

Facilitator's Notes

Planning a Workshop

When planning a workshop there are a few key things you need to consider:

- Who do you want to come to the workshop?
- How will you get them there?
- Where and when will you hold the workshop?
- What will be discussed in the workshop?

The following are some of the things we've learned from the various dialogues and workshops that have been held through the Food Security Projects. Many of these "tips" are from participants in the National and Provincial Orientation and Training Workshops that were held in Nova Scotia in 2004 and 2005 to pilot test the workbook.

Who do you want to come?

- 10-15 people is a good size for a workshop
- Try for a diverse group of people. Consider including:
 - Government representatives
 - Community Health Board representatives
 - Members of networks for children and youth

How will you get people to come to your workshop?

- Involve a guest speaker or "celebrity".
- Go the extra mile — include potential participants in the planning process and make personal phone calls to potential participants.
- Tie into other programs — is there another event you could piggy-back on?
- Have a hot topic — maybe something a bit shocking. Timing is very important. Is there something in the news that you could use as a "hook" to interest people?
- Let people know that they will be active participants. People like to feel they are able to contribute something to workshops as well as get something back.
- Contact inter-agencies — spread the word and reach a larger group of people.
- Send mass emails, phone calls and faxes.

- Attract media attention.
- Create buy-in or a “hook” when advertising for the event. Show how food security is everyone’s issue.
- Give lots of notice before the event.

A sample workshop invitation can be found on page 91 in Section 7 of the workbook.

When will it take place?

- Pick a starting time that is convenient for your participants. For example, starting too early may make it difficult for everyone to arrive on time.
- Plan to include lunch or other refreshments in your event.
- Consider the season. Winter weather can be an issue for those who have to travel to come to the workshop. It is always good to have an alternate storm day.
- Be aware of other community activities. You may want to plan your workshop to piggy-back on similar events or to avoid conflicting with other events.

You may need to offer money to pay for transportation, childcare and any other supports participants need. Be clear about what you are able to offer.

Where will it take place?

- Have a room that is large enough to comfortably hold the maximum number of people you are expecting.
- Be sure your location is accessible to people with disabilities, close to public transportation and has adequate parking.

What will be discussed at the workshop?

Every workshop you offer will be different, because each one will need to be planned to reflect the specific needs and level of understanding of the participants involved. Start by asking yourself:

- Who are my participants and what is their level of knowledge about food security and its relationship to the determinants of health?
- What sections of the workbook can I use to best meet their needs?
- What can I offer the participants and how can I present it so it is meaningful to them?
- What is the realistic amount of information I can cover in the time allotted for my workshop? It is important to be respectful of participants’ time and leave lots of time for activities and discussion.

- What tools can we provide to build on the momentum, connections and ideas shared at the workshop? Examples could be making banners describing the issues raised, writing letters to elected officials, or a public march to draw attention to the issue. Taking action is an important outcome of the workshop. Use the “Your Thoughts” on page 93 in *Section 7* of the workbook as a way for participants to think about their role after the workshop.

To help you get a sense of how well you did with the workshop, a sample evaluation form is provided on page 92 in *Section 7* of the workbook.

Other Tips for a Successful Workshop

- Have coffee, tea, water or juice available at the beginning of the workshop.
- Arrange seating to encourage discussion and group work.
- Have name tags for all participants and wear one yourself.
- Arrange for refreshments and meals that are suitable for your participants. This workshop is about food security so you could try to arrange for food that is locally grown or produced (support small independent caterers) or organic food.
- Arrive early at the workshop location to ensure that all the equipment you will be using works properly.
- Have information packages available for your participants with up-to-date contact information for you and the hosting group.
- Have a sign-up sheet for participants to provide their contact information.
- Build capacity (i.e conduct a workshop) within your own organization before going out into the broader community. This will also give you practice in facilitating the workshop.

Facilitating a Workshop

As facilitator, your role is to keep the discussion on track and to help the group make the transition from understanding and discussing the root causes of food insecurity to moving towards action. Participants must feel that they can discuss issues openly. It's an important part of the facilitator's role to create an environment where participants feel safe and comfortable.

NOTE: Depending on the group, some dialogues or workshops work best if people introduce themselves by name only. In some cases people may become intimidated or anxious if they know who the other people in the room are and/or the organizations or governments they work for. This may be the case when you have a mix of community members and politicians or other people in positions of power or influence over others. In these cases sharing a name is usually enough.

Icebreakers

Icebreakers can help to make people comfortable and get them started working as a group. Sample icebreakers can be found in the end of this workbook in *Section 7* (page 82). These icebreakers have been successfully used by the Food Security Projects. We've noted which icebreakers work especially well when used with certain sections of the workbook.

Ground Rules

Ground rules are basic agreements that participants make to help ensure that everyone gets a chance to participate and their voice is heard and respected. Rules should be established in the beginning and followed throughout the discussion. Ground rules will vary from group to group, but usually include:

- People will not interrupt other speakers.
- Everyone's contributions will be heard with respect.

In addition to the group's ground rules, facilitators need to be clear that they have some leeway to make sure the workshop proceeds smoothly. For example, the facilitator can reserve the right to:

- Interrupt a speaker who is not on topic, is dominating the discussion or is interrupting another speaker.
- Take a turn as a participant and follow the same rules for speaking about the topic/issue as everyone else.
- Speak out of turn in order to assist the meeting process.
- Make minor adjustments in the workshop process.

Using Flipcharts

Used effectively, a flipchart is a valuable tool for the facilitator.

- It is handy to have two flipcharts — one for what you are doing and a second one for the agenda, items to deal with later, etc.
- Use water-based markers to prevent headaches from toxic fumes.
- Before the workshop, check to be sure that your markers do not bleed through the paper.
- When posting flipchart pages around the room, you may want to use small push pins to hold up flipchart paper — masking tape can sometimes remove paint from the walls.
- Try to record the exact words of the person making the comment. If you feel you need to paraphrase what was said because you didn't understand the comment, ask the person to repeat what was said. If you are unclear about the thought that they were trying to express, chances are someone else in the room is too.
- Blue and black inks are easiest for people to see and read. As a general rule, use red only to highlight ideas, as it may be hard for some people to see. Orange and yellow are very difficult to see, so avoid using them to write text.
- Using different colours can help distinguish between topics. This not only helps keep everyone clear on the discussion, but can also help after the workshop when you are writing up proceedings.

If possible have someone else record thoughts and ideas on the flip chart. This allows the facilitator to focus on the discussion. This person should not be a participant, but ideally someone who has worked with the facilitator and is familiar with her/his style.

Taken from: The Facilitator's Toolbox

Tips for Keeping the Discussion Moving

- Ask open-ended questions—that is, questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” answer.
- Ask for more information when needed.
- Keep eye contact with the participants, especially with whoever is speaking.
- Call on people in the order they raise their hand.
- Know the agenda.
- Protect the process of group brainstorming by enforcing ground rules and time allotments.
- Make sure that people's comments and ideas are properly recorded.
- Pay attention to whoever is talking and show interest in what they have to say.
- Pause after you ask a question and give people time to think about what they want to say.
- Encourage people to voice their own ideas and opinions. For example, avoid “we all know” or “some people say” statements.