Facilitating Meetings in Evaluation Contexts

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Professional Development Session presented at the
19th Annual Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI) Spring Training,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Session Description</strong></th>
<th><strong>Learning Outcomes</strong></th>
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| Successful meetings provide participants with a sense of purpose, direction, collegiality, accomplishment, and positive energy for moving forward. This session will focus on effectively facilitating meetings in evaluation practice by demonstrating an evaluator’s dozen of facilitation strategies especially useful in participatory approaches. Ultimately, these strategies will become vehicles to engage participants in considering (a) components that influence effective meetings such as contextual, cultural, social, political, and logistical concerns; (b) what to do when conflict strikes; and (c) how to enhance facilitation in one’s own professional setting. | • Identify characteristics of effective meetings and what this means for facilitators  
• Consider how facilitators attend to contextual and logistical concerns that ground effective meetings  
• Experience an evaluator’s dozen of interactive strategies useful for facilitating meetings across a wide variety of contexts  
• Explore ways to manage conflict constructively in meetings  
• Plan to enhance the facilitation of meetings in your own professional context |
Considerations

When it comes to meetings . . .

- Purpose
- Participants
- Context
- Culture
- Norms
- Logistics
- Involvement
- Materials
- Documentation
- Communication

Choose facilitation strategies wisely!
Strategy #1. Voicing Variables

This exercise has two purposes: (1) to allow you as a facilitator to see the types of people who are participating in your session, and (2) to allow people in the group to identify people who are similar or different from them. It is important that people stand when their category is called so that others can see them. (If people are physically unable to stand, then hand waving can also work.) In our experience, you should identify specific variables that will separate your group in obvious ways. You can adapt the following examples to fit almost any group. (See also “Sit Down,” a variation of Technique #1 on the following page.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Variable</th>
<th>Possible Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth</td>
<td>USA: Northeast, Midwest, South/ Texas, Southwest/ California, Northwest, Hawaii/Alaska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-USA: By continent, then ask people what country they were born in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male, female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Under 25, 26-40, 41-55, over 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job role</td>
<td>Internal evaluator, external evaluator, researcher, student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite sport</td>
<td>Football, baseball, basketball, table tennis, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite dessert</td>
<td>Cake, pie, cookie, fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred type of movie</td>
<td>Action, drama, comedy, science fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious affiliation</td>
<td>Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal vacation spot</td>
<td>Disneyland, Tahiti, New Orleans, the Rockies, the Mall of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political affiliation</td>
<td>Republican, Democrat, Independent, Green Party, other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategy #2. Fist to Five

Fist to Five is similar to Voicing Variables in that it simultaneously allows the facilitator and the group to determine the group’s characteristics. The facilitator asks people to assess themselves on a variable, using their fingers and the following scale to respond: fist means zero, 1 finger means a little, 2 fingers mean slightly more, all the way to five fingers meaning complete knowledge or positive attitude. It’s important to adapt the scale to the question being asked. The group can look around to determine an average or to identify those who know a lot or a little.

Sample topics for Fist to Five:
- Knowledge of program evaluation
- Confidence in your cooking ability
- Familiarity with the content about to be taught
Strategy #1. Voicing Variables—Sit Down Variation

In this variation of voicing variables, you ask the entire group to stand, and then have people sit down as items are called. The goal is to end with one or two people standing.

Sit down if you...
Plan to travel outside the country next summer.
Serve on a Board of Directors.
Have season tickets to a professional sports team.
Have a class reunion this summer.
Make your bed every morning.
Are currently involved in a fund-raising campaign.
Balance your personal checkbook daily.
Take vitamins daily.
Are the oldest in your family.
Have ever camped in a VW bus.
Are currently learning a second language.
Sent a child off to college this fall.
Have blue eyes.
Have an IBM computer at home.
Were a camp leader/ counselor in your youth.
Commute more than an hour to work.
Have cooked for friends this month.
Will be moving into a new home in the next couple of months.
Have been to NYC in the last year.
Have a pilot’s license.
Subscribe to the Wall Street Journal.
Count calories daily.
Have worked in the same field for 15 years or more.
Have a favorite or not so favorite pet.
Live within five minutes of your office.
Eat Chinese food once a week.
Play an instrument.
Are of a different weight or age than what is on your driver’s license.
Have ever had a sports-related injury.
Are a twin.
Talk to a friend on the telephone daily.
Have participated in a triathlon.
Have ever been on jury duty.
Talked to your mom this weekend.
Wore a ponytail in the 80s.
Were nicknamed Buzz, Buck, or Biff in high school.
Get up between 5 & 6AM on Sunday mornings.
Had a speeding ticket in the last year.
Took your most recent driver’s test more than once.
Had braces on your teeth as a child.
Eat cereal 3 or more days a week.
Have purchased a book through Amazon.com.
Own a pair of plaid boxer shorts.
Strategy #3. Belief Sheet

The purpose of the statements on a belief sheet is to encourage participants to think about their values and beliefs around a certain topic, typically the topic your session or study will address. These do not have to be excellent survey items. We have found it helpful to allow people to complain about the wording of individual statements, but at the same time to encourage them to discuss their ideas about the content. What follows are three items we have used at training sessions on participatory techniques and then sample statements from specific content areas. You may want to use a more complex scale, but in our experience, the SA-SD scale is sufficient to foster good conversation.

