective Interactive Stakeholder Dialogue to take place, it needs sufficient planning beforehand. It requires thoughtful alignment of stakeholders, objectives, agenda, and facilitation techniques.

1. Clarify dialogue purpose, objectives and agenda.

Questions to inform the purpose:

What is the reason for this dialogue? Why did the need for the dialogue arise in the first place?

Questions to inform the objectives:

What are the shared interests that stakeholders would want to discuss together?

What would you like to achieve, or discover, through the dialogue?

What goals are you looking to accomplish through the dialogue?

What would you like to do with the outcomes of this dialogue?

What do I need to research, to understand the challenges and potential solutions related to this topic more? (This could be compiled from previous research studies, or done by a market research firm).

Questions to inform the agenda:

What information needs to be communicated, and which processes align with the purpose, context, and participants of this dialogue? What needs to be included, to make it attractive to potential participants?



Points to remember:

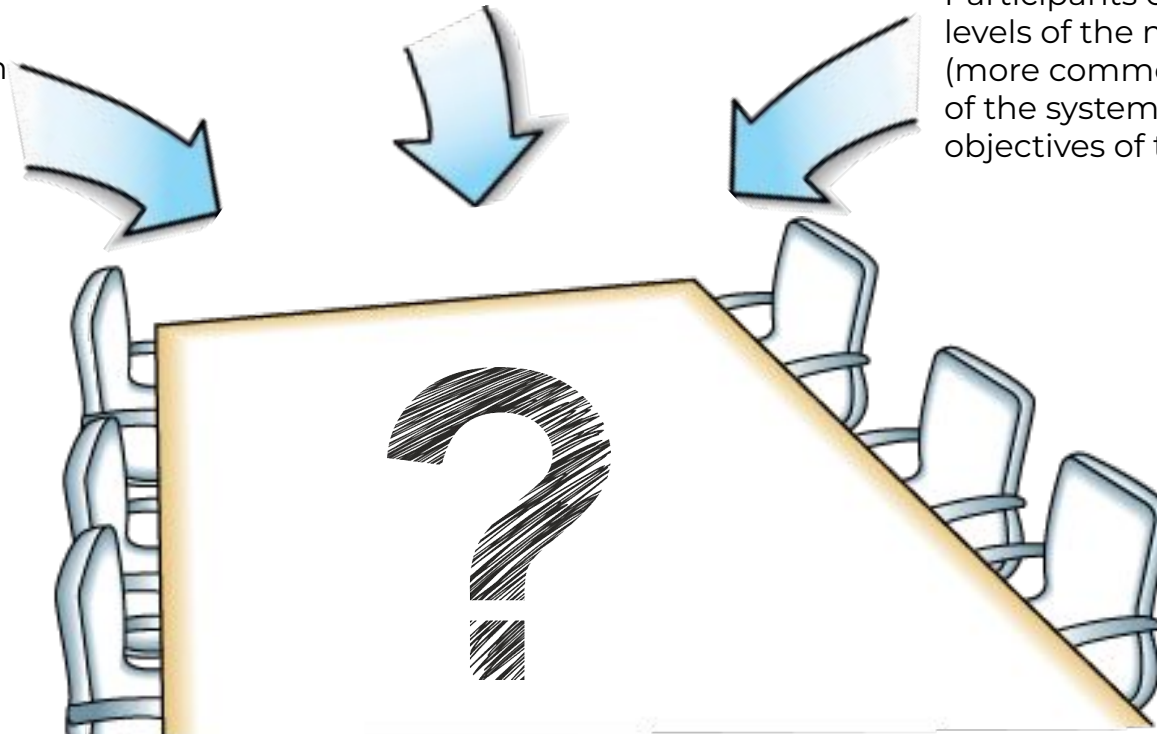
- Recognize the value of simply building trust and relationships between market actors as a first step.
- Consensus-building around challenges and opportunities is important.
- It is okay to take small, baby steps rather than trying to push market actors too quickly – while still maintaining momentum.
- Be clear as to the organizer's reason for interest and objectives.
- It is key for the market actors to feel ownership of the process by co-creating it, or at least feeling that they co-created it.
- It is important to allow market actors to recognize their individual incentives for being involved.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Try to get decision-makers to attend if possible ... but recognize that not all attending will be decision-makers.

