Participatory Facilitation Techniques Workshop Curriculum

September 2015

The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program is the USAID/Food for Peace-funded learning mechanism that generates, captures, disseminates, and applies the highest quality information, knowledge, and promising practices in development food assistance programming, to ensure that more communities and households benefit from the U.S. Government's investment in fighting global hunger. Through technical capacity building, a small grants program to fund research, documentation and innovation, and an in-person and online community of practice (the Food Security and Nutrition [FSN] Network), The TOPS Program empowers food security implementers and the donor community to make a lasting impact for millions of the world's most vulnerable people.

Led by Save the Children, The TOPS Program is a consortium program drawing on the expertise of its partners: CORE Group (knowledge management), Food for the Hungry (social and behavioral change), Mercy Corps (agriculture and natural resource management), and TANGO International (monitoring and evaluation). Save the Children brings its experience and expertise in commodity management, gender, and nutrition and food technology, as well as the management of this 7-year (2010–2017) US$30 million award.

Disclaimer:

The TOPS Program and the FSN Network were made possible by the generous support and contribution of the American people through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this guide were created by The TOPS Program and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the U.S. Government.

Citation:

Lynette Friedman. 2015. *Participatory Facilitation Techniques Workshop Curriculum*. Washington, DC: The TOPS Program.

Contact:

The TOPS Program
c/o Save the Children USA
2000 L Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036
info@thetopsprogram.org
www.thetopsprogram.org
www.fsnnetwork.or

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to the curriculum for a workshop on participatory facilitation techniques. This workshop is intended as a short skill-building session to provide meeting facilitators with some new “tools” and techniques for facilitation. We encourage trainers to modify this workshop as needed to fit your audience and your needs.

This workshop is based on a session conducted for the CORE Group in April 2015 to improve the ability of working group chairs to facilitate actively engaged working groups. The workshop was modified for TOPS to focus on knowledge management practitioners and other development practitioners who implement food security and nutrition activities and who run or participate in a community of practice, working group, task force or project team. The curriculum has been adapted based on workshops held in July and August 2015 in Washington, DC.

Workshop Overview

Workshop Objectives:

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to select and implement techniques for strengthening engagement, generating ideas, insights and dialogue, and managing physical meetings.

Workshop Audience:

This workshop is appropriate for anyone interested in building skills in facilitation. The recommended size for this workshop is approximately 17 - 20 people to ensure appropriate group dynamics.

Workshop Agenda:

This workshop is designed to be conducted in 3 ½ hours.

Sample Timing	Session Title	Total Time
9:00 – 9:30	Introduction	30 minutes
9:30 – 10:35	Techniques for Generating Ideas A. Generating Ideas Exercise (25 minutes) B. Generating Ideas Debrief (40 minutes)	65 minutes
10:35 – 10:50	Break	15 minutes
10:50 – 12:20	Techniques for Managing Meetings A. Solving Problems through Speed Consulting (50 minutes) B. Using Icebreakers (5 minutes) C. Dealing with a Dominating Speaker (5 minutes) D. Dealing with a Negative Participant (5 minutes) E. Coming to Conclusion (5 minutes) F. Other Challenges (20 minutes)	90 minutes
12:20 – 12:30	Conclusion and Evaluation	10 minutes

Workshop Preparation

Advance Preparation:

1. **Conduct participant needs assessment:** It is helpful to solicit input from the participants ahead of time on their specific needs and interests related to facilitation. This information can be used to streamline the workshop focus and inform group discussions.

   Sample message to send to all participants:

   > "To help our facilitator to finalize the agenda for this workshop, would you mind sending me your answer to the following question by [insert appropriate deadline]: What are the main challenges you face or questions you have related to facilitating a group?"

2. **Arrange for room set up:** This workshop works best when participants are seated in a circle of chairs with no tables. Tables can be provided on the side of the room for participant belongings or as a place for eating any refreshments provided.

3. **Prepare Handouts and Materials:**

   Handouts:
   - Designing Participatory Meetings and Brownbags: A TOPS Quick Guide to Linking Development Practitioners[1]
   - Participatory Facilitation Techniques[2]
   - Workshop Evaluation[3]

   Materials:
   - Pack of index cards
   - 2 Flip chart easels with flip charts
   - Tape
   - Markers
   - Pens
   - Pans of paper
   - Sticky fabric and adhesive spray (if available)
   - Colored sticky dots
   - "Engaging Everyone with Liberating Structures" (1 copy for reference if available)
   - Flip cards for time management (red, yellow and green cards with "Time is up", "2 minutes", and "5 minutes" printed on them respectively)

[1] http://bit.ly/1kvozDt
[2] http://bit.ly/1LpM2yT
[3] http://bit.ly/1LpM0qw

Preparation on the Day of the Workshop:

1. **Hang sticky fabric:** Choose an accessible, visible part of the room, and apply adhesive spray after hanging.

2. **Write instructions for exercises on flip chart paper:**

Flip Chart 1:

Page 1: Welcome -- Workshop: Participatory Facilitation Techniques

Page 2: How can we make sure we create the worst possible, non-functioning, non-participatory painful meetings?

