

CDC Evaluation Coffee Break: Facilitation Skills for Evaluators – Getting the Most out of Partnership Engagement

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Disclaimer: The information presented here is for training purposes and reflects the views of the presenter. It does not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Topics for Discussion

- ❑ **CDC Evaluation Framework – Step 1**
- ❑ **Role of Facilitation in Evaluation**
- ❑ **Learning to Be an Effective Facilitator**
 - Use of a Guide Analogy
- ❑ **Tips on Facilitation Skills Application**
- ❑ **Resources**

On today's call we'll start off with a quick overview of the evaluation framework and where the engagement of stakeholders takes place. We will go over why facilitation skills are appropriate for evaluators to learn and apply in the evaluation process. I will integrate an analogy of being a guide to help understand the skills further. Then we will spend most of our time together on specific skills to help improve future stakeholder engagement. Finally, I will provide some used references.

CDC Evaluation Framework



I would like to start off with a quick shot of the CDC Evaluation Framework. The “engagement of stakeholders” is not only a pivotal first step in the development of a new evaluation plan, but also the linkage from identifying the lessons learned from an ending evaluation and applying the lessons learned through stakeholder engagement. Remember: An evaluation is about program improvement through the application of lessons learned, not just finding the results of an evaluation.

Stakeholder Definition

- ***“People or organizations that are invested in the program, are interested in the results of the evaluation, and/or have a stake in what will be done with the results of the evaluation”***



The engagement of stakeholders step is defined as “Fostering input, participation, and power-sharing among those persons who have an investment in the conduct of the evaluation and the findings; it is especially important to engage primary users of the evaluation.”

The role of this step is to help increase the likelihood that the evaluation will be successful by improving the evaluation’s credibility, clarifying roles and responsibilities, enhancing cultural competence, helping protect human subjects, and avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest. As an ultimate result, the evaluation will be not only successful, but also useful. But what exactly is a stakeholder?

The CDC defines stakeholders as “people or organizations that are invested in the program, are interested in the results of the evaluation, and/or have a stake in what will be done with the results of the evaluation.” These stakeholders can be either external or internal to your organization. Some examples could be principals from schools you are working in (external), hospital administrators (external), and programmatic managers or staff from other health programs that have a vested interest in your evaluation (internal).

Engagement Activities

- ❑ Consulting leaders, staff, clients, program
- ❑ Taking special effort to promote inclusion of less powerful groups or individuals
- ❑ Coordinating stakeholder input throughout the process of evaluation design, operation, and use

As the evaluator of the project, you could potentially use many different activities to engage stakeholders:

- Consulting leaders, staff, clients, program
- Taking special effort to promote inclusion of less powerful groups or individuals
- Coordinating stakeholder input throughout the process of evaluation design, operation, and use

There are challenges to engagement activities. Common potential challenges include the overall relationship between you and the stakeholders or between stakeholders, defining the roles and responsibilities, and also ensuring the evaluation is relevant. As an evaluator, any engagement with the stakeholders must be done in a conscious and deliberate way to ensure that a strong, positive relationship is established within the stakeholder workgroup.

Why Facilitation Skills?

- ❑ Facilitation skills help the evaluator **GUIDE** the stakeholders through the described sessions and arrive at a result that is developed, understood, and recognized by all participants.

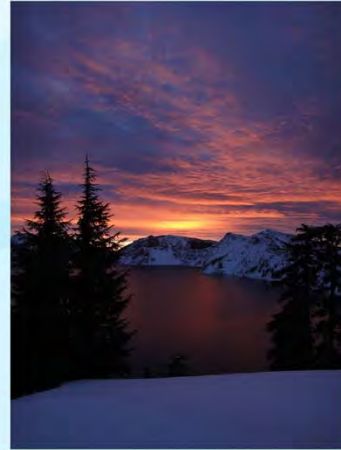


Why should we use facilitation skills?

Facilitation skills are technical skills that can be applied in many different settings. Facilitation skills allow the evaluator to promote engagement by all stakeholders. In a perfect evaluation stakeholder meeting, all the participants are present, actively contributing to the discussion, respectful, and cooperative toward their expectations and needs for the evaluation. How often does this happen realistically? Facilitation skills help prepare the evaluator to GUIDE the engagement of stakeholders toward this destination.

Analogy

- Imagine an evaluator as a guide for either an outdoor adventure trip or road trip



An example I will be using to make the presentation more relatable is to view the facilitation skills in an evaluator during stakeholder engagement as guide skills on an outdoor trip or road trip.

