

Facilitation Tools for Successful Meetings

Many factors affect a decision to engage an external facilitator to support discussions among Board representatives related to a voluntary integration initiative. These factors include:

- the complexity of the proposed voluntary integration initiative,
- the current relationship between the participants at the Board or operational level,
- the financial resources available to support the process, and
- the complexity of project management associated with the anticipated scope and duration of the Board to Board involvement.

An alternative to retaining an external facilitator is for the parties to reach agreement on alternating chairs or co-chairs to ensure there is a level playing field among participants in the joint Board process.

The following are tips for facilitating successful meetings:

Tips for Facilitating Successful Meetings

1. At the initial group meeting, ask the participants to:
 - identify themselves,
 - state their background and experience that is relevant to the task of the group, and
 - identify their expectations for the process.
2. A representative of each participant should establish (with the facilitator, when one exists) and pre-circulate to the participants an agenda for each meeting, which clearly identifies:
 - the topics for discussion and, where appropriate, the specific decisions to be reached,
 - the specific time allocation for each topic,
 - the person who is to lead discussion of each topic,
 - the messages to be communicated from the meeting, and
 - next steps.
3. At the beginning of each meeting, the participants should review the established guidelines for working together.
4. At the completion of each topic, the **[chair/co-chairs/facilitator]** confirms with the group the agreements reached and next steps.
5. At the conclusion of the meeting, the **[chair/co-chairs/facilitator]** asks the participants to provide feedback on the meeting concerning process and outcomes.
6. **[The chair/co-chairs/facilitator/administrative support]** prepare a summary of proceedings/minutes that clearly documents the participants, topics discussed, agreements reached, messages to be communicated and next steps for timely circulation to the group and approval at the next meeting.