A. Individually (1)
B. Pair (2)
C. Join Pairs (4)
D. Report out (All)

Page 3: Is there anything that we are currently doing that in any way, shape, or form resembles this?

Page 4: What steps or actions will help create a successful, interactive, participatory meeting?

Flip Chart 2:

Page 1: Think of one characteristic that made for a successful meeting

Page 2: Successful meetings (written as header with rest of page for writing down participant responses)

Workshop Outline

Introduction (30 minutes)

1. Briefly explain purpose and flow of workshop:

    - Facilitating a meeting can take place in the context of communities of practice, working groups, task forces or weekly staff meeting. All of these are groups that brings together individuals for a specific purpose to be accomplished over time
    - Trainings on facilitation can be week-long intensive programs; this workshop is intended to provide a few concrete tools and techniques that you can practice immediately. It is focused specifically on in-person meetings and is not intended to address virtual meetings or meetings that are a combination of in-person and virtual.
    - We'll practice several techniques in order to provide some new tools for a facilitation toolkit. We'll explore some techniques that can be used to:
        - Generate ideas
        - Organize thinking/ideas
        - Make decisions

2. Ask each participant to take a minute to reflect in silence on a well-facilitated, successful meeting they've attended. Ask them to think of one characteristic that made that meeting successful. Ensure that participants can see the first page of Flip chart 2 with the question for reflection.

3. After allowing time for reflection, ask each participant to introduce themselves with name, organization, and their response to the question. Record responses on Flip chart 2, page 2.

4. Clarify the types of meetings that we'll be discussing. Ask participants what types of meetings they think about in their needs for facilitation techniques? Ex. Regular staff meetings, task force meetings, strategic planning, etc. Touch on the differences between facilitating your own meeting or facilitating someone else's meeting and the respective dynamics involved.

5. If participants do not start in the circle of chairs, invite them to come to the circle at this time. Let them know that all they'll need is a pad of paper and a pen.

Techniques for Generating Ideas (65 minutes)

A. Generating Ideas Exercise (25 minutes)

1. Introduce session. Let participants know that we're going to incorporate a variety of techniques for generating ideas followed by some time to discuss the techniques and when they are most useful.

2. Turn to second page of Flip chart 1.

3. Ask participants: "How can we make sure we create the worst possible, non-functioning, non-participatory, painful meetings? Please take about two minutes for self-reflection and make a list individually of all the things we could do to ensure this bad result." (2 minutes)

4. After the individual reflection and listing, ask participants to pair up with another person and take the next five minutes to compare and consolidate lists. (5 minutes)

5. When the groups are done, ask each pair to join another pair to compare and consolidate lists. Let them know that they have three minutes to develop their group ideas of perfect design elements to ensure bad groups. (3 minutes)

6. Ask groups of four to share in turn one design element. Record ideas on flipchart. (5 min)

7. Turn to third page of Flip chart 1.

8. Ask participants in their groups of four to go down the list and identify "Is there anything that we are currently doing that in any way, shape, or form resembles this item?" Ask them to take five minutes in their small group to generate a list of things they are currently doing. They should be encouraged to be brutally honest in making this list of all the counter-productive activities/programs/procedures. (5 minutes)

9. Turn to fourth page of Flip chart 1 and distribute index cards to each group.

10. Ask participants "Go through the second list and decide what steps or actions will help create a successful, interactive, participatory meeting. Write each action on a separate card." (5 minutes)

11. As participants are completing their cards, invite them to put them up on the sticky fabric, read the responses of others, and start moving cards around to group similar items.

B. Generating Ideas Debrief (40 min)

1. Debrief on ideas on cards. Ask participants for their main take away messages from the exercise.

2. Ask the group, "What struck you about the group processes? What did you like? What did you find uncomfortable?"

3. Identify the techniques used and comment on how they could be used in participants' groups. Most of the debriefing time should be spent on this item in order to help participants identify the techniques used and how they could be adapted and used for their own meetings.

Key points for facilitators to bring out in discussion:

- One minute of silence: For both the original introductory question and the start of the group process, we started with a minute of silence to enable everyone to formulate their own thoughts. This time is especially important for introverts to actively engage them in the subsequent discussion. Giving just a small amount of time for individual reflection increases the quality of each person's contribution, since it allows each person to organize their ideas and connect new information with their own experience.
- Develop insights by talking: People learn by talking; the more participants can discuss, debate, and analyze ideas by talking about them, the more they learn. In the group process, we used small groups at several different times so that participants could bring together their individual ideas and take them to a deeper level. A small group of 3-5 members is the size that produces the richest and most in-depth thinking. It is large enough to contain diverse views, yet small enough for members to engage each other. Engaging each other means asking questions to clarify the meaning another has expressed and challenging as well as building on others' ideas.
- Small to large: After small groups have been in conversation, their ideas need to be brought together in a larger group setting to integrate their insights into the thinking of the whole. In a lengthy meeting, small and large group discussions can be alternated to stimulate knowledge creation and synthesis.
- TRIZ: TRIZ is a technique from the guide *Engaging Everyone with Liberating Structures* that can help a group think creatively about how to solve a problem or improve a complex process by thinking about the opposite of the desired result. As a structured creativity exercise, TRIZ works best in a small group (5-8 participants), but can be used in larger groups by applying the technique in several small groups working in parallel and then bringing pairs or trios of groups together to share and integrate their insights. In this exercise, we accomplished this by pairing TRIZ with 1-2-4-All.
- 1-2-4-All: This technique is outlined in the same guide. It is useful to build on the benefits of self-reflection, small group analysis and the building of group consensus. The technique gets everyone in the room engaged in the conversation and produces a natural synthesis of the ideas as pairs or trios join and integrate their ideas.
- Report outs by main idea: Complete report outs from each group can get really tedious and repetitive. Asking for key points brings out main ideas and captures the essence of the information discussed in an active, engaging manner.

