Creating Confident Leaders: Facilitation Skills for a New Era
Facilitation Skills Workbook

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Part 1: Introduction to this Workbook

Welcome to PFLAG National’s guide on facilitation skills for chapter leaders! This workbook is meant to outline the materials we have on facilitation and serve as an accompaniment to our facilitation skills video titled Creating Confident Leaders: Facilitation Skills for a New Era.

With this workbook, you will be introduced to several scenarios that you could encounter while facilitating a support meeting. Remember to review this guide carefully and answer every scenario in as much detail as you can. At the end of the workbook, you’ll be given some examples for how each of these scenarios could be handled should you be faced with similar situations.

PFLAG National recommends that you use this workbook and the Creating Confident Leaders: Facilitation Skills for a New Era facilitation skills video to train all existing and future facilitators within your chapter. Try to revisit this workbook every few months to refresh your knowledge and practice some of the exercises with your Board members.

If you have any questions about this workbook and/or any of the accompanying materials, please contact your Chapter Engagement Coordinator or Manager.
Part 2: How to Use this Workbook to Improve Your Facilitation Skills

Here you are given six scenarios to work with as part of improving your facilitation skills and going the extra mile to understand and engage with your attendees. This workbook should be used in conjunction with the video titled *Creating Confident Leaders: Facilitation Skills for a New Era* as tools to train new facilitators.

We recommend the following format to get the best use out of this training:

1. Watch *Creating Confident Leaders: Facilitation Skills for a New Era* with your Board and facilitators or individually.
2. Set up a time to go over this workbook during your next Board meeting or set up a different time.
3. Read through each scenario carefully in part 3—you can have one person appointed to read all the scenarios or take turns.
4. Give everyone about seven minutes to write down their responses to each scenario.
5. Go around and ask everyone for their responses and how they would best address each of the scenarios.
6. Go to part 5 and read the example answers out loud—you can have one person appointed to read the answers or take turns.
7. Take at least 15 minutes to discuss the activity as a group, using the guided discussion questions in part 6.

Revisit this workbook and the video often. You don’t have to have a new facilitator or Board member join your chapter before revisiting these exercises. A refresher every few months is key to ensure that facilitators feel comfortable in their role and feel able to handle the many situations they may encounter.
Part 3: What it Means to be a Facilitator

A facilitator is meant to plan, guide, and manage a group through a meeting. In the very particular case of a PFLAG chapter support meeting, the facilitator’s role is to guide the group through sharing of personal stories and experiences. Facilitators of PFLAG chapter meetings are often in the unique position of being intimately aware of the personal struggles of their members. This should never change a facilitator’s ability to be neutral and lead with compassion.

But how can I be compassionate and neutral? It takes practice! It’s important that you come from a place of understanding while remaining able to guide your group’s support meeting. This means that you are someone who can separate yourself from being a participant in the meeting and can handle difficult situations as they arise.

Good facilitators have a host of positive attributes which include the ability to plan an agenda ahead of time, communicate effectively with attendees between meetings, actively listen, keep others on track, manage different personalities, and follow up as appropriate. You can learn more about these skills in our video training, *Creating Confident Leaders: Facilitation Skills for a New Era.*

During the video training, you went through some scenarios and tackled issues of privacy, redirecting conversation flow, handling disagreements, and dealing with tech issues for virtual meetings.

Let’s move into some advanced scenarios here and see what you can come up with.
Part 4: Scenarios

Scenario 1: Your First Chapter Meeting

Congratulations! You’re a newly affiliated PFLAG chapter. You’ve gone through all of the IRS processes, you’ve assigned Board members, and you even have some interested attendees lined up for your first meeting. Now what? It’s easy to forget what it was like to set up your first meeting if your chapter is one that has been established for some time.

Getting back to the roots of your chapter setup can be a helpful exercise in making adjustments for future meetings.

Walk yourself through the set up for your first chapter meeting. What do you need in order to ensure this is a successful debut?

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You’ll find an example response in part 5 of this workbook.

Scenario 2: Sitting with Silence (or Not)

You have a few members of your chapter at your support meeting this month and you’ve all decided that this week you’re going to show a short video detailing the experiences of a member of the LGBTQ+ community and their difficulties coming out to their conservative family. The video is very moving and seems to have struck your attendees emotionally.

