

Creating out Loud: Facilitator Guide



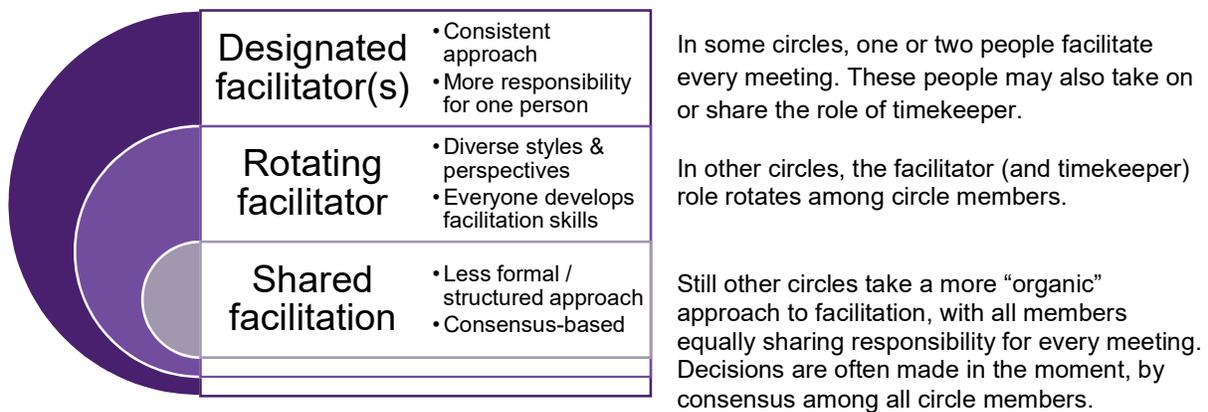
Who facilitates Creating Out Loud circles?

Creating Out Loud circles are designed to be “self-facilitating.”

In traditional learning environments, small groups are often coordinated and led by a single facilitator.

In Creating Out Loud peer-coaching, by contrast, circle members share responsibility for their own group – scheduling meetings, managing communication, choosing discussion topics, helping participants feel safe and able to contribute, and sticking to time.

Every circle is unique.



What makes for an effective facilitator?

The success of small group learning experiences is often put down to the part played by the facilitator.^[1]

- **Important attributes include:** a positive, non-judgemental, and non-defensive attitude; respect for group members; calmness, confidence, and authenticity.
- **Important behaviours include:** listening, observing, and helping the conversation flow; focusing on what works for the group as a whole, rather than one’s own contributions; modelling appropriate interactions and helping group members manage conflict.^[2]

Unlike the chairperson [in a committee meeting] who can waltz to the regulated music of Robert’s Rules of Order, the facilitator has to do a combination tap dance, shuffle, and tango to a syncopated rhythm produced by unpredictable humans.^[3]

There is no single recipe for effective facilitation. But flexibility is essential.^[4]



Getting started

To get your peer coaching circle off to a good start,

- **schedule six sessions in advance** – getting circle meetings into everyone’s calendar at the start helps people commit to the process. This is central to your circle’s success. Given how varied people’s schedules can be, finding six times that everyone can meet may prove impossible. Don’t worry too much if one or more people can’t attend every session. Personal investment in the process and engagement with fellow circle members matters more than 100% attendance.
- **choose a meeting ‘venue’ that works for everyone** – wherever possible, it is great to meet in-person (especially over a “coffee”). However, Zoom, Skype or Teams meetings can also work well, especially if everyone has a camera and can turn on their video. The most important thing is that all circle members can access the meeting venue without too much difficulty.
- **choose a communication channel that works for everyone, between meetings** – there will be times that you might want to contact other circle members in between meetings, such as to share resources or change meeting details. Some communication options include email, Slack, WhatsApp, Facebook and LinkedIn groups – each of which has pluses and minuses. But, here again, the most important thing is that everyone has access to and feels comfortable using the same communication channel.
- **decide how you will keep your circle on track and on time** – although peer-coaching doesn’t rely on a “leader-follower” model, it can help to choose a facilitator and time-keeper for each meeting (these can be the same person).
- **agree on a shared goal for your circle (optional)** – the overarching aim of the Creating Out Loud program is to help circle members build relationships with and support one another in pursuing their individual (personal and/or professional) goals. Circle members have an opportunity to identify and share their goals with each other in the first meeting – although you do not need to have a clear goal in order to join a circle. Some circles also decide to pursue shared goals, specific to their own group.

Facilitation resources

Creating Out Loud Discussion Guides provide everything you need – and more – to host successful peer coaching sessions.

The **Topic-based Discussion Guides** include prompts for both *Individual Reflection* and *Group Discussion* activities, plus additional resources that can be read or viewed outside meeting times. A separate one-page Facilitator Guide includes suggested timing for each activity.

Depending on each circle's preferences, facilitators can choose to stick to the suggested timing for each activity. Or they can allow conversation to flow more freely, following the interests and ideas of the group, as they emerge.

Reading through the Discussion Guide before each meeting will help facilitators see connections between their circle's conversation and different parts of the Guide – and use the Guide to support that conversation.

Most guides include more material than it is possible to use within a one hour meeting. So, facilitators can decide which activities their circle will complete, and how deeply to dive into any one activity.



Topic-based sessions require facilitators to be both flexible and responsive to their fellow circle members' priorities.

The **Goal-focused Discussion Guides** outline two well-established approaches to peer-coaching: a council model, and a forum model

Both approaches are structured to ensure that all circle members have an opportunity not only to bring their concerns to the group, but also to give and receive input with other circle members.