4. Explain that following the solicitation of ideas, you need a way to critique/rank/focus ideas and move the best ones forward. Ask the group for the technique used in this exercise as well as other techniques they might use.

Key points for facilitators to bring out in discussion:

- Posting ideas on index cards and sorting: The technique used here is useful to bring out key points, enable participants to see the ideas generated, and move ideas around to sort them into a logical progression.
- Dot voting: This is a useful technique that enables participants to vote for their own priorities or interests and then have a good visual of the outcome of the group voting. Participants can be given any number of colored dots and instructed to vote for the ideas they would support moving forward. This technique can be easily modified based on the number of votes provided and the specific question provided for voting.
- Voting with your feet: Another visual technique, voting with your feet requests that participants move towards the item (ex. activity, position statement, etc), that they support. Discussions can be held among people in each grouping.
- Turf to small group development: Sometimes it is more appropriate to move the next steps to a small group situation. Depending on the dynamics and the specific situation, this might be something to send to a specific task team or leadership group or to request a volunteer subcommittee to take the discussion to the next level and report back to the whole group.

5. Let participants know that they will receive a handout at the end of the workshop that provides written information and links on these and other techniques.

6. Refer participants to the reference book *Engaging Everyone with Liberating Structures* for more information on TRIZ and 1-2-4-All as well as other techniques.

Break (15 minutes)

Techniques for Managing Meetings (80 minutes)

A. Solving Problems through Speed Consulting (50 minutes)

1. Explain that we're going to start the session on techniques for managing meetings using the speed consulting technique. For this technique, we're going to need three volunteers who would like to raise a problem they have in managing meetings. The benefit to the problem owner is that they get a small group of "high priced consultants" who are paid by the minute to focus on their specific problem for fifteen minutes. The rest of the group will get the chance to select the problem they would most like to discuss and join that problem owner.

2. Ask for three problem owners. If there are not enough volunteers, a problem can be selected from the issues raised in the needs assessment. Examples include: how to balance the role of facilitating/participating/leading; how to engage quieter individuals; getting participants to prep prior to meetings; reeling in the conversation when one person takes over.

3. Ask problem owners to each explain their challenge to the whole group. Ask the rest of group to join a circle around the problem owner with which they want to consult (ensuring roughly equal sized groups). (15 minutes)

4. Implement one round of speed consulting. Groups may need some prompting to ensure that they provide enough time for each individual to give their advice and don't spend too much time further describing the problem. (15 minutes)

5. Debrief on suggestions. Ask the problem owners what good ideas they heard. Take notes on ideas to provide to participants following the meeting. (10 minutes)

6. Debrief on speed consulting technique. Ask both the problem owners and the consultants how they felt and what they got out of the technique. (5 minutes)

   Key point: Typically, both groups of participants will voice surprise at the breadth and value of ideas that they heard.

B. Using Icebreakers (5 min)

1. Ask the group to stand along a line based on their reaction to this sentence: "Icebreakers should always be included in meetings?" One end of the line is completely agree, one end is disagree (middle is 'it depends').

2. Ask each grouping to explain why they chose their position on the line.

3. Explore issues around types of icebreakers and appropriateness for various audiences.

Key points for facilitators to bring out in discussion:

- The purpose of an icebreaker is to "break the ice". It is useful at the beginning of a workshop or meeting to help people feel comfortable, meet each other, and potentially introduce the topic area. Energizers, by contrast, are used at any point in a workshop or meeting and their purpose is to get participants moving and bring up the overall energy level in the meeting. Energizers are often useful following a meal or between a number of presentations.
- Some people are uncomfortable with icebreakers. They may not feel comfortable talking to the whole group, providing potentially personal information, or engaging in "silly" exercises. There are a wide variety of icebreakers that can be used and the key point is to select one that will be appropriate for the audience and setting. Icebreakers can be done in the whole group or in small dyads or table settings. They can be focused solely on getting people comfortable and acquainted or they can be tailored to fit a specific learning objective or move the content of the meeting forward.
- Lists of icebreakers can be found in books and on-line. It is useful to look through these lists for ideas that would be appropriate or adaptable for a specific setting.
- Many good ideas for icebreakers used or experienced by participants generally emerge from the discussion around this activity.

