

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

STAGE 2: LEADERSHIP SKILL – FACILITATION (GROUP WORK – 1 HOUR)

Objective:

Strengthen the skills of facilitation.

Introduction:

Facilitation is an important leadership skill. It helps groups get their work done more effectively, especially in complex organisations like a municipality and in times of change. It helps individuals link up with others in professional situations. It can encourage consensus and strengthen teamwork.

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP IS:	FACILITATION IS:
▪ Taking a long term view. ▪ Concerned with values and moral purpose. ▪ Pointing out the challenges. ▪ Articulating vision. ▪ Focused on the future, on innovation and change. ▪ Seeking collaboration and commitment. ▪ Giving work back. ▪ Listening to the hard questions. ▪ Moving towards conflict and difference. ▪ Seeking to support others.	▪ Helping people see own future. ▪ Clarifying different values and creating common purpose. ▪ Relating challenge to staff / work. ▪ Helping people clarify own hopes. ▪ Helping people make sense of the new and consider alternatives. ▪ Exploring opinions and commitment; seeking common ground. ▪ Helping staff get work done together. ▪ Challenging assumptions. ▪ Showing people conflict is normal and resolution can be achieved. ▪ Focusing staff on practical ways to deliver better services.

Leadership as facilitation means encouraging people to share their perceptions of what needs to be done, cooperate on tasks and work collaboratively rather than in isolation. Its effect is seen in people learning and acting as individuals as well as through team performance.

Leadership is frequently surrounded by different views and conflicts about what should be done or not done. Facilitation means facing up to these differences; it means providing a structure to encourage progress.

Assignment::

Working in 2-3 groups, use 'blue skies' thinking to generate a new proposal for your municipality to raise the standard of living among its citizens. People are faced with high levels of poverty and unemployment; young people are leaving. Half the population lives in the urban area; the rest are scattered in several villages.

The selected facilitators should follow the steps set out below to enable the group to developing a way forward:

STEP	ACTION	KEY QUESTIONS
1. Generate aims	Ask each person to write their aims on a Post-it note; then stick it on wall and brainstorm for any others.	What needs doing in this situation? Have we missed any important aims?
2. Sort aims	Ask volunteers to cluster the Post-it notes; check the meaning of the clusters with the group.	Have we got all possible objectives? What are the main clusters about?
3. Agree priorities	Ask pairs to agree the top 3-4 priorities; compare lists of the group; come to consensus.	What are our key aims? Are we agreed? Do other stakeholders share our priorities?

Be prepared for a subsequent peer review to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the facilitation and to learn lessons from the experience.

Typical steps in resolving challenges or conflicts are:

- *Acknowledge the challenge; get agreement on the problem.*
- *Express differences; get all opinions on the table.*
- *Clarify differences; what are the dimensions of difference?*
- *Establish common ground; what do we agree on?*
- *Negotiate on areas of non-agreement.*
- *Agree and decide.*

This approach of facilitated discussion may not be simple, but it heads in the right direction. It involves everyone and seeks to bring about agreement. It encourages leaders to confront challenges and conflict rather than avoid them.

Key questions to open such a facilitated discussion might include:

- *What is the nature of the conflict?*
- *Does everyone know about it?*
- *How important is it?*
- *Are we agreed that we should try to sort it out?*

You can help the process by asking everyone to:

- *Write down their initial thoughts on paper in advance.*
- *Use pairs or small groups to generate diversity of views and ideas.*
- *Use the whole group to make decisions and agreements.*
- *Limit your own contribution, as facilitator, to allow the group greater ownership of the outcome.*

You need to be sure that your facilitation is helping.

When acting as a '**critical friend**', be sure that you are not acting as a bully or just satisfying a personal need to be helpful. All relationships involve power, but such power can be healthy or unhealthy. Facilitation needs skill and good intentions.