

10 Tips to Co-Facilitation

Facilitating a meeting with others is different than doing it solo. Here are some tips to ensuring you are successful:

1. **Agree on the “big picture” before the meeting.** Before every meeting take some time (even ½ hour) to write down your meeting plan (i.e. the people, situation, time and place...). Make sure to include the key agenda items and an achievement for each one. [GLP’s meeting planning tool lays it all out.] Then, sit you’re your co-facilitator and review all parts of the meeting plan to make sure you are on the same page and agree on the “big picture” for the meeting. Even if one of you deviates a bit from the plan, you will get back “on track” if you keep the big picture in mind.
2. **Clarify details and roles with each other in advance.** As soon as you know you will be working with each other, get together to plan. You need to agree on the timing, and who will be the lead for each part of the meeting.
3. **Tell your partner what you expect and need.** The first time you meet, tell each other what would be helpful to you, and how you work best. Everyone has a different understanding of co-facilitator roles and this needs to be shared *before* you work together.
4. **Check in with each other during the meeting.** When possible and necessary between agenda items, check in with each other briefly. Sometimes you just need to tell the person that you’ll want their help with something such as distributing a handout. Checking in helps the flow of the meeting and shows the participants how seriously you are taking their time. The best time to check in with each other is during breaks. Avoid talking to one another when learners are working on their own rather than listening to the dialogue attentively.
5. **Support your co-facilitator in a number of ways.** While your partner is leading an activity or discussion, be fully attentive to what he or she needs *and* what the group may need that you can best do. Helping your colleague by writing for him/her on a chart, taping something to the wall, or supporting a confused working group can help him or her be more focused on the task at hand and keep the energy of the group up.
6. **Don’t interfere.** While your co-facilitator is leading an activity, don’t interfere or contradict him or her (unless it is critical to the learning). You need to stay focused on what is happening so that you can support each other without being an interference or burden.

7. **Set personal and team goals.** Before the meeting, name 1-2 facilitation skills you especially want to keep in mind during the meeting such as waiting, affirming or weaving. [You may find GLP’s facilitator self-assessment a useful tool for this.] Tell your partner what skill/s you are focused on, so that they can give you supportive feedback on these goals at the end of the session. Setting team goals is also a great idea.
8. **Stay on time.** Always try to stay within your delegated time frame. The sessions are scheduled for a short amount of time, where every minute is valuable and accounted for. If you use more than your allotted time, it will impact your co-facilitator’s activity and the learning that needs to happen.
9. **Affirm each other.** Whenever possible and true, affirm your partner. Everyone feels nervous about teaching, especially to peers. You need to take every opportunity to tell your co-trainer what he/she is doing *well*.
10. **Work as a team.** At all times, you want the learners to see the two of you as “a team”. Support each other, affirm each other in front of the group, and weave the work your co-trainer did into your work. You want the learners to think “Wow, you work well together!”