

Setting the Agenda: Reviewing Goals and Establishing Ground Rules

Each BRIDGE module begins with a session of reviewing goals and establishing ground rules for the workshop. The beginning of a popular education session is one of the most important moments—it is the time when you can establish a respectful and open tone with the group; develop rapport with participants; expose yourself as an equal and as a learner; and clarify goals for the workshop. A good opening moment can create a lot of positive mileage for facilitators—chances are that even if you hit some difficult moments later in the workshop, participants will be willing to give more, and remain more engaged in the process.

Why Do It?

- To establish trust and agreement within the group before starting the workshop.

Time Needed

- 10-15 minutes, depending on style and time limits

Materials needed:

- Easel paper, markers, tape

Facilitator Prep

- Write out the agenda and the workshop objectives on butcher paper before the start of the workshop

Directions

(order can be switched, according to your individual style and time limitations):

1. Introduce yourself to the group, and have participants introduce themselves.
2. Familiarize participants with agenda and workshop objectives. Provide some background information on the workshop: what is the reason for this workshop? Read the agenda and workshop agenda out loud (posted for the participants). This is also the time to clarify any questions about the agenda. It is often useful to review the goals that are stated as questions (“What will we be talking about?”) for clarity, and get feedback from participants about their goals—and how they will be met in the workshop.
3. Clarify any logistical details: Where is the restroom? When will there be breaks or meals?

Ground Rules

4. Develop ground rules as a group: If you are facilitating a module in an ongoing series, participants may have already developed ground rules and you may have written them up before the session. In this case, ask a participant to read them out loud. Ground rules are particularly helpful to establish an environment of mutual accountability, respect, and trust.

Ask participants to list some ground rules for the workshop.

Here are some ground rules that we've heard:

- Respect yourself and others.
- Honor confidentiality: Nothing shared in the workshop is to be repeated without permission of the person(s) involved, even to the person who shared it outside this space.
- Challenge your limits and take responsibility for your own learning: If someone goes too fast or is unclear, ask him/her to slow down and explain the points you don't understand.
- Affirm each other: We are creating a supportive learning space for each other.
- It's ok to challenge each other respectfully: These can be the biggest opportunities for the whole group to learn from one another.
- Step Up, Step Back: If you like to talk, try to "step back" to give others a chance to participate; if you're a quiet person, try to "step up" and contribute to the group.
- Listen to each other: Have only one person talk at a time, with others giving their full attention.
- Speak for yourself: Each person has much to contribute. Say "I think" or "I feel" or "I believe" rather than "women think" or "middle class people think."
- Don't be afraid to call time out when dealing with tough issues Sometime taking a break really helps you create the space and extra awareness needed to make it through hard patches. The hard stuff sometimes yields the richest mines for learning.
- Expect unfinished business. We can only make a start on these issues. Expect that there may be things that you will want to know more about, and intense feelings that will surface that you will want to explore in the future.

Ground Rules

Challenges

- If you rush through ground rules or generate the list without involving participants, ground rules can lose their legitimacy within the group. Establishing ground rules is one of the first chances to set a respectful tone for the workshop.

Source

Authors; Ground rules adapted from Nationwide Women's Program, American Friends Service Committee, *Facilitator's Guide for Women's Workshops on Women, Poverty & Economic Power* (Philadelphia: AFSC, 1990) 2-3; and from Miriam Ching Louie and Linda Burnham, "Ground Rules to Facilitate Participation," *Women's Education in the Global Economy: A Workbook of Activities, Games, Skits and Strategies for Activists, Organizers, Rebels and Hell Raisers,* (Berkeley: Women of Color Resource Center, 2000) 20.