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Facilitator's Guide

What is my role as facilitator?

Your role is to keep the discussion on track and productive and to create an environment for fruitful discussion, the sharing of ideas, and the exploration of different approaches to the issue. As a facilitator, you are generally responsible for the following:

- Introducing the topic
- Maintaining organization and time in the session
- Confirming the objective
- Creating an open forum for discussion
- Leading and encouraging discussion
- Asking open-ended questions to stimulate thought
- Making sure everyone has an opportunity to participate
- Reinforcing and clarifying the content

How do I run a facilitated discussion session?

- At the beginning of the discussion, introduce yourself and set a positive tone for the session
- State your role/position, goals and hopes for the session
- Make the group objective clear before the conversation begins – the group must agree on this before it can move on to generate alternatives or an action plan
- Encourage participation by opening with an ice-breaker that gets the participants talking early in the session
- Ask someone to volunteer to be your "what have we learned" reporter for the end of the session
- Make sure you are knowledgeable about the topic and feel comfortable with people questioning your sources of information
- If you are asked a question that is beyond your expertise, offer alternative strategies and resources
- Your role is not to lecture or answer the questions. Don't be judgmental – allow everyone to express their views so that they will feel comfortable about contributing to the discussion
- Do not accept answers such as "I would call the Law Society." Turn those kinds of answers around by saying, "You're the Law Society. What would you tell the lawyer or paralegal in this case?"
- In closing, summarize the discussion and ask the volunteer to give the "what have we learned" report and then emphasize one or two points that the group thought was good to keep in mind
- Stick to timelines

How do I encourage discussion among group members?

One of your main responsibilities is to encourage discussion of the issues. There are several ways to do this, including acting as a provocateur or devil's advocate to encourage conflicting opinions. You can also offer real-world scenarios and examples. Be sure to ask lots of open-ended and follow-up questions, such as:

- What would result if...?
- What facts would you select to show...?
- What approach would you use to...?
- How would you use...?
- What inference can you make...?
- What is the relationship between...?
- What evidence can you find...?
- What things justify...?
- What could be changed to improve...?
- How would you test...?
- What way would you design...?
- What outcome would you predict for...?
- How could you select...?
- How could you prove...?
- How would you prioritize...?
- What information would you use to support...?

How do I handle challenging group members?

The **over-talker** has plenty to say and likes to be the first person to say it. Remind everyone in the that it is an equal participation group so if you have 5 people in the group, you want each person to contribute 20% to the discussion. If the problem continues, talk to the person outside of the group and ask for help in getting some of the other members to contribute more.

The **non-talker** is the quieter person in the group who doesn't say much. Try calling on him or her periodically to contribute and provide lots of affirmation for the contribution.

The **tangent-starter** can quickly get the group off track. Feel free to allow the person to go off on these tangents once in a while but then firmly bring the group back on track. If this becomes a problem, speak with the person outside of the group and express your appreciation for their contribution and share with them the challenges you have in facilitating the group, and ask for help in keeping it on track.

The **insensitive person** gives advice, makes fun of answers and other people, cuts people off or does other things that may offend group members. This person is detrimental to the group. Remind everyone of group guidelines and speak with this person outside of the group and offer advice on how he or she can be a better group member.

Keep in mind that **young lawyers and paralegals** may feel too intimidated to speak for fear of getting it wrong. Be especially encouraging of these members and be sure to affirm their participation.

What are the signs of a successful facilitated discussion?

- Each member of the group contributes
- *Only one member of the group speaks at a time and the others actively listen*
- Members are prompt and come prepared
- The group stays on topic
- Members are free to ask questions and provide constructive criticism

Is facilitating a Study Group or a Roundtable Session an eligible educational activity for the CPD Requirement?

Yes, lawyers or paralegals who facilitate a Study Group or a Roundtable Session may claim up to three hours of CPD for every one-hour session to reflect preparation time.

Can facilitating a Study Group be considered an eligible educational activity for the three-hour professionalism content requirement?

In order to be eligible for Professionalism Hours, the session must address topics related to professional responsibility, ethics and/or practice management and be accredited in advance by the Law Society of Upper Canada. You will need to complete an [Application for Accreditation of Alternate Eligible Educational Activities \(PDF\)](#) a minimum of 30 days in advance of the Study Group date. See the Law Society's [CPD Accreditation Process](#) for more information.

Consider using one or more of the Law Society's [Professionalism Case Studies](#) in your session to obtain the professionalism credit. Case studies are based on actual situations in which a lawyer or paralegal was faced with a decision involving one or more ethical, professional responsibility, or practice management issues.

Other resources are available for those who wish to facilitate a Study Group or a Roundtable Session. Please contact us at RC@lsuc.on.ca.