4. Explain that the voting technique used in this exercise to discuss icebreakers is a technique that can be used in various contexts to engage people and generate discussion.

Note: Adapt Items C, D, and E as needed based on the problems that emerged during speed consulting and debriefing sessions. If a specific challenge has already been addressed in the workshop, it does not need to be repeated and more time can be given to discussion of other challenges (F).

C. Dealing with a Dominating Speaker (5 minutes)

1. Let participants know that they will now experience the first in a short series of meeting interactions designed to practice managing difficult personalities and meeting dynamics.
2. Ask for a volunteer who can talk for a period of time about any subject. Explain that the volunteer can say "blah, blah, blah…" if they don't have anything else to say. You can also recruit this volunteer ahead of time.
3. Provide the group with color coded flip cards.
4. Ask the volunteer to start talking and invite participants to jump in to demonstrate how they could try to get the speaker to stop talking. Ask them to start with milder, more discrete methods.
5. Rapidly transition through several volunteers to ensure that more participants have a chance to engage and only one method is demonstrated per participant.
6. Debrief on various techniques that could be used.

Key points for facilitators to bring out in discussion:

- The basic technique is to use color coded flip cards with minutes remaining. It is useful to explain cues to speakers ahead of time and let them know where you will be sitting. Most speakers will indicate that they have seen your cue with a slight nod.
- If the speaker does not see (or respect) the card cue, proceed as needed to intensify the cue by waving the card or standing up to attract their attention.
- Progressively more aggressive cues include walking towards podium, politely (but firmly) addressing the speaker, and (in an extreme situation) starting the applause
- Techniques that are helpful to manage speaker time ahead of time include communicating clear expectations and reviewing their Power Points to ensure that they do not intend to cover too many slides for the time allotted.
- If you are facilitating a meeting for someone else, it is important to get guidance ahead of time for how assertive they would like the facilitation to be in regards to time. Organizers can specify whether they would like to stay strictly to the time schedule in order to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak, if there are certain issues that may need to be provided with more time flexibility based on the level and direction of the discussion, or if there are certain individuals (often based on political position) who should be granted greater flexibility.
- In general, good time management respects everyone's time and helps ensure that participants and organizers achieve what they need to achieve in the allotted time.

D. **Dealing with a Negative Participant** (5 minutes)

1. Ask several volunteers to move their chairs into a smaller circle in the middle of the larger circle (i.e. fishbowl set up).
2. Ask for a volunteer to facilitate the group in a brainstorming around ideas for an office social.
3. Provide them with a flip chart and marker.
4. Ask for a volunteer to play the role of the disruptive, negative person in a meeting who either tries to monopolize the time or provides negative feedback on the suggestions of others.
5. Invite participants to take turns practicing techniques to mitigate the situation.
6. Debrief on various techniques that could be used.

Key points for facilitators to bring out in discussion:

- Call on others if their hands are raised or state that you are looking for input from the other side of the room or from people who haven't yet provided it.
- Remind participants of the ground rules of brainstorming and the importance of not applying critique until all the ideas are out.

- State that the person is raising some important ideas and suggest when that can be properly addressed.
- Place a hand on the person's shoulder (assuming this is culturally appropriate).
- Pull the person aside at a break and ask their help in encouraging others to speak up.
- Understand your audience ahead of time and prepare for certain dynamics.
- It may be useful to explore the potential sources of the negative feedback in greater depth prior to the meeting.

E. **Coming to Conclusion** (5 minutes)

1. Build off the same scenario above requesting new volunteers to help the group come to conclusions and next steps.

2. Facilitate a rapid succession of brief input from participants to use different techniques.

3. Debrief on various techniques that can be used including:
    - Bring up time check to draw attention to next steps (i.e. we have 20 minutes left and we need to leave here with a clear way forward).
    - Summarize key points you have heard during the discussion so far.
    - Repeat request for next steps coming out of meeting and write up commitments. (note: this is helpful especially when the group is tending to ramble).
    - If the group is not able to provide clear direction, suggest that a small subgroup meet and distribute suggestions for moving forward.
    - Ensure that there is a clear conclusion and verbalization of the way forward by the end of the meeting so that there is no confusion amongst participants.

F. **Other Challenges** (20 minutes)

1. Ask participants for any other meeting management challenges that have not yet been discussed. Provide guidance and ask other participants to provide their input and ideas.

Key points for facilitators to bring out in discussion:

- There are various strategies to engage both introverts and extraverts. Both groups can benefit from silent reflection before commenting. Techniques such as 1-2-4-All enable introverts to think about their responses and temper the initial responses from extroverts so that everyone comes up with better quality questions or comments. Introverts especially, benefit from having advance agendas and meeting materials so that they can come prepared with their thoughts and ideas.
- When facilitating a meeting, don't share your stress related to timing or a change of plans in the agenda. Modify the agenda or your actions as needed to get the meeting back on schedule, but provide the participants with the illusion that everything is going as planned.
- The guide Designing Participatory Meetings and Brownbags: A TOPS Quick Guide to Linking Development Practitioners includes a number of useful tips. There are tips on making room for reflection and dialogue on p. 6 - 7 and time keeping tips on p. 8 – 9.

