

# Creating out Loud: Facilitator Guide



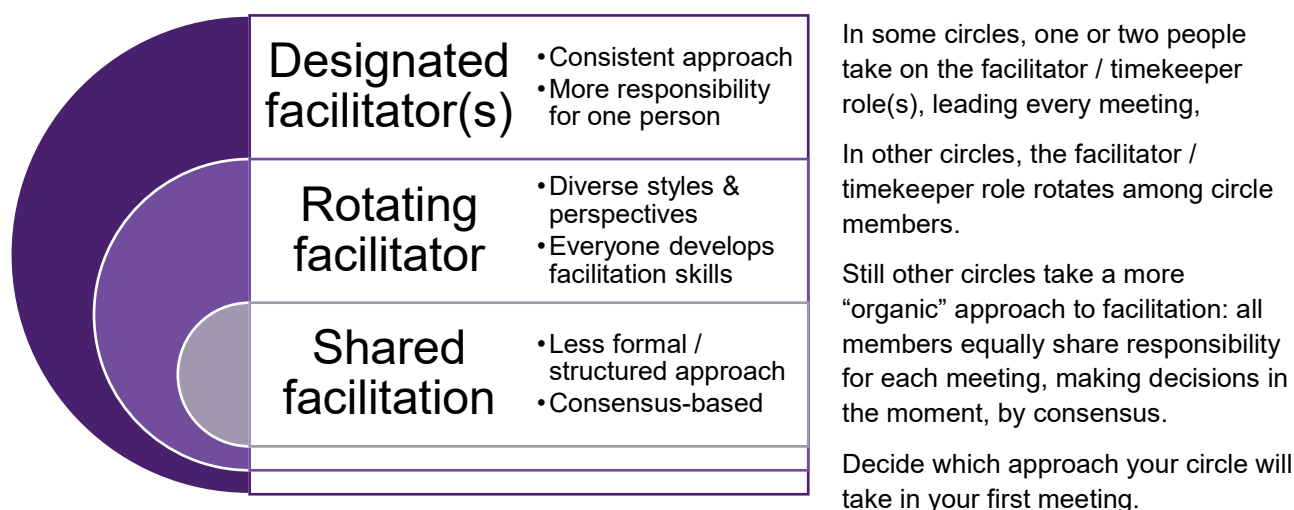
## Who facilitates Creating Out Loud circles?

### Creating Out Loud circles are designed to be “self-” or “co-facilitating.”

One of the things that makes Creating Out Loud a sustainable peer coaching program is that it does not require an external facilitator: everything circle members need to have courageous, mutually-supportive conversations is included in the Discussion Guides.

#### Every circle is unique.

Creating Out Loud participants share responsibility for their own circles: scheduling meetings, managing communication, choosing which program to follow, helping each other feel safe and able to contribute, and sticking to time. But different groups do this in different ways.



### This Guide offers tips for “self-facilitating” your Creating Out Loud peer coaching circle.

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## Facilitation roles

Whether or not your circle has a designated facilitator, all Creating Out Loud circles need one or more people to take on some facilitation roles.

In a nutshell, the facilitator's role is to serve the group by helping circle members to....



### Get started

- Choose which program(s) your circle will follow
- Schedule meetings and venue(s) in advance
- Develop a Working Agreement



### Navigate content

- Keep discussion on track
- Pace the session
- Finish on time



### Create and hold space

- Be gently and compassionately present
- Listen without judgement
- Help circle members arrive at their own insights



### Develop a sense of "groupness"

- Value and respect all circle members
- Support safe, self-paced risk-taking
- Acknowledge / validate feelings and experiences



### Listen to understand

- Promote and support equal participation
- Invite clarification of confusing statements
- Summarize ideas and identify common themes



### Manage conflict

- Don't fear disagreement
- Support conflict resolution
- Remember and act on Working Agreement



### End well

- Celebrate what you have done together
- Identify anything circle members want to take forward
- Invite constructive feedback for future groups



