

# Facilitating Inclusive Discussions

Facilitating open and inclusive discussion is about getting people involved in the conversation. The facilitator/chairperson's role is to start and guide the flow of the discussion but rarely to enter into the content.

## The facilitator's role involves:

- › asking open-ended questions (questions that don't have "yes" or "no" answers)
- › keeping track of who gets to speak next. If there are many speakers, keeping a list and letting people know that they are on the speakers' list
- › asking questions that clarify or dig deeper
- › summarizing what's been said so that people can move on
- › checking for consensus if there are any decisions to be made.

## Some important things to remember:

- › Everyone's opinion is welcome.
- › Facilitators should always try to equalize participation.
- › It is not effective to argue with people you are trying to engage in a discussion.
- › Participants should be speaking to each other, not to the facilitator. Check yourself to be sure you are not the central focus of discussion.
- › Check in with participants to see when/if it is time to move on.
- › Sometimes creating a space for reflection before beginning the discussion is helpful.
- › Sometimes conducting a round where you invite everyone to take turns participating is a good way to draw out new/unspoken opinions - just be sure to let people know they can opt out if they aren't comfortable.
- › If someone asks you a question, it is always best to see if someone else in the room can answer
- › Where appropriate, your discussion should generate some follow-up action.