Conclusion and Evaluation (10 minutes)

1. Distribute handouts and provide a brief overview of the information found in each document.

2. Draw the following columns on a flip chart with plus on the left side and delta (Δ) on the right.

+	Δ

3. Explain that you would like to solicit both the traditional individual, written feedback, along with a group +/Δ so that participants can build on each other's ideas. Explain that this technique is useful after any meeting or workshop to collect group input and ideas. First request input on what participants liked about the workshop (record on left side). Then request input on what participants would like to see done differently (record on right side). Resist the urge to respond or react to suggestions and honor each suggestion by recording it on the flip chart.

4. Distribute written evaluations to participants and ask for their input.

5. Thank participants for their involvement.

Workshop Follow-up

Provide participants with notes capturing the main input from the various exercises along with electronic copies of the handouts and contact information for participants (if appropriate).

Appendix I: Workshop Handouts

Designing Participatory Meetings and Brownbags: A TOPS Quick Guide to Linking Development Practitioners

Available at http://bit.ly/1kvozDt

This quick guide provides suggestions and ideas for sessions that will be more conducive to learning, adoption, and action than the more traditional expert-led lecture in front of a passive audience. Underpinning the ideas presented in this guide is the belief that meeting participants have a wealth of useful experiences and ideas. Meetings and brownbags that can unlock the opportunity for sharing, discussion, and debate will produce the best opportunities for learning and a dynamic exchange of information.

Participatory Facilitation Techniques

Full handout included in coming pages, and available at http://bit.ly/1LpM2yT

This handout profiles over 10 participatory facilitation techniques, including summaries of the techniques and guidance on how to apply them in meetings. A list of tips for working with groups is also included.

Workshop Evaluation

Full handout included in coming pages, and available at http://bit.ly/1LpM0qw

The workshop evaluation gives participants an opportunity to provide feedback. It can be customized for individual needs.

Participatory Facilitation Techniques

Some of the techniques profiled in this mini-workshop are listed below.

Additional techniques and tips are provided in *Designing Participatory Meetings and Brownbags: A TOPS Quick Guide to Linking Development Practitioners*, available at: http://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/designingparticipatorymeetingsfinal_0.pdf

The guide *Engaging Everyone with Liberating Structures* by Group Jazz is also an excellent resource, available at: http://www.groupjazz.com/documents/EngagingEveryone.pdf.

Technique	How to apply in meetings
1-2-4-ALL is a technique from the guide *Engaging Everyone with Liberating Structures* that facilitates rich conversation in small groups and then brings the small groups together to integrate their ideas around an important question or issue. Give participants a short amount of time to silently reflect on a question or issue (1). Then ask participants to find one other person and share their ideas. You can invite them to talk to the person next to them or, if you'd like them to move around and mix it up a bit more, ask them to stand up and find a partner (2). Give the pairs 5-10 minutes to discuss the question. Then ask two pairs to join up (4). Suggest that they each first share interesting things they heard or said in the previous rounds. Then continue with the conversation as a group. Less time is needed in the pairing of pairs. Then invite everyone back to the whole group (All). Without "calling on" individual small groups, ask an open question such as "What insights emerged from your conversation?" or "What did you learn that is important for the large group to understand?". The technique can also be done as 1-3-6-All, using trios rather than pairs. *Read more: https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/1-2-4-all*	1-2-4-All can be used to generate, discuss, or reflect on questions of interest to the working group, including develop action agendas. The technique gets everyone in the room engaged in the conversation and produces a natural synthesis of the ideas as pairs or trios join and integrate their ideas.
25-to-10 (Crowd Sourcing) is a technique from the guide *Engaging Everyone with Liberating Structures* for quickly generating and rating ideas. Distribute one index card to every participant. Pose a question, and ask everyone to think about their best response/idea silently, and then write it clearly on the card. When all have completed their card, ask everyone to mill around swapping cards repeatedly until the cards have churned and no one has their own card. At the signal, ask participants to pair off. Each person reads the idea on the card in their hand and tries to sell the idea to the other person. Then trade cards and rate the idea on the card on a scale of 1-5: "5" being fabulous and "1" just OK. At the signal, each person makes a new pair and repeats the procedure. Repeat five times. At round 5, each card should have 5 ratings. Each person adds up the score for the card in their hand. The facilitator asks for any idea with a score of 25…24…23..etc. until the highest scored idea is identified. Ask the person to read the highly rated idea aloud. Continue to identify and read out the top 10 high scores. If the group is small, each card can be used to express more than one idea.	This is a great method to generate ideas and get the sense of the entire group about them, allowing for ideas to be rank-ordered.

