



Strengthening Facilitation Skills: A Training Curriculum for Programs Working with Youth

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Let's get to know you

Please answer the following poll questions:

- 1. What best describes your role?**
- 2. How do you typically engage with facilitators?**



Photo by [Vladislav Klapin](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Agenda

- 1. Developing the Strengthening Facilitation Skills curriculum**
- 2. Overview of curriculum components**
- 3. Using the curriculum**
- 4. Questions and answers**

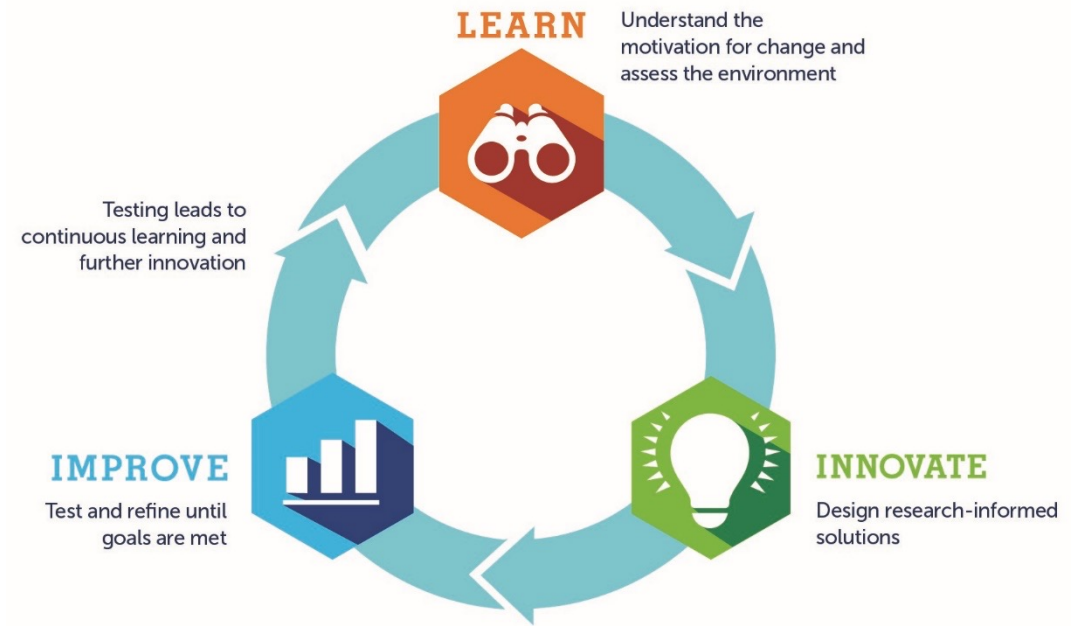


Developing the Strengthening Facilitation Skills curriculum



Development

- / **Used a formative evaluation**
- / **Conducted as part of the STREAMS evaluation**
- / **Public Strategies and Mathematica partnered with Catholic Charities of Wayne County, New York, and Youth and Family Services in Rapid City, South Dakota**
- / **Drew on evidence-based facilitation strategies**
- / **Guided by the Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI²) framework**





Gathering evidence to refine the curriculum



After each training

- Collected data on facilitators' experiences
 - Improved handouts to include written list of activities and resources for facilitators to use
 - Added “teach backs” and practice opportunities
-



After collecting data

- Provided more strategies and links to the appropriate time to use them in the curriculum
 - Refined the supervisor observation form
-



Debriefing as a group to plan improvements

- Used human-centered design techniques to elicit targeted feedback from supervisors and facilitators
 - Emphasized importance and benefits of planning for each session and reflecting on the last
-



Curriculum modules



Managing Energy

- What the energy cycle is
- How it affects youths' abilities to engage and learn
- How to manage energy in the classroom or group setting



Debriefing: Drawing Out Teachable Moments

- How to ask questions after each lesson or activity to draw out from youth what they learned
- How to connect insights to prior lessons and to youths' lives to deepen learning



Building Trust and Challenging the Comfort Zone

- How to build and maintain trust with individual students and a group
- How to challenge youth to explore new skills and behaviors



Examples of when a program may want to use this curriculum:

- / Provides group-based educational and prevention programs for youth**
- / Wants to raise the quality of facilitation and engage youth more effectively**
- / Wants to strengthen a curriculum being used in any group setting**
- / Can identify an experienced facilitator inside or outside of the organization to conduct the facilitation skills training**

