



Centre  
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Arts

# CREATING A WORKSHOP

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A 4-STEP GUIDE TO MAKING ENGAGING WORKSHOPS

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## GOAL + ARTREACH

This guide is part of the larger GOAL (Grassroots Organizing and Leadership) Youth Workshop and Resource Series presented by ArtReach in partnership with Grassroots Youth Collaborative, City of Toronto, For Youth Initiative, and Toronto Community Foundation. Through the GOAL project, ArtReach provides free workshops across the city of Toronto as well as a comprehensive set of toolkits, videos, and other resources -- of which this important guide is just one. More information about the services offered by ArtReach can be found on our website, [artreach.org](http://artreach.org).

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### ABOUT LETECIA ROSE

Leticia Rose is an award-winning facilitator, mentor, and advocate passionate about empowering youth to become the leaders of their schools and communities. She has been involved in developing and implementing programs and initiatives within community agencies and various school boards for the past seven years. From her experience in community theatre, she uses anti-oppression, popular education techniques, and multimedia to engage the diverse audiences that she works with. Leticia has led workshops on Islamophobia, homophobia, Anti-Racism, gender equity, and the practice of conducting courageous conversations in the workplace. The popularity of these workshops has allowed Leticia to facilitate workplace equity workshops for City of Toronto, The City of Newmarket, Centennial College, the United Church of Canada, Community Microskills, and Human Resources and Skill Development Canada. She has managed to personally work with over 3,000 youth in hands-on diversity programs and facilitate anti-racism workshops and assemblies for additional 10,000 youth across Ontario. Currently Leticia works as a Program and Partnerships Manager at Nia Centre for the Arts where she creates initiatives to support Afro-Diasporic arts/artists.

## PLANNING A WORKSHOP IS NOT AN EASY FEAT.

It needs to be creative, relevant, engaging, thought-provoking and have the ability for the participants to leave with a call to action or tangible skills that they can apply to their everyday lives. Most times, all this needs to be accomplished with in an hour! There are so many elements to be aware of that often, without guidance, critical pieces are missed.

So as a facilitator, where do you start?

This toolkit provides a step-by-step process of planning an effective workshop for any audience. A workshop done right has the potential to create spaces for brainstorming, interactive learning, building relationships, and problem solving. With advanced planning, all this can be achieved.

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The 4-steps outlined in this toolkit come from the Art of Facilitation (AOF) workshop series. AOF is a train-the-trainer workshop series that infuses art programming and popular education with the presentation and facilitation skills needed to work with diverse youth audiences. The AOF series is presented in partnership between ArtReach and the Nia Centre for the Arts.

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## STEP 1: PRELIMINARY PHASE

The *Preliminary Phase* is all of the work that you do prior to creating your workshop. Although this is the first step, this is the step that most facilitators do not consider. In this phase, you want to get as much information about the objectives and goals of the workshop.

*Why is the workshop necessary?*

*Why now? What impact does it need to have?*

These are all questions that need to be answered by the workshop organizers to ensure that you are meeting their needs. Additionally, this is the point where you gather as much information about the workshop group so that you can tailor the material to their diverse needs. The activities, concepts and examples that you use for a young women's group will vastly differ from what you use for peers in a corporate or work setting. In order to harvest all this information, a *Needs Assessment* needs to be taken in order to discover who this group is and what they need. A *Needs Assessment* is a document that can be sent to the individual(s) requesting the workshop that asks 10-15 questions about the workshop participants, the workshop goals and the workshop space. All the information gathered from this document will shape the structure and flow of your workshop.

### Items to consider in your Needs Assessment:

- Purpose of workshop
- Date of workshop
- Length of workshop
- Location of workshop
- How many participants
- Type of participants
- Accessibility
- Diversity of participants
- What kind of space will the workshop be in?
- What is the major point that you want the participants to leave with?
- What skills/knowledge do you want the participants to leave with?
- Other workshops that this group has participated in?
- Other questions that might be important to ask?

Once you have all this information, the challenge will be to **APPLY** your learnings to the content and facilitation methods.

