



Marine
Management
Organisation



**Developing a
framework to
enable sustainable and
just fisheries
co-management
arrangements:**

The role of facilitation

MMO1280a



...ambitious for our seas and coasts

MMO1280a: Developing a framework to enable sustainable and just fisheries co-management arrangements: The role of facilitation, August 2024

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1. Can you set out why facilitation is important, what happens with or without facilitation, can you provide case studies?

Facilitation involves an independent person working with a group of people to co-design a process and manage a discussion or series of discussions to achieve their goals.

Facilitation is beneficial because the facilitator is focused on designing and supporting a process with a view to achieving outcomes, leaving the subject matter expert or meeting convenor to focus on the content of the engagement. It is difficult for the same person to focus on both content and process.

1.1 Engagement planning

Facilitation takes place within the context of engagement which may be defined as any contacts between the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and its stakeholders.

Typically, this may be categorised as:

- one-way - providing information
- two-way - providing information and seeking a response
- collaboration / co-management - working with others on equal terms to co-develop an entire process.

The stages in a typical engagement plan include:

- identify the full range of stakeholders to engage
- prioritise which stakeholders to engage at different stages of the engagement
- design an engagement process to deliver the intended outcomes
- agree the mix of synchronous, asynchronous, virtual and face to face activities
- have an evaluation plan for your engagement.

The role of facilitation should be identified as part of your engagement plan. At each stage of the engagement, it is important to be clear what level of engagement you are seeking and to design a process to enable that.

We understand that the MMO are refreshing their approach to stakeholder engagement to help them “*know and better understand*” their stakeholders and “*what their interests are*” (MMO, 2020, p 19). You want to establish and build more direct and productive relationships with key stakeholders, particularly the full breadth of the fishing industry, “*working together to establish shared objectives and create opportunities for collaboration*” (MMO, 2020, p 19).

The Benyon Review into Highly Protected Marine Areas (for Defra) also stressed the need for co-management to build relationships which are beneficial in helping achieve ecological success. It is seen that this can be effective at both utilising rich local knowledge and increasing buy-in from stakeholders. The review concluded with the recommendation that “*Government should adopt co-management principles*”

where possible, to agree effective management in partnership with sea users”
(Benyon, 2020, p 64).

Broadly speaking facilitation becomes more important the further you move along the spectrum to co-management. A briefing session in which information is provided with little or no feedback required may not need a facilitator. A consultation event where stakeholders ask questions and feed in views is likely to need one. Moving into the territory of collaboration or co-management, facilitation is indicated:

- to design and manage a complex process of interactions
- to handle conflict, differences of power and personality that arise
- to identify areas where consensus can be achieved and areas where differences of opinion are present
- by demonstrating neutrality in relation to the subject matter, acting as an ‘honest broker’ so that all stakeholders buy in to the results of the process.

The major risks associated with not using facilitation are:

- inefficient and even counterproductive process design leading to disaffection and/or disengagement
- the sense that one organisation is attempting to dominate the process, reducing buy in
- the sponsor becoming distracted from core concerns by the practicalities of meeting management
- only drawing on a small number of models and techniques whereas others may be more useful.

In addition, there are risks associated with using inexperienced or untrained people to facilitate:

- actual or perceived bias on the part of the facilitator (at worst, the facilitator expresses their own views on the subject matter) so the process is not felt to be fair
- inefficient use of time and participants’ knowledge by choosing a suboptimal process
- failure to encourage diversity of participation, allowing certain voices to dominate, failure to manage conflict.

1.2 Case studies from our experience

Cleaning up polluted mine water at an isolated rural site (consultation /engagement project)

We were called in to support engagement with a local community following a breakdown of trust in initial engagement. The initial engagement had been carried out by technical experts, focusing in this case on the engineering solution with little regard for the disruption and concern expected by the local community who would be affected by a new treatment site ‘on their doorsteps’. This caused such concern that a consultation meeting was ‘invaded’ by the community and the whole project paused for a year.

This was followed by a patient process of trust building with the community leading to the building of a scheme within the community. Independent facilitation enabled

the community to express their views, often very robustly, while ensuring that professional colleagues could provide information and respond without being intimidated and without having to manage the conversations. The engagement plan included:

- structured consultation workshops with the local community
- regular communication and updates
- drop-in sessions to share information and ask for community views on this development.

In summary, failure to invest in effective engagement planning early on led to a major delay and the need to invest very substantially in time and resource to retrieve the situation.

Developing a shared vision for water resource management (co-management facilitation project)

The aim of this project was to bring together and so far as possible align thinking about multi-factor plans for localities encompassing both flood alleviation and water quality, issues which were usually considered separately by separate groups.

Our approach involved workshopping issues with multiple stakeholders to create a shared vision bringing together factors. The workshops involved different stakeholders including public bodies, voluntary sector organisations and community groups. Facilitation enabled the different parties to participate on equal terms, building a shared vision through round table discussions to generate priorities which were shared on facilitation boards and discussed in plenary.

We worked with four different catchments to create a shared vision for each locality and also draw together threads of common learning for the approach as a whole.

Key learning points were:

- collaboration taking time up front to deliver outputs downstream, so it is important for partners to be clear about the potential benefits their investment of time will deliver
- how different the different areas were and the different states of maturity, so it is necessary to consider the best 'fit' in terms of approach
- the potential opportunities in terms of resources, ideas and innovation, where a range of local action issues were identified
- the need to connect with wider economic and social issues, exemplified by the focus on development that emerged in several of the workshops
- the need to work on strategic issues and not get side-tracked by tactical and operational issues and recognise that local representatives of organisations may not have experience of strategy making processes.

The International Association of Facilitators offers awards for projects that showcase the impact of facilitation (<https://www.iaf-world.org/site/facilitation-impact-awards>). Further examples are listed in the further reading section.

2. What is the difference in outcomes between self-facilitation and independent facilitation?

In this section we refer to three types of facilitation:

- self-facilitation – where a group choose one of their number to facilitate a discussion in which they all have an interest
- internal facilitation – where someone from within the organisation without a direct interest in the subject matter is the facilitator
- external facilitation – where someone from outside the organisation is the facilitator.

