

Running a Workshop at a Conference for First-Time Facilitators

This leaflet is for anyone who wants to run a workshop, but needs some practical guidance on how to approach the whole thing.

1 The Basics

What is a workshop?

A workshop, as opposed to a presentation or a seminar, is an interactive meeting where a group of people learn, discuss and engage in activities around a particular theme. They are guided by one or several facilitators, whose role is to structure the workshop by providing the framework for the activities. A workshop can last anything between 1,5 hours and a couple of days. By the end of the workshop, both the facilitators and the participants will have contributed something to the discussions and activities, and everyone should have learned something.

How to select a topic for your workshop



Workshops can be on any topic, from disaster preparedness, designing retention schedules, managing metadata, digital preservation, cataloguing, archival administration, digitization... It's always a good idea to run a workshop on a subject you are comfortable with.

But, if you're a new professional, you might have limited knowledge of the field and therefore it might make sense if you pick a topic that's not too complex.

You may also want to pick a topic that is especially relevant for your target audience, for example, training needs at the beginning of your career, or something topical, like social media for archivists. Whatever topic you pick, make sure it's something that you're actually interested in, because you may need to do some research to gain confidence and increase your knowledge and expertise plus you're going to be talking about it for at least a few hours!

THINKING ABOUT LEARNING OUTCOMES

No matter what topic you decide to address in your workshop, try and think early on about what the learning goals will be for the

participants. This is important for thinking about what your workshop might look like and can help you plan your activities. Do you want them to learn a new skill (like creating a classification scheme), learn about something new (like trauma-informed archival practice), learn to do something new (like how to migrate digital files from one format to another).

2 What might your workshop look like?



Let's say you're given a 3-hour time slot with one 15 minute break about halfway through.

| MINUTES | ACTION |
|------------|---|
| 0 to 15 | Welcome and Introductions |
| 15 to 30 | Short presentation on topic by the facilitators |
| 30 to 60 | Group work 1 |
| 60 to 80 | Feedback to the whole group |
| 80 to 90 | Recap |
| 90 to 105 | Break |
| 105 to 135 | Group work 2 |
| 135 to 155 | Feedback to the whole group |
| 155 to 180 | Summarize and conclude |

No matter what timing your workshop has, it is important to balance presentations, group work, time for feedback and breaks. Consider the time and content you have, and the outcomes you want participants to reach and this should help you determine how to structure your workshop, and how long to make it.

In person or online?

If you are running your workshop online, make sure that you have tested the platform you are using and have circulated all the logging on details to the participants well ahead of time. On many platforms, you can set up individual spaces, break-out rooms, chats and share screens: test those functionalities and see how you can use them in your workshop.



To get feedback from the room, you can ask the participants to use visual cues like holding up a flashcard to ask a question, or use some audience participation tool or live surveys. Don't be afraid to try out a few things and then find what works for you. Also, breaks are still important, even virtually – give everyone time to stretch their legs and get a drink as you would in an in-person workshop.



Ideas for activities



INTRODUCTIONS

- Ask each participant to introduce themselves.
 - Ask for a benign fact to break the ice: what's their favorite color, sport, book...
- Ask participants to pair up. After talking for a few minutes, the other person introduces them to the group.
- Make up a category (Who does yoga? Who learned French in school? Who DJs?) and get participants to group themselves according to this category. Repeat a couple of times.
- Do a short quiz, a topic that may or may not be related to the workshop, and ask participants to shout out answers.

PRESENTATIONS



- A classical lecture with slides might be the most effective way of delivering information concisely.
 - Providing a handout of your slides is a good way of helping your participants keep a record of main points.
 - If you cite a lot of literature, always provide a list of these to the participants.
- Show a short film: there may already be a resource out there that you can reuse.

GROUP WORK



The size of the group is whatever you think will work: pairs or 6 people. And you can change the composition of the groups throughout the workshop, too!

- Mind mapping
- Brainstorming
- Acting out scenarios
- Draft social media posts
- Prepare elevator pitches on a topic
- Draft sections of a plan, publicity materials, etc... as appropriate for subject matter

FEEDBACK TO THE WHOLE GROUP

If your participants have been working in small groups, you'll want to make sure they share back with the group.

- Each group designates a person who will recap their group's work.
- The groups present their findings as a team.
- The facilitator/s travel/s through the groups and summarize each group's discussions on their behalf.

It is good for the facilitator to comment briefly on each group's feedback to recognize the good points and to redirect or correct anything that might need clarifying.

Handouts and materials

Throughout the course of your workshop, whether it's during the presentations or the activities, you may want to provide handouts or materials to your participants. For example, you can imagine handing out, at the beginning of the session, a printout with a copy of the schedule, the slides of your presentations, general notes, a list of pertinent references, room for them to take notes, your own contact details... When you've attended a workshop, what did you find useful to have from the outset? You might also give this printout at the end of the workshop, so they don't need to worry about taking notes, in which case, make sure you tell them at the start!

Together with this, you may want to distribute activity sheets for the activities you've planned. If there are specific templates that you want to use, you can print these out ahead of time. If you are delivering your workshop online, make sure that all documentation you send is in an easy format to open and does not require licensed or specialist software.

Worst-case scenarios and best-case solutions

You're probably going to worry that all sorts of things are going to go wrong. If they do, just think on your feet and don't worry. Here are a few scenarios and solutions, in case you need them.

“What if hardly anyone turns up?” - You'll just have more time to go into everything in more depth. And when you're done, just finish early - people rarely complain about an extra 15 minutes of time to spend how they choose.

“What if loads of people turn up?” - That's great! Try to divide the group into several groups and run two parallel sessions. Next time, consider capping registrations or running several sessions.

“What if people aren't engaging?” - Some groups are less chatty than others, some people are more shy than others. Try to make sure that some of your activities can also be done individually. Also, make sure you have given as much information as possible about the types of activities, so that the participants can decide if the activities suggested suit their learning style. If you feel you can do so without individuals feeling threatened or made uncomfortable, you can call on them to answer questions or share their own experiences.

“The participants haven't read the materials that were sent in advance.” - People have a lot of commitments, and sometimes just don't get around to preparing for meetings. Don't take it personally! Just make sure that your introduction or the topical presentation summarizes some of the main points you want to highlight.

“The computer / projector / presentation / microphone is not working!” - Technology does not always work how we want it to. The best way to avoid such problems is to test your set - up beforehand. Check with the venue what is available and bring your own equipment and adaptors if possible. Having a print out of your script or presentation slides that can be copied if needed and used as a visual aid (and to prompt your own presentation) is a good precaution in case of total system failure.

3 Checklist of Practical Things



- ✓ Wear a watch
- ✓ Contact the participants ahead of time if you want them to prepare anything in advance or bring something to the workshop.
- ✓ What materials do you need in the room? Paper, pens, markers, flipcharts, sticky notes? It's always a good idea to bring spares!
- ✓ Do you have the technology you need? Chargers, adaptors, USB sticks?
- ✓ Print out enough handouts for all the participants and facilitators. And print a few extras.

A FEW EXTRA RESOURCES

Check out the ICA-SPA **“Toolkit on Holding an Elevator Pitch Workshop”** in the following link: <https://bit.ly/34MyptM>
Or the ICA-SAE **“Train the Trainer”** resources pack by clicking here: <https://bit.ly/33WPVfr>

4 Run your Workshop



We hope this gives you courage to know that your voice is important, and as a new professional you have the knowledge to present a workshop at a conference.

Go out there and shine!

The leaflet was prepared by the ICA New Professionals 2019-2020 cohort.

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