

Become A Certified Professional Facilitator

10 Steps for Certification Preparation

A number of facilitators, both new and experienced, have asked about what they should do to prepare themselves for facilitator certification. My first response is to say, "Go check out the IAF requirements". But upon reflection the question asked has a deeper meaning when examined closely. The question refers to preparation related more to a long-term approach to developing the skills and artifacts as opposed to getting their documents together for the next certification event. To that end I thought I would share the following 10 steps program:

1. Conduct a Self-Assessment: The first thing I would recommend to anyone is to conduct a self-assessment. This can be done in many different ways but, in particular I refer to assessing your knowledge, skills, and abilities with respect to the IAF Facilitator Competencies.

A friend once said, "Prescription without Assessment is Malpractice." Without an assessment it doesn't matter what you do, the path you take will be long and difficult, or at worst, you may never get where you aim to be. To help you with this I have included several resources you can use for conducting your self-assessment:

- My company, CELF, LLC, developed a Self-Assessment instrument, based on the IAF Facilitator Competencies and Bloom's Taxonomy, that we use in the *Professional Group Facilitator: Concepts and Practices of Group Facilitation* course. Go to our website (<http://www.facilitationcenter.com/index.php?option=articles&task=viewarticle&artid=9&Itemid=3>), then click on Facilitator CELF-Assessment.
- Steve Davis the editor of the Master Facilitators Journal website offers a Self-Assessment (<http://www.masterfacilitatorjournal.com/assess.htm>)
- The Canadian Standards and Guidelines (Facilitator) is a Self-Assessment that uses 87 detailed sub-competencies at (http://www.aspect.bc.ca/pdf/NS_Assessment.pdf).

2. Construct an Individual Development Plan: After you have conducted a self-assessment it is time to examine your needs and determine what degree of development you want to achieve. An IDP is not a document that covers one thing. It should blend development activities across several areas of your life. That said we are free to discuss what should be covered in the plan. Beginning with the results of your self-assessment you should determine what you want to accomplish and what options you have for each. Consider including formal courses, books, independent research, on-the-job training, professional organizations, conferences or symposia, or a mentor/coach. When you examine options determine to what extent they will close the gap but also how many gaps they will close.

The format you use is not itself significant. Use whatever format you are familiar with. If you have never done an IDP I found several websites that provide instructions and formats for Individual Development Plans that should be helpful:

- Navy, HR Office - http://www.donhr.navy.mil/Employees/documents/30IDP_BLANK_FORM.doc
- US Coast Guard - http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/cit/cim/directives/CI%5CCI_5357_1.pdf
- US Army - <http://esd.hood.army.mil/Employe.htm>
- NASA, Human Resources - <http://ohr.gsfc.nasa.gov/forms/GSFC/GSFC17-98.doc>
- State of Iowa HR Office - <http://das.hre.iowa.gov/docs/EDPD/TheIndividualDevelopmentPlan.doc>

One thing you may want to do with your IDP is to continue it's development through to a Learning Contract. Here is how you do that:

(<http://p2001.health.org/ST01/02HFSDPPE9.htm>)

3. Get Involved With Other Professionals: One item that should appear on every IDP is how you intend to get involved with other professionals. Whether you choose the IAF, MAFN, some other professional group, or just with one or two individuals this may be the best way to close the gap in your competencies. In this case you could ask for a Mentor, get a Coach, or work with other professional facilitators, particularly CPFs. What other ways might you get involved? How about joining a MAFN committee or the Board of Directors. In either case you must simply make a commitment to be engaged.

4. Be the Lead Facilitator: One of the best ways to gain experience and learn is to Co-Facilitate events with an experienced Facilitator. When you are ready, serve in the role as Lead Facilitator. This is as important to your development as it is to the preparations for certification. Certification requirements state that you must serve in the role of lead facilitator for at least 7 events over the last three years. It does not take long to do this but remember that events where you are a co-facilitator or subordinate-facilitator cannot be used in the certification documentation.

5. Document Your Processes: Much of our work and understanding, or knowledge, is a volatile commodity. This means that it slips easily from our memory. Being able to recall the process, tools and techniques, you used three years ago is tough. The IAF certification process requires you document what and how you did things, processes, over the three years prior to the certification cycle you enter. In addition, it is expected that maintaining your certification, or re-certifying, every three years will require documenting how you remain current.

I recommend, as a routine practice, you document the processes, tools and techniques, you use with your facilitation work. Recognizing this need when I was preparing to get certified, I developed a series of worksheets to use in designing my events, documenting the real-time adjustments, reflecting on the results and outcomes and formalizing the final worksheets as a way to capture the process, tools and techniques I used.

6. Document Your Models: Models are the constructs we use to organize our activities. Facilitators use models every day. Document the models you use. Explore and

research new models. This will not only help with certification but more over it will make you a better facilitator. My partners and I have researched and developed new models documenting these models in, what we call our, Menu of Venues. This provides us with a selection of models that we have developed, understand fully, and used. Additionally, we have been engaged in the MAFN Facilitators Body of Knowledge research project to identify and document models, concepts, pioneers, tools & techniques for the last three years. It has provided me with a wealth of knowledge and potential models to use.

7. Document Your Results: Similar to documenting your processes and models, documenting your results is important to documenting the complete picture. The report you create for your client is a crucial part of the documentation process. Make sure your results are kept with the documentation on process and models.

My company uses a 2-pocket folder to store our Facilitator's Planning Worksheets and Facilitator's Meeting Report in both hard copy and diskette formats. The folders have labels with the project title, facilitator names and client contact information.

8. Attend formal facilitator training course: Even if you have experience but have never actually gone to a formal facilitator course, do so. If you have not attended a course in the last 5 years, do so. This will round out your knowledge, enhance, and update your skills

9. Attend the MAFN Facilitator's Workshop Series: The MAFN Facilitator's Workshop Series is a unique blend of workshops conducted on an annual basis and designed around the IAF Facilitator competencies. It is a great way to continue your development and network with facilitators from a wide variety of disciplines and organization types.

10. Deliver a Skill Building Workshop: One of the best ways to develop your knowledge is to offer workshops on the subject you wish to develop. I'm not suggesting that you go in cold. The commitment generally requires a significant amount of time and development to do a competent job. It is a well known fact that to teach a subject one must learn it better than if they were simply using it.

The time commitment for doing these 10 steps can be significant. But if you apply them, depending on your level of experience and engagement, you can be prepared for certification within 1 to 2 years. The key is "How comfortable are you with talking, writing, and doing activities that reflect knowledge and familiarity with the IAF Facilitator Competencies?"