The key determining factors in this choice are cost, convenience, the complexity and therefore level of skill required and, above all, the importance of the facilitator remaining neutral in relation to the content.

[The International Association of Facilitators \(IAF\) competencies](#) outline the importance of the facilitator remaining neutral in relation to the subject matter under discussion so they do not seek to influence the decision one way or another. In the words of the competencies the facilitator seeks to ‘honour the wisdom of the group’ and ‘be vigilant to minimise influence on group outcomes and the content of the discussion’.

2.1 Features of self-facilitation, internal and external facilitation

Outcomes from self-facilitation

Self-facilitation is a simple, cheap option for an internal group. The person facilitating should be careful to stick with the facilitator role only, i.e., for the purpose of the discussion does not comment on the subject matter and focus on ensuring that participants gain the result they wish. If they have to comment, the facilitator should indicate clearly ‘at this time I am stepping out of the facilitator role to comment’ and then indicate when they are resuming the role. If the meeting involves people from other teams or organisations it may be difficult to persuade participants that the facilitator is neutral in relation to the content; this can reduce the level of trust.

Outcomes from internal facilitation

Working with an internal facilitator offers understanding of the organisational context and deeper understanding of the session content enabling quicker focus on what matters provided that the facilitator again remains neutral in relation to the detail of the session content. This person is also well placed to champion the collaborative outputs in decision making later in the process. If that person has a continuing role in supporting a group / project it may be helpful to think of them as a project facilitator. For example, see the Wilson Sherriff (2021) blog [Do You Need a Project Manager or A Project Facilitator](#). A well trained and experienced internal facilitator can demonstrate the IAF competencies outlined above.

Outcomes from external facilitation

An external facilitator will help you develop a process design that is realistic, focused and takes account of the needs and interests of participants as well as organisers.

The ability to maintain neutrality in line with the IAF competencies achieves stronger outcomes in a process that is 'felt fair' by all participants. The competencies also explain that an independent facilitator also aims for the following outcomes:

- a collaborative relationship with the 'client' or meeting owner including challenging and testing your assumptions
- a well-designed process to enable the group to meet their outcomes
- a participatory and inclusive environment during the meeting enabling creativity and allowing conflict to be handled well
- appropriate and useful outcomes are achieved.

2.2 Client perspectives

Our clients seek facilitation support for many reasons. The most common reasons cited for seeking independent facilitation are:

- the client is an interested party in the discussion, so a neutral perspective is important
- conflict or controversy is expected
- the issues are complex and require careful handling
- the engagement approach is complex e.g., multiple stakeholders and events requiring careful design of the engagement approach
- the project leaders want to be able to concentrate on the content of the discussion rather than managing the discussion.

2.3 When should you use external facilitation?

This suggests that external facilitation is indicated when trust is low, because the resource is not available, when working with multiple stakeholders, when the MMO is an interested party and when conflict is expected (see below). Independent facilitation should also bring expertise in ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion are integrated in session planning and facilitation. In particular we would suggest that the regulatory role of the MMO makes it difficult for the organisation to play the role of neutral, engaging facilitator in contexts where the regulatory role is prominent. We have worked with the Environment Agency to facilitate a number of discussions where their role was explicitly one of regulation, for instance in relation to environmental permitting. In those contexts, we have made a very careful distinction between the role of the Agency providing formal input and commentary, and the role of an independent facilitator enabling stakeholders to participate in a meeting, which is not run by the regulator.

In particular this should include reflection on values, interests and power differentials. If not, Bussu and Galanti (2018) report that processes of co-production "*might well exacerbate inequalities*" (p 348) and they refer to the need for *a priori* investment in training of staff or a leadership that is able to facilitate participation from marginalised sectors.

2.4 When should you use internal or self-facilitation?

Internal or self-facilitation is appropriate for simple sessions / projects, when you do not have the resource to fund external facilitation, when you have trained and skilled internal facilitators. If you do use an internal facilitator ideally:

- the person facilitating should not comment at all on the content of the discussion
- that person should be from a different team / specialism within the organisation to make it easier to maintain neutrality.

Building an internal facilitation network

The Environment Agency has built an internal facilitation network over a period of years, currently numbering over 100 internal facilitators. This has been achieved by:

- offering a structured facilitation training course based around the IAF competencies (currently provided by Wilson Sherriff) - all members of the Facilitation Network have completed the course
- creating opportunities for continuing development of Network members including an annual development event
- mentoring and coaching support being available for Facilitation Network members
- having a process within the Environment Agency for teams to seek internal facilitation support when needed
- opportunities for new network members to buddy with more experienced facilitators both within the Environment Agency and among independent facilitation partners like Wilson Sherriff.

Teams within the Environment Agency request an internal facilitator from the Network to support them on projects. These tend to be smaller scale or simpler projects.

Many members of the Network have dedicated roles as Engagement Advisers so can also use their understanding of session design and facilitation in their day jobs.

For more complex and larger scale projects, the Environment Agency draw upon the Stakeholder Engagement, Advice and Facilitation Services framework for external facilitators which is also open to the MMO.

3. What types of facilitation are there?

All facilitators are fundamentally in the business of managing a process. The facilitation role starts by working with the client (meeting owner) to confirm outcomes and design a process, facilitating during the meetings or sessions, and supporting the follow up activity such as evaluation.

The type of facilitation required depends on a number of variables:

- whether you are seeking information, consultation or collaboration
- outcomes you are seeking – tangible, intangible, experiential, rational
- time and budget available
- participants – how many, how well do they know each other and are they professionals, public, knowledgeable, concerned?
- what type of outputs (concrete or more experiential) and what needs to be captured e.g., notes, write up of a plan?
- space – venue availability and scope to set up in a collaborative way e.g., round tables
- technologies available for both face to face and virtual events
- role of the client in the session e.g., expert input, recipient of stakeholder views.

3.1 Main schools and variations

Given the overall task of managing a process, different models of facilitation have emerged, some offering quite tight and structured process design, while others feature a looser more open approach.

Some of the main ‘schools’ are as follows, with the more structured approaches higher up the list and the looser approaches further down.

Technology of participation

A systematic and structured approach derived from international development, featuring methods including focused conversations (see below) and the consensus workshop (which is very similar to the diverge/converge model).