## Getting started

To get your peer coaching circle off to a good start,

- **decide which program you will follow** – Creating Out Loud circles can follow a Topic-based and/or Goal-focused program (see pages 6-8 below for more detail). Deciding on your circle's approach will be one of your first decisions.
- **schedule all of your meetings in advance** – given how varied people's schedules can be in the arts, finding times that everyone can meet may be difficult, but getting meetings into everyone's calendar at the outset helps people commit to the process. Don't worry too much if some people can't attend every session. Commitment to the process matters more than 100% attendance.
- **choose a 'venue' that works for everyone** – some circles will decide to meet in-person. For others, Zoom, Skype or Teams meetings work better. The most important thing is that all circle members can access the meeting venue without too much difficulty.
- **choose a 'between-meetings' communication channel that works for everyone** – circle members may need to contact each other between meetings, to share resources or adjust meeting details. Choose a communication channel that everyone has access to, and feels comfortable using. Some options include email, Slack, WhatsApp, Facebook, and LinkedIn groups.
- **decide how you will keep your circle on track and on time** – although peer coaching doesn't rely on a "leader-follower" model, it can help to choose a facilitator and time-keeper, especially for Goal-focused sessions. Sharing or rotating these roles can lighten the load, and bring new energy and perspectives to your discussions. Choose an approach that works for everyone.
- **agree on a shared goal for your circle (optional)** – the Creating Out Loud program focuses on circle members supporting one another's personal and/or professional goals, by sharing knowledge, insights, and resources. But some circles also choose to pursue a shared goal, specific to their own group. This could be a creative project and/or related to advocacy for sector.
- **jointly develop a Working Agreement for your circle** – Working Agreements foster safety and promote learning, by making explicit circle members' expectations about how they will interact with each other.<sup>[1]</sup> More information is provided on page 5 (below) and in the Creating Out Loud "Working Agreements for Courageous Conversations" Discussion Guide.

## Working agreements

**Because peer coaching circles rely on trust, talking about what will help circle members bring their best selves to the group is time well spent.**

One of the first things to do with your Creating Out Loud circle is establish a ‘working agreement.’<sup>[2]</sup>

Working Agreements put down in writing your circle’s shared understanding of how circle members will relate with one another, and what they can expect from each other.

- Some expectations will be very practical, relating to the logistics of the group.
- Others will be more general and focused on relationships.<sup>[2]</sup>

Some examples of both types of expectation are listed here below.

But it is important to create your own Working Agreement – rather than copy someone else’s – because it is important for everyone to have the chance to speak up and be heard.

In fact, just having this conversation is itself a first step towards building trust and respect within your circle.



### General expectations

- maintain confidentiality
- be authentic
- be open
- respect one another
- avoid judgement
- adopt a constructive mindset
- support two-way sharing
- listen deeply to each other
- take care of one another's vulnerability

### Practical expectations

- commit to the group process
- turn off cell phones
- be on time
- check before inviting anyone new to join the circle
- specific details about when, where, how often, for how long the circle will meet
- whether / how circle members will stay in touch between meetings
- what to do if you can't attend a session

More information about how to develop a “Working Agreement” is included in the Creating Out Loud “Working Agreements for Courageous Conversations” Discussion Guide.

## Navigating content – Topic-based program

The Creating Out Loud Topic-based program addresses key issues facing the arts and culture sector.



### Topic-based meetings follow a standard agenda:

Activity	Suggested Timing	
	(60 minute meeting)	(75 minute meeting)
Being here	Approx. 15 minutes	Approx. 15 minutes
Individual reflection	Approx. 20 minutes	Approx. 30 minutes
Group discussion	Approx. 20 minutes	Approx. 25 minutes
What next?	Approx. 5 minutes	Approx. 5 minutes

Depending on each circle's preferences, you can choose to stick closely to the suggested timing for each activity. Or you can let the conversation flow more freely, following circle members' interests.

The decision about how closely to adhere to suggested timings can be made spontaneously in each meeting, or included in your circle's Working Agreement.

Reading through the relevant Discussion Guide before each meeting will help you use the questions in the Guide to support and extend your circle members' conversation.

Feel free to adjust the suggested timing for each activity.  
 Good conversations are more important  
 than strict timekeeping or sticking closely to the agenda.

