

How to Choose a Facilitator

Selecting the right fit facilitator for your convening is critical to achieving its purpose. Yet, there's no one size fits all approach. The most common facilitator models we encounter are:

1. Inviting a **subject matter expert** (often the convening organizer or a close partner) to take on the additional role of facilitator, or
2. Hiring an **external professional facilitator**.

We recommend selecting a facilitator (or multiple facilitators) based on the unique needs of your participants and the dynamics of the convening.

Benefits of a Subject Matter Expert as Facilitator(s)	Benefits of an External Professional as Facilitator(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask subject-specific guiding questions based on historical or landscape knowledge of the issue • Discuss sensitive issues that would benefit from being handled by a respected leader in the space • Leverage existing relationships with others in the room for building trust and surfacing tensions • Respond quickly and intelligently to criticisms or a critical audience • Conduct simultaneous breakout groups focused on technical content • Reduce preparation time if the facilitator has been involved in convening design and production • Reduce additional fees or headcount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refocus a group on the big picture and take the discussion “out of the weeds” • Discuss sensitive issues that would benefit from being handled by an entirely neutral individual • Enable neutrality and objectivity in advancing dialogue due to lack of pre-existing alliances or biases • Respond adaptively to draw out diverse voices and balance discussion • Conduct highly productive and focused full group discussions • Dedicate preparation time to facilitation, vs. splitting attention on facilitation, content, and production • Increase expert participation