The “hotter” the topics and more “high-level” the issues are that are being addressed (and the way you frame them in the invitation), the more high-level decision-makers are likely to attend.

Participants could be at different levels of the market system (more common), or at same level of the system (depending on the objectives of the meeting).



2. Select appropriate stakeholders.

Who needs to be involved, in order to achieve the objectives?

Which experts/participants from outside the sector, could bring value to the conversation?

Initial meetings may be larger to get buy-in and give credibility to the issue. Later it may be more practical to meet in smaller groups to tackle specific issues. The purpose of the Interactive Stakeholder Dialogue has a significant impact on who to invite

3. Frame the dialogue. Design the invitation to attract participants and set their expectations.

An **important message** to convey to invitees is that they are going to have an opportunity to meet other market actors to address market problems and possible solutions.

The **guest list** should be wide enough and shared along with the invitation so that market actors feel that they will be left out if they are not involved.

Inform participants about the **level of participant** that the meeting is appropriate for (e.g. logistics manager, procurement manager or managing director).

Invitation to
Interactive
Stakeholder
Dialogue

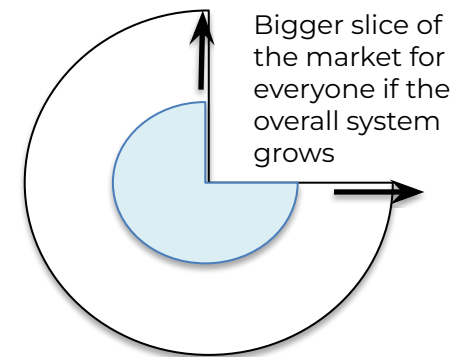
Draw key decision-makers by giving examples of similar-level participants from other businesses that will be attending and/or sending the invite from a “big name” person, firm, or association.

The invitation could ideally be **sent by** a market actor or groups of actors, but in some cases could come from a development project.

4. Meet with relevant stakeholders.

Meet with invitees who may be less familiar with such processes (e.g. traders, smallholder farmers, etc.) to assist them to understand what an Interactive Stakeholder Dialogue is, and what the benefit is for them. Also, to assist them to ensure their message is 'heard', by building their capacity to speak up in this kind of forum.

- Consider who would have the least power in the dialogue, and build their capacity to speak and to feel their contribution is valued and valid.
- Meet with potentially troublesome invitees, to discuss concerns and manage their expectations.
- Key Messages:
 - Relating Sector Growth to Individual Business Performance: How can strengthening of the sector drive individual business / market actor performance and growth?
 - Collaboration alongside Competition: How can businesses collaborate for everyone's benefit while still competing in the market?



5. Select a location to suit the participants.

Consider the space and practicalities, to suit the process and context.

Consider what is a familiar space for participants, and decide whether to use the same space, or to use an unfamiliar space to activate a particular response. For example:

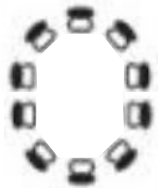
- Select a familiar location if you would like certain participants to feel at ease, so that they might be comfortable enough to share openly, e.g. a marketplace or school room in a local community.
- Select an unfamiliar space if you would like participants to be 'out of their comfort zone', or a neutral space unfamiliar to all participants, e.g. an art studio, or private room in a restaurant.
- Select a familiar space, but set it up differently to activate a different interaction with participants, e.g. a conference room with a circle of chairs, instead of a boardroom table..

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

Factors to consider when selecting a room layout:

- How big is the group, in relation to the space you have available?
- How interactive do you want the session to be?
- What methodology are you using, and which seating arrangement aligns to the activities?

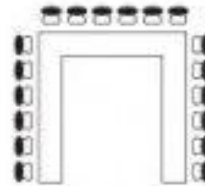
Circle of
Chairs



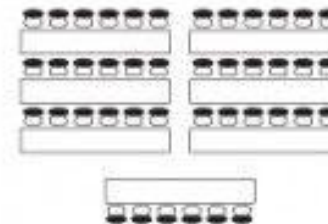
Theatre



U-Shape



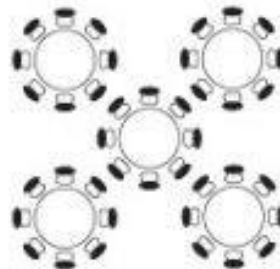
Classroom



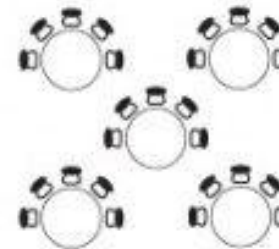
Boardroom



Banquet



Cabaret



FRONT OF ROOM

6. Prepare the initial presentation.

Consider the relevant resources you will need, in order to 'set the scene' for participants, e.g. research, case study, cost benefits, needs analysis, information, training piece, etc.