## Being here

This “check-in” opportunity helps circle members settle in and “be present” with one another. For some people, this might be the most valuable part of the meeting. Make sure everyone has a chance to contribute.

- Open each session with an Acknowledgement of Country, recognizing the Traditional Custodians of the land(s) on which you are meeting and any First Australians in the meeting. This important step can also help establish respect as the basis of all interactions and communication within your circle.
- Invite all circle members to talk about the steps they planned to take since the last meeting. Acknowledge and affirm any steps people have taken. Invite anyone who didn't take their planned step to share one thing they learned or enjoyed since the last meeting, reassuring anyone who didn't take their planned step(s) that there is no judgement in your circle.
- Some Topic-based Discussion Guides include one extra “check-in” question, which sets the scene for your discussion of that meeting's topic.

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Topic-based sessions require facilitators to be flexible and responsive to their fellow circle members' priorities.

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## Individual reflection

This part of the meeting gives circle members time to think about and connect with the topic of the day. Use the Discussion Guide however works best for your circle members:

In some circles, participants prefer to have a few minutes for quiet reflection, to think about, write down and/or draw their thoughts before sharing their reflections with each other. Taking some time alone in this way can help keep the circle's discussion on track. Other circles prefer to jump straight into discussing these questions as a group. Still others complete the personal reflection activities before the meeting.

## Group Discussion

The questions in this part of Topic-based Discussion Guides are designed to stimulate discussion.

- Most guides include more questions than it is possible to discuss within a single meeting.
- Feel free to choose the questions that most resonate with your circle – as well as how deeply to dive into any one question – based on your fellow circle members' interests.
- There is generally no “right” or “wrong” answer to Group Discussion questions. Circle members may disagree, even strongly, about some ideas. If so, it might help to revisit your circle's Working Agreement.

## What next?

In this part of the meeting, each circle member names one “step” they plan to take before the next meeting.

Most Topic-based Discussion Guides include additional resources about each meeting's topic, which can be read or viewed outside meeting times. For some circle members, looking at these resources will be their “next step.” Other people might want to progress their own personal or professional goal.

It can help to write down each person's planned step, to help you remember and ask about them at the next meeting.



## Navigating content – Goal-focused meetings

### Goal-focused meetings follow a simplified “council model” agenda<sup>[2]</sup>

This approach ensures that – in every meeting – all circle members have an opportunity to bring their concerns to the group, and to give and receive input with other circle members.

Unlike the Topic-based sessions, the success of Goal-focused meetings relies on sticking closely to the recommended timing for each activity – so that all circle members have an equal opportunity to present and receive input on their concern.

For this reason, it can help to have a designated facilitator / timekeeper facilitator in each meeting. Rotating this role can help to share the load amongst circle members.

Activity	Timing
Being here	Approx. 10 minutes
Council session	Approx. 1 – 1¼ hours
Issue presentation & clarification	Maximum 5 minutes
Advice	Maximum 10 minutes
(repeat the Council session for each circle member)	
What next?	Approx. 5 minutes

#### Being here / What next?

Like Topic-based meetings, Goal-focused sessions

- begin with a “Being here” check-in, and
- end with a “What next?” check-out.

These steps provide a “through-line” between meetings, providing gentle accountability and encouragement to pursue your personal and/or professional goal(s).

#### Council session

At the heart of each Goal-focused meeting is a “Council session.” Here, circle members take it in turns to bring a question, issue or challenge to the group, and to receive input from their peers.

Each person has 15 minutes to explore their concern:

- roughly 3 minutes to explain their question, issue or challenge
- roughly 2 minutes to answer any clarifying questions posed by the group, and
- roughly 10 minutes during which circle members share information, advice and experiences that are relevant to the presented concern.



Goal-focused meetings require fairly strict adherence to the agenda, so that everyone has the same opportunities to explore their concerns, and to give and receive feedback.

## Creating and holding space

There is no single recipe for effective facilitation. But creating and ‘holding space’ for participants to relate well with one another is a key ingredient.