Individual circles should feel free to try both approaches, before choosing which one works best for them.

Unlike the Topic-based sessions, the success of Goal-focused meetings relies on sticking closely to the recommended timing for each activity.

For this reason, it can help to have a designated timekeeper, as well as a facilitator.



Goal-focused sessions require facilitators to be gently firm, ensuring that the process is followed fairly and all circle members have the chance to present and receive feedback on their concerns.

Time management

Topic-based meetings follow a standard agenda, with suggested timing for each activity:

| Activity | Suggested Timing |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Being here | Approx. 15 minutes |
| Individual reflection | Approx. 15 minutes |
| Group discussion | Approx. 20 minutes |
| What next? | Approx. 5 minutes |



Being here

This “check-in” opportunity helps circle members settle in and “be present” with one another. For some people, this is the most valuable part of the meeting. Make sure everyone has a chance to contribute.

- Opening each session with an Acknowledgement of Country is an important way to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land(s) on which you are meeting. It can also help establish respect as the basis of all interactions and communication within your circle.
- Also acknowledge and affirm any steps people have taken since the last meeting, and reassure anyone who wasn’t able to take their planned step(s) that there is no judgement within your circle.

Individual reflection

This part of the meeting gives circle members time to think about and connect with the topic of the day.

In some circles, participants prefer to have a few minutes for quiet reflection, and to write down or draw their thoughts before discussing the topic. Other circles prefer to jump straight into discussing these questions as a group, while still other circles complete the personal reflection activities before the meeting.

Try to use the Discussion Guide material in ways that work best for your fellow circle members.

Group Discussion

The questions in this part of Topic-based Discussion Guides are designed to stimulate discussion. There is generally no “right” or “wrong” answer – and circle members may disagree, even strongly, about some ideas.

You might occasionally need to remind people about your circle’s Working Agreement.

In most cases, there is not enough time to discuss every question. Facilitators can choose just one question for everyone to answer – or invite circle members to respond to whichever question most interests them.

What next?

In this part of the meeting, each circle member names one thing they want to do before the next meeting. You might like to write these things down – so you (or another Facilitator) can follow up at the next meeting.

*Feel free to adjust the timing for each activity and/or skip one or more activities.
Good conversations are more important
than strict timekeeping or sticking closely to the agenda.*

Goal-focused meetings have very specific agendas, depending on whether you're using the "Council model" or the "Forum model":

"Council model" meetings

| Activity | Timing |
|---|----------------------|
| Being here | Approx. 15 minutes |
| Council session | Approx. 1 – 1½ hours |
| Issue presentation | Maximum 3 minutes |
| Issue clarification | Maximum 3 minutes |
| Advice | Maximum 10 minutes |
| (repeat the Council session for each circle member) | |
| What next? | Approx. 5 minutes |



"Forum model" meetings

| Activity | Timing |
|--|--------------------|
| Being here | Approx. 15 minutes |
| Target presentation | Approx. 20 minutes |
| Personal introduction & clarifying questions | Approx. 10 minutes |
| Presenting concern | Approx. 10 minutes |
| Group discussion | Approx. 30 minutes |
| Advice (optional) | Approx. 5 minutes |
| What next? | Approx. 5 minutes |

More information about both of these agendas is provided in the relevant Discussion Guide.

Goal-focused meetings require fairly strict adherence to the agenda, to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities to explore their questions.



Facilitating online circles

Meeting online can be a great way to connect with people outside your usual networks, and can prove especially useful for people in regional, rural and remote locations.

While facilitating online sessions calls for many of the same attributes and behaviours as face-to-face meetings, the online environment does make some face-to-face approaches more difficult – and even impossible. Working online also calls for additional knowledge and skills, in particular the ability to:

- work with a range of online tools, match technology to group needs and processes, and help group members use any tools they are not already familiar with; and
- the ability to “communicate with presence online,” which includes both “being present to the group” and using “techniques and interventions that reduce the effects of time differences, geographical distance, and cultural separation” between group members.^[5]

For more information about facilitation:

If you sincerely care about the success of the group and are able to communicate that caring to the group, you can be successful... facilitation is a highly emotional activity. The best facilitators are in tune with their intuition and use this sense as their guide during facilitation experiences.^[6]

- The International Association of Facilitators (IAF) Core Competencies framework can be found here: <https://www.iaf-world.org/site/professional/core-competencies>
- The International Institute for Facilitation Certified Master Facilitator® Competencies can be found here: <https://www.inifac.org/the-master-facilitator-competencies/>

References

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Additional Discussion Guides

Discussion Guides related to arts and culture can be found at:

<https://creatingoutloud.business.uq.edu.au/>



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The opinions in this Discussion Guide do not necessarily represent the views of The University of Queensland, funding / industry partners, or the individual members involved in the reference groups.

About Creating Out Loud

“Creating Out Loud” is an 18-month Industry Research Fellowship funded by the Queensland Minister for State Development, Tourism and Innovation, under the Advance Queensland Industry Research Fellowship program.

Creating Out Loud was developed to support Queensland’s artists and arts managers as they recover from and rebuild business, artistic, and cultural practices following the COVID-19 pandemic.

For further information visit

<https://creatingoutloud.business.uq.edu.au/>



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To interrupt the flow of this Discussion Guide as little as possible, reference information appears at the end of the guide and direct attributions have been minimized.

This guide includes links to various web material. All links were working at the time of publication. Please note however that these links may become outdated over time.

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