

Facilitating Role Plays—Facilitator Instructions and Resource Materials

Why use role plays?

Role plays allow participants to apply new technical knowledge and skills in situations that simulate those they encounter in real-life situations and facilitate transfer of learning to improve performance. Role plays require participants to react to situations in the moment when applying technical information and skills they have learned. Role plays help facilitate transfer of learning by giving participants opportunities to:

- Practice in a safe, non-threatening environment where it is permissible to make mistakes
- Work in small groups and observe the facilitator or an experienced participant demonstrate the task/skill, which helps participants to be comfortable trying out new approaches
- Become confident using job aids and tools to facilitate performance of tasks/skills
- Receive targeted feedback and support after each role-play; immediate feedback is crucial for participants to achieve a high level of proficiency and attain performance expectations

Note: The following instructions apply to activities involving role plays conducted in small groups with a minimum of four participants (an observer, a facilitator and at least two stakeholders).

Preparing for the activity

- 1. Read the role-play scenario, character descriptions and skills checklist.** Carefully review the details of the scenario and the character descriptions for the *community liaison officer who will facilitate the meeting with the stakeholders (CLO/facilitator)* and the *stakeholder meeting participants*. Become familiar with the key issues being addressed in the scenario and the behaviors on the checklist. *[Note: Although this curriculum contains only one scenario as a prototype, there should be multiple appropriate scenarios that can be used during the practice session to keep the participants from becoming bored as they take turns playing the role of the CLO/facilitator.]*
- 2. Adapt the activity to make it relevant** (or create a new scenario, character descriptions and skills checklist to match your objectives). If necessary, adapt the role play scenario, character descriptions and checklist to make them more consistent with the situations that participants are likely to encounter (e.g., type of organizations, cultural practices). For example, if most of the participants work in a rural community, the scenario should reflect the cultural practices and priorities of the population. If community leaders/organizations have existing agreements about how they work together, make sure that the scenarios reflect this.
- 3. Familiarize yourself with relevant tools and job aids.** If participants will be practicing using a step-by-step checklist, ensure that the items on the checklist reflect the behaviors that you want them to practice. Be prepared to demonstrate proper use of tools, job aids or other props.

4. **Anticipate and know how to address issues.** Study the relevant technical information (e.g., the study protocol) so that you are ready to address issues related to the situation depicted in the role play that participants might raise during the activity. For community stakeholders, keep scientific explanations simple and non-technical but accurate.
5. **Decide how you will introduce and use the role plays.** If it is the first time that the participants are taking part in this type of role-playing activity, conduct a demonstration so that they become familiar with the expectations related to the roles and support materials. Practice playing the role of the *CLO/facilitator* until you can provide a suitable demonstration and prepare other facilitators (or participant volunteers) to take on the supporting roles of the *participants at a stakeholder engagement meeting* and an *observer* during the demonstration. Also practice explaining how to conduct the role plays.
6. **Prepare copies of resources.** Make copies of the *CLO/facilitator*, *observer*, and *stakeholder meeting participant* instructions; the scenario and character descriptions; the guidelines for giving and receiving feedback; and the role play observation checklist for each participant in the small groups. If the scenario involves using an existing job aid, tool or other props (e.g., an informational brochure about the study) ensure that there is at least one set per small group available to use during the role play. Note: In addition to the copies of specific pages needed to conduct the activity, participants should receive a separate copy of the entire Facilitating Role Plays Handout so that they will have it for reference after the training.

Conducting the activity

1. **Introduce the activity using the slide (or prepared flip chart) that outlines the role-play instructions.** Emphasize that role-playing provides participants with an opportunity to apply their new knowledge, skills, and tools in situations that simulate actual interactions with stakeholders.
2. **Identify specific learning objectives.** Describe the objectives that are associated with the role-play activity. For example: *Participants will demonstrate their ability to negotiate/facilitate an agreement during a meeting with community stakeholders.*
3. **Ask participants to break into groups of four or five.** Direct the members of each group to choose who will play the role of the *CLO/facilitator*, *observer*, and *stakeholder meeting participants*. Remind the groups that during the training workshop (or outside the workshop if time is limited) each participant should be given the opportunity to play/practice the *CLO/facilitator* role. Distribute copies of the instructions for the *CLO/facilitator*, *observer*, and *stakeholder meeting participant* roles, or create flip charts that describe the general expectations for each role. Review the expectations for each role with the participants.
4. **Provide a demonstration.** In addition to showing how the activity is conducted, the demonstration will help participants feel more comfortable trying out new approaches. Prepare for the brief demonstration as suggested in item 5 above. Additional suggestions for conducting a demonstration are included on the note page of slide 29.
5. **Distribute role-play materials to the small groups/participants taking on the CLO/facilitator, observer and stakeholder meeting participant roles.** Give each participant a copy of the

scenario information sheet that includes a description of their character so they can respond “in character” during the role play. Give the “observer” a role play observation checklist. To maintain spontaneity of the interactions during the role play, ask the participants not to discuss the details of their roles prior to the role play.