Now, it's time for the discussion part of your meeting. You’ve asked people to share their first reactions about the video. Everyone is silent. Knowing that silence is okay and normal to sit in for a while, you give your attendees some time to gather their thoughts and reactions. Still there is silence.

You decide to pivot to another question and ask your attendees what advice you would give to the family of the person in the video to help ease their concerns or fears. Everyone remains silent. What would you do in this situation?
You’ll find an example response in part 5 of this workbook.

Scenario 3: Keeping to the Schedule

You’ve taken the time to put together an agenda for tonight’s meeting. You’ve done your due diligence in asking attendees for their input on the agenda and have run the agenda by the rest of the Board. It’s a pretty packed agenda with some tight scheduling involved, but you feel confident that you can make it through all of the topics people want to discuss tonight.

Your meeting is slated to end at 9pm local time. It is now 8:45pm and you still have 3 more topics to make it through before the end of the meeting. It seems that the current topic your attendees are discussing has dominated the conversation and most seem unwilling to cut it short. One of the remaining topics for tonight was brought up by Ren who approached you early on in the month to include it in tonight’s agenda. You feel really guilty because it does not look like you’ll be able to get to Ren’s topic tonight.

How would you handle this?

You’ll find an example response in part 5 of this workbook.
Scenario 4: On Inclusivity

You have worked with a vendor to translate your website and subsequent materials into Spanish over the course of a few months in an effort to attract more members of the Latinx community. The materials you’ve created are beautiful and highlight the work that your chapter does to support families and members of the LGBTQ+ community. In the lead up to your chapter meeting tonight, you’ve done some advertising on Facebook, on your chapter’s website, on Twitter, and some individualized email outreach. There seems to be some interest in the meeting and you’ve gotten a few RSVPs for tonight.

Your attendees are starting to come into the meeting. You go over to meet some new people and quickly realize there’s a language barrier. Although your materials were translated and ready for distribution, you did not secure a translator from the community to address any language barriers. Your attendees are confused and start leaving--you’re unsure about whether or not they will be in attendance at your next meeting.

What could be done to salvage the relationship you have started with these members of the Latinx community?

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You’ll find an example response in part 5 of this workbook.

Scenario 5: Challenging the Facilitator

You have a great turnout at your meeting this month--you see some new faces and are eager to get started with tonight’s agenda. You spend some time going over the PFLAG mission statement, providing ground rules, and making some quick announcements. You’re now on to introductions which are going smoothly with everyone sharing their names, pronouns, and a little bit about what brought them to your chapter meeting.

It’s now Gill’s turn and they have some comments about the structure of the meeting. Gill mentions that at their other meeting, the facilitator will ask everyone to say one interesting thing about themselves to break the ice. You reason that this isn’t a big deal, so you welcome the
suggestion and ask everyone to share something interesting about themselves, in addition to the rest of their introductions.

You’re now on to the night’s first topic which is to discuss an article you shared with attendees weeks before tonight’s meeting. You ask people to share their initial thoughts on the article. Gill quickly voices some dissatisfaction with the article and suggests that everyone instead talk about the new Pride collection that launched a local retailer. You suggest that Gill’s topic can be discussed at a future meeting since the agenda items were agreed upon for tonight’s meeting. Gill voices that the article was boring and there are so many other things you could be talking about tonight.

What would you do in this situation?

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You’ll find an example response in part 5 of this workbook.

Scenario 6: “I Hate Talking About Myself”

You have a new attendee at your meeting who has a child that has just come out to them as part of the LGBTQ+ community. They haven’t spoken much during the meeting; they have mostly nodded their head or given a verbal cue in agreement to some of the other attendees’ stories.

After a long time member, Sara, shares her own story, this new attendee says out loud: “Yes, that’s how I felt as well.” Everyone is looking to the attendee to continue sharing and elaborate on the point, but they have fallen silent once more. You usually don’t like to force anyone to interact with the group if they aren’t ready, but you can see that they have something to share.

What can you do to encourage your attendee to share their story without alienating them or making them reluctant to share in the future?

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You’ll find an example response in part 5 of this workbook.
Part 5: Sample Answers

Scenario 1: Your First Chapter Meeting

You can (and should) use the video training *Creating Confident Leaders: Facilitation Skills for a New Era* as a guide here. Think back to what your facilitators outlined for you during that meeting.