Facilitation Skills

□ Planning

- Destination in Mind = Purpose
- Map & Course = Agenda

□ Preparation & Packing

- Start on Good Foot = Opening Statement
- Travel Regulations = Meeting Rules

□ Exploring

- Rest Stops = Checkpoints
- Navigation Skills = Focus



When looking at facilitation skills that can be applied to evaluation, although many of these would seem basic, they are often overlooked or used minimally. When dealing with stakeholders, it is very important to understand that you are building a relationship with the stakeholders. The information that the stakeholders possess is critical to the success of your evaluation. These skills can help create an environment where stakeholders feel comfortable, respected, and involved. The stronger the initial connection with stakeholders, the more likely the stakeholders will be not just present, but fully engaged in the evaluation discussions.

When thinking of yourself as a guide, the utilization of these skills can seem more practical and realistic in the evaluation setting. In the next slides we will go over how you should plan, prepare, and pack for your “trip.” Mark out rest stops along the route you want to take, and be mindful of the direction you are always traveling in so that you arrive at your destination.

Facilitation Skills: Planning Phase



- **Destination in Mind = Purpose**
 - Builds respect
- **Map = Agenda**
 - Provides topics for a meeting
 - Increases focus
- **Course = Planned Route**
 - Provides direction

The **PURPOSE** of any stakeholder interaction (such as the creation of a logic model or documenting a program description or services that are being offered) needs to be explicitly defined for the stakeholders. The stakeholders need to know the final **DESTINATION** of the meeting because without that they could feel lost or confused, and their buy-in as a participant in the stakeholder workgroup may decrease. An explicit purpose of this is to also build respect for everyone's time.

Once a clear destination is selected, a **MAP** must be used to help you, as the guide, to get the stakeholders to the destination. As a guide for the stakeholder meeting, your **AGENDA** is the map that will provide topics for the meeting. It is the guide's duty to select a course, which is the **PLANNED ROUTE** between points on a map that keep you working towards your destination. There must be points on a map that lead up to the final destination. A stakeholder workgroup will appreciate a detailed **AGENDA** that helps provide context and direction for the meeting. The agenda also allows for the stakeholders to focus on the main topics and themes for the meeting. The stronger the planned route is—meaning a progression of logical steps or topics with a strong flow between them—the stronger the environment for stakeholders to work in will be.

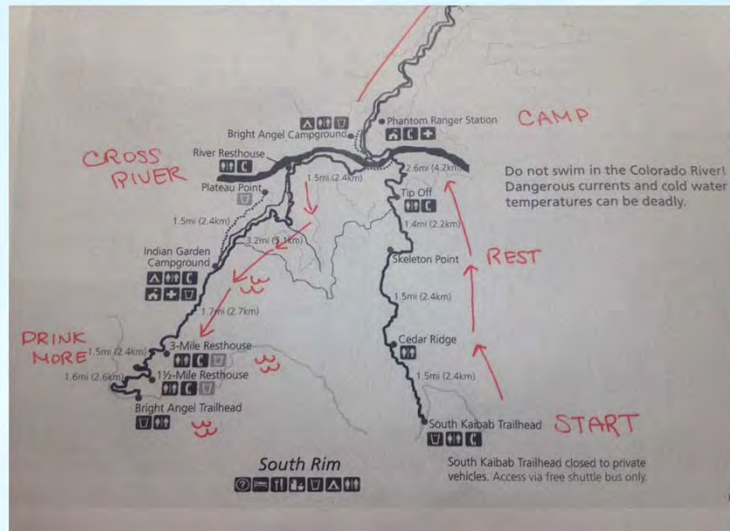
Destination: North Rim of the Grand Canyon



Grand Canyon from South Rim, May 2014

Let's use a concrete example that came to mind for a recent trip. These are my actual photos from the trip. The purpose of my trip was to get to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon from the South Rim.

Map & Course



Grand Canyon from South Rim, May 2014

I obtained a map with specific areas I would travel to along my trip. I then planned my course for the trip, selecting logical points that linked previous checkpoints. I could not get to my final destination without reaching checkpoints along the planned course on my map. A facilitator should review progress before each agenda item.

Facilitation Skills: Be Prepared

□ **Pack** = Prepare opening remarks

- State
- Excite
- Permit
- Engage



Grand Canyon, May 2014

You wouldn't expect a guide to show up to a tour without any preparation. The same applies to stakeholders looking at the evaluator.