## WORKSHOP TIP

**Know your Magic Number! Figure out the number of participants that you are comfortable working with!** Often organization will want you to work with 50 participants at a time, which may not be difficult for experienced facilitators, but for others, this may be too many to be effective.. Typically a workshop should have between 15-30 participants. Over 30 participants will drastically alter the dynamics and what you are able to effectively offer. Identifying your Magic Number will be the difference between a workshop that is highly engaging and one that has zero impact.



## STEP 2: BRAINSTORMING PHASE

The *Brainstorming Phase* is the point where you get all your ideas down on paper and assess all the items that you have in your *Toolbelt*. Your toolbelt is a collection of all the activities and resources that you have on hand to use in your workshops. The goal of this phase is to get as many thoughts and concepts down from your toolbelt and other sources in a centralized place where you can generate ideas and begin to mold the workshop. Additionally, this is the place to research all the information that you may not know. If you don't know a lot about the neighbourhood that you will be working in, or need some current information or statistics about the topic in general, this would be the time to look into any gaps that you may have.

A great tool for this process is *sticky notes*. Sticky notes are great because they are visual aids that are repositionable, re-groupable and force you to be quick and concise. So as you think of or come across an idea, concept, or important fact, jot it down on a sticky note and put it on your planning wall or sheet and begin to generate a mind map of the workshop.

### Items to consider when brainstorming for your workshop:

1. Start with the topic(s) and critical concepts that you need to cover
2. For each topic start listing/naming all the activities, icebreakers, videos, quotes, skills, etc. , that could relate to the topic (use the info from the Needs Assessment to tailor this)
3. If you cannot come up with anything ...Google it!  
The internet has so many ideas and recourses for every topic.
4. Think about all the methods and content specific accommodations that you want to incorporate into this workshop.
5. If there are areas that you don't have answers for, you may need to guess.

Once your workshop mind map has been created, the challenge will be weeding out all the extra content and keeping the best material.

## WORKSHOP TIP

**What are your workshop rituals?** Do you play music in your workshop? Do you give our treats for great participation? Do you use a talking stick? Do you make your participants cypher? What makes you workshop uniquely you? During your brainstorming phase think about all the things that you want to incorporate into your workshop to make your workshop different from all the others. Planning this out ahead of time will ensure that you workshop is unforgettable.

STEP

3

## STEP 3: ASSEMBLY PHASE

The *Assembly Phase* is the point where you start to put your workshop together using the information gathered from the Needs Assessment and the ideas generated from the mind mapping. Using all the individual pieces that you have, you want to begin assembling your workshop like a giant puzzle. However, in order to do this, two items must be clearly addressed:

### 1. *What is the overall aim of the workshop?*

The aim of the workshop is the overall goal that you and the workshop organizer want to achieve. (i.e. The goal of this workshop is to...)

### 2. *What are the specific objectives of the workshop?*

The objectives are the specific and tangible skills that you want the participants to walk away with. Typically a workshop should have a minimum of 3 objectives that the facilitator intends for participant to gain from their involvement in the workshop. (i.e By the end of this workshop participants will be able to identify the differences between...)

Once these items are determined, you can begin to put ideas together to see if it fits. This can be done by plotting your ideas into a *Workshop Planning Sheet*. A Workshop Planning Sheet outlines all the elements of your workshop from beginning to end.

## **A typical workshop has the following 10 segments:**

**1. Opening:** A catchy, eye-opening, exciting way to get your audience's attention and focus. (i.e. Play a video, start with a spoken word poem, icebreaker, etc.)

**2. Introductions:** How you introduce yourself and the work that you are there to do. This is important because this outlines why you are there and why you care. Most importantly it allows the participants to connect to you and gain an understanding of why you are the person leading this workshop/training.

**3. Agenda:** An outline of the topics being covered or details of the journey that the participants will be taking. This is important because some participants cannot connect to the material unless they understand where they will be going. The Agenda can be as specific as you want it to be. Do not reveal every detail of your outline; rather, display a brief description of the direction you are going in.

**4. Community Agreement:** A set of rules or guidelines that need to occur in order to maintain group safety and