

# Spoke Facilitator Discussion Guide

## Facilitation Goals

- Create an environment for collaborative communication (the achievement of mutual understanding)
- Keep discussion focused
- Keep attendees engaged
- Keep discussion flowing smoothly
- Advance and deepen discussion
- Encourage participation of everyone and provide opportunity for all voices to be heard
- Create environment of trust and support
- Leave attendees challenged and willing to engage in follow-up conversations

## Pre-Event Preparation

### Decide who should facilitate the discussion in your Spoke

- Consider who is familiar with and has attended Symposiums in the past and has group facilitation experience
- Consider co-facilitators

### Spoke Session Goals

- View Symposium content together, if applicable, such as the CLN AGM, Opening Ceremony Opening Keynote presentations, Energizer Break and Awards Ceremony
- Facilitated Reflection of the learning following the presentations, including the keynote and breakout sessions
- Encourage networking and 'hallway' discussions during breaks and between sessions

### Plan the format of the discussion

- Will it be a small group? a large group? a group of people who know each other well? only somewhat? not at all?

### See Symposium At-a-Glance Agenda for time blocks (see attached)

- Watch timing so that the introduction and key points will be covered before the end of the scheduled discussion time

### Plan the physical environment

- Plan and arrange seating and the AV so that attendees can see the screen and talk to each other and to the group without visual or height barriers

## Prepare Prompt Questions

- Come prepared with some interesting questions to get discussion started and to keep moving

## Plan for any materials (optional) or help you will need

- Will you need a writing surface such as a flipchart or table chart paper and marker pens?

## Starting Off

**Introduce the purpose** of the discussion

**Explain the organization and structure (including the time line)** of the discussion – when it will begin and when it will end, etc.

**Explain your role as a Spoke Facilitator** - the person whose role it is to keep the discussion focused and energized and to create an environment for all to have a chance to participate

**Create a safe and welcoming space** so that the attendees will feel comfortable and share their views openly and honestly

**Do introductions** – Consider an icebreaker to help people connect and feel welcome in your space

## Getting the Discussion Started

**Prompt Questions** - Pose an interesting question or set of questions. Remember to come to the discussion with some prepared prompt questions. (keywords: "how", "why", "what", "what if", "tell us about")

- Sample questions include:
  - Did the presentation spark your interest? Why or why not?
  - Would anyone be willing to share their reactions to the presentation?
  - What's a key learning that connected with you?
  - How do you feel about the points made in the presentation?
  - What in your experience has led you to the view that you just expressed?

## During the Discussion

**Gatekeeping** - Acknowledge contributions, validate attendee's ideas and keep the focus on ideas generated

- Examples include:
  - "Thanks for saying that. No one had mentioned that before."
  - "Thanks for that helpful contribution. It is not easy to share such a personal experience. That was very courageous."
  - "I appreciate your offering a different view."

**Arrange the discussion in different ways, such as:**

- Divide the group in half
- Go around the circle asking everyone to say something about the topic
- Create small groups, each with a reporter who will bring ideas of the small group back to the whole group
- Consider breaking up into smaller groups or pairs (dyads) or trios for mini-discussions as a way to involve the quieter people

**Summarize or synthesize statements** - as a way of keeping track and bringing focus on where the discussion is going/has gone. Talk about main points and/or main themes

**Be patient with silences** - Don't jump to fill in silence. Silence can be an important time for some and may spur others to talk. A facilitator's rule of thumb is to wait 6-7 seconds when you want people to think about and answer your question.

**Know and emphasize the importance of pause time** - Encourage each attendee to be aware of their own pause time before jumping in. As a facilitator don't jump in too quickly

**Read non-verbal cues** - Are a few attendees dominating the discussion? Are there many interruptions? Observe who is participating and who is not? Are attendees looking bored? What is the level of energy in the discussion?

**Encourage Participation** - Create (and recreate) a safe and trusting environment. Monitor excessive talkers and prompt the quieter attendees

**Ask open-ended questions** - (What?, How?, Why?)

## **Wrapping Up**

**Keep to the committed ending time**

**Summarize the main points of the discussion/day**

**Ask the group to comment on how the discussion/day went**

- How do attendees feel about their own participation? - What was good about the discussion and what could have been better?

**Thank everyone** for the discussion...for their participation