Collaborative decision making

Developed by Kaner (2014) from multi-stakeholder engagement approaches, this includes the diverge/converge (diamond) model of decision making.

Agile

Really a project management methodology but features some key facilitation methods for short-term, agile (as the name implies) decision making.

Deliberative engagement

Involving citizens in decision making through assemblies, panels and juries, the distinctive feature is helping citizens deepen understanding of issues and develop priorities through an iterative engagement process (see in particular the work of [Involve](#) on their website).

Sandpit

Developed in academia and generally used to bring together researchers from different disciplines to generate new research proposals. Heavily features creative brainstorming and clustering diverse ideas before proceeding to refine proposals often followed by a pitching session for the award of funding. Typically, sandpits are several days long.

World Café

The classic round table approach which enables small table groups to work in parallel to explore issues. Now incorporated into many face to face and virtual facilitation methodologies.

Open Space

One of the loosest structures, Open Space enables the group 'who turn up' to set their own agenda and work in their own way. Open Space is governed by the following principles:

- whenever it starts is the right time - Open Space encourages creativity both during and between formal sessions
- when it's over it's over - getting the work done is more important than adhering to rigid schedules
- whatever happens, happens - let go of your expectations and pay full attention to what is happening in the moment
- there is one "Law", the "Law of mobility" - if participants find themselves in a situation where they are not learning or contributing, they have a responsibility to go to another session, or take a break for personal reflection.

Less of a school or method, but very helpful, is a compendium by Lipmanowicz and McCandless (2014) on liberating structures which offers a toolbox of around 35 methods / techniques which can be dropped into different process configurations.

Our approach tends to be to mix and match methodologies and schools / types of facilitation to meet the need of the engagement plan.

3.2 Virtual / face to face

Facilitation can be practised in person or face to face. Each have their advantages and disadvantages, and often it is worth considering a mix of activities within a wider engagement project. This section is based on the work of Wilson *et al.* (2021).

Advantages of face-to-face events

Face to face events are familiar and most people understand the etiquette. Attending a face-to-face meeting signals that certain behaviours are appropriate. They include ways of working - knowing when to speak, how to signal that you want to speak, where to write things down, when to take breaks - and psychological habits including mentally shutting off distractions to concentrate on the meeting. Moving from one geographical space to another - from desk to meeting room - marks a shift of attention.

Human interaction is fuller in a face-to-face event. You observe body language, hear tone of voice, see expressions on faces. The range of possible formats is huge, from

formal round table board discussions at which people raise their hands to speak or vote, through stand-up briefings to open space sessions where people create their own agenda and huddle in small groups. Often there is time and space for informal interaction over coffee and what political operators call 'corridor conversations'. This blend of formal and informal contact enables humans to get business done and build the relationships that sustain business.

Disadvantages of face-to-face events

The major downside is having to be in a certain physical space at a certain time. Meetings can take people away from 'real work' for little purpose. Having to be physically present puts pressure on people with mobility issues or caring responsibilities. Travel eats up time and money. Once at the meeting, many people are uncomfortable. Most meetings suit those with a more extroverted personality. Others hold back while they think things through or find it hard to make their voice heard. The results are often dominated by those who speak loudest. Hierarchy may be reinforced by the room layout and style of discussion - who is at the head of the table, who is asked to speak first? Having invested in booking a meeting room, the content of the meeting expands to fit the time allotted, and it is difficult to leave before the end without at least a good excuse. Although everyone is physically present, they may be staring out of the window thinking about something else or peering at their phones under the table.

Advantages of virtual events

Virtual events allow us to participate from almost anywhere. People who need to be at home can join from there, while others join from different work sites or cafes, even from different countries. Virtual meetings tend to be shorter so there is more time for other work. Virtual events can be more democratic. Hierarchy is less evident when everyone's image appears the same size on a video conference screen. Other markers of difference such as physical disabilities diminish, as may signs of seniority such as age. Some people feel less anxious in online meetings. It may feel less intimidating to raise a virtual hand rather than a physical hand when you know that everyone will turn to look at you. Options such as commenting in the chat may be easier than speaking up in front of others. Well facilitated meetings offer a range of ways to participate - talking, looking, working together to build a picture or create a plan. Virtual meetings allow you to use time productively if the meeting itself is not relevant. Multitasking is an opportunity - quietly working through emails while keeping half an ear open for the important points in the discussion.

Disadvantages of virtual events

Many people are still unfamiliar with how to get the most out of virtual meetings. The etiquette is not clear. It is difficult to 'read the room' without the usual cues from body language and tone of voice. There is a distancing effect and often it feels as though each participant is in their own bubble rather than coming together as a group. Technology is still a barrier. Most of us have learned over the years how to find our way to a meeting room in an unfamiliar town but joining a meeting on an unfamiliar platform can be frustrating, so we arrive flustered and distracted. Inadequate broadband connection or hardware (no webcam on a laptop, joining a meeting via smartphone with a small screen) can make people feel like second class participants. Although less severe than they were, technology problems still get in the way. A participant who must leave a meeting and log in again, or whose audio is

not working, will feel excluded. Psychologically we may feel less than fully present in a virtual meeting. We miss the breadth and depth of signals we send and receive when we are physically present - glances, nods, murmurs, eye contact, gestures.

Hybrid events are those where some participants join virtually and some join face to face. There is a trade-off between ‘complexity’ and having all the technology and all the human resources which is costly, takes time and needs a lot of extra pairs of hands, and the simpler approach. The simpler approach may not be such a good experience, as it is likely to be less interactive. Trade-offs may include levels of interactivity, the types of tools you use, and the technology in the room.

You need to think about the balance of participants - how many are online and how many in the room? In any case you should design it for the people online, as they are the ones most likely to be having the lesser experience. Different combinations are possible. For example, you could have everyone in the room all on laptops interacting with a digital whiteboard, groups in the room working together or groups online working together on different platforms and sharing in plenary.

For hybrid meetings, there is a lot of setting up to do. You need to be very organised and possibly have one facilitator online and one in the room. You can have the main facilitator in the room, or online.