Decide how you will convey the information. A powerpoint presentation can often pacify participants, rather than engage them. Rather explore other ways of presenting information that don't rely on technology, instead they engage people, e.g. handouts, questions, discussions including the use of flipcharts to highlight key messages, etc,

7. Define roles for participants and facilitators.

Clarify what you expect from the participants, and what their specific role is within the dialogue. Ensure you convey this during the introduction of the session.

Define the roles of facilitators, if you have more than one person. Whilst facilitator no 1 is facilitating parts of the dialogue, facilitator no 2 can support in many ways:

- Take notes or make observations
- Take photos
- Prepare the materials and activity for the next item on the agenda

8. Capture the discussion.

Decide how you will capture the discussion and who will coordinate it:

- Note takers
- Graphic recorder/facilitator
- Voice recorder
- Video

Ensure you have permission to record voice or video, if you choose those methods

Discussion notes are very useful to refer to after the session, to see how to follow up and incentivize more momentum by participants. Don't quote, as it could be confidential information that was shared.

9. Define the core engagement process.

Dialogues can take many forms, depending on the facilitation methods used, however there are key aspects which are included in most sessions:

Introduction of participants, facilitators, and format of the session

- Decide how the participants will introduce themselves, e.g. they can share their name, organisation, and why they are here. It is useful to ask participants to provide some kind of information that will be useful to you, as a facilitator, to learn more about them, such as the type of business they represent or a key challenge they face, or the experience they have in a certain area. It is important to emphasize that this should be a short introduction, no more than 5 minutes at the maximum (although shorter is better).

- Introduce the facilitators.

- Briefly outline the format of the session, e.g. We will be using interactive methods in order to inspire ideas, sharing, and specific focus on the important aspects needing exploration in the dialogue today.

Define purpose and agenda

- Keep it clear and simple
- Flexible agenda
- Clear desired outcomes

Share rules of engagement

- Define roles of participants and facilitators
- Set up clear ground rules - No interrupting, Focusing on topic at hand, etc.
- Parking issues not possible to address in the time and context.

Share info piece - presentation on research, case study, sector info, etc.

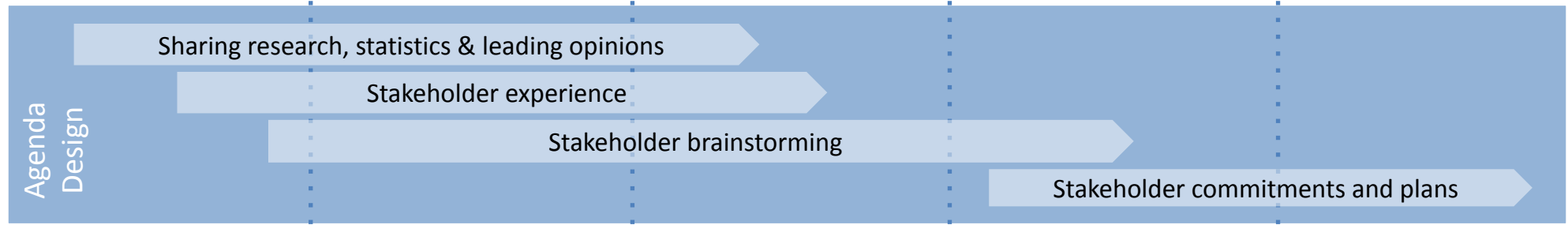
Clarify key outcomes - flipchart ideas/ hot topics which, by being discussed, would achieve outcome.

Facilitation Methodology- Utilise appropriate processes, e.g. brainstorming, world cafe, SPOT analysis, etc.

Action Steps - What are next steps, done by whom, and when.

Check out - Each reflect on experience and a take-away

THE FACILITATION METHODOLOGY



What (other) challenges do you see as impacting multiple business / market actors?

