



## Competencies for Communication, Engagement and Facilitation (people competencies)

**What are these competencies?** The ability to effectively convey your message, effect change, reach and engage your audience on an ongoing basis, exchange ideas and receive feedback. Good engagement, communication and facilitation creates an environment that allows this to take place.

- [Communication competencies](#)
- [Competencies for local engagement](#)
- [Equity, diversity & inclusion competencies](#)
- [Competencies for mental health awareness](#)
- [Competencies for group facilitation](#)
  
- [Learning pathways for communication, engagement & facilitation](#)

**Why are they important?** Communication is at the heart of transformation. You must find your audience, engage them, convey your message and learn from the experience, motivate and inspire - and keep them engaged. Good facilitation is almost invisible. It allows effective communication and engagement to take place, in the moment and on an ongoing basis. Good facilitation enhances the experience which can lead to deeper transformation, it can deal with conflict and discomfort and it can allow for mutual understanding and growth.

### **Reality Check:**

*A common and sometimes surprising challenge that many centres face is resistance from the local community. Trying to create a better world and effect change is often interpreted as criticism of what already exists or (by extension) as a criticism of "normal life" or even of tradition. People can be protective of their way of life and often feel threatened to varying degrees by centres that advocate for system change. This can result in resentment and social division and in some cases even acts of sabotage, vandalism or arson.*

*This needs to be addressed very sensitively. There is no formula as every location, culture and group of individuals has its own set of circumstances and nuances. **Early positive engagement with the local community is vital.** It may be challenging to win hearts and minds at the early stages, but it is far more difficult to gain support when distrust has taken hold. If local people feel invested in your centre, they will be much more supportive.*

*In some cases conflict between your centre and the wider community may be inevitable - and acceptance of this fact may be necessary. There are compromises and concessions that can be made at times and the original vision of the centre may evolve. With time, patience and good engagement and facilitation skills you will become a dynamic part of the local community.*

**How are these competencies used and developed?** This can cover marketing and advertising, social and other media, effective delivery of programs, public speaking, seeking and evaluating feedback, creating stories and narratives, inspiring and motivating change, non-verbal communication, games, experiences, listening, "walking the walk". Group and on-line facilitation skills, non-violent communication, listening skills, conflict management and resolution are all very important, as are how to effectively use spaces and learning environments, breaks, refreshments, variations in learning intensity, workshops to identify issues and priorities in the local community, and to identify how to respond to them in sustainable, regenerative ways that build community resilience.

## **Communication Competencies**

### **Internal communication**

- Selects appropriate media of communication
- Develops and implements codes of conduct
- Fosters a team culture

### **External Communication - General**

- Understands the needs of others - asks open questions and listening to gather insight into other perspectives
- Clearly communicates messages - articulates an easily understandable perspective
- Adapts communication style to the audience, situation and needs of the message
- Uses a range of communication methods - determines which comms mode(s) will deliver the desired outcome - develops ways of communicating with key stakeholders (e.g. newsletter for supporters, press releases for events, celebrations)
- Identifies and participates in suitable formal and informal networks
- Builds an influential and effective network for communication - seeks to grow their network and extend or deepen the influence of their communication - identifies appropriate affiliations (for example other iACT or LAND Centre projects)
- Is aware of personal impact - is self-aware, manages emotions & respects others
- Engages with and deals with conflict appropriately - facilitates challenging situations confidently, where participants hold different views & want different outcomes
- Records the activities of the organisation (for annual reports, funding applications etc.) and makes this information available (for research or promotion).

### **External Communication - Promotion**

- Identifies target audiences (marketing) and appropriate means of communication with them (advertising)
- Develops a "Brand" - identifies how that brand is to be used (brand mission & identity)
- Creates and maintains a good quality web interface (website/homepage) so that it is easy for people to find you, get the information they want, enquire or make bookings.
- Effectively utilises Social Media

### **External Communications for Local Community Engagement**

- Identifies how your organisation is represented locally and by whom
- Identifies appropriate and sustainable local partnerships (for example helping the local school to develop a food garden)
- Makes efforts to integrate into the local communities and economy

- Discerns what criticism or feedback to act upon.

## Local Community Engagement Competencies

- Engages and includes diverse sectors & audiences
- Conveys relevant complexity in accessible ways
- Responds and adapts to specific bio-cultural and values-based contexts
- Creates a group container and supportive environment for community engagement or learning
- Creates safe spaces that can work effectively with discomfort
- Senses and responds to group dynamics in service of learning and action

## Competencies for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

This involves seeing, thinking and responding in terms of equity, diversity, inclusivity and social justice.

- Has knowledge of socially just and inclusive approaches to engagement, and to identification and representation of needs
- Uses strategies to meet diverse needs in ways that are inclusive
- Identifies and understands:
  - how sustainable actions are affected by biases about how choices for action are influenced or inhibited by our comparisons with others
  - how humans relate to risk (basic knowledge of behavioural theory).



## Engagement & Facilitation and Health & Wellbeing

Health & Wellbeing is a vital cross-cutting theme that needs highlighting in the mind, plans and activities of centres. It relates to other competency areas, particularly organisation and management, but is included here to ensure we consider the issues in relation to external engagement as much as internal organisational issues.

Two key elements of this health and wellbeing theme are:

- Looking after ourselves: Health and wellbeing of the people running centres
- Health and wellbeing of those who are volunteering, visiting or learning at centres and the wider community the centres are part of.