Technique	How to apply in meetings
Card Sorting is a way of gathering and organizing ideas that draws on the knowledge of the whole group. Similar to 25-to-10, each participant reflects on a question and writes one idea on a card or post-it (you can allow people to generate more than one card). It is helpful to have a sticky wall on which cards can be posted and reposted, or butcher paper if post-its are used. After all the ideas have been generated and posted, ask all to look at the posted ideas and begin sorting them into like groups, such as ideas that can be easily implemented together. Encourage participants to add names for the groups or categories. Once ideas have been sorted into like groups, ideas can be rank ordered by giving each participant an equal number of colored dots to vote on the ideas (e.g., a participant can places 1 dot on each of 10 ideas, or weights their vote by placing more than 1 dot on an idea they feel strongly about).	Card sorting and voting is a fast way to generate written ideas and engage the whole group in categorizing and ranking them.
Field Trip Around the Room is a technique that can be used in a meeting to organize how members of the group discuss several topics and integrate their ideas for how to address them. It uses small group conversation and successive discussions of the same topic by different groups to help to integrate the ideas of the whole group around specific topics/questions posted on flip charts in the corners of the room. To organize the field trip, divide the participants into groups—one group for each issue to be discussed (ideally, 5-8 people per group). (A quick way to divide participants into groups is to have them count off in sequence—1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.—and join the group of the number they said.) Have each group stand by one of the flip charts, and when instructed to do so, discusses the topic/question and writes their answers on the flipchart in a 10-minute round. Each group has the opportunity to address the issues on each chart sequentially in 10-minute intervals before moving on to the next chart. Each group leaves one person behind to explain what their group has just put on the chart – that person has 1 minute to explain before moving on to rejoin his or her group. After every group has worked on every flip chart, have the groups return to the flip chart they started at. Give each group a few minutes to study the comments left by all groups and then give a short report-out of the key ideas noted on the chart and suggest next steps to follow up on these ideas. *Read more: https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/field-trip-around-room*	This technique is a good alternative to plenary discussion when you have several issues that specific groups need to discuss. Similar in concept to a knowledge café but faster and engages the participants in creating the synthesis notes.
Gallery Walk (aka Walk-About) is a technique from the guide *Engaging Everyone with Liberating Structures* that gets the whole room on its feet to take a walking tour of posters or flip chart pages generated by different groups that reflect each group's answers to a question or series of questions. All the charts are posted around the room, and the whole group walks around to look at them one at a time. A member of the group can be asked to share one or two highlights, or the meeting facilitator can make comments on each chart, but most of the information is conveyed as participants read each chart. After the gallery walk, ask for reflections on what people saw with an open, inviting question, such as "What stood out for you?"	This is an energizing way to organize small group report-outs because it gets everyone on their feet and moving around the room.
A **Knowledge Café** is a method for hosting conversations about questions that	When a technical

Technique	How to apply in meetings
foster discussion about topics important to participants. These conversations link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into the questions or issues. The Café host asks the meeting participants to sit as groups of five to six people at small tables covered in paper to allow for participants to write on the table cover. Each table has a clearly identified question (e.g., written on a table tent). In Round 1, participants discuss the "table question" for 20 to 30 minutes and make notes on the table paper. The table host uses a notebook to summarize the discussion as it continues. When the café facilitator gives the signal, everyone except the table host moves to another table of their choice. Ideally, the members of the table should try to choose different tables so that they do not move from table to table as a group. In subsequent rounds, the table host welcomes the new guests and briefly shares the main ideas, themes and questions of the initial conversation to encourage new table guests to link and connect ideas coming from their previous table conversations. By providing opportunities for people to move in several rounds of conversation, ideas, questions, and themes begin to link and connect. At the end of the three rounds, all of the tables or conversation clusters in the room will be cross-pollinated with insights from prior conversations. *Read more: https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/knowledge-café*	team has a large event with multiple stakeholders or staff from field offices present, a Knowledge Café can be organized in order to engage all participants in conversation around a set of pre-determined questions. The design also encourages discussion among different groups, since participants move independently among tables to discuss questions that interest them.
Popcorn Report-outs is a technique for eliciting comments from those who feel moved to share them, rather than calling on tables or groups sequentially to report out. Ask the open question, "What did you hear in your small group that is important for the whole group to understand?" and allow the group to think for 20-30 second before you say anything further. Some people will be moved to shared (like the first kernels of popping popcorn), and hearing from a few people will likely encourage others to also share reflections. The facilitator can also ask a question such as, "Did anyone have a different view?" to elicit other views. Hearing from 5-8 individuals in a large group can create a sense of the key issues discussed across the small groups and takes less time and usually involves less repetition than group-by-group report-outs.	Use to bring the ideas of small group discussions back to the whole or to get a sense of how participants reacted to a presentation.
Speed Consulting is a group technique that draws on the experience of participants to advise another participant on how to address a specific problem or issue. It uses small group conversation and a fast-paced schedule to focus participants on providing concrete, actionable advice. In advance, identify a number of people (around 10% of the total) with a program implementation issue which they would like help with – they are to play the role of the client who will be visited by a team of brilliant management consultants. Implementation issues should not be highly complex; ideally, each issue could be described in three minutes or less. Sit one issue owner at each table. Everybody else at the table plays the role of the high-priced consultant—paid by the minute! The issue	This is an engaging way to build in peer problem solving into any meeting.