The success of small groups is often put down to the part played by their facilitator,<sup>[3]</sup> whose attributes and behaviours can impact how group members encounter and relate with one another.

“Holding space” involves being gently and compassionately present with others – and listening actively, without judgement, to help group members arrive at their own insights.<sup>[4, 5]</sup> To do this successfully, “one must have a high degree of self-awareness and be able to set aside one’s own agenda and ego.”<sup>[6, 7]</sup>

Taking on a facilitator role invites us to do some of our own “inner work”<sup>[8]</sup> because “If we are uncomfortable, distracted, or trying to fix things, we fill the space we intend to hold for another person with our own selves.”<sup>[6]</sup>

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Holding space is about listening to and hearing another person’s perspectives and histories without passing judgement, and it avoids disempowering or devaluing another person’s experiences.<sup>[4]</sup>

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### Effective facilitation also relies on

- **attributes:** a positive, non-judgemental, non-defensive attitude; respect for group members; calmness, confidence, authenticity, and flexibility.<sup>[10]</sup>
- **behaviours:** listening, observing, and helping the conversation flow; focusing on what works for the group as a whole, rather than one’s own contributions; modelling appropriate interactions, and helping group members manage conflict.<sup>[11]</sup>



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Unlike the chairperson [in a committee meeting] who can waltz to the regulated music of Robert’s Rules of Order, the facilitator has to do a combination tap dance, shuffle, and tango to a syncopated rhythm produced by unpredictable humans.<sup>[11]</sup>

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## Meeting – in person or online?

Meeting in-person is often thought to be the most effective way to build personal connections, but online meetings can be a great way to connect with people outside your usual networks, and is especially useful for people in remote locations.

Both types of meeting have their advantages and disadvantages. So, choose whichever type of meeting works best for your circle.

In-person meetings	Online meetings
Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can feel more personal</li> <li>• may be easier to read “body language”</li> <li>• can reduce distractions / multi-tasking / technology challenges</li> </ul>	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• builds connections across diverse locations</li> <li>• can be more accessible</li> <li>• saves time and expense of travelling</li> </ul>
Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need to organize (and pay) for a venue</li> <li>• may be inaccessible</li> <li>• public safety concerns (e.g., COVID)</li> </ul>	Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can cause fatigue<sup>[12]</sup></li> <li>• requires equipment and internet connection</li> </ul>

Facilitating online sessions requires many of the same attributes and behaviours as face-to-face meetings. But some additional knowledge and skills can be helpful when meeting online, including the ability to:

- **match technology to group needs and processes**, and help group members use any tools they are not already familiar with; and
- **“communicate with presence online”** – this includes both “being present to the group” and using “techniques and interventions that reduce the effects of time differences, geographical distance, and cultural separation” between group members.<sup>[13]</sup>

If you sincerely care about the success of the group and are able to communicate that caring to the group, you can be successful...  
 facilitation is a highly emotional activity. The best facilitators are in tune with their intuition and use this sense as their guide during facilitation experiences.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Inclusion and accessibility

Creating Out Loud seeks to be both inclusive of and accessible to everyone working in the arts and culture sector.

**Deaf and Disabled people were actively involved in developing and evaluating all of the Creating Out Loud Discussion Guides.**

**To support accessible and inclusive conversations, Creating Out Loud offers:**

- **Discussion Guides** – Circle members can download all of the Discussion Guides at once – or just one guide before each session – and either print them out or use them electronically. All Guides are freely available from the program website, and both fillable and visually accessible.
- **Introductory videos** – many people prefer to access information via videos, rather than reading a lot of text. For this reason, all Creating Out Loud Discussion Guides are supported by short captioned videos, outlining key information and activities in the guide. All videos are accessible on the program website.
- **“Program on a page” Guides** – Each Discussion Guide is also summarized in a 1-page visually accessible pdf, available from the program website.
- **PowerPoint slides** – during online meetings, some circle members might find it helpful to view key content from the Discussion Guides. All PowerPoint slides are available from the program website, and facilitators can share these with their circle.