Collaborative Values and Beliefs:

Where Do YOU Stand?

1. A good evaluator shares control of the study with his/her clients from start to finish.  
   - Strongly Agree  
   - Agree  
   - Disagree  
   - Strongly Disagree

2. Program participants will bias a study if they are involved in planning it.  
   - Strongly Agree  
   - Agree  
   - Disagree  
   - Strongly Disagree

3. Program staff should be neutral toward their own programs during an evaluation study of those programs.  
   - Strongly Agree  
   - Agree  
   - Disagree  
   - Strongly Disagree

Examples from Specific Content Areas

Education
- Teachers should be held accountable for everything that takes place in their classrooms.
- School change is best orchestrated from the central office.

Health
- Public health initiatives should be directed primarily at the youth of this state.
- In the past 20 years, the health system in the United States has improved.

Social Services
- The greatest issue facing the working poor today is affordable housing.
- Welfare-to-work initiatives have worked well in this county.
Strategy #4. Dot Voting

Goal: To determine group preferences among alternatives

Procedure:

1. Present participants with a list of alternative items.
2. Give each participant an equal number of dots (or Post-Its, stickers, etc.).
   Note: Fewer dots per person more sharply focus choice making (such as when each person has one dot and therefore only one vote). Multiple dots per person allows more flexibility in choice-making (such as when each person has five dots and therefore can vote for five different items on the list or can indicate a strong preference for one item by voting five times for that item).
3. Have participants vote for alternatives by placing dots next to desired items.

### Scattered Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item A</th>
<th>Item B</th>
<th>Item C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Scattered Format" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Scattered Format" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Scattered Format" /></td>
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### Bar Graph Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item A</th>
<th>Item B</th>
<th>Item C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Bar Graph Format" /></td>
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<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Bar Graph Format" /></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Strategy #5. Corners

Directions:

1. Ask participants to move to a corner that matches their opinion.
2. Have people shake hands with one or two others in that corner and introduce themselves.
3. Have then exchange reasons why they chose that corner, then compare and contrast reasons, noticing similarities and differences.
4. Present another item (Round 2) and ask people to move again, and so on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND</th>
<th>The corner I chose… my reasons why</th>
<th>The person I met</th>
<th>… his/ her reasons for choosing this corner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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Strategy #6. Three-Step Interview

Cooperative Interviews

- The interview topic should be...
  - Relevant to the program evaluation
  - Useful for obtaining information
  - Meaningful and linked to the personal experiences of participants
  - Safe and non-threatening
  - Open ended, thought provoking, achievable

- Provide sample interview questions

- Group members rotate roles (groups of 2, 3, or 4)
  - Interviewer
  - Responder
  - Recorder... WORDS and SYMBOLS

- Arrange materials and work space to strengthen positive interdependence
  - One shared Interview Response Sheet per group
  - Group members seated around one desk for close proximity

- Group interprets/ uses the interview information
  - Similarities?! Common themes?! Predictions?! Conclusions?!

- Group members process social interaction
  - Inclusiveness... all voices sought and heard
  - Careful listening... TRUSTWORTHINESS enhances TRUST

- Acknowledgment and appreciation
# Interview Response Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Interview Question:</th>
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</table>

## Key Group Ideas:

*Similarities?! Common themes?! Predictions?! Conclusions?*
### Strategy #7. Data Dialogue

**Data Dialogue Topic:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is working well?</th>
<th>What is problematic?</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Signatures:** _______________________________  ______________________________________
Strategy #8. Making Metaphors

Making metaphors with...

WORDS

Provide sentence starters:

- A participatory program evaluation will take you over the rainbow when...
- A participatory program evaluation is like a garden because...
- Useful information in a participatory evaluation is like a road map because...
- Participatory program evaluation is like surfing because...
- A participatory program evaluation sounds like a symphony when...
- A participatory program evaluation is like a roller coaster because...
- Conducting an effective participatory program evaluation is like discovering hidden treasure because...

PICTURES

Provide a set of images for making metaphors:
(such as art cards, postcards, photographs, illustrations, etc.)

- Effective participatory program evaluations look most like (select an image) because...
- When I visualize what I need to conduct an effective participatory program evaluation I see (select an image) because...
- The picture that reminds me of an important pitfall to avoid when conducting participatory program evaluations is (select an image) because...
- An environment or situation well suited for participatory program evaluation will look like (select an image) because...
- The benefits of participatory program evaluations look most like (select an image) because...
Strategy #9. Check-In

Check-In

The purpose of Check-In is to touch base quickly with all participants by asking each to respond to a pertinent question.