3.3 Synchronous and asynchronous facilitation activities

A further set of distinctions is between activities for which people participate synchronously (at the same time) or asynchronously (at different times) (Figure 1), so facilitators need to consider the most effective combination.

Figure 1: Matrix of different types of engagement activity.

<p>Virtual asynchronous</p> <p>Online polls Shared documents and resource sites Virtual whiteboards (used between meetings) Social media e.g., Twitter</p>	<p>Virtual synchronous</p> <p>Online meetings Messaging and chat Virtual whiteboards (used in a meeting)</p>
<p>Face to face asynchronous</p> <p>One to one conversations</p>	<p>Face to face synchronous</p> <p>Meetings and workshops Drop in sessions</p>

It is useful to consider the best mix of activities for your engagement plan, based on how your stakeholders would prefer to engage as much as on how you would prefer to engage. Considerations include travel distances to venues, availability of members of the public during working hours, accessibility and caring responsibilities, access to and familiarity with technology. Synchronous engagement allows debate

and discussion as well as building relationships in real time. Asynchronous engagement enables stakeholders to participate at a time to suit them.

This in turn leads to consideration of the distinction between one-off facilitation and longer-term assignments where it may be appropriate to talk about project facilitation. For example, see the Wilson Sherriff (2021) blog *Do You Need a Project Manager or A Project Facilitator*.

3.4 Difference between internal and external groups

One of the key differences between facilitating meetings with internal groups (that is, within a team or organisation), or external groups (that is, involving participants from diverse organisations and teams) is the impact on group dynamics. With an external group that don't necessarily know each other the individuals may be united by their interest in the topic, they will likely be quite diverse and not used to working together. A process needs to consider the fact that the group may need to go through a longer "storming" phase (Tuckman, 1965) to work well together collaboratively. One of the big impacts is on the time this takes. A group that is used to working together will conversely have less cognitive diversity but will work more easily together, know each other's opinions and biases, and likely come to a consensus more easily. They will share a same language and have known group norms and culture.

Other factors when considering the differences in working with external compared to internal groups include availability, access to the same platforms and technology (when working online), and expectations of the "event" deriving from different experiences and organisational cultures.

Facilitating co-management

From the academic literature (Haas et al. 2021, Karnauskas et al. 2021, Wijermans et al. 2020), an international picture emerges of the oceans as a common pool resource, governed by numerous actors, formal and informal institutions, and nation-states, for a variety of often conflicting services and uses. There have historically been conflicts between these actors, overlapping mandates and poor communication between the governance institutions (Haas et al. 2021). Legitimacy of decision-making institutions, stakeholder engagement and participation, and empowering communities are seen as key drivers for a more sustainable future. In particular 'conflict resolution practices' are seen to enable representation of all interests, to provide inclusive practices, facilitate fair-sharing and cross-sectoral cooperation. This in turn is seen to transform how humans relate to and interact with the ocean (Campbell and Hanich, 2015).

There are some key issues in relation to the role of facilitation in enabling MMO to get closer to your stakeholders and partners, and in the longer term, move towards co-management and shared stewardship.

What you need to include to co-manage and share stewardship of the sea is:

- protection (including the "*highest ever protection of the UK's blue belt*") yet development of the marine environment
- a prospering yet sustainable, climate friendly fishing industry

- creating shared marine stewardship and collaboration with stakeholders while being respected as an effective, professional, expert marine regulator
- co-production of Fisheries Management Plans.

Here again we would note the tension between the role of regulator and facilitator. In our work with the Environment Agency, we have found that it is difficult (impossible) to play both roles, which is where independent facilitation comes in.

In the MMO's report on the Marine Pioneer work in North Devon one conclusion is the need *"to further develop co-management mechanisms for fisheries and the marine environment that can be applied across England. Co-management could deliver both national and local objectives that provides transparency for the industry and creates a flexible adaptive management culture to better react to fishing pressure and conservation objectives"* (MMO, 2021, p 64). This has been underpinned by a natural capital and ecosystem-based approach. Although promising governance structures and partnerships exist, lack of funding is seen as a principal barrier for ongoing delivery of such co-management arrangements (MMO, 2021, p 72).

We hope that this report makes the case for investment in facilitation as part of this approach. The rationale for investment in effective early engagement and independent facilitation is that it saves money in the long run by building stronger collective buy in enabling more effective and efficient decision making and reducing the likelihood of challenge and delay.

Straying beyond the territory of facilitation itself, co-management provides wider challenges for leadership as outlined in a recent study by Bussu and Galanti (2018) which points to the benefits of facilitative leadership in resolving some of the conflicts we discuss below. Some food for thought is set out in the quotations from Bussu and Galanti (2018) below:

- *"Co-production might well exacerbate inequalities without a priori investment in training of staff and a leadership able to facilitate participation from marginalised sectors"*
- *"When local policy-makers lack specific community engagement skills, they may contribute to exacerbating the 'gaps in community leadership' by promoting actions without reliance on funding; by providing weak information flows with local officers; and by being unable to arbitrate between competing or conflicting interests"*
- *"Facilitative leadership seems the most appropriate leadership style to solve problems of priorities, inequality of participation, scarcity of resources and weak accountability in the co-production process. A facilitative leadership can enhance the participation of weaker stakeholders and support their involvement by providing the necessary time and resources to voice their expectations and acquire the skills they need to co-deliver these".*

We also find a helpful framework for collaboration in ISO 44001, the international standard for collaborative business relationships which also serves as a tool for organisations considering collaboration to develop a joint approach and work programme (see Institute for Collaborative Working for further details).

4. Conflict

Conflict in facilitated activities is where disagreement is expressed in a way that goes beyond stating opinions that differ. It may be affected by personality differences, power, and authority issues or where an individual or group feels threatened by another. Conflict may arise between individuals in the group or between (individuals in) the group and the facilitator. Conflict may be expressed in different ways, from explosive rows, shouting and storming out (confrontation) to more passive forms where an individual withdraws from the conversation and no longer contributes or refusing to engage seriously with the discussion, sabotaging the process or other disruptive actions.

