



The Role of Facilitators

1. The Facilitator is the person who **ensures the Hearing becomes a welcoming place** for those who will offer their lived experience of poverty and the impact of current government policy and practice.
2. The Facilitator should be **a person with empathy** and an understanding of the issues and circumstances in which witnesses find themselves. Central to the Facilitator role is the ability to allow and encourage full and free expression by witnesses.
3. The Facilitator should work toward **reflecting to the witnesses summaries of the key points of his/her testimony** for their approval. This reflection should include both the informational and emotional content of the witness testimony. The Facilitator is also responsible for the creation of a safe space from which witnesses can speak about their lived experiences of poverty.
4. As the Facilitator **works toward drawing out the impact of lived experiences** from witnesses, the Facilitator may also provide an opportunity for the witness to offer assessments of how their lived experiences of poverty could be different, what is working or not working within the current system of supports, and what changes could be made to improve their circumstances.
5. The Facilitator is also **responsible for expediting the sessions** with local **social service providers** and local **politicians** that will take place on the same day.
6. The Facilitator is **responsible for vetting and preparing any witnesses** who are willing to **speak with** members of the **media**.
7. **Training will be provided** for Facilitators prior to their taking up the role. The Facilitator role is primarily active on the day(s) of the Hearing(s) and during any local media events. The Facilitator may become a member of the delegation that follows up with politicians after the interim report is released. The Facilitator may also be called upon to assist with communications within the local Planning Committee.



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Handout for Facilitators

What is a Facilitator?

A Facilitator is a person who creates the needed structure for a successful hearing. These functions are accomplished in the following manner:

1. The Facilitator prepares and plans for the hearing.

Where possible, the facilitator should familiarize themselves with the location and layout of the room where the hearing will take place prior to the hearing date.

Preparation for the hearing could include decisions on how chairs will be set up to aid in both the comfort of the witnesses but also allows for ease of conversation, listening, and recording. A circle is often used to create a sense of containment and equality amongst participants.

2. The Facilitator understands the components of a good meeting.

Introduction: (10 minutes)

- Facilitator introduces self, Rapporteurs and Recorders.
- Facilitator offers a brief explanation about the purpose of the hearing.
- Explains participation form and invites witnesses to complete it.
- Explains the role of the Rapporteurs and Recorders.
- Listens and shows respect when others are telling their stories.

Focusing the testimony: (60 to 70 minutes)

- The witnesses will likely respond more to an invitation to tell their story than a barrage of questions. Ask open ended questions such as:
 - How has your struggle on a low income changed in the past five years for better and for worse?
 - Tell us about your experience with social assistance or low wage jobs?
 - What changes would make to break the cycle of poverty in your life?
 - If you have children and youth in your family, how have they been affected by your low income?
 - How do housing, transportation, health care, child care, or other issues affect you (and your family)?
 - If you could make one change that would dramatically affect you (and your family), what would be most important to you?
- You will need to be aware of time. As much as we would like to give everyone as much time as they need to tell their story, it may be necessary to remind the witnesses that others want to speak.
- Ideally, as one witness shares their story, other witnesses will chime in and share their experiences and expand on what others are sharing.

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Wrapping up the hearing: (10 minutes)

- Collects participation forms.
 - Thanks everyone for their participation.
3. Sessions with service providers, educators, and healthcare workers will follow a very similar format with the use of Rapporteurs and Recorders. Allow approximately one hour for these sessions. The need to ask open ended questions remains the same.
 - The following are some sample questions:
 - How has your work with people living on low incomes changed in the past five years? For better or for worse?
 - Tell us about your experiences with people receiving government assistance?
 - What changes would it take to break the cycle of poverty?
 - What are the barriers to making those changes?
 4. Meeting with the local politicians will also follow the same format.
 - Sample questions for these sessions could include:
 - How has your view of poverty changed in the last five years?
 - What programs does your community have to fight/eliminate poverty?
 - What changes would it take to break the cycle of poverty?
 - What are the barriers to making those changes?
 5. As with the Hearing sessions for people experiencing poverty, it is important to help service providers and local politicians feel comfortable. Their perspectives on poverty in their communities is also a valuable part of the social audit hearings.