



Facilitating Effective Teamwork and Learning

Community-led development needs good facilitation skills and teamwork. It's essential to grow a high trust culture from the beginning; where learning from failure and success is the norm. We may come to the party with fears and disappointments from past failures, so it's important to spend time on whakawhanaungatanga/getting to know each other; sharing our stories, hopes, fears, vulnerabilities and strengths; and achieving some small wins together. This all helps to create a foundation of trust and commitment. We can then build on that foundation to harvest learning from our doing.

Here are a few strategies for overcoming common challenges in growing a high trust culture.

Common issues	Some strategies	We know things are going well when...
Meetings are very focused on the immediate action and there is no culture of deeper learning	Build powerful questions into your regular agenda format. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why did people engage with our Matariki hangi 	There are deeper conversations happening naturally People can unpack insights and learning without it

	<p>event more than our usual community dinners?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are we learning? • Any ideas for what we might do differently? 	<p>being forced</p> <p>These insights are based on the feedback we have intentionally gathered and discussed and fed into our evaluation and planning work</p>
<p>The group gets easily distracted and goes off track</p>	<p>Help the group form an agreed purpose or focus at the start: What matters most today? How can we make the best use of time available?</p> <p>Help the decide on agreed tikanga/values/norms about what's important. How will we work together? What's the overall purpose or vision?</p>	<p>Anyone in the group feels they can respectfully bring the conversation back to the agreed focus, while being open to tangents, which can bring important insights.</p> <p>The group actively hold each other accountable to the agreed group tikanga/values/norms</p>
<p>People aren't showing up to meetings or activities</p>	<p>Meet people where they are.</p> <p>Get to know and work with their reality and their passions.</p> <p>Ask what's getting in the way – e.g. transport, childcare, timing, not enjoying or getting value from gathering... Then respond and plan accordingly.</p> <p>Check that you do have a shared vision – does everybody agree on it?</p>	<p>People show up every time because they are getting real satisfaction and they prioritise this group over other commitments.</p> <p>People use their own words to express the shared purpose of this CLD initiative</p>



<p>Trust isn't high enough to enable open discussion and deeper sharing and learning</p>	<p>Invest time in relationship building as a group.</p> <p>Take risks yourself to share vulnerabilities and deep learning coming from failure and successes</p> <p>Check for confidentiality concerns, boundaries, behaviours that may be holding people back</p>	<p>People feel safe enough to bring challenging issues; share bold, scary or wacky ideas; acknowledge failures and/or vulnerability. They are not judged, but instead affirmed for their courage to give things a go and to learn, especially when they share things they haven't done well.</p>
<p>Some people become the "experts" who think they know best</p> <p>Some people aren't confident enough to give respectful yet honest feedback</p>	<p>Encourage the ako/ako principle as part of your tikanga: we are all teachers and learners. Affirm what you have learned from others in the group.</p> <p>Brainstorm some useful phrases for giving constructive feedback or advice like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What I have found useful in a similar situation is... • I hear what you have said about what's difficult about XYZ... What do you see as strengths that we could draw on? • Whose voice is missing? How could other voices be invited into the conversation? 	<p>People are giving and receiving feedback in constructive ways</p> <p>People are being teachers and learners at different times</p> <p>People are learning to ask thoughtful questions to engage in genuine dialogue, not just give their own opinions and advice or insisting they are right and others are wrong</p>
<p>Venting going</p>	<p>Learning is about</p>	<p>Mistakes are ok but we are</p>



<p>nowhere</p> <p>People getting bogged down in what has happened rather than moving forward</p>	<p>discussing both the positive and the negative.</p> <p>But the negative needs a learning (not a venting or blaming) lens on it. For example:</p> <p>If situation X didn't go well;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have we learned? • What's our part that we take responsibility for? • What could I/we do differently next time? 	<p>held accountable to learn from them and move forward</p> <p>We are confident to offer and explore diverse perspectives, interrupt old patterns, and we can see shifts in people's thinking, motivation and feelings over time</p>
<p>Lack of belief that anything will change</p> <p>Focusing more on problems than possibilities</p>	<p>Collective inquiry can lead from hard places to out-of-the-box solutions.</p> <p>Sometimes getting started to try/do/be differently is difficult. Appreciative inquiry questions can help. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking back, what positive changes have you noticed? • What helped those succeed? • What small steps could we take towards change? • What support might we need? 	<p>Group facilitators acknowledge challenges, and the need to listen and understand root causes.</p> <p>The focus the energy of the group around noticing strengths, assets, allies that could create conditions for positive change.</p> <p>Any innovative solutions and ideas shared are welcomed, refined together through discussion, experimented with through action and then reflection.</p> <p>People feel inspired by new possibilities and perspectives and are clear about actions they can</p>