In considering this focus on Health & wellbeing, particularly important areas are:

- Mental health - including risks from work-related stress (e.g. often in the context of very limited resources, when staff identify strongly with the need for the centre to be a success), climate and ecological grief, etc - as well as the positive contributions centres can make to factors that benefit mental health;

Mental health is an area that needs particular awareness. It is recommended that various team members are 'mental health aware' and that centres can work with mental health

ambassadors to provide a full range of activities and facilities that support positive mental health and what helps or provides a nurturing environment for those that have mental health challenges or who are on a recovery path.

### **Competencies for Mental Health Awareness**

- Understanding and awareness of what is meant by mental health and positive mental health, including:
  - how to look after your own mental health (self-care)
  - how to identify those who might be struggling with their mental health
  - awareness and understanding of factors that promote and protect mental health and build resilience
  - able to identify factors that might increase the risk of developing a mental health problem
- Understand the roles and responsibilities, your own and those of others, in meeting mental health needs for all ages
- Consider your own values and attitudes about mental health and how these might influence your work
- Aware of barriers that may exist for minority groups in terms of accessing services
- Know who you should speak to if you identify a person experiencing mental health difficulties (and what information to include within the conversation)
- Have an understanding of safeguarding issues and how to respond in your setting to severe distress / a mental health crisis (including risk of suicide)
- Aware of key local services and resources that can support better mental health
- Able to signpost people (including parents/carers) to sources of support
- Have updated and readily available policies (e.g. mental health policy and anti-bullying policy) that link to mental health and which outline staff roles and responsibilities within these
- Undertake regular mental health refresher training / have completed Mental Health training in the last 12 months

### **Group Facilitation Competencies**

The following summary of competencies for group & community facilitation is sourced from the competency framework of the *International Association of Facilitators (IAF)*.

See: <https://www.iaf-world.org/site/professional/core-competencies>:

- 1. Creates Collaborative Group / Client / Community Relationships**
  - Develops working partnerships
  - Designs and customises processes to meet group / client / community needs
  - Manages multi-session events effectively
- 2. Plans Appropriate Group Processes**
  - Selects clear methods and processes
  - Prepares time and space to support group process
- 3. Creates and Sustains a Participatory Environment**
  - Demonstrates effective participatory and interpersonal communication skills
  - Honours and recognises diversity, ensuring inclusiveness
  - Manages group / community conflict

- Evokes group / community creativity
- 4. Guides Group / Community to Appropriate and Useful Outcomes**
    - Guides the group / community with clear methods and processes
    - Facilitates group / community self-awareness about its task
    - Guides the group / community to consensus and desired outcomes - NOTE: this sets up for Coaching competencies that can help achieve the desired outcomes
  - 5. Builds and Maintains Knowledge of Practice**
    - Maintains a base of knowledge
    - Knows a range of facilitation methods
    - Maintains professional approach and standing
  - 6. Models Positive Professional Attitude as a Process Facilitator**
    - Practices self-assessment and self-awareness
    - Acts with integrity
    - Trusts group / community potential and models neutrality

For greater depth on these competencies refer to the **Community Climate Coaches competency framework Section 2: Community Facilitation Competencies**

## Learning Pathways for Communication, Engagement & Facilitation

<b>Learning Pathway Options - How competency is learned &amp; developed for Communication, Engagement and Facilitation</b>		
<b>Competencies for Communication</b>		
<b>Entry level 'Taster' → Communication &amp; Community Engagement</b>	<b>Core 'Experience' →</b>	<b>Extended 'Journey'</b>
Developing awareness of good communication and engagement techniques and practices  Experience of working with others with strong communication and engagement skills and experience  Books, Online searches, articles & videos  Online Introduction to communication / engagement short courses	Training and practice in a communications role	Ongoing training and practice in a communications role  Learning from experienced mentors
	<b>Competencies for Community Engagement</b>	
	<b>Core 'Experience' →</b>	<b>Extended 'Journey'</b>
	Training and practice in community engagement methods	Ongoing training and practice using a diversity of engagement methods in a range of contexts  Learning from experienced mentors
<b>Competencies for Facilitation</b>		
<b>Entry level 'Taster' →</b>	<b>Core 'Experience' →</b>	<b>Extended 'Journey'</b>

Read, study and digest the <a href="#">BLAST JEDI Pathway Guide</a>	Equity, diversity and inclusion training	Further training and ongoing development of equity, diversity and inclusion practices
<b>Competencies for Literacy in Equity, Diversity &amp; Inclusion</b>		
<b>Entry level 'Taster' →</b>	<b>Core 'Experience' →</b>	<b>Extended 'Journey'</b>
<p>Books or Online searches, articles and videos</p> <p>Experiencing expert / professional Facilitation on a number of occasions</p> <p>Online 'Introduction to Facilitation' short courses</p>	<p>Facilitation training accredited by relevant Professional body e.g. <i>International Association of Facilitators (IAF)</i></p> <p>Experiencing expert / professional Facilitation for a set period e.g. 3 months / 10 sessions</p> <p>Completing a number of Facilitator trainings / workshops with expert / professional Facilitators</p>	<p>Engage with and participate in Facilitator Communities of Practice to find allies</p> <p>Ongoing participation in Facilitation Supervision group or Peer-to-peer exchanges</p> <p>Developing your Facilitation practice</p> <p>Undertaking Facilitation CPD or similar development training</p>