212.477.2677
TF: 877.668.AGPA (2472)
F: 212.979.6627
E: info@agpa.org
www.agpa.org

NOTES ON LEADING A WORKSHOP

The following represents one model found useful for conducting workshops. The description of the model is divided into three parts: 1) Assumptions; 2) Concepts; and 3)

Workshop Format.

1. Assumptions
When conducting a workshop, please keep in mind the following five assumptions:
   a) A workshop is a teaching-learning experience. It should be enjoyable as well as educational.
   b) Participants wish to apply this learning to their work situations.
   c) Contracts for participation in a workshop are different from contracts for participation in a therapy group. Whereas the former emphasizes a cognitive and skill building experience, the latter involves disclosure, vulnerability, and change.
   d) Impact matters regardless of intent. If participants experience microaggressions, their reactions need to be acknowledged and responded to as a valid emotion.
   e) In alignment with the **AGPA Participant Agreement**, we are equally committed to fostering a safe learning environment and affirming group experience for all participants.
   f) A useful workshop combines theory, experience, and application.

2. Concepts
In planning for and implementing a workshop, the following concepts have been useful:
   a) **Boundaries:** Boundaries, defined as "in" from "out," help identify what is possible regarding time, focus, role, goal, and participation. For example, at the very beginning of a workshop, the boundaries are defined by introducing goals, roles, and time frames, and by inviting members to share their expectations for learning. By clarifying these boundaries at the beginning, a learning process, marked by clarity and mutuality, can be set in motion. Faculty agree to uphold and actively support the principles outlined in the Participant Agreement during their sessions.
   b) **Task-Maintenance**: Task refers to work on particular goals; maintenance refers to the extent to which we are aware of and respond to the feelings generated by the task work. For example, too much emphasis on the task risks losing the interest of participants, while an overemphasis on feelings risks losing work on the task. A validation of the contract and a clear sense of boundaries help to blend task and maintenance.
   c) **Phases of Group Development**: Workshops move through and out of phases. In the beginning there is orientation of people and task, in the middle there is the bulk of the learning, and at the end there is a review and a critique. Phases of group development help us to further appreciate events in our workshops. For example, a poor orientation at the beginning can lead to confusion and miscommunication in

the middle phase. Or a lengthy orientation can result in unnecessary limits on middle phase work. Finally, a shortened evaluation at the end can deprive participants of valuable opportunities for catharsis and perspective and can deprive leaders of useful feedback for their professional development.

d) **Feedback:** Feedback can be delivered as direct input or request, or expressions of emotional reactions. Critical feedback and negative reaction can be painful to receive but can serve as a valuable contribution at the same time. When participants share critical feedback, evaluate the meaning behind the communication and consider making appropriate changes in the moment or in future workshops. Workshop Co-Chairs are available for you to process difficult feedback afterward.

e) **Management of Disturbances:** In this context, a disturbance refers to a situation in which a participant, because of very strong feelings about an aspect of the workshop, appears unable to work within the workshop framework or blocks others from doing their work. When this occurs, there should be an attempt to integrate this person into the boundary of the workshop. If, however, you are unable to reintegrate this individual, consider asking them to withdraw from the workshop. **The Conference Committee is available to assist the workshop faculty in any such effort. Please be in contact with the Association staff who will be able to locate a Committee member immediately.**

f) **Inclusivity and Accessibility:** Feelings of disenfranchisement and marginalization interfere with participants' ability to learn and get the most out of your workshop. Faculty are expected to model inclusive and respectful leadership consistent with AGPA's Safe Environment Conduct Policy, Statement on Inclusion, and Guidelines for Creating Affirming Group Experiences. Faculty should thoroughly review this information to engage in inclusive practice. You are, however, not expected to be perfect. What matters is your sincere desire and effort to be inclusive combined with openness and humility to acknowledge missteps.

3. **Workshop Format (Program Agenda)**
   In developing a workshop, try to blend theory, experience, and application. For a half-day workshop (150 minutes), time may be organized in the following way:

20 minutes	Orientation, including introduction of people, task, and role, and a sharing of expectations by participants.
30 minutes	Presentation of theory or concepts that provide a framework.
50 minutes	Demonstrations or discussions in small groups which emphasize application of concepts.
30 minutes	Sharing of examples of applications in a large group.
10 minutes	Critique (oral and whole group). Discussion of continuing education material.