Sample Questions

- **Opening a session:**
  - What is your current definition or understanding of the topic?
  - What experience do you bring to the topic?
  - What would you most like to know about the topic?
  - What word best describes your emotional reaction to the topic?

- **Making transitions between session topics/activities:**
  - What additional issues or concerns arose for you?
  - What’s one question that you would like answered?
  - What’s the most important idea you will remember on this topic?
  - What’s an important connection you made?
  - What is something you were reminded of from dealing with the topic?

- **Closing a session:**
  - What was something you especially valued in this session?
  - What was your most important “lesson learned” from the session?
  - What insight will you carry away and act upon?
  - What is your next step for using one of the participatory techniques?
Strategy #10. Graffiti or Carousel

Step 1
Each group writes graffiti on an assigned topic for 1 minute.

Step 2
Groups stop, then pass their sheet to the next group.
(Variation: Group members leave home base and individually walk from table to table, adding graffiti to other sheets.)

Step 3
Sheets are passed until original graffiti sheet returns to the home group.
(Variation: After ___ minutes, return to your original graffiti.)

Step 4
Each group...
- Reads
- Discusses
- Summarizes
- Presents

...their graffiti ideas.

Strategy #11. Concept Formation

Group like items…

What are the critical attributes that distinguish like items in each cluster?
Strategy #12. Cooperative Rank Order

Directions for this cooperative task:

Arrange the items in order
from ____________________________
to ____________________________

Social focus:

Everyone . . .

• Contributes ideas
• Defends and justifies
• Reaches agreement

Roles:

1. Card mover
2. Scribe
4. Pacer
**Strategy #13. Jigsaw**

**Team Goal:**
Everyone will know, understand, and use information.

**Directions:**
1. **Original Teams** divide information among members.

2. Information-alike **Expert Pairs** form to learn their unique part of the whole, then plan to present it to their original team.

3. **Original Teams** reunite. Teammates present their unique information and check that all understand.

4. Once mastered, the entire body of information can be used for an intended purpose such as to formulate or address questions; identify priorities; make decisions; inform actions; compare, contrast, integrate, or summarize perspectives; draw conclusions; etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Teams</th>
<th>□ □ ◊</th>
<th>□ □ ◊</th>
<th>□ □ ◊</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert Pairs</th>
<th>■ ■</th>
<th>■ ■</th>
<th>◊ ◊</th>
<th>◊ ◊</th>
<th>◊ ◊</th>
<th>◊ ◊</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Facilitation Materials

- Laptop and projector
- Chart paper/ newsprint
- Felt markers
- Masking tape
- File cards (3x5)
- Post-it notes (varying sizes)
- Colored paper (8½” x 11”)
- Dots and other stickers
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Art cards/ pictures from magazines
- Corner cards (SA, A, D, SD)
- A timer visible to the group
- Cartoons/ Quotations (PPT slides or posters)
- A recall device (gong, whistle, dinger, etc.)
- Working norms sheet/ “rules” for group participation
- Sense of humor
Defining Conflict

“*A conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur*” (Deutsch, 1973, p. 10).

- **Conflicts of interests** are over people’s desires and occur when interpersonal incompatibilities produce behaviors or actions that block, delay, or prevent the accomplishment of personal goals.

- **Conceptual conflicts** are controversies over policy issues. A controversy occurs when incompatibilities deal with the different theories, ideas, opinions, perceptions, or beliefs that people have on the issue and they want to reach a settlement.

**NOTE:**

*Cooperative Relations and Perspective-Taking are key to constructively resolving both types of conflict.*
# Resolving Conflicts of Interests

## Dual Concerns Model

## Conflict Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Importance</th>
<th>Low Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RELATIONSHIP</strong></td>
<td><strong>GOAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smooth (it goes your way)</td>
<td>Force (it goes my way)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solve (we mutually agree)</td>
<td><strong>Compromise</strong> (50-50 split)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdraw (I'm out of here)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Integrative Negotiation
(mutual problem solving)

1. Express cooperative intentions
   (mutual problem solving)
2. State what you want
3. Express how you feel
4. Explain your reasons
5. Communicate understanding of the other’s perspective (wants, feelings, reasons)
6. Invent integrative solutions
   (be creative—the more the better!)
7. Mutually agree on and commit to a solution
Resolving Conceptual Conflicts

Creative Controversy Model
(Adapted from Johnson & Johnson, 2009)

- Establish mutual cooperative foundations
- Commit to solutions based on best reasoned judgment

1. Prepare (a position and its supporting arguments)
2. Present (each position gets a fair hearing)
3. Refute / Rebut (positions and arguments)
4. Reverse perspectives (now argue the other position)
5. Synthesize (drop advocacy and seek best reasons)

- Reflect on the effectiveness of the process
- Implement the solution and assess its effectiveness