Technique	How to apply in meetings
owner remains at the table throughout the exercise, while the groups of “visiting consultants” move around. 15 minutes per round is usually enough time for the consultants to dispense valuable advice based on their own experience. The time pressure is designed to prevent any one person monopolizing the time with long-winded explanations. Can be done with 1-3 rounds, depending on how much time is available. As the end of the exercise, ask the issue owners to comment on the input they received, and then ask the consultants to do the same. Typically, both groups of participants will voice surprise at the breadth and value of ideas that they heard. *Read more: https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/speed-consulting*	
Speed Networking is a technique from the guide *Engaging Everyone with Liberating Structures* for getting all participants in a meeting to reflect on a question and share their insights with others in small group conversation. Invite everyone to think individually about a provocative question that relates to the purpose of the meeting or the group. Make it a question that levels the playing field and for which there is no “right” answer—something that everyone in the group has an equal ability to talk about. Tell participants that when they hear the bell, they should find a partner. Explain that partnering with a person they know less well than they know others will be most interesting. Invite the pairs to have a conversation about the suggested question. After a short time (5-10 minutes depending on how much total time you have), ring a bell or use some signal to let participants know it is time to find another partner and have another conversation. Ask participants to raise their hand if they are looking for a partner so everyone can see who else needs a partner. Three “rounds” are usually sufficient to allow for a lot of mixing and conversation. Tell participants that when the bell rings continuously, they should stop their conversation and come back to the large group. Have a short large group conversation about what the participants experienced in the exercise.	Speed networking is a great way to generate energy at the beginning of a meeting by providing an opportunity for everyone to speak early on.
Storytelling is a way to share knowledge that incorporates the context, emotion and tacit knowledge. The story conveys much more than a series of basic procedural steps. It can contain the rationale, the strategy and the cultural values implicit within the actions taken by the story teller. It is invaluable to put messages in a context that learners can better understand through key details. One way to use story-telling in a large group is to have people gather in small groups of three to five. In each small group, each member has two minutes to tell a story centered on a question provided by the facilitator. Use a bell or other signal to let all groups know when it’s time to begin and when it’s time to go on to the next story. After two minutes, the next person begins their story. Once each person in the small group has told their two-minute story, everyone is asked to get up and find a new small group of three to five people that have not yet heard their story. Repeat the process of each person sharing a two-minute story in groups of three to five people. Continue until each person has had the chance to tell their story three or four times and has heard 12-16 stories. Then bring everyone back into the large group. One way to process what people	Use storytelling as an alternative to formal presentations or as a way of sharing successes or challenges. Because stories naturally have an emotional content (how the person felt about the situation described), the storyteller seems more approachable. Members who listen

Technique	How to apply in meetings
heard in the stories is for the facilitator to ask people to share what they learned from the stories they heard and from the act of telling them. What new methods have they heard about? What insights have they gained into the problem being discussed? What do they want to know more about? *Read more: https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/storytelling*	to another member tell a story are more willing to give that person a follow-up call or email to learn more detail about what happened.
TRIZ is a technique from the guide *Engaging Everyone with Liberating Structures* that can help a group think creatively about how to solve a problem or improve a complex process by thinking about the opposite of the desired result. TRIZ encourages participants to think outside the usual solutions by envisioning what would be the perfect system to prevent the desired result from occurring. By focusing on how to ensure that the opposite occurs, characteristics that may be preventing the desired result from happening are more easily identified and can then be addressed. Groups generate a list of the key elements of the perfect system to prevent the desired result from occurring and then compare that list to the current situation to identify what aspects of the system are actually in place now. For each element of the "perfect system to prevent the desired outcome" that is similar to the current situation, identify what it would take to eliminate the similarities. Use these insights to design specific changes to make in the current process/system. *Read more: https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/triz*	TRIZ brings a game-like quality to the identification of barriers to achieving our desired results. As a structured creativity exercise, TRIZ works best in a small group (5-8 participants), but can be used in larger groups by applying the technique in several small groups working in parallel and then bringing pairs or trios of groups together to share and integrate their insights.
Voting with Your Feet (aka Agree/Disagree) is a technique for engaging participants in expressing their views for or against a position by moving to one side of the room or the other. The facilitator can ask for volunteers to explain their position at each vote, for and against. If done with several questions in succession, it creates a lively milling of the group as participants move back and forth between the positions. *Read more in the TOPS Quick Guide "Designing Participatory Meeting and Brownbags"*	This is a quick and lively way to get the sense of the group on an important question.