When thinking of yourself as a guide, the utilization of these skills can seem more practical and realistic in the evaluation setting. On a tour, the first interactions with a guide set the tone for the rest of the trip, no matter how spectacular the location. You do not want to be a bad guide.

A strong opening will set the stage for a meeting. There are four key components that must be included in your opening: You need to (1) state the purpose of the meeting—along with any deliverables that will be produced from the meeting; (2) excite the stakeholders about their involvement in and benefits from participating in the meeting; (3) permit the entire group by discussing the important role that each one of them plays within the group; and finally (4) engage the stakeholders about key topics to be covered during the session.

Facilitation Skills: Travel Regulations

□ Meeting Rules

- Everyone speaks
- Respect the speaker
- Titles left outside the door
- No idea/concept is dumb
- End point first
- Avoid side discussions
- Start and end times



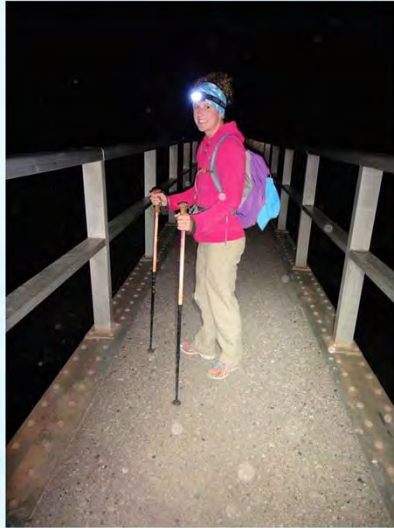
As a guide, your number one priority is the safety of your clients. In particular trips, such as the Grand Canyon, there are signs, regulations, and permits that help you ensure that you and your party are safe during the entire trip.

Within the confines of a stakeholder meeting, the safety of all stakeholders is your number one priority. If everyone is not respected and comfortable, they might not share valuable information that would help improve your evaluation. Having printed out rules or visible rules for all stakeholders to view is important. On this slide, I have listed some of the more popular rules used by skilled facilitators.

By simply listing out that everyone has to speak, all invitees to a meeting, even the quieter stakeholders, understand that their opinion is wanted in the meeting. Letting all stakeholders understand that titles and positions are left outside of the room is important. There could be existing relationships coming into the room with particular people and organizations that would influence the engagement environment. Telling participants to start with their end point is important because it helps the session move from point to point more efficiently. Do not allow side conversations to distract or interrupt others. Finally, stating a clear end time allows stakeholders to understand that they can give their full attention until that time.

Establishing these small ground rules can produce a stronger engagement environment than just assuming everyone in the room knows them.

Exploration Begins!



You are no longer in the planning and prepping stages. The rules have been outlined. Now the engagement begins, or in this case, my outdoor adventure is in motion! Here we have started our outdoor hike early in the morning. Hopefully, with proper planning and prep, we will meet the destination we have in mind!

Facilitation Skills: Checkpoints

□ Focusing the group

- Invokes a positive sense of accomplishment
- Things are getting done



Grand Canyon from South Rim, May 2014

During a tour, it is important for the guide to point out the scenery around them and also describe how far the group has traveled. This creates a sense of accomplishment within the group. Highlighting what has been reviewed and completed to date with the stakeholders will instill a strong sense of positivity that things are getting done in the session. A checkpoint should be used in the time right after returning from any break as a checkpoint or as a review session that you are building upon.

Here is one of my rest stops along my trip – this is me after I had traveled 13 miles up to this point. Looking back on what I had accomplished at this point got me excited about getting to my final destination.

Facilitation Skills: Navigating

- ❑ **Off Topic = Lose Your Course**
 - Remember the purpose of the meeting
 - Get the meeting back on track



Grand Canyon, May 2014

Sometimes in a meeting, you get off track. This is a natural occurrence in meetings, and a skilled facilitator will get the group back on track without using much time. A skilled guide will get their bearing, or direction toward their final destination, and get back to their planned route or course. This is a skill that is often overlooked.

Tips to Better Navigation

Type	Purpose	Example
Direct Probe	Challenge or Probe	That's important because...
Indirect Probe	Probe/Clarify	Is the reason that's important because...?
Redirection	Get Back on Track	That's an interesting point. Can we put that on the issues list?
Playback	Confirm	What I heard you say is...
Prompt	Keep the Ideas Flowing	What else?
Float an Idea	Give a Possible Solution	What about...? What are the benefits to...?

