

# General Guidelines for Group Facilitators in Scenario Planning Sessions

In scenario creation workshops, it is common to hold small group conversations, comprising 6-10 people per group. This size of group allows each participant the chance to share their ideas, listen to others and, collectively, emerge with some considered ideas. This short note outlines some reminders and tips for facilitators of small groups in scenario workshops.

- **Your Role:** It is worth explaining your role at the start of the first session. Say that you (as a facilitator) are responsible for making sure that the group has a valuable conversation and completes the task on time. You are not the 'expert' of the group. Decide if you will record the conversation yourself (this gives you more control) or whether you would like to ask someone else (or everyone) in the group to scribe. You might also have a note-taker at your table who will take more extensive notes.
- **Keep it Moving:** Scenario break-out groups are designed to allow participants to have interesting and valuable conversations while moving through a time-limited process. In general, encourage your group to keep moving through the conversation; don't let them get bogged down in a specific issue or detail for more than 5 minutes (unless it is a particularly important conversation). Emphasize that the point of these small group conversations is mostly to raise ideas and perspectives, rather than to prove a point or make a final decision.
- **Live in the Scenarios:** Remind the group that most of the conversation should take place within the context of a particular scenario. It is usual, natural and tempting for groups to talk about the realities of today; your job is to keep them imagining the possibilities of tomorrow. To do this, it is helpful to preface a comment (and encourage others to do the same) with "...so, in this scenario in 2042, I could imagine that..."
- **Avoid focus on Solutions & Actions:** It is very common for participants to want to talk about solutions and actions. Your job is to artfully discourage this when possible, by reminding them that scenario creation conversations are designed to paint a picture of the conditions that we might face in future. The solutions conversations will happen later in the session. If a solution idea is raised, ask the proposer to write it up on a "parking lot" in the room.
- **Capture Memorably:** Make sure that you - or a designated reporter - capture the main points of the conversations. Worksheets will be provided for this. Add as much color (literally and figuratively) as you can. If someone describes an idea in terms of a powerful image, don't be afraid to sketch it, or create an icon for it. It will make it more memorable for the group, and easier to communicate.
- **Regulate the Energy:** Try to regulate the energy of the group. If they are energized, then concentrate on channeling and focusing their conversation. If they are flagging, change the situation. Ask a different question. Make them stand up or walk around the room. If one member of the group is less vocal than others, look for opportunities to ask them specifically for their opinion and ideas.
- **Be Part of the Conversation:** Having said all this, remember that there are dangers in "over-facilitating". The worksheets (and the size of the group) should ensure that group members know the task in front of them, and the small number of people in the group usually means that they will self-organize. So, in some situations, you can simply concentrate on being part of the conversation.