

# Facilitation Tips

## Before the Meeting

1. Clarify the Purpose
  - What decision, input, or outcome is needed?
  - What does success look like?
2. Know the Audience
  - Who will attend? (Residents, merchants, youth, advocates, agency staff?)
  - What are likely concerns or sensitivities?
3. Design for Participation
  - Integrate interactive engagement formats if possible:
    - Small groups, Dot voting, Polling, Mapping activities
  - Avoid presentations that are too long
4. Plan for Tension
  - Identify potential “hot button” topics.
  - Develop neutral framing statements.
  - Agree internally on what is flexible vs. fixed.

## Opening the Meeting

1. Set Ground Rules
  - One person speaks at a time
  - Respect differing viewpoints
  - Critique ideas, not people
  - Stay focused on the topic
2. Clarify the Process
  - Explain what will happen tonight
  - Explain how input will be used
  - Explain what decisions are (and are not) being made

## During the Discussion

1. Encourage Balanced Participation
  - Manage Dominant Voices
2. De-Escalate Emotion
  - When tension rises: Pause, Acknowledge, Reframe, Redirect
  - Example: “I hear that safety is a major concern. Let’s focus on specific improvements that would help address that.”
  - Focus on the underlying interest in finding solutions

## Handling Difficult Situations

1. If Someone Is Angry:
  - Don't interrupt, validate emotion (not necessarily the claim).
  - Stay calm and steady in tone, avoid defensiveness.
2. If Discussion Goes Off-Topic
  - Capture it visibly.
  - Commit to follow up.
  - If Misinformation Appears, thank them, but provide factual clarification.
  - Avoid embarrassment or correction tone.

## Facilitation Language Toolkit

1. Use Neutral Phrases
  - "Help me understand..."
  - "Can you say more about that?"
  - "What I'm hearing is..."
  - "Is that accurate?"
2. Use Clarifying Questions
  - "What would success look like for you?"
  - "What concerns you most?"
  - "If we could improve one thing first, what should it be?"
3. Transition Statements
  - "Let's shift to..."
  - "We're hearing two main themes..."
  - "Let's build on that..."
4. Keep it Accessible
  - Avoid jargon.
  - Explain acronyms.
  - Offer multiple ways to provide input (written, verbal, visual).

## Explain Next Steps

- Summarize key takeaways.
- Clarify timeline.
- Share how input will be used.
- Thank participants