6. **Give the groups 15 minutes to conduct the role play.** Circulate among the groups to answer any questions that may arise and provide guidance as needed.
7. **Instruct each group to discuss the role play.** After the small groups have finished with the role play, ask the groups to take five minutes to talk about what happened during the role play from the perspective of the CLO/facilitator (self-assessment), the stakeholder meeting participants (personal satisfaction with the interaction, sense of engagement), and the observer (objective assessment using the Role Play Observation Checklist). The groups should discuss the following questions among themselves.
 - What did the CLO/facilitator do in this situation that was most effective?
 - What might the CLO/facilitator consider doing differently?
 - Did the CLO/facilitator complete the steps and meet the standards for the items included on the Role Play Observation Checklist?

Post a prepared flip chart of the discussion questions where each small group can see it, or display the PowerPoint slide that shows the questions. Encourage participants to provide constructive criticism during their discussions.

8. **Rotate roles and substitute new role plays.** Participants should rotate roles within their small groups. If the small groups are each working on different role plays, the groups can pass their role play materials to the next group. Ideally each small group member will have an opportunity to play the role of the CLO. To keep participants engaged in the activity, do not practice more than two roles plays in a row; intersperse other activities with the role plays. If there is not sufficient time for each participant to practice every skill, ensure that practice opportunities are distributed as evenly as possible among participants.
9. **Process the activity.** After the groups have completed one (or two) rounds of role plays, conduct a discussion in the large group using the following questions:

While playing the role of the CLO/facilitator

- How did it feel to integrate new techniques, and job aids into your interactions with stakeholder meeting participants?
- What worked well? What still feels awkward and requires more practice?
- What did you think about the pacing/length of the interaction/process?
- Did the stakeholder meeting participants raise issues or questions that you did not know how to answer or retain differences of opinion that you could not negotiate?

While playing the role of a stakeholder meeting participant

- Did the CLO/facilitator adequately address your main reason for attending the stakeholder meeting? Resolve other issues/concerns raised during the meeting?
- Were you able to understand and use the information the CLO/facilitator provided?
- Were you comfortable asking questions?

- After being a stakeholder meeting participant, what changes will you make when you role-play the CLO/facilitator?

While playing the role of the observer

- What was it like using the checklist? Do you feel it helped with the process of both knowing what to observe and organizing your feedback to share with the CLO/facilitator?
- Can you share some examples of interesting interactions and creative solutions that you observed in the role plays?

10. Conclude the activity by asking participants to think about whether and how they might use scripted role play and skills checklists in their stakeholder engagement activities. Engaging stakeholders and building their capacity to support your study is an essential component of HIV prevention trials.

Hints for Effective Facilitation

Focus on impact, not comfort:

1. Posture—maintain close proximity to audience with body open to participants, stand balanced on two feet, keep arms relaxed unless gesturing
2. Eye Contact—speak only to a pair of eyes; deliver one thought, concept, sentence per person in 3 to 5 seconds; use a random approach
3. Movement—look and lock on a pair of eyes, move with a sense of purpose, plant and return to solid balanced position
4. Gestures—above the waist, open, full, expansive, expressive, paint a picture
5. Facial Expressions—use a variety of facial animation appropriate to message being communicated including a smile when appropriate
6. Voice—vary tone and project to ensure message is heard

CLO Facilitator—General Instructions for Role Plays

Pretend that you are a CLO facilitating a stakeholder engagement meeting.

Before beginning the role play:

- Read the scenario that describes the meeting that you will be facilitating.
- Review the Role Play Observation Checklist so that you are familiar with the behaviors that you are expected to perform during the role play.
- Review other resources, tools, job aids that provide guidance related to the task you are going to perform.
- Review the *Guidelines for Giving and Receiving Feedback After Role Plays*.

During the role play, apply your prior experience along with the guidance from the resources provided to facilitate the meeting described in the scenario.

Observer— General Instructions for Role Plays

Prior to the start of the role play:

- Review the Role Play Observation Checklist so that you are familiar with the behaviors that you are observing and where they appear on the checklist.
- Review the *Guidelines for Giving and Receiving Feedback After Role Plays*.

While observing the role play between the CLO facilitator and stakeholders, remember to:

- Use the observation checklist to note what you observe—tick yes, no or NA if not observed.
- Use the space provided to write more detailed observations about specific issues.
- Be prepared to give feedback to the CLO facilitator regarding how well he or she managed the interactions with the stakeholders.

Stakeholder Meeting Participant— General Instructions for Role Plays

Prior to the start of the role play:

- Read the description of the stakeholder meeting participant role you will be playing and make sure you understand your character's situation.
- During the role play, use the information provided in your character's description to respond to the facilitator's questions and instructions.