How do you relate to these challenges?

What are examples from your experience that demonstrate the importance of these issues?

What (other) opportunities do you foresee in the sector?

How might these opportunities benefit the businesses in the industry?

What are potential solutions to these challenges and potential ways to take advantage of or operationalize these opportunities?

In which area(s) might it be most strategic for your business to be involved?

What are immediate priority areas that could be actioned?

What role could your business potentially play in testing or actioning this?

Who else should we be sure to get involved?

How can we coordinate, if at all, around any collaboration that takes place?

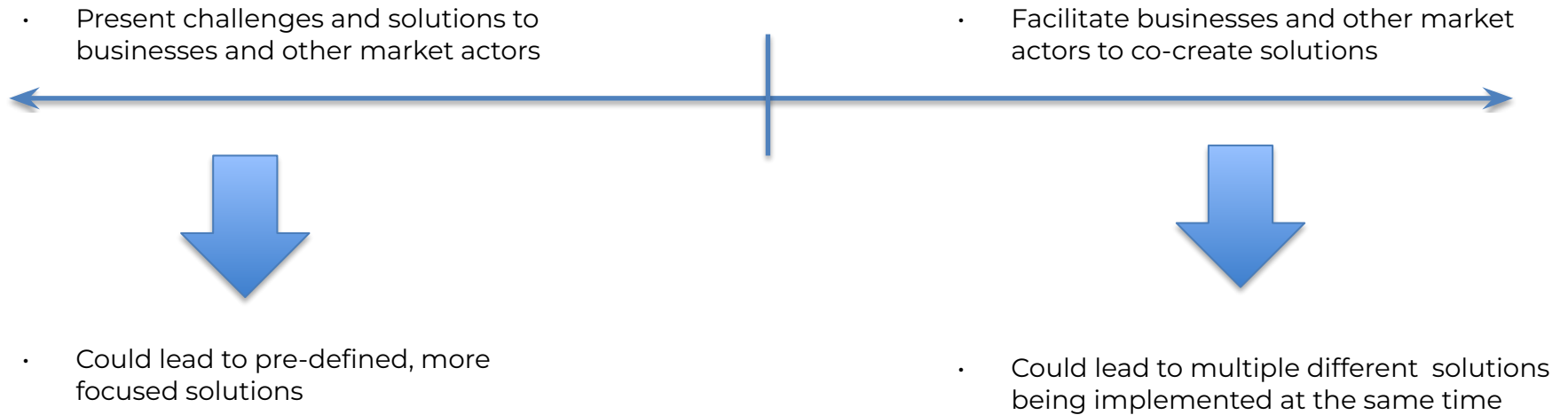
How do we monitor and measure our progress and results?

- **Use large and small group discussions**
 - During the meeting it could be useful to break into small groups that allow market actors to participate more confidently in a smaller group of people, rather than having to speak out in front of the whole meeting. If done early, this is particularly useful to build the confidence of market actors, if needed.
- **Use participatory workshop tools to give all equal voice**
 - When prioritising information, it can be very useful to utilise methods such as getting participants to write their views anonymously on paper, which the facilitator will then read out loud or voting by putting a dot next to the selection on paper.
- **Provide translation**
 - In some contexts, it will be necessary to have an effective translation option to ensure easy communication between participants.
- **Brainstorming**

Apply various brainstorming techniques, to encourage the generation of information (e.g. sharing experiences, ideas, plans, etc). Fundamentally you are exploring the following:

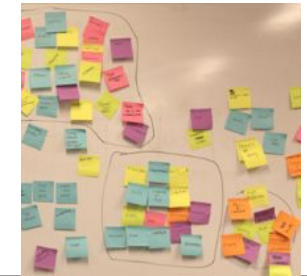
 - What's working?
 - What's not working?
 - What can be done differently?
- **Open and Closed Questions**
 - Think about how to use open-ended questions and close-ended questions strategically. For at least 80% of the stakeholder dialogues, you will want to be using open-ended questions. Close-ended questions can be more effective when used to guarantee commitment or a way forward.

FACILITATION STRATEGY



Purpose

The Affinity Process is a tool that can be used to ensure that all voices are heard and included in the dialogue. It is a great way to gather information quickly, or to get to the heart of a problem. It engages a group in idea generation.