### Celebrating diversity

The “Let’s Get R.E.A.L. model” promotes equity in online learning spaces:

- **Recognition** – recognizing participants’ identities and cultural characteristics
- **Engagement** – interacting with and establishing a sense of presence with participants
- **Affirmation** – affirming participants through emotional support and encouragement
- **Learning** – being curious and open to learning.<sup>[15]</sup>



### Online meetings become more inclusive and accessible when you

- introduce yourself, using your preferred name, pronouns and a visual description
- respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land(s) on which you are meeting
- make sure all circle members have materials in accessible formats ahead of time
- use a hand-raising technique to prevent people speaking over one another
- describe any visual information when sharing your screen, including photos
- read aloud any important details in the Chat
- if an interpreter is present, pin their screen so it remains visible
- send a follow-up email, including any important information shared during the meeting

## Additional resources

- The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) has produced these resources, to help you identify whose country you're on:
  - [Map of Indigenous Australia](#)
  - [Whose Country am I on?](#)
- The Groupwork Centre has published these blog posts about:
  - [“Groupness” A facilitator’s guide to helping a group connect](#)
  - [Group culture: The magic of facilitating group agreements](#)
- The Australian Human Rights Commission has produced two guidelines for hosting accessible and inclusive meetings:
  - [In-person meetings](#)
  - [Online meetings](#)
- Description Victoria has produced a [Guide to Inclusive Meetings for People who are Blind or have low vision](#)
- Forbes magazine published a short article, [How To Lead Inclusive Meetings](#), which includes helpful tips for leading inclusive meetings
- Various professional associations and networks offer more information about, and standards for, facilitation:
  - [The International Association of Facilitators \(IAF\) Core Competencies framework](#)
  - [The International Institute for Facilitation Certified Master Facilitator® Competencies](#)
  - The Groupwork Centre’s free video resource [“Facilitation Hot Spots and Tricky Bits”](#)

The Australasian Facilitators Network (AFN) website includes more [resources about facilitation](#)

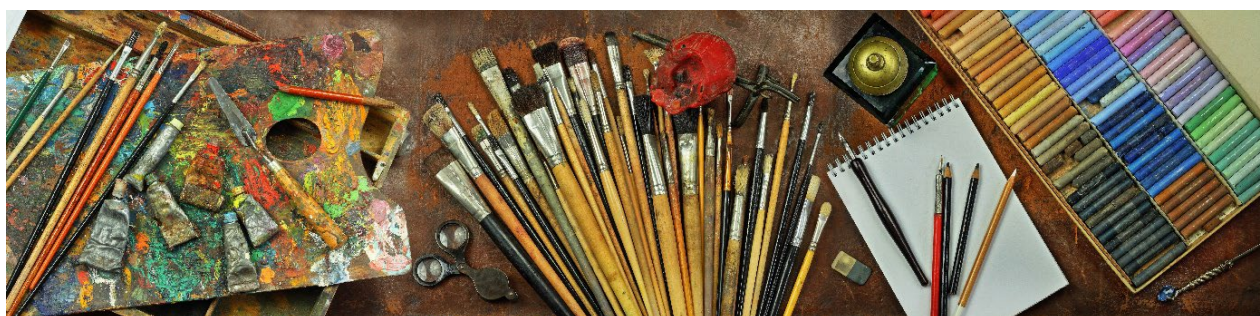


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## Additional Discussion Guides

Discussion Guides related to arts and culture can be found at [University of Queensland's Creating Out Loud webpage](#)



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The opinions in this Discussion Guide do not necessarily represent the views of The University of Queensland, funding / industry partners, or the individual members involved in the reference groups.

## About Creating Out Loud

“Creating Out Loud” is an 18-month Industry Research Fellowship funded by the Queensland Minister for State Development, Tourism and Innovation, under the Advance Queensland Industry Research Fellowship program.

Creating Out Loud was developed to support Queensland’s artists and arts managers as they recover from and rebuild business, artistic, and cultural practices following the COVID-19 pandemic.

For further information visit [University of Queensland's Creating Out Loud](#)



## Industry Reference Group

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This guide includes links to various web material. All links were working at the time of publication. Please note however that these links may become outdated over time.

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