Evaluators with strong facilitating skills will use these information-gathering questions, or reacting questions, as a tool to lead the session back on track or to help guide the stakeholders along the planned course for the session. These refocusing techniques do take some time to master, but like with any tool, the more you use them in different work settings, the more natural it becomes to use them to your advantage.

A guide who redirects a group back on track without raising any alarms about the dangers the group was actually in is a level-headed and confident guide. The same can be said about an evaluator.

I'm sure we can all think of a time when these questions would have helped get a meeting you were in on track.

A good example of this in evaluation could be in a lessons-learned meeting where the results ended up being less than anticipated. After getting some feedback from members, by asking, "what else?" you are directing the members to dig deeper to find information that helps meet the objective of the meeting. Again, a simple but very powerful tool for evaluators to learn and apply.

Facilitation Skills: Navigating



Grand Canyon from South Rim, May 2014

Sometimes even the most skilled get off track. Here we are on the trail, heading the right direction again after a small detour.

Summary of Facilitation Skills

- ❑ Remember to plan for all interactions with stakeholders using a defined purpose and agenda.
- ❑ Prepare yourself with a strong opening session and set meeting rules.
- ❑ Use checkpoints, when appropriate, to help inject positivity and describe the progress that has been made within the workgroup.
- ❑ Even the best guides lose their footing or direction, and the same happens in meetings. Use navigation skills to get the meeting back on track and aligned with the agenda.

In summary, facilitation skills can be extremely powerful tools for evaluators to use to help engage stakeholders. As evaluators, we know that there is important information that needs to be collected from stakeholders. Getting the stakeholders to this final destination can be challenging, but using your guide training, you can help minimize these challenges.

These skills are easy to overlook but can be the key to a successful session with stakeholders.

- Remember to plan for all interactions with stakeholders using a defined purpose and agenda.
- Prepare yourself with a strong opening session and set meeting rules.
- Use checkpoints, when appropriate, to help inject positivity and describe the progress that has been made within the workgroup.
- Even the best guides lose their footing or direction, and the same happens in meetings. Use navigation skills to get the meeting back on track and aligned with the agenda.

These tools will help create an environment where stakeholders will leave with a stronger belief in the evaluation process. When everyone participates and feels like a contributor to the evaluation focus and end goals, the process is more likely to go more smoothly and make this step of the framework easier for you as the evaluator.

Resources

- ❑ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1999). Framework for program evaluation in public health. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 48(11), 1-58.
- ❑ The Effective Facilitator. (2013). Leadership Strategies: The Facilitation Company, Inc.
- ❑ Gangopadhyay, P. (2002, September). *Making Evaluation Meaningful to ALL Education Stakeholders*. Retrieved June 2014, from http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/archive_checklists/makegevalmeaningful.pdf
- ❑ Jones, K. (2014, January). *Participatory Evaluation: Engaging Stakeholders in the Process*. Retrieved June 2014, from <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/CLD4/CLD41/CLD41.pdf>
- ❑ *Navigation: Course, Bearings and Headings* | *PaddlingLight.com*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.paddlinglight.com/articles/technique/navigation-course-bearings-and-headings/>
- ❑ Preskill, H., & Jones, N. (2009). A Practical Guide for Engaging Stakeholders in Developing Evaluation Questions. *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Evaluation Series*. Retrieved from <http://www.rwjf.org/en/research-publications/find-rwjf-research/2009/12/the-robert-wood-johnson-foundation-evaluation-series-guidance-fo-a-practical-guide-for-engaging-stakeholders-in-developing-evalua.html>

Here are a few resources that can serve as handy tools.

Resources

Reference Table on Facilitator Skills

Skills	Analogy	Application
Planning	Destination	Purpose
	Map & Course	Agenda
Prep & Packing	Start on Good Foot	Opening Statement
	Travel Regulations	Meeting Rules
Exploring	Rest stops	Checkpoints
	Navigation	Focusing/Refocusing the Group

Here is a high-level table with the skills analogies next to the evaluator application meaning for quick reference.

Reminders!

New time for coffee break sessions:

2:30 p.m. (ET)

All sessions are archived and
can be accessed on-demand at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/pubs/podcasts.htm>

If you have questions, comments, or topic ideas
for this or other coffee break presentations, send
an email to: **AREBheartinfo@cdc.gov**

Next Coffee Break

Topic: Using SWOT Analysis to Plan Your Evaluation

Presenter: Sue Lin Yee, M.A., M.P.H.

When: Tuesday, August 12, 2014

@ 2:30 p.m. (ET)



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