You can work with your Board to figure out a few different things:

- How many meetings will you hold each month?
- Will they be all in person or will you have virtual offerings?
- Who can serve as facilitators for your meetings? Do you have a plan to alternate facilitators for each meeting?
- How will you advertise your meetings to the local community?
- Will you have a social media presence (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)?
- Have you set up an email account to communicate with attendees?
- Will you offer any educational content aside from your support meetings?

These may seem like straightforward questions if you’ve been holding meetings for some time, but don’t take lightly the fact that things may slip through the cracks. Always do a temperature check on how your meetings are running and if any adjustments need to be made. Use the questions above as a guide in this process.

Scenario 2: Sitting with Silence (or Not)

We all understand that sitting in silence--especially after a particularly intense conversation or topic comes up--is important. However, there are times when silence can become too prolonged. A good rule of thumb is to count out ten beats in your head after asking a question. Know that it may take someone in a group some time to become comfortable speaking up.

If you have waited for those ten beats and no one has said anything, and if you’ve tried reworking your question or moving into a different part of the conversation without any success, it will be important for you to refer to prepared responses. What does this mean? This means that, as part of your planning for your meeting, you should be thinking ahead about what it would look like to have a quiet group show up. Prepare two or three responses to each of your planned questions to get the conversation started. Sometimes it just takes a little bit of facilitator participation to get others to feel more comfortable sharing. Don’t jump to this step, though!

First, go through your checklist:

- Repeat the question for clarity
- Wait ten beats for a response
- Pivot to a different question or a different way of framing the question
- Wait ten beats for a response
- Use your prepared responses
Scenario 3: Keeping to the Schedule

Even after all the planning in the world, it’s completely possible that you won’t always make it through every part of your agenda. Don’t let this stress you out!

In this particular scenario, your attendee (Ren) proposed an agenda item early on in the month and you promised to bring it up during the meeting. What you should not do, at this point, is try to quickly move on to Ren’s agenda item. Your attendees are already engrossed in the topic at hand and abruptly stopping the conversation will do no favors for anyone involved.

Instead, let the conversation happen and close out the meeting as you normally would. Leave time for a quick goodbye and promises of sending out meeting information and agenda item requests for the next meeting. You should then try to engage Ren in a conversation. You can ask them to stay after the meeting or set up a different time to meet or talk over the phone. During this conversation is your opportunity to apologize for not getting to the agenda item and validate any of Ren’s feelings. Ren may be completely okay with not having gotten to their topic, but they also may not. Both are acceptable responses and should be remedied with your next steps.

Ask Ren if they would like you to include the topic in next month’s agenda. This time, you should plan to prioritize this topic at your next meeting to ensure you get to this agenda item. At the end of the day, these scenarios will happen. You can’t plan for what will be a “hot” topic and what will catch your attendees’ attention most. It’s all about how you can move on and plan better for next time that matters.

Scenario 4: On Inclusivity

We all want to be inclusive of different members of our communities. PFLAG meetings, after all, provide a space for families, allies, and LGBTQ+ people to talk to each other openly and without fear. It’s important to note that inclusivity efforts should be thought through before implementation. Putting together text and getting it translated is a great first step in engaging members of a minority community. This cannot be the only step, however.

We live in a society that’s rich in different languages, cultures, and experiences. These can often be barriers of engagement for folks from different backgrounds. As PFLAG chapter leaders, it’s important that we educate ourselves on what the community needs, first and foremost, before taking any other steps. Talk to organizations in your local community working with Latinx families and ask them if any parents, families, or LGBTQ+ individuals are looking for support and what that support should look like. Maybe translation of your materials will be exactly what they need. Maybe they need to connect with other families from the Latino community. Maybe all they need right now is acknowledgement that they’re not alone. Our journeys happen in steps, and it’s important to prepare for those steps before engaging with a new community.
In this scenario, you can work with a translator to reach out to the families and be frank about the misstep. You can encourage them to meet with you and a translator or, perhaps, other Latino families from your group. Ease them back into the group and make sure you’re keeping all avenues of communication open so that when their needs change, you know what to do.

Scenario 5: Challenging the Facilitator

People will have opinions about agenda items and how your meeting should be structured. Always take these in stride! It’s nice to have an engaged group that is bought into the planning and details for your meetings. It’s nice to have different ideas come in, especially as you plan your agenda each month.

