

Running a training session

AIMS

1. What are your aims for the training session? What would you like to be different afterwards: for you, for your work, for the participants, for their groups, for their campaigns, for their environment?

Your objectives should include some element of action in the real world, not just information exchange – if you plan to share information, what do you expect them to do with it – communicate it more widely through the media, talking to the public, lobbying local or national government?

AUDIENCE

2. Who do you think will attend your session? What will they expect? What are their aims likely to be? What will they probably know and be able to do already? How many will there be?

Are they experienced campaigners? What roles do they take in their groups? What skills, knowledge and experience do they already have? What sorts of activities might they be prepared to engage with?

Their objectives will vary. Some may want to learn a skill for their own development, or to help them run their campaign or their group more effectively. Some may just be filling the time. Others could have their own agenda – raising an issue they have with you or the organisation, wanting help with a specific problem, or wanting to share their experiences and viewpoint.

See also: *Dealing with difficult behaviours*

DELIVERY

3. How do you like to receive training – hands-on? time to think? lots of theory? How will your preferences affect how you design and run your training session? How can you engage people who learn in different ways? Who else could help you to run this session (staff, local group member)?

Your preferred style of learning will influence how you design training e.g. if you are an activist you will tend to include more hands-on practical sessions, but this may alienate people who like lots of information, or who need time to think through the implications of ideas. If you don't know your own learning style, complete the *mini-questionnaire* to find out.

Different people like to learn in different ways, and to ensure that your training engages them and is taken on board; it helps to understand what these different ways are.

4 Learning Styles: (from Kolb's theory)

- **Activist** – (doing and feeling) hands-on, relies on intuition rather than logic, uses other people's analysis, and likes practical, experiential approach.
- **Reflector** (feeling and watching) - able to look at things from different perspectives, sensitive, prefers to watch rather than do it, gathers information and uses imagination to solve problems.
- **Theorist** (watching and thinking) - concise, logical approach, ideas and concepts are more important than people, requires good clear explanation rather than practical opportunity.
- **Pragmatist** (thinking and doing) - can solve problems and will use learning to apply to finding solutions to practical issues, prefers technical tasks, less concerned with people and interpersonal aspects.

People will tend to use one learning style more than the others when receiving training. You need to try to provide sessions in your workshop that will appeal to each type. If you run a training session that appeals to only one type, they may learn lots and really enjoy it, but others will find it frustrating, intimidating, uninspiring etc. To learn more about the preferences of different learning styles read '*Learning styles – in-depth*'

CONTENT

4. How would you like the session to run? How would you like people to interact with the material, with you and with each other? What ground-rules would you like to set for the group? What ground-rules do you think they would appreciate?

You might like questions throughout the session, or prefer to leave time for them at the end. Maybe you like free-for-all discussions, or you prefer people to put their hands up when they want to contribute. Some people like heated debate, and others prefer respectful and constructive discussion. For some audiences *ice-breakers and energizers* work very well, for others they are seen as a waste of time.

Ground rules can include: respect for each other (no interrupting, not dismissing other viewpoints etc.); when to ask questions (at any time or at the end, but should be questions, not statements or arguments); keeping to time (facilitator and participants have responsibility); fully engaging with the session (not criticising from the back, or sitting out); etc.

They work best when they have been suggested by the group rather than enforced, so 3 minutes at the beginning to elicit these, putting them on a flip and asking people to challenge those who aren't abiding by them is well worth it. They are a vital tool for dealing with difficult people and behaviours, again see *Dealing with difficult behaviours* for other ways to deal with them.

5. What training methods have you thought of? How much time do you have? Of all your ideas, how many can you really include? Which are essential?

Training methods could include: simple lecture-style presentation, discussion, demonstration, role-play, brainstorm, games and quizzes, question and answer, practical, action-planning. Some of these can be run as a whole group, in small groups, in pairs or individually. Generally, using just one method in a training session isn't recommended, as different people will like, respond well to and learn from different methods.

Be realistic about how much time different sections will take. Allow time for questions, as there will always be some. Allow time for people moving from one segment to another. It is better to have a very good session where everyone got to have their say and learnt something well, than to squeeze so much in that you run out of time and have to leave out something vital at the end.

FOLLOW-UP

6. How will people use the information and skills once they leave your training session? What barriers might they face? How could you help them overcome these – during and after the session? What materials would they find useful to take with them?

How do you think people will use the skills and knowledge from your session once they've left it? What would you like them to do? What might stop them from doing these?

It's vital to help people to use the information and skills you share – very often returning to the harsh realities of their local group means they forget all about their good intentions.

Barriers to action include: forgetting the content or the skills, having no time to use them, having no opportunity to use them, other people not accepting or valuing them, old habits of behaviour returning once the training is finished etc.

Highlight the key barriers your participants might face, or talk to them about the ones they can anticipate. How can you help them overcome these? Raising their awareness of the barriers is very important – they will at least be prepared for it to be difficult. Then getting them to think through how they could overcome them will mean when they happen they've already thought through what to do or say. Getting each person to commit to one action and writing that down makes their first step easier and more likely. See '*Transfer of Training*' for more ideas.