4.1 The value of cognitive diversity

Conflict is to be expected in the context of co-management given power dimensions and collaborative paradoxes. It is much easier to reach consensus where there is less diversity, but a truly robust consensus on something will take time to allow people to understand different viewpoints and allow them to be valued. In considering co-management approaches it will also be important to think about consensus - what does it mean for the group, what kind of consensus are you looking for, when is it 'good enough' and when is it true consensus compared to 'giving in'?

Consensus is not always the best way of expressing the results of engagement. Sometimes facilitation can capture a range of diverse perspectives rather than pushing for a consensus which may marginalise particular groups. An example is Wilson Sherriff's work with a federation of local charities exploring how far they wanted to go in agreeing a common approach. The majority view was in favour of much more alignment and coordination, but a distinct minority favoured local groups retaining full autonomy. Here the facilitator did not seek to define a consensus (still less imposing the majority view). Instead, they reported on the range of views and the decision taken was to work with diverse opinions. In this case – and this is often so – any attempt to impose a consensus or majority approach would have been resisted by a significant number of stakeholders.

Similarly for co-management one collaborative paradox is that it is easier to collaborate with people / organisations like yours, but there are more benefits from collaborating with those who are unlike you (Vangen, 2017). In turn this may mean accepting a higher likelihood of differences of opinion and conflict. Another collaborative paradox is that in order to gain benefit from collaboration the individual parties need to be prepared to give something up – which may be a cherished view, resources or control. The process of addressing these paradoxes can give rise to conflict as a natural part of collaborative processes.

4.2 The facilitator's role

The facilitator needs to bring self-awareness and understanding of what they are bringing to the discussion. Further research (Burnham, 2012) supports this view. Much of what we learn as facilitators is around understanding the influence we have

on a discussion and how to minimise it, our own preferences and assumptions and how to subdue them, and the different ways in which others may wish to contribute.

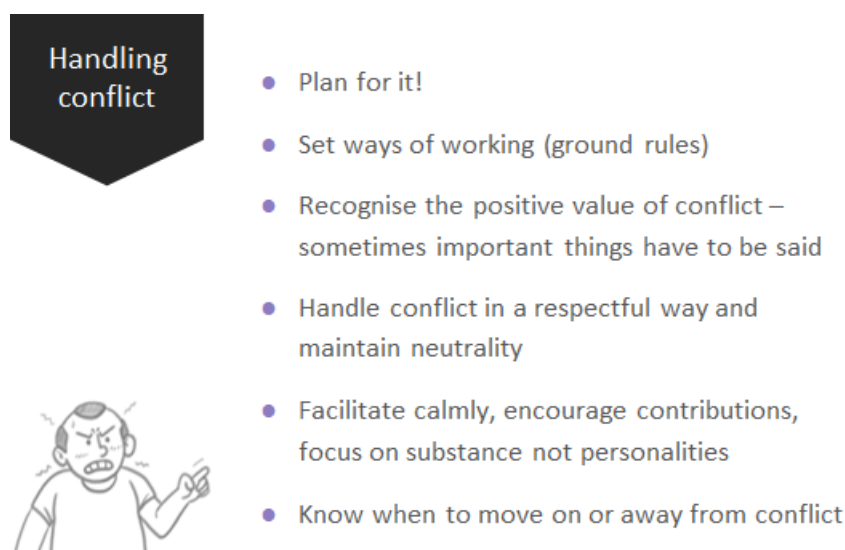
A small but significant example concerns how we like to participate. Some participants are more extroverted and like to contribute by speaking often in a group. Others are more introverted and prefer to keep silent before contributing or even reflect and contribute after the event. Allowing for one approach rather than the other can lead to conflict even if more introverted participants may express conflict more by withdrawing. Good facilitators are aware of their own preferences and make sure to design a process and facilitate in a way that recognises those differences – for instance, providing space to contribute to a shared resource including after the event, as well as allowing time to speak up. The facilitator also needs to consider their own psychological safety and look after themselves in situations of conflict so that their own nervousness does not influence the group.

It is important to anticipate and plan for conflict. Facilitators are always asking ‘what if...?’ in the planning stage, not so they can shut conflict down as it may have value but rather to anticipate how to manage it in the best interests of the group. This may include for instance speaking to participants in advance to identify potential conflict areas and consider how they are positioned.

4.3 Managing conflict in the moment


In a meeting or session, the first responsibility of the facilitator is to scan for signs of conflict which may be overt or covert (see Figure 2). Sometimes it is obvious – when participants raise their voices and explicitly criticise each other – and sometimes less so, for instance when a participant withdraws from the discussion. In either case it is important not to ignore or gloss over the conflict. If it is not addressed the group are unlikely to achieve their goals, and if it is it may add value if important disagreements are surfaced and / or resolved.

Figure 2: Guidelines on handling conflict we offer in our facilitation training.



Handling conflict

- Plan for it!
- Set ways of working (ground rules)
- Recognise the positive value of conflict – sometimes important things have to be said
- Handle conflict in a respectful way and maintain neutrality
- Facilitate calmly, encourage contributions, focus on substance not personalities
- Know when to move on or away from conflict



4.4 What kind of workshop structure/design minimises conflict?

The aim of the facilitator is usually not to minimise conflict but to ensure that it is handled well so that the group are able to surface and ideally resolve difficult issues. The most important consideration in session design, therefore, is to allow time for views to be expressed, conflicts to be surfaced and where appropriate resolved. When designing a workshop or event facilitators are focused on two outcomes: what do the organisers of the meeting want to achieve, and what do the participants want to achieve? These outcomes may be different. We often find that the organisers are focused on information they want to get across and the questions they want to ask the group. More often, participants are keen to have a say, express their views and are rarely keen to sit through lengthy presentations (which can generally be provided in advance so the workshop itself focuses on more interactive activities).

Similarly, if conflict is expected it is helpful to allow sufficient time in the workshop design for important issues to emerge and for conflict to be expressed and handled, where appropriate.

Focused conversations (Figure 5)) take the group through a structured process of questioning to surface different views and perspectives and ideally seek resolution. The diamond process (Figure 6) is a classic session design which enables all views to be put on the table before interaction / discussion (in what is known as the 'groan zone') allowing the group to converge towards a common view or decision. Whatever the event structure, it may be useful to include a session with the question 'What are the areas of agreement and disagreement?' to allow different views to be expressed and considered.