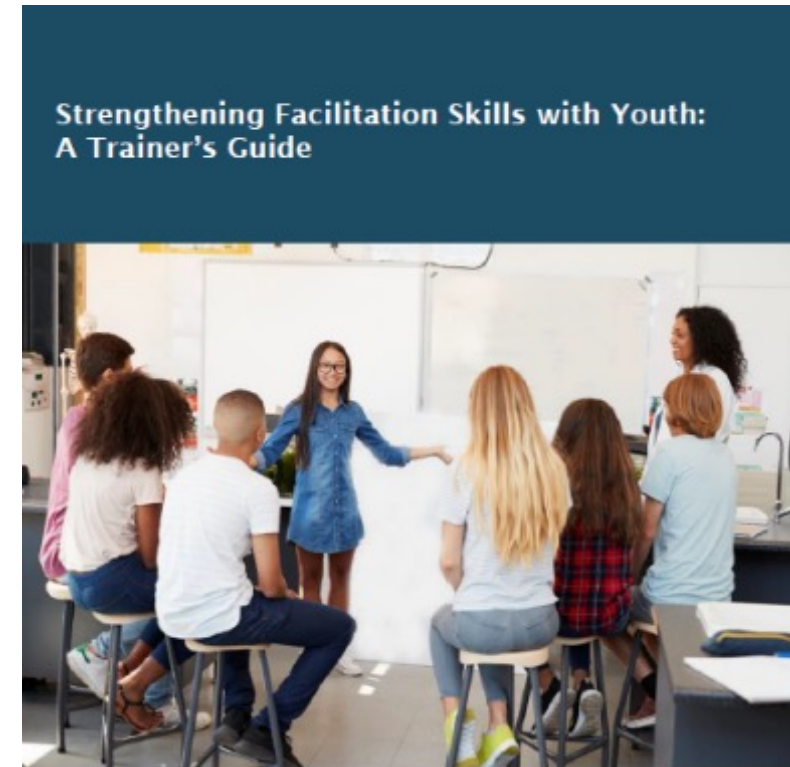


Overview of curriculum components



Curriculum components

1. **Trainer's guide and slide decks**
2. **Tools for facilitators**
3. **Supervisor observation form**
4. **Tip sheets**



August 2022



Strengthening Relationship Education and Marriage Services
OPRE Report Number 2022-158



Trainer's guide and slide decks



Used to train a group of facilitators and supervisors



Helps the trainer prepare for the training



Separate modules for Managing Energy, Debriefing, and Building Trust



Slide decks to present each module



Trainer's guide structure



Tips for the trainer



Objectives



Materials lists



Talking points



Discussion prompts



Activities and practice



Tip: The trainer can use guidance in the trainer's guide to tailor talking points and the training to trainees' needs.



Tools for facilitators

/ Each module has supporting materials for facilitators that are aligned to the module's learning goals

- Back Pocket Tips
- Checklists
- Sample discussion questions
- Activity descriptions

/ Includes tips from supervisors and facilitators

Back Pocket Tips

Steps to a Strong Debrief	Facilitating the <i>What?</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Revisit group agreements2. Plan your debrief3. <i>What?, So What?, Now What?</i>4. Reflect on your work5. Use co-facilitator signals (if applicable)6. Be culturally sensitive7. Use neutral responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photograph review• Journal review• Bag O' Metaphors• Stoplight• One Word Whip
Two-Minute Takeaways	Initiating a Six-Minute Debrief
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The One Thing Without Props• Someone Who ... ?• Next Time ... ?• One-Word Whip	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The One Thing With Props• Cut the Deck• Debrief Thumb Ball• Pair and Share• A <i>What?</i> technique followed by <i>So What?</i> and <i>Now What?</i> questions



Supervisor observation tool

- / Enriches and develops the skills of facilitators
- / Can help identify training needs or reinforce skills facilitators have learned

START OF SESSION:	DID THIS WELL	ATTEMPTED TO DO THIS BUT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	DID NOT DO THIS AT ALL	NOT APPLICABLE OR NOT POSSIBLE IN CLASS CONTEXT
Facilitator began session using high personal energy	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilitator began session with an opening activity	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilitator actively greeted students by name as they entered the room	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
THROUGHOUT SESSION: Managing Energy				
Facilitator made strategic deviations from standard content delivery to manage/reset energy	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Tip sheets

- / One for each module
- / Offers key lessons on the curriculum
 - Important content
 - Quick tips
 - Activities and strategies
- / A supplement to the facilitation skills training
- / Can be used by those who cannot complete the training

Strategies for Managing Energy in the Classroom

Keeping youth motivated and engaged in the classroom is important to maximize their learning. We call youths' engagement level and motivation "energy," and it can naturally vary throughout the day. Understanding how to manage energy can help you nurture positive energy and redirect negative energy in the classroom.

Understanding energy levels

Youths' energy is often proportional to the amount of fun they are having and the level of energy you put in. Effective facilitators can recognize when energy is getting too low or too high and use activities and strategies to bring the energy back to an appropriate level.

Energy has three levels:



Level 3 energy: Youth are engaged in discussion, focused on the facilitator, and not distracted.



Level 2 energy: Youth are slower to engage in discussion and the facilitator may notice that students start to slouch in their chairs.



Level 1 energy: Youth are hesitant to participate, struggling to stay awake, and are easily distracted.



Tip: Take action when youth are at Level 2 energy, because it's easier to raise their energy from Level 2 than from Level 1.



Caution: Sometimes energy can be too high. If you notice disruptive behavior impacting the group's ability to learn, energy might be too high and you will need to reduce it.

Leading by example with high energy

You should model high energy from the start to the end of a session.

Strategies:

- Arrive early to the program location and make sure everything is set up and ready so you can energetically greet youth as they arrive.
- Demonstrate high energy through your voice, intonation, movement throughout the room, facial expressions, and hand gestures.



Tip: If you have a co-facilitator, one facilitator can teach while the other monitors the energy in the room. Plan ahead and have signals to cue each other when you need to reset energy.



How to use the materials

- / Identify an experienced facilitator or trainer who will use the trainer's guide and slides to prepare**
- / Determine facilitators' needs and the appropriate modules to deliver**
- / Ideal group size for a facilitation skills training is 10 to 12 facilitators**
- / Facilitators use the strategies regularly**
- / Supervisors or trainer observe and debrief with facilitators a few weeks after the training**



Using the curriculum



Lessons from the formative evaluation and field

- / **The three training modules flow naturally**
- / **Planning ahead is essential**
- / **Strategies are applicable across contexts**
- / **Debriefing strategies take the most time and practice**
- / **Developing facilitation skills may boost youth engagement**





Access the materials on OPRE's website

/ Curriculum, supporting materials, and tip sheets

/ Formative evaluation report

- <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/co-creating-facilitation-training-curriculum-formative-evaluation>

Questions or comments? Contact us at ewelch@mathematica-mpr.com and scott.robby@publicstrategies.com