

Strengthening Your Team: Practical Strategies for Facilitation, Team Interactions, and Decision Making

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This resource is a companion to *Effective Teaming Strategies*, which focuses on building a strong foundation for effective teams. Effective Teaming Strategies help teams identify who should be involved, clarify the team's purpose, develop a shared vision and mission, engage stakeholders, and establish structures that support successful collaboration.

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builds on that foundation by focusing on how teams work together in practice. It provides practical strategies for facilitating meetings, making decisions, encouraging meaningful participation, managing conflict, maintaining a focus on outcomes, and fostering productive interactions among team members.



Together, the resources address both the structural and operational components of effective teaming:

- ▶ ***Effective Teaming Strategies*** = Building the Team
- ▶ ***Strengthening Your Team*** = Operating the Team

Facilitation and Team Interactions

Team facilitator(s) help create the conditions for productive, collaborative, and action-oriented teamwork. By guiding discussions, encouraging participation from all members, and helping teams navigate challenges and disagreements, facilitators support psychological safety, stronger relationships, and more effective decision-making. The strategies below provide practical approaches that facilitators can use to foster meaningful participation, address challenges constructively, and keep teams focused on progress and results.

Encourage Balanced Participation

Create structures that prevent a small number of members from dominating discussions.

Examples of structures:

- ▶ Round-robin responses (call on each person to offer 1 idea or reflection)
- ▶ Think-pair-share (a question or problem is posed, participants pair with partner to discuss and then share back)
- ▶ “One voice before a second voice” (everyone speaks once before someone speaks twice)

Why this Works:

When multiple voices are intentionally included, team members are more likely to feel heard, respected, and valued for their perspectives. Strategies that promote balanced participation reduce dominance by a few voices, increase the diversity of input considered in decision-making, and strengthen overall team engagement and trust.

Establish Team Agreements

Develop and regularly review agreements that support respectful participation.

Examples of agreements:

- ▶ Respect differing perspectives.
- ▶ Honor confidentiality.
- ▶ Critique ideas, not people.

Why this Works:

Clear team agreements create structure, and structure creates safety by establishing predictable expectations for how people will engage. This helps team members feel safe sharing ideas and differing perspectives, while keeping the discussion focused on ideas rather than individuals.

Use Collaborative Planning and Engagement Activities

Periodically incorporate structured activities that help team members build relationships, share their perspectives, and contribute to a shared vision for the work.

Examples of planning processes:

- ▶ PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope)
- ▶ Liberating Structures activities
- ▶ Visioning exercises
- ▶ Future-focused planning discussions
- ▶ World Cafe for gaining broad input

Why this Works:

Structured engagement activities create opportunities for team members to connect beyond routine meeting tasks, strengthen relationships, and contribute their unique perspectives. These approaches often surface new ideas, increase commitment to shared goals, and build a stronger sense of ownership for the team's work. By actively involving members in shaping the team's direction, facilitators can strengthen engagement, trust, and collective investment in outcomes.

Redirect Problem Admiring Toward Action

When the discussion becomes focused on barriers, help the team identify solutions and actionable next steps.

Example of redirection to action:

- ▶ “What is one action within our control that we can take before the next meeting?”

Why this Works:

This helps teams move from identifying problems to taking purposeful action, which strengthens a sense of shared ownership and momentum. It also supports psychological safety by ensuring that concerns are acknowledged and addressed rather than left unresolved.

Addressing Conflict Constructively

Name and normalize tension early. When disagreement or tension arises, acknowledge it directly rather than letting it remain implicit or unspoken.

Examples for addressing conflict:

- ▶ “It sounds like there are different perspectives on the best next step—let’s pause and make sure we understand each point of view before moving forward.” Or,
- ▶ “I hear not everyone has the same opinion on this; let’s explore the perspectives more.”

Why it Helps:

Early naming of tension prevents misunderstanding and escalation. It supports psychological safety by signaling that disagreement is expected, safe, and part of effective team functioning. Taking time to address conflict or disagreements early saves time in the long run by preventing escalation or making it more difficult to resolve later.

Celebrate Progress Regularly

Reserve time in every meeting to recognize accomplishments, milestones, and successful implementation examples.

Example of celebration:

- ▶ Begin each meeting with “Bright Spots” where members share one success related to team goals.

Why this Works:

Regular recognition of progress reinforces team strengths and supports psychological safety by making contributions visible and valued. It helps sustain motivation and balance attention to both challenges and successes.

Decision Making

Define a Decision-Making Process

Establish in advance how decisions will be made (consensus, modified consensus, voting, advisory recommendation).

Example of defining how decisions are made:

- ▶ The team agrees that implementation decisions will use consensus whenever possible.

Why this Matters:

Teams function most effectively when members understand how decisions are made and believe their perspectives will be considered. A clear decision-making process promotes transparency, fosters psychological safety, and helps team members feel heard, respected, and valued. As a result, teams are more likely to engage in honest discussion, build trust, and support decisions once they are made.

Link Data to Outcomes

When analyzing data, clearly connect your results related to progress and outcomes to the team's mission and goals. Involve all team members in the process to gather diverse input, insights, perspectives, and to align on shared outcomes.

Example of data linked to outcomes:

- ▶ The team reviews and compares Fall and Spring Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) aggregate scores alongside provider survey results, ensuring these findings are connected to the team's mission and goals. All members, including community leaders, are actively involved in sharing their perspectives, helping the team interpret the data and summarize outcomes. Through this collaborative process, the team identifies that community professional learning experiences and coaching have contributed to stronger fidelity levels and increased feelings of efficacy.

Why it Matters:

Linking data to clear outcomes helps team members understand the real impact of their work and how it advances the team's mission. Actively gathering input from invested partners—such as ad hoc participants, workgroups, focus groups, surveys, interviews, and special projects—ensures diverse perspectives are represented. This approach strengthens engagement, increases participation, and creates ongoing opportunities for meaningful collaboration and partnership.

Additional Resources

- ▶ The *Liberating Structures* website offers a wealth of practical ideas and activity structures for working together as a team. <https://www.liberatingstructures.com/>
- ▶ The *Community Tool Box* is a free, online resource for those working to build healthier communities and bring about social change. It offers thousands of pages of tips and tools for taking action in communities. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en>
- ▶ The *World Cafe* and Central Garden is a hub where you can find creative ideas for convening and collaborating. Here you will find many free resources for different ways your team might collaborate or engage with diverse audiences. <https://theworldcafe.com/about-us/>