Facilitators will also consider how to vary the process to enable people to contribute in different ways including both synchronous and asynchronous elements to the design. For example, setting up a poll in advance of the meeting to identify different views which may then be addressed systematically in a meeting with further work identified to take forward afterwards.

In workshops themselves, breakout or round table sessions are a key tool for varying the dynamic, reducing the influences of the loudest voices, and encouraging exploration of issues. Working in smaller groups seems to create a stronger sense of safety and can help a group move forward. Of all facilitation techniques this is the one we would probably use every time.

Is there evidence that shows drop-in style sessions provide more meaningful interactions?

As outlined above, a good engagement plan will have several different elements so that people can contribute in different ways. Drop-in sessions have the advantage of diluting the voices of particular individuals and allowing one to one conversation over a period of time. The effect is also to minimise intimidation felt by participants intimidated by dominant voices in a group. During a drop-in session, you may collect views from participants for instance through completing a survey or simply asking for views (e.g., marking a favoured site on a map). Therefore, drop-in sessions are useful in providing information and consulting individuals within a community. They

were a key part of our strategy in one of the case studies outlined above. However, they do not enable collaboration, or the exchange of experiences collectively, so would not be appropriate when seeking a collaborative or co-management approach. The following paragraphs outline some options and considerations for managing conflict with groups.

4.5 Psychological safety

One of the roles of the facilitator is to create and maintain a participatory environment. This starts with the idea of psychological safety – creating a safe space where different views may be expressed (Figure 3). Often conflict and difficulty in groups arises from that lack of psychological safety. Considerations for building psychological safety are outlined below. It is important to realise that it takes time to build and sustain psychological safety as suggested by the sequence set out below.

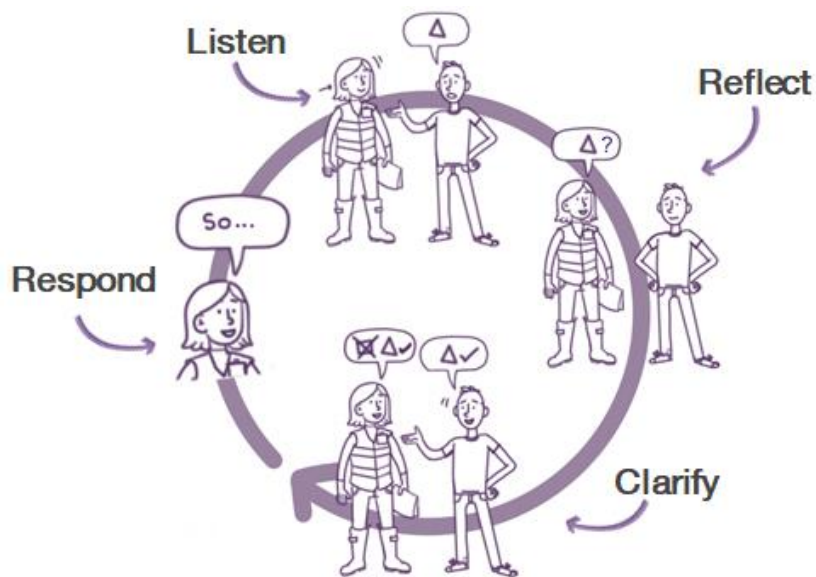
Figure 3: Four stages of psychological safety.

- Stage 1 – Inclusion: satisfies the basic human need to connect and belong. In this stage, you feel safe to be yourself and are accepted for who you are, including your unique attributes and defining characteristics
- Stage 2 – Learning: satisfies the need to learn and grow. In this stage, you feel safe to exchange in the learning process, by asking questions, giving and receiving feedback, experimenting, and making mistakes
- Stage 3 – Contributing: satisfies the need to make a difference. You feel safe to use your skills and abilities to make a meaningful contribution
- Stage 4 – Challenging: satisfies the need to make things better. You feel safe to speak up and challenge the status quo when you think there's an opportunity to change or improve

4.6 Listen / reflect back / clarify technique

A key skill for facilitators is listening (Figure 4) and in the context of conflict or controversy this technique is helpful in ensuring that participants feel that their concerns have been heard. Deriving from the principles of non-violent communication this enables the facilitator to handle different opinions with respect and to ensure that they are heard by others.

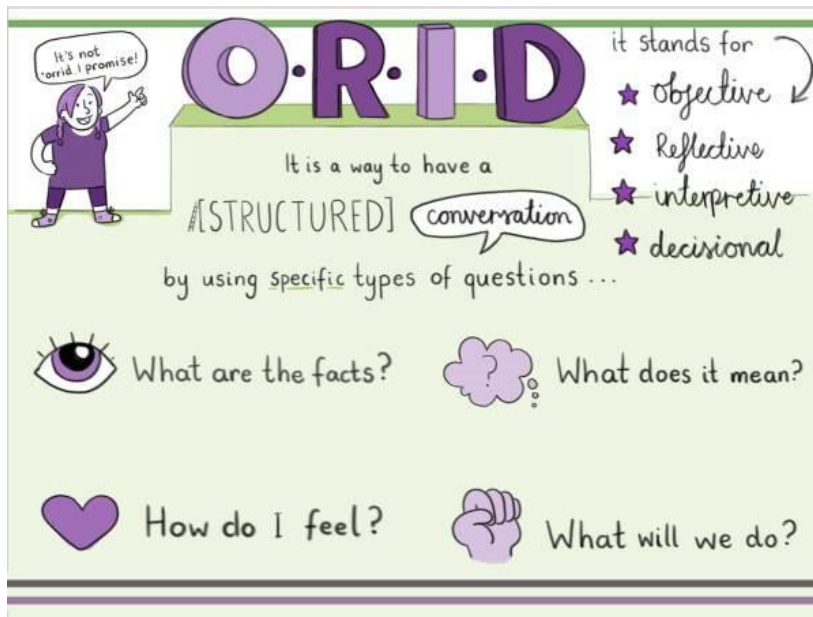
Figure 4: Listen, reflect, clarify and respond technique.



