

## How to Structure Group Dialogue

When designing a meeting, a big part of our plan should be the dialogue. We need it to be rich, meaningful and helpful. Whether we are considering how data informs action or working to make progress on a project, ensuring an intentional process is essential.

However, there are several traits and dynamics among learners we need to consider in order to ensure a safe and inclusive space. These are things like:

- number of people
- expertise and skills
- learning preferences
- introverts vs. extroverts
- gender and age
- cultural background
- seniority in the room
- ... and much more.



Here are a few ideas for ensuring everyone is included *and heard*. Try a mixture of the following:

- **solo work** - this is time to think or write on your own before talking. It can be helpful for introverts as well as extroverts.
- **pair work** - this raises all voices in the room, and everyone is engaged. In other words, comments from the “bosses” don’t always take center stage.
- **small group work** - you can intentionally group participants or let them choose for themselves. Typically, 3-6 people is a good size for small group work and will depend on the total number of people in the room.
- **large group work** – of course it is important for ideas to regularly come to the full group. However, it is usually helpful to start with solo and/or small group work before sharing with everyone. This will maximize the number of voices and ideas in the room on the topic of focus.

As you design, ask yourself the following questions:

- *When would it be wise to start with solo work?*
- *When would pair or small group work be helpful to ensure all voices are invited in?*
- *What needs to be shared in the full group? How can the energy be maintained and the focus clear, by carefully determining what should be shared with everyone?*
- *What creative and helpful technique(s) can help the dialogue and engagement?*