Procedure

Step 1: Define the topic

- Ask the question or statement that you are trying to gain input on.
- Ask if anyone has questions, to ensure everyone understands the question or statement.

Step 2: Brainstorming *Directions given are as follows:*

- The first part of the brainstorming will be done in silence, please do not talk.
- You will be given 3 minutes (can be up to 5), to come up with as many responses to the question as possible.
- Put each of your responses on a separate post-it and place them randomly on the flipchart paper.
- Your responses should be brief, however try to be as specific as possible. "Bullet points" are fine.

Step 3: Thematic analysis *Directions given are as follows:*

- Cluster all responses that seem to be alike. If needed, ask members of your group to further explain or clarify their thinking.
- Discuss as a group how clustered responses are alike and come up with a heading that can be used to categorize these responses.
- Position these on your flipchart paper with the heading above each cluster. Ensure all items have a heading.
- You will have 15 minutes for this task. The most important and meaningful conversations will take place during this time, so be sure to allot enough time.
- Have groups share categories "Round Robin" style, with the whole group.
- If the level of understanding of most people is sufficient, ask the groups to combine their clusters on the wall.

Step 4: Group Discussion and Debrief

Engage in a whole group discussion on the findings so far. Ask questions to focus their thinking on how to use the information for the next step of the dialogue, which may include decisions and action steps.

Materials

A large sheet of flipchart paper for each group
 Colour markers for the flipchart and pens for the post-it notes
 Post-it notes, enough for each person to have approximately 5 sheets.

Room layout

Cabaret

One table per group, including space for the flipchart paper in the middle of each table.

Group structure

Divide group up, so that there are 4 to 8 people in each group. Give out the materials for each group (post-its, a sheet of flipchart paper, markers and pens).

Potential Debrief Questions

What did you realize about (topic) through doing this exercise?

How do these responses, and categories, influence your next steps in relation to this topic?

What would you like to do with this information?

Options

Use sticky dots to **prioritize the information**, e.g. participants put green sticky dots on topics they want to explore further, or on the ideas they would like to implement. The prioritization depends on the question, and the dialogue objectives that you are moving towards. The topics with the most dots are discussed further.

Use colour post-it notes to **represent different perspectives**, such as 'what's working' and what's not working', or positive and negative, etc. You can then see which categories are a problem, or where solutions exist.