4.7 Focused conversations (ORID)

One of the key things a facilitator does is to ask questions rather than make statements and trained facilitators are experts at asking the right questions to enable a group to discuss and resolve the issues it is confronting. Facilitators pay a lot of attention to the questions they ask, starting with the simple distinction between open and closed questions. Over time a number of question frameworks have been developed for use in resolving issues and helping groups reach consensus. One of the best known of these is ORID, a process to structure conversations and build understanding and commitment to common action (see Figure 5). The facilitator guides the group through a series of questions of different types – objective, reflective, interpretive, and decisional – and through the process helps to surface issues and guide the group to appropriate and useful outcomes.

Figure 5: The ORID way to have structured conversations.



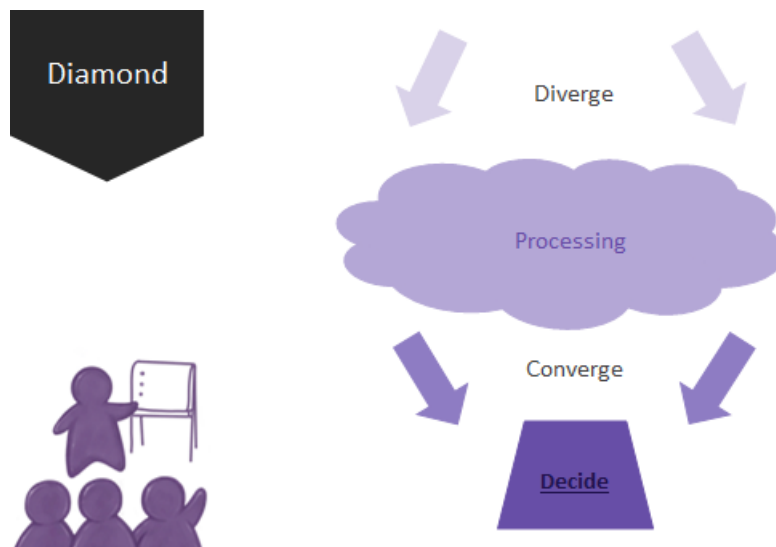
4.8 Diamond process – diverge / groan zone /converge

The diamond is a way to structure discussion so that all views can surface and to find a way to resolution or decision (see figure 6). It has three stages:

- the diverge stage allows the range of different views to emerge and be heard in the discussion
- the processing stage includes approaches like clustering, ranking, voting to enable convergence
- Kaner (2014) described the processing stage as the groan zone because this is often where groups need to pass through a phase of difficulty and disagreement in order to find points of commonality
- the converge phase involves moving towards a decision on areas where there is consensus / willingness to move forward.

The diamond structure can be used within a meeting or can be used to structure a whole event or series of events depending on the complexity of the issues.

Figure 6: The diamond process.



5. When embarking on a programme of facilitation what do we need to consider and do beforehand?

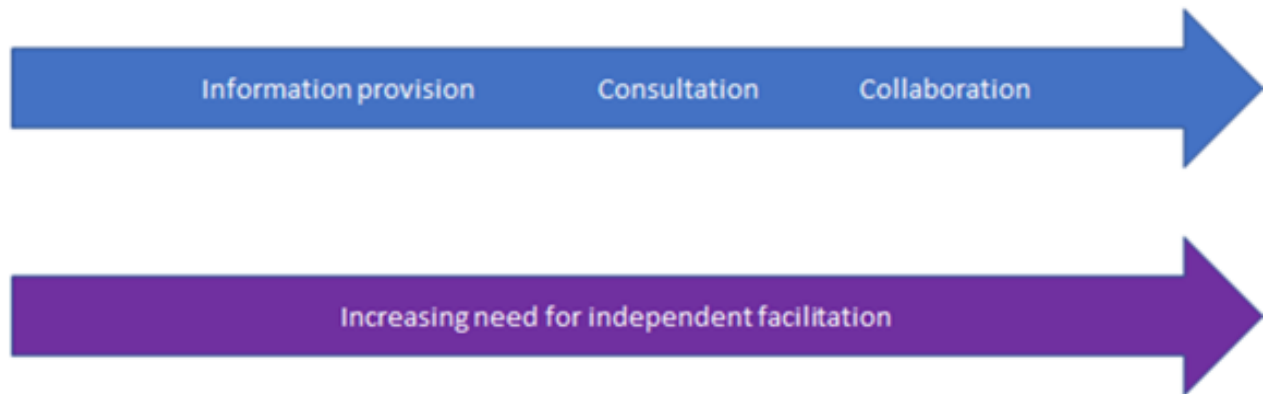
Facilitation usually finds a place within a broader programme of stakeholder engagement which should be developed systematically and outlined in a plan.

Before embarking on a programme of facilitation you should define your engagement outcomes and develop the elements of an engagement plan, including identifying stakeholders and the nature of the engagement. For example, inform / consult / collaborate. This should include considering whose voices you are not currently hearing within the organisation and beyond.

It is helpful to explore previous experiences of engagement with the stakeholders for the project. For example, have there been previous positive or negative experiences, is there a risk of engagement fatigue?

Then it is helpful to consider whether / what role independent or internal facilitation might play in the broader plan of engagement. Broadly speaking, the further along the spectrum towards co-management, the more likely you are to benefit from independent facilitation (Figure 7).

Figure 7: The increasing need for independent facilitation

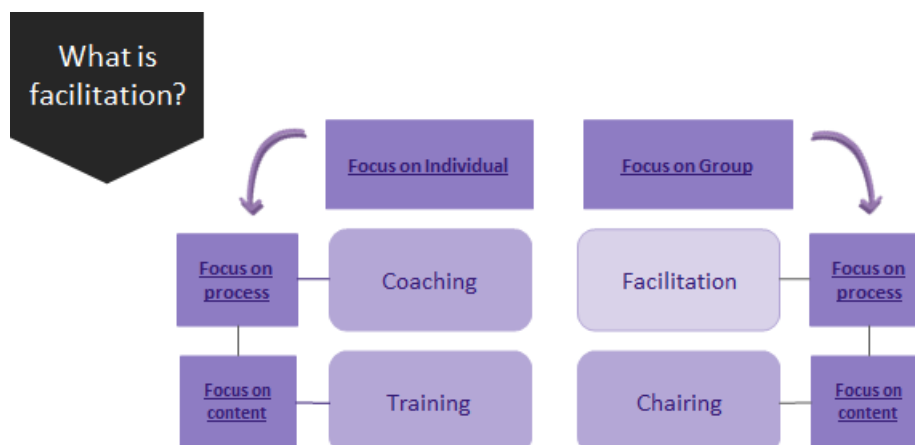


At this stage, you should also seek to understand the risks, issues and challenges that are likely to arise for this engagement plan, including the risk of conflict arising as outlined above. Your engagement plan should include a risk register with identified mitigations for key risks.