Scenario and Character Descriptions for Role Play

Instructions: *Cut along the dotted lines and distribute the descriptions to the participants playing the various roles.*

Scenario—Facilitating Agreement

Situation: A meeting of stakeholders in your community about a new trial that is just getting off the ground. You have invited a small group of key stakeholders to discuss sociocultural factors that might impact the study. At an earlier meeting, stakeholders met in small groups to identify sociocultural factors/issues that might have an impact. You are reconvening today to decide how to prioritize the factors/issues. The study team will be developing a strategy for how to address the sociocultural factors within the community that might impact the study and are relying on you to solicit input from the community to ensure that decisions that the study team makes are well-informed.

Character CLO/Meeting Facilitator: Your role is to facilitate a discussion among the small group to prioritize the list of factors/issues that your group brainstormed at the previous meeting (the Open Stage of the process described in Tool 7F: Facilitating Agreement, see page 183). Today you will be completing the Narrow Stage and the Close Stage with the group.

Stakeholder 1: You are attending a second meeting of stakeholders in your community about a new trial that is just getting off the ground. You are a representative from one of the largest community-based organizations. During the role play, make it clear that your motivation for prioritizing the factors is based on channeling work to your organization with the goal of procuring funds for your organization—irrespective of whether it supports the objectives of the study or would serve the best interests of the community.

Stakeholder 2: You are attending a second meeting of stakeholders in your community about a new trial that is just getting off the ground. You are a representative of the district health team. Your team is responsible for implementing the nationwide initiative to provide integrated, community-based health services. This directive drives all of your priority-setting decisions.

Stakeholder 3: You are attending a second meeting of stakeholders in your community about a new trial that is just getting off the ground. You are a representative from a local activist organization. Regardless of the topic of discussion, you are always focused on your concern about ARVs being used for prevention while your organization struggles to provide ARVs for its beneficiaries with AIDS.

Stakeholder 4: You are attending a second meeting of stakeholders in your community about a new trial that is just getting off the ground. You are a representative from a local CBO. You are very distracted today because of a proposal deadline and are not focused on the meeting objectives. You keep checking your phone—obviously distracted.

Role Play Observation Checklist for CLO/Facilitators—Facilitating Agreement

CLO facilitator: _____ Observer: _____ Date: _____

	Yes	No	N/A	Case-Specific Observations
Overall: Communicate Effectively and Manage Group Dynamics				
Creates and maintains a supportive and calm environment
Explains clearly the process of what will occur during the meeting
Provides structure for discussions/activities
Encourages stakeholders to share ideas/opinions freely
Ensures stakeholders' understanding/corrects misunderstandings
Supports uniform participation of all stakeholders
Manages disruptive behavior of stakeholders effectively
Shows respect for and avoids judging the stakeholders
Maintains relaxed, friendly, attentive body posture and eye contact
Uses simple, clear language
Uses open-ended and probing questions correctly
Listens carefully to the stakeholders (paraphrases and reflects)
Uses humor effectively
Uses tools/job aids (if any) appropriately
Facilitating Agreement—Open Stage				
Makes a proposal
Works with stakeholders to generate a short list of ideas
Works with stakeholders to expand the list of ideas
Clarifies ideas to ensure mutual understanding of all the ideas listed
Facilitating Agreement—Narrow Stage				
Combines duplicates/consolidates similar ideas
Prioritizes/ranks ideas using a ranking tool
Allows stakeholders to advocate for ideas before eliminating
Facilitating Agreement—Close Stage				
Uses a negative poll to eliminate low-ranking ideas
Resolves disagreements by adjusting ideas
Avoids win or lose solutions by exploring feasibility for both ideas

Guidelines for Giving and Receiving Feedback After Role Plays

Ground Rules for GIVING Feedback

- Offer praise before sharing constructive criticism.
- Offer feedback using the first person—for example, “I think,” “I saw,” “I feel,” “I noticed.”
- Be brief in your comments.
- Direct comments toward behaviors over which the person has control and can change.
- Offer constructive criticism by offering ideas for improvement.
- Criticize the performance not the performer.
- Describe what you saw and heard, but avoid making judgments.

Constructive feedback: “You were very thorough and seemed to cover all of the important steps. When you asked the person playing the role of the stakeholder if s/he had any questions, however, I noticed that you were writing on the flip chart and not looking at her/him. Perhaps if you stopped what you were doing and made eye contact with him/her, s/he would feel more comfortable asking questions.”

Unconstructive feedback: “You ignored the stakeholder because you were too focused on writing on the flip chart. You asked, but you didn’t seem to even care if s/he had any questions. Also, your voice is too deep and intimidating.”

Ground Rules for RECEIVING Feedback

- Ask for specific and descriptive feedback.
- Ask clarifying questions to understand the feedback.
- Accept feedback. Do not defend or justify behavior.
- Listen to the feedback and thank the observer, other the participants or facilitators for sharing their perspectives.
- Reflect on the feedback and use relevant feedback as information to improve your performance.

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