		take
People in the group not working well together	<p>Debrief at the end of each meeting on what's working, what's not, and what can be done to improve.</p> <p>Help people name the issue, rather than make the person the problem. Help the group identify and use the diverse strengths each person brings.</p> <p>Consider planning a different kind of activity that might help the group appreciate their different qualities more.</p>	<p>Group grows confidence and skills to name and work through conflicts within its own dynamics. This can be a model for what's needed to build a more inclusive community.</p> <p>Problems are not personalised, but addressed early on and constructively.</p> <p>Respect for and enjoyment of diversity grows through experience.</p>
Too much/too little structure	<p>Use regular end of meeting debrief (as above) to tweak meeting style as necessary.</p> <p>Make sure the group can visibly see/feel how their feedback has resulted in changes next time.</p>	<p>The group adapts and learns as it goes, from modelling how to invite open, constructive feedback and taking action in response.</p>
A few people are dominating in group discussions and others are quiet	<p>Review facilitation techniques. For example, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce more structured groups/pairs/threes • Frame some powerful questions • Share your observations or concerns: e.g. I am 	<p>The group builds awareness and confidence in everyone around skills for effective facilitation and participation.</p>



	noticing a few people have shared valuable input today. Has everyone who wanted to contribute on this topic had space to do so?	
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The art of facilitating groups and effective learning requires attention to the constant interplay of three things:

- **Self- awareness:** How am I feeling and behaving? What’s impacting on me? Is anything getting in the way of my ability to hold this space for the group?
- **Awareness of others:** What’s happening for and between the people in this group? Who is engaged/not engaged? Are any tensions building? How is the energy/mood of the group?
- **Commitment to the group fulfilling its kaupapa/purpose:** Are we on task/on track? Does something need developing, untangling, clarifying? What will help the group get closer to reaching its aspirations?

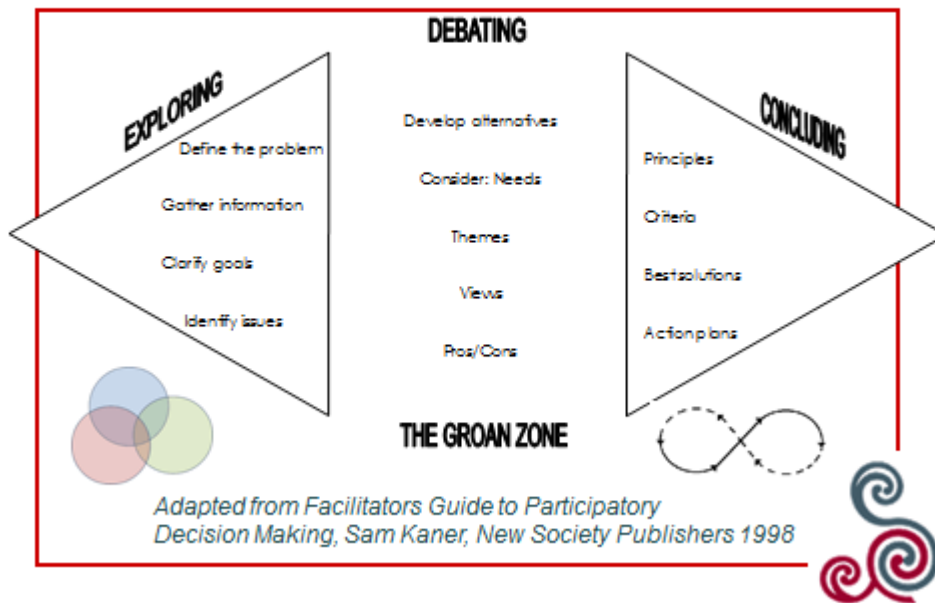
Careful observation of and reflection on these subtle threads are key skills for effective facilitators and leaders. Our awareness of these three dimensions helps shape the practical preparations and interventions we make when we [hold community gatherings](#). For example, how we welcome people, how we set up the space, the kai/food we offer, the way we structure and order time and activities are all important.

The [Liberating Structures website](#) explains how to apply ten key principles to get the best out of conversations and offers a very creative menu of structures for fun and effective collaborative learning spaces. It is a great resource to explore, whether you are new to facilitation or highly experienced.

Facilitators actively massage the flow of conversation by structuring ways for groups to get the best out of their time together. In the exploration phase, structures that ensure all voices are heard and contribute to agenda setting are important. In the middle phase, structures and processes need to enable creative or generative discussion, healthy debate and weighing up consequences. And in the final phase, processes which help group members come to agreement are needed.



Phases of Conversation /Focus



There are some great examples of how to make use of various Liberating Structures for different phases of conversation on the following websites:

[Liberating Structures](#)

[The Art of Hosting](#) and

the Gather tool here:

<https://assets.rockefellerfoundation.org/app/uploads/20130626174021/Gather-The-Art-and-Science-of-Effective-Conveing.pdf>

Inspiring Communities' facilitation skills [workshops](#) are a great place to enhance your facilitation skills. We also sometimes offer online Communities of Practice where you can experience facilitated learning and reflection strategies.



ABOUT



Inspiring Communities catalyses locally-led change, to achieve sustainable, effective outcomes.

We are the reference point for community-led development in New Zealand, building on international and local practice-based evidence to grow and share expertise.

Inspiring Communities operates across many sectors at multiple levels.

Talk to us about your CLD training, workshop needs, coaching, support and opportunities in your community or region. We understand diversity! We can tailor packages to your specific requirements.

Email us exchange@inspiringcommunities.org.nz.



RESOURCES

Harakeke/Flax - from the root to the flower the harakeke shares its properties.



ADVICE

Korimako/Bell Bird - fluent, graceful speaker.



EVENTS

Whakaatu/Presenting - the peak of the mountain as a stage to present from

