

Tips for running an effective listening session

For FACILITATORS:

Before the session: Be sure send an invitation/announcement with the purpose of the meeting and a contact number, at least 7-10 days in advance.

On the day of the session:

1. Arrive early enough to arrange the room before the session begins. If possible, move the chairs in such a way so that everyone can see each other and the board/easel.
2. Have a chalk board, white board, or easel to write down everyone's ideas big enough for the group to see.
3. **PREPARE A SIGN-UP SHEET.** This is very important to record who was there and their contact information. Remind people as they walk in and after the meeting to sign in.
4. Begin and end on time.

During the session:

1. Have someone take notes, so there is a record of the meeting. This should not be the facilitator if at all possible.
2. Be sure to write down everyone's idea, even if it doesn't seem feasible. Sort ideas as best you can among the 4 FFPP Work Groups, acknowledging that there is overlap among them. This will require 4 writing areas---preferably large sheets of "butcher paper" so that you can take them with you, but alternatively sections of blackboard or whiteboard.
3. When people speak, ask them to stand and state their name first, so that the notetaker can record it.
4. Keep the discussion focused, and participant-led. Be positive and encouraging. If people get off topic, talk too long on a specific point, are overly negative, repeat one another, or resort to personal attacks, it's okay to politely interrupt them and suggest that you return to the task at hand. Try not to show your own opinions on the topics discussed, as this will likely steer the discussion. As the facilitator, you will have the opportunity to report your own opinions to FFPP when you give us the results of the meeting.
5. Give everyone a chance to speak. Keep a "stack" of the names of people who wish to speak. Try not to allow people to speak out of turn, so everyone has a chance to talk if they wish. If the same people are speaking all the time, frequently ask if there are others who wish to join in. Before the end, be sure to ask if anyone who has not had a chance to speak would like to say something. Remember that some people won't comment unless they are specifically invited to do so, but will have thoughtful ideas.
6. End on time. If there is clearly more to be done, ask people if they'd like to stay longer or suggest another time to meet.

FOR NOTETAKERS:

1. Read the “Report Back” questions ahead of time, so that you can capture ideas related to those questions especially
2. Try to capture the main point of what each individual says, but don’t get too stressed about it! ☺
3. If you can, try to write down who says what, so that you (or we) can ask them about it later if needs be.