If, however, you have an attendee who is disruptive, it’s important to have a game plan. This means that you should always have a co-facilitator present at your meetings. You’ve heard PFLAG National staff say it (and write it) before, and it continues to be an important point. Always have a co-facilitator to act as another point of contact throughout your meeting. You can also play out some similar scenarios together with your co-facilitator to deal with any issues that may come up during your meetings.

Because Gill is unwilling to go with the agenda as planned, you can take the opportunity to go over the chapter meeting ground rules and processes once more. You can outline that the meeting agenda is put together weeks before the meeting and everyone has a chance to voice their meeting topics and let the facilitators know what they would like to see as part of the next meeting. You can let Gill know that if they want to discuss the Pride collection at Generic Store, they can request this be added to the agenda for next time. Make sure that everyone is clear on these rules. If Gill continues to distract the group and tries to divert attention to a new topic, you should lean on your co-facilitator to take Gill aside. This is never meant to alienate an attendee or punish them. It’s important to protect the time of your attendees who are there to share and support each other, while working to get Gill on the same page and understand that there will be time for them to share their ideas, just not at the cost of others’ time. Who knows, Gill could go through this workbook and become a wonderful facilitator for their chapter!

Scenario 6: “I Hate Talking About Myself”

This is very tricky because you don’t want to force anyone to talk if they aren’t comfortable. That said, facilitators, over time, develop a “sixth sense” for when someone may need a little bit of nudging. Be mindful of when someone needs a nudge versus when they just really don’t want to speak. You can usually gauge this by asking the person directly if they have anything to add to the conversation. If they don’t respond or respond in the negative, move on.

If the group is large, it may be that the person doesn’t want to talk among a large group of people. You can work with co-facilitators to create small groups that may be more comfortable for shy attendees. You should also keep in mind that people communicate differently. If you’re in an online setting, there are so many ways to diversify your communication with attendees that
we go over in *Creating Confident Leaders: Facilitation Skills for a New Era*. If you’re in person, this can be slightly more complicated, but here are a couple of suggestions:

- Lay out a large piece of paper on the floor or on a table and devote part of your time to writing down words or images that reflect feelings
- Buy a pack of Play-Doh or pipe cleaners and have them laid out so that your attendees can play with them as they share

Drawing something out can help break down the complicated ideas in people’s minds. This can allow them to express themselves more easily and clearly. While providing pipe cleaners or something similar acts as a wonderful tool for kinesthetic learners who need to be touching something or doing something with their hands while sharing to gather their thoughts and feel less anxious.
Part 6: Guided Discussion

Now that you've had the chance to go over these different scenarios, take some time to do a debrief with your group. Here are some questions you can consider:

1. Which situation was the easiest to figure out a solution for? Which situation was the hardest to find a solution for? Why?
2. How can we take what we've learned here and make sure we are using this as a guide for our own meetings?
3. What real life situations have you dealt with recently that you would like to discuss and figure out solutions for?

Part 7: Now What?

Congratulations! You've made it to the end of this workbook. This doesn't mean the work stops! You should reference this workbook every few months to make sure you and your other facilitators feel comfortable dealing with the various scenarios presented to you here. Take some time to make this a main agenda item at your Board meetings every so often. Don't assume that if you answered the questions “correctly” the first time, that you’re all set. The answers provided to you here are just suggestions of what can be done in these scenarios, so please only use them as a guide. Every situation is different, and you will be presented with variations of these scenarios in your own meetings. Practice with your Board members and look to them for feedback. Always use this workbook in conjunction with the facilitation video: Creating Confident Leaders: Facilitation Skills for a New Era.

We strongly encourage you to share your answers with your Chapter Engagement Coordinator or Manager and set up a time to discuss your process if you would like to dig deeper into this work.

If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to reach out to your Chapter Engagement Coordinator or Manager. Find a list of our staff here: pflag.org/staff

If you’d like more specific information about how to handle virtual facilitation, please reach out to PFLAG Connects Manager, Laura Galeano: lgaleano@pflag.org.
Part 8: Resources

● How to Run a Chapter: https://pflag.org/runachapter

● PFLAG Academy Online Videos & Training Toolkits: https://pflag.org/onlineacademy

● PFLAG Connects Resources: https://pflag.org/pflag-connects


● Support Resources: https://pflag.org/needsupport