6. When engaging facilitators what do we need to consider?

The figure below (Figure 8) outlines the distinctions between facilitation, chairing, coaching, training. In summary, facilitators focus on the process not the content, while a chair also has an interest in the subject matter. When considering whether your meeting needs a chair or a facilitator, it is useful to explore whether subject matter or process knowledge is more important for your event. However, a facilitator will often work alongside a chair, where the chair provides an introduction and summary and is then able to participate in the discussion as an ‘ordinary’ member of the group.

Figure 8: The different focuses of facilitation, chairing, coaching and training.



Other issues to consider include:

- outcomes intended

- nature of the event – duration, virtual / face to face / complexity / conflict expected – in turn this affects how far you need facilitation skills like ability to listen actively, reflect back, adapt when things go wrong etc.
- one off, short term or longer-term process – availability and capacity
- experience and IAF accreditation / skills
- EDI and accessibility
- awareness / understanding of the subject matter / culture and broader credibility in the environment or context
- how important is it for the facilitator to be seen as neutral?
- style and feel of the event – fun, professional, structured, open
- ability to adapt to the context

6.1 Costs

When costing facilitation, factors to consider will include the duration and complexity of the event, amount of preparation required, the number of facilitators, and follow up activities. The day rates for SEAFS contracts are likely to be in the region of £600. The key factors influencing the cost of an actual event are event duration and preparation time:

- simple one day workshop - half day preparation, 1 day delivery
- complex one day workshop - 2 days preparation, 1 day delivery
- series of 6 workshops - 2 days preparation, 6 days delivery
- major one day conference - 6 days preparation, 1 day delivery with two facilitators.

It is important to consider whether you also want the facilitator to produce a report / write up of the session and of course travel, accommodation and venue hire for face-to-face events.

6.2 How many facilitators


Many events require only one facilitator. However, it is often beneficial to have a second technology facilitator for virtual events whose role it is to handle any technical issues, set up break out rooms etc.

If your event includes the use of small group discussions round tables or break out rooms, consider if you need facilitation for these discussions or whether it is appropriate for the group to self-facilitate.

7. What practical considerations should we give to facilitation activities?

In our facilitation training we provide the following checklist (Figure 9) for the facilitator to discuss with the client or meeting owner. In our experience the most important of these questions is ‘what do you think the participants want from the session?’ Putting ourselves in the shoes of the participant enables us to develop a facilitation plan to maximise participation and collaboration for a diverse group.

Figure 9: Client /facilitator checklist.



Planning with Clients

Planning Checklist

- What are you seeking to achieve?
- At the end of the session, what would you like to have happened?
- What do you think the participants want from the session?
- What level of involvement are you looking for (tell, consult, collaborate)?
- What information do you want to get across?
- What information do you want to get back?
- If this is a decision-making meeting, who makes the decision and how?
- How long do you have?
- How many people do you expect?

7.1 Practical considerations

Further practical considerations include:

- time
- cost
- drivers and barriers to participation
- location and practical features of the venue
- virtual / face to face – including net zero carbon considerations
- workloads and resource conflicts
- preparation
- accessibility and EDI.

7.2 Inclusion considerations

It is essential to consider the equality, diversity and inclusion elements of your engagement including, but not limited, to:

- understanding the demographic makeup of the communities you seek to engage e.g., age, socio-economic status, BAME communities, geographical isolation and consider how to engage with specific needs of that community
- consider barriers to participation e.g., accessibility of venues, people with mobility issues or caring responsibilities, digital inclusion / exclusion

- ensuring that materials meet accessibility guidelines and that examples / case studies are inclusive
- ensuring that language used and processes are inclusive (e.g., mobility issues, literacy levels affecting understanding of written materials)
- asking ‘whose voices are we not hearing?’ and exploring ways to include more of them
- working with partners who have existing links in the wider community.

Disengaged stakeholders

There is information from the Marine Pioneer Programme (MMO, 2021) that “new mechanisms are required to enable fishers to participate in fisheries management through a co-management model at regional scales” (p60). It is considered vital to encourage this participation as many fishers currently feel disenfranchised and disengaged.

Fair and considering needs

Co-design and co-management of MPAs is also seen to hold the potential to allow local knowledge and values to be reflected, “*enhancing the aspects of MPAs that speak to human wellbeing and livelihoods*”, whilst building transparency and trust in the management decision support system (MMO, 2021, p80).

Leading practice in facilitation is now strongly focused on creating fair, inclusive processes and again independent, expert facilitation will be key to this.

7.3 Evaluation

It is helpful to evaluate your engagement activities to learn and adapt for the future. Evaluation should be built into the plan from the outset, and it is important to consider how to evaluate engagement. This is often done through short questionnaires / polls and an evaluation report produced to draw out lessons for future engagement.

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- International Association of Facilitator: www.iaf-world.org
- Fostering alignment and commitment of the (mainly Government) actors involved in a new strategy, in an Environmental context, Environment and Energy Management Agency - [Development of a strategy and reorganisation | IAF World \(iaf-world.org\)](#)
- Giving a community 'a voice': Rural Health Collaboration—Better Together [Rural Health Collaboration—Better Together | IAF World \(iaf-world.org\)](#)
- Delphi process, reaching global consensus on clinical practice guidance - [Reaching Global Consensus on Clinical Practice Guidance | IAF World \(iaf-world.org\)](#)
- For internal facilitation - <https://www.iaf-world.org/site/award-winner/building-internal-facilitation-mindset-shape-sustainable-future>
- And also on internal facilitation, the Cabinet Office - [Building Facilitation Skills Competence & Capacity | IAF World \(iaf-world.org\)](#))

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