

# Facilitating a Tabletop Exercise



# Facilitation

**“To free from difficulties or obstacles”**

Source: American Heritage Dictionary

# Facilitation

**“A neutral third party who helps a group increase its effectiveness by improving its process.”**

Source: Mediation Center for Conflict Resolution, Hamline University Law and Graduate Schools

# Facilitation

**“The art, craft and science of leading people through a process toward an agreed-upon outcome.”**

Source: Mediation Center for Conflict Resolution, Hamline University  
Law and Graduate Schools

# Design Issues for Consideration

**Structure:** How rigidly or flexibly should the exercise be implemented?

**Pace:** How rapidly or leisurely should the exercise be implemented?

**Interaction:** How should players relate to each other?

**Control:** Where should players look for direction and validation?

# Characteristics of an Effective Facilitator

- Plans and prepares
- Guides, but doesn't participate
- Calls people by name
- Uses the space well
- Stays on track, stays on time
- Honors break, meal, and end times
- Allows group members to talk to each other



Sources: DHS HSEEP Manual, Vol. II, Mediation Center for Conflict Resolution, Hamline University Law and Graduate Schools

# Characteristics of an Effective Facilitator (continued)

- Gives clear instructions
- Is confident, yet flexible
- Isn't afraid of productive conflict
- Isn't afraid to cut people off
- Provides clarification and focus
- Brings encouragement, humor and empathy
- Always remains neutral, objective, and fair



Sources: DHS HSEEP Manual, Vol. II, Mediation Center for Conflict Resolution, Hamline University Law and Graduate Schools

# Possible Player Challenges

- Players Who Dominate
- Overly Talkative Players Who Digress
- Side Conversations and Other Distractions
- Overly Disagreeable Players



# Include Facilitation Preparation in the Exercise Design Process

- Predict player challenges in advance
- Prepare the facilitator
- Develop specific strategies for involving players
- Develop facilitator questions for each script
- Consider player seating arrangements
- Provide back-up support to facilitator

# Questions/Discussion

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