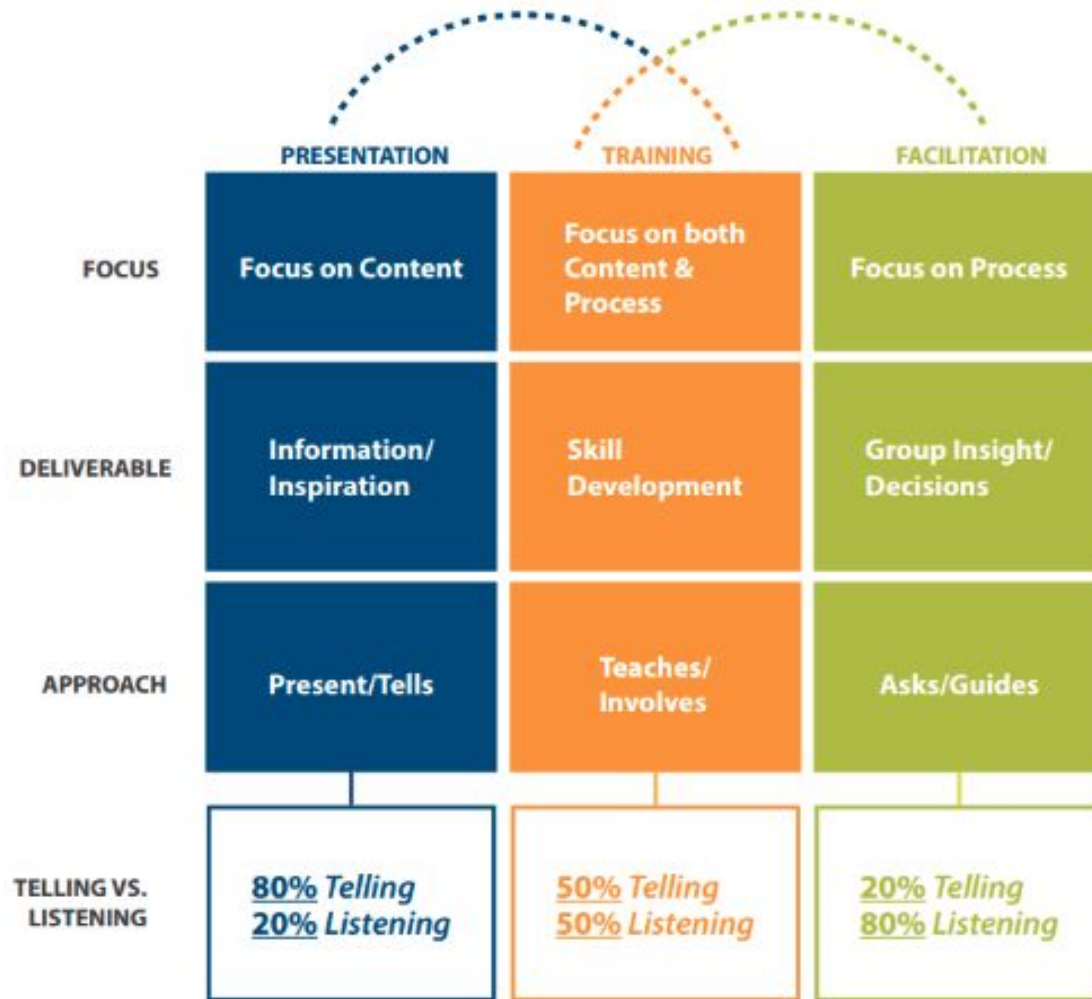
Preparation as a Facilitator

Ensure you understand the topic well and have an idea of the potential categories that may arise, so that you can effectively assist the group to gain clarity during the 'thematic analysis' phase. Also, you can then ensure that all relevant factors are included, in case an important category has been left out.

Facilitator Tips

- Allow for confusion, debate, and clarification – this is part of the group's process of establishing shared understanding and potential shared interests.
- Give input where needed to ensure the clusters are appropriately represented.
- Ask questions to ensure that all the relevant categories that should be included, when exploring this topic, have been considered. If not, your questions or suggestions may spark more aspects to include.

- **There is no one right way**
 - It is critical for the facilitator to refrain from preconceived notions of the “right” process. Always keep in mind the end destination: increased collaboration and specific action plans. How you get there will be determined by the stakeholders.
- **Keep it short and simple**
 - Participant time is valuable. Focus on activities that stakeholders have an incentive to overcome.
- **Emphasize short-term activities**
 - Successful execution creates incentives for participants to come together to work on longer-term solutions to constraints.
- **Let stakeholders take ownership**
 - Focus on activities that stakeholders are likely to quickly take ownership of. The process will only work when stakeholders take ownership of it.
- **Focus on incentives and motivations**
 - Look for incentives in transactions - nothing motivates as quickly as opportunities with relatively quick returns.
- **Focus on the small, quick first steps with high probability of success**
 - This is likely a process with many steps: the first ones are often small and must be successful.
- **Find the balance between quick and catalytic**
 - The development of a shared industry vision is an important part of the process but is often best built upon short-term results.
- **Do not feel pressured to resolve conflicts**
 - It is more important to help participants understand the conflicts, as the stated conflict is rarely the real issue. Instead of trying to resolve the conflict, hold to the goal of clarifying the perceptions, including assumptions and facts. However, facilitators should not let the conflict get out of hand during the workshop.
- **Address the underlying issues**
 - People often ask a question that is one step away from the real question. Try to address the real question to get real commitment.
- **Be genuine**
 - Although some stakeholders will try to push the facilitator into an expert role, it is important not to accept it. If you do, conflict will be seen as a question for the expert to answer rather than as different perceptions that need to be understood by each of the participants.
- **Mirror effective communication skills**
 - The skill of being able to communicate effectively will be the most valuable tool the facilitator can leave with the participants.



Facilitation Skills

- Building the container
- Active listening
- Good questioning
- Managing participant participation
- Managing the process
- Diffusing conflict

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

- Market actors start committing to and taking action in addressing some key issues that will benefit their own businesses and the sector as a whole.

INDICATORS

- Are firms starting to collaborate around industry issues?
- Are firms participating in industry stakeholder meetings? Are they attending follow up meetings?
- Is the media picking up the story? Are firms talking about the changes to the media?

