



# Towards an indigenous-informed facilitation practice:

## Questions we can ask ourselves as facilitators working with and between cultures

### Preparation

- How am I with stepping into the unknown? How can I prepare myself to be open to change?
- How can I build relationships early on with the local people so that I will be able to ask what will be appropriate?
- Who are the local Indigenous people? Who are their elders?
- How do the local Indigenous people feel about the topic I will be facilitating?
- What knowledge might they bring?
- Is there an option for Indigenous facilitation or co-facilitation (Indigenous and non-Indigenous facilitators working together)? What can *really* be created together? How open am I to this?



### Purpose

- What is my intention? What are the intentions of local Indigenous people?
- What needs of theirs can be met? How can I find out?

#### How were the questions developed?

These questions arose from a challenge that was laid down by Carol Vale, an Indigenous facilitator, at the Australasian Facilitators' Network (AFN) conference in 2014 in Alice Springs: "How can the AFN develop an indigenous-informed practice?" A group of participants met under a tree in the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens to reflect on this challenge, to gather up the content of conference sessions that had addressed this topic, and to consider a way forward. Through a series of conversations, this led to the drafting of these questions that we facilitators might ask ourselves when preparing to work inter-culturally in Australia or New Zealand. This is not intended as a checklist; more as a reflection tool to seed our thought processes. The invitation is for you to pick up what may be of assistance to you on your own journey.

Australasian Facilitators Network [afn.net.au](http://afn.net.au)

### Time

- What time needs to be factored in to allow for this to work for Indigenous people, and for the necessary conversations to take place before, during and after this event?
- How prepared am I to change my plan based on what I find out? What am I prepared to give up?
- What is my responsibility to deliver, and how does this sit with the timeframes of the Indigenous people? What are my real time constraints and deadlines? Who set them? Why? What happens if I don't meet them?



### Process

- What can I bring into my design and facilitation that will encourage this group to participate? What might prevent, or make it uncomfortable to participate?
- How can I allow time for relationships, connections and story-telling to unfold?
- What would I want to share about myself and my background, and what would be the right way to do this?
- How can I allow space and flexibility in the process, and find out how people would like it to work today, so that they can achieve what they would like to?
- Would it be useful to spend time caucusing (Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants working separately)? Or for people to break into groups that make sense to this culture?

### Space

- Where is the right space? Where is a safe space? Will we need separate space so that different genders, ages or other cultural groupings, will be able to speak freely?
- What visual cues, symbols, objects or sounds would create a welcoming space that acknowledges Indigenous culture meaningfully and brings it into the space?
- What connections can be made in this space to the land, its features and its spirit?



### Language, History and Protocol

- What are the original names for places I will be in or referring to, and what is the correct pronunciation for places, people and words I will say?
- What is the appropriate way to open and close? Whose voice should be heard first, and last? How can we acknowledge country/the land, its significant features, original inhabitants and spirit? What other protocols or practices are important?
- What do I know of the history in this place and how can it be acknowledged? What other context is important? What do I want to honour? What do I not want to perpetuate?

### Deep Listening

- Is there anything that will get in the way of my listening/hearing?
- Will I be patient enough to wait for the answers?



### Awakeness/Awareness

- How have I attempted to learn about, and make sense of, history and culture in the context of this land, my own personal journey and my professional identity? How aware am I of my own privilege? How well do I know the deep river of assumptions and information that flows beneath my practices and work? Whose 'normal' does this event or process reflect?
- What strengths do I bring and what can I offer? What power and resources do I hold at this time and how can they be shared? What is my responsibility at this time?
- What can I give, before I ask for anything? How can I show appreciation?
- How do I respond to making mistakes and being corrected? Am I able to acknowledge challenges as they arise and still stay with the journey?
- What is my commitment to learning about the culture and language of groups I work with, so I can bring this into my practice authentically and respectfully?
- How important is this work to me? How strong is my commitment?

