

Workshop Summary

Facilitation Skills for Scientists and Resource Managers

Description:

Facilitation skills are used by scientists and resource managers to form productive teams, plan programs and projects, and to implement controversial projects and programs. Facilitators help groups to communicate productively, honoring diverse points of view and respectfully creating options that provide the richest suite of benefits for all.

The success or failure of programs and projects often depends on the support of a variety of interested parties – staff, management, agencies, environmental groups, the general public, and other stakeholders – with diverse perspectives. Productive communication among project stakeholders is essential for successful implementation. In some cases, worthy projects have been blocked by disenchanted stakeholders who felt they had no voice or had been treated badly by public officials. The loss of meaningful participation can negatively affect a project's design and implementation.

This course is intended to be a practical approach to improving group meetings. It is oriented specifically to the needs of scientists and resource managers. Core facilitation skills are practiced and the class will be tailored to the students' development needs. Participants will be asked to complete a pre-workshop skills profile. Students are presented with a wide array of tools and opportunities to practice new facilitation skills.

Course topics:

- Perspectives: *Why doesn't everyone think like me?*
- Meetings: *Different meetings for different needs*
- Roles and Responsibilities: *Who wears what hat?*
- Planning Meetings: *Assessing needs, objectives, and purpose*
- Process and Content: *The two parts of effective meetings*
- Logistical Considerations: *The right room, the right set up*
- Basic Facilitator Skills: *Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Skills*
 - Maintaining Rapport
 - Framing, reframing, and paraphrasing
 - Managing personal states of being
- Basic Facilitation Processes and Their Use: *Use the right process*
 - Agenda
 - Ground rules
 - Open participation
 - Presenting information
 - Collecting information
 - Analyzing information
 - Decision Making
 - Closing the meeting
 - Evaluation
 - Follow-up



A Facilitator's Tool Kit: *Tools that make meetings better and easier*
Managing group dynamics: *Tracking and assessing audience needs*
Group decision-making
Skills practice and feedback: *Creating a safe place to explore*
Challenges: *How to prevent or respond to problems*

Outcomes:

Participants in this workshop will be able to design and facilitate meetings more effectively with lower anxiety and better meeting outcomes. Improved meeting participation of all students is an expected outcome of this training.

Students will be provided an overview of the competencies required for effective meetings. These competencies include:

- The ability to assess needs and design meetings to serve the purpose of the meeting and the interests of meeting participants
- Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator, assist team, meeting leader, participants, etc.
- Managing and facilitating meetings
- Information gathering and presentation techniques
- Facilitation skills
 - Verbal skills
 - Nonverbal skills
 - Recording skills
 - Basic visual facilitation techniques
- Decision-making processes
- Evaluation processes



Intended Audience:

This course is intended for scientists and resource managers who must plan, facilitate or manage meetings. The skills learned in the class are applicable to work groups and project teams, larger staff groups, interdisciplinary teams, multiagency groups and public meetings.

Past attendees have included personnel throughout organizations: executives, managers, supervisors, technical staff, clerical, and seasonal and contract employees. These skills have been taught as part of a broader leadership development program.

About the Instructor:

Jim Nelson is a retired California Department of Fish and Game Staff Environmental Scientist. He worked both as a biologist and as a supervisor of technical staff. He has trained as a mediator and facilitator and has broad experience dealing with challenging public meeting opportunities, and helping groups of scientists organize programs and projects. Following his retirement in 2006, Jim has worked as a trainer and facilitator and has helped many groups with complex technical and organizational issues. He has taught a variety of courses including Facilitation Skills, Public Meeting Techniques, Environmental Negotiations, and Basic CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act). He has authored technical papers on rare and endangered plants and is still active in habitat conservation efforts.

Comments on this course from participants (CTP MD December 2010)

- *Well worth the effort and cost; this type of thing does inspire, build skills, and advocate.*
- *I learned so many directly applicable skills that I will use and will considerably improve my effectiveness and that of my meetings and my program as a whole.*
- *Excellent.*
- *This was very well constructed and well delivered workshop. Thank you.*
- *Great program for us and other local governments to invest our resources in.*

- *Jim and Julie made a phenomenal team. Jim is a very engaging and enthusiastic instructor. He made every lecture and exercise applicable and interesting it is easy to learn from someone who is so passionate.*
- *Great training opportunity, and hope there are more to follow.*
- *One of the best training sessions I've attended; so many things that I can use in so many aspects of my job.*

What Participants liked about this course (participant evaluations Seattle 2011)

- *Content was exactly what I was hoping for, enough detail to be meaningful but not too technical or wordy. Jim's manner and style are wonderfully warm, encouraging, sincere...a true model for the persona of facilitator.*
- *I liked how we learned by doing. The ability to practice each method learned was great.*
- *Always appreciate the practice opportunities. Graphics/visuals are most helpful, including videos.*
- *Skill building, practice with others, examples of feedback and other models were all highlights.*
- *Engagement and participation. Demonstration of techniques.*
- *I liked the way that Jim and Sheri modeled so well the methods taught. Very well organized*
- *The continuous activities, energy, and engagement.*
- *Quality of instructors, both Jim and Sheri.*
- *All tools, skills, displays, demonstrations were excellent. I liked the small practice groups a lot.*
- *Variety of content, pacing, small group work.*
- *Content, pace, organization, and instructors.*
- *The instructors made this class in all aspects, content, execution, and energy*