Tips for Working with Groups:

- ***Why are we here?*** Think through your objectives for the meeting and the needs of participants. What is in it for them? Receiving information passively is a low-level need and not one that best uses high-value face time. Think of face-to-face meeting time as a scarce and precious resource that should only be used for purposes than can't be better accomplished another way. Meetings that provide opportunities for creating new insights and knowledge, that get people talking and exchanging ideas, and that engage people in problem-solving tend to be more highly valued than meetings where participants are mainly just listening. Meetings can better achieve such engagement and learning goals if they are purposefully designed to do so.
- ***What will happen that will make the best use of everyone's time?*** How do you want people to interact during the meeting? Is there value in having people connect with others who don't happen to be sitting at the table they chose when they walked in the room? At what point in the activity would it be helpful to bring together people of different experiences? Who should come together and when? And how will ideas generated in small groups come back to the whole room? Having a plan for the meeting which describes and indicates times for each activity and gives directions to all those facilitating helps to make the best use of scarce meeting time. It's a good practice to check the planned times with a colleague to make sure they are realistic.
- ***How the room is set up makes a difference***. Classroom style set-up suggests passive listening. Small groups (4-6 people) are more conducive to deep conversation than 10 or 11 people crowded around a large round table. If possible, remove tables and just use chairs. Use of chairs without tables makes it easier to re-arrange participants in different size groups and to do whole-room activities like "voting with your feet" or gallery walks. Tables can also be too conducive for participants to bring out their laptops and multi-task.
- ***Build in time for reflection***. Before beginning a discussion or conversation, ask each participant to think silently for a minute about the question or topic under discussion. Giving just a small amount of time for individual reflection increases the quality of each person's contribution, since it allows each person to organize their ideas and connect new information with their own experience.
- ***People learn by talking; the more participants can discuss, debate, and analyze ideas by talking about them, the more they learn***. Listening does provide us with new ideas, but as long as those ideas are just swimming silently around in our heads, they are neither fully formed nor actionable. It is only when we put an idea together in a way that allows us explain the idea to others, that the idea takes shape for us as well as for those we are talking with. For this reason, new knowledge and insights are best created in small group conversation. A small group of 3-5 members is the size that produces the richest and most in-depth thinking. It is large enough to contain diverse views yet small enough for members to engage each other. Engaging each other means asking questions to clarify the meaning another has expressed and challenging as well as building on others' ideas.
- ***After small groups have been in conversation, their ideas need to be brought together in a large group setting to integrate their insights into the thinking of the whole***. In a lengthy meeting, small and large group discussions can be alternated to stimulate knowledge creation and synthesis. How can the meeting be designed to make this happen—to go efficiently between small and large groups, to integrate and synthesize ideas? Instead of lengthy group report-outs, which can be tedious, try giving a few volunteers the chance to respond to a question like "What did you learn in your small group that is important for the whole group to understand?" Gallery walks are another way to share insights with the whole group.
- ***People are more likely to share insights and reflections when they have already established a connection***. Give people a chance to get connected to each other before they try to construct new ideas together. Use introductions, social activities, information provided before the meeting, or ice-breakers that allow participants to talk informally to get a sense of each other. Icebreakers that allow participants to frame themselves in a way that shows what knowledge and experience they can offer

the group are a good way to establish connections. For example, when asking people at round tables to introduce themselves, ask them to say their name, organization, and then something substantive, like “tell us one best practice that you’ve found to be effective in your work” or something related to the topic of discussion. It is these examples that others in the room are more likely to remember and associate with that individual. Conversely, icebreakers that don’t relate to anything of interest to people may seem forced or even awkward.

This handout is adapted from “Facilitation Techniques to Make Working Groups Lively and Fun” by Lynette Friedman and Lani Marquez, April 13, 2015.

EVALUATION

Participatory Facilitation Techniques Workshop

[INSERT DATE]
[INSERT LOCATION]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The workshop achieved its objectives.					
2. The topics discussed are important and relevant to my work.					
3. My knowledge and skills on the key topics definitely improved and I will be able to use them in my work.					
4. I will make use of the materials after the workshop is over.					
5. The workshop gave me adequate opportunity to participate (speak up) during the sessions.					
6. The workshop activities gave me sufficient practice and feedback.					
7. I am satisfied with the design and delivery of the workshop materials.					
8. The pace of the workshop was appropriate.					
9. Please rate the overall quality of the workshop:	**Bad**	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	**Excellent**
10. If we organize similar workshops in your region on topics that are relevant to your job, will you participate?	**Unsure**	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Always**

11. How was the balance between presentations versus discussion/group work?

Too much presentation   Good balance   Too much discussion/group work

12. What did you learn about facilitation in this workshop?

13. How would you improve this workshop?

14. What was most valuable about the workshop?

15. What was least valuable about the workshop?

<u>Thank you very much for your feedback!</u>

Appendix II: Workshop Advertisement

Participatory Facilitation Techniques Workshop

[Insert Date / Time]

[Insert Location]

Have you ever struggled to accomplish your objectives in a meeting? Facilitating a group can sometimes feel like “herding cats”.

This workshop will build skills in techniques for energizing participatory groups in discussion and decision making. Participants will explore strategies for:

- strengthening engagement;
- generating ideas, insights and dialogue; and
- managing in-person meetings.

Join the [insert sponsoring organization] for a fun, interactive workshop, and build your skill base in facilitating a community of practice, working group, task force or project team.

Coffee and light breakfast will be provided. [if appropriate]

Space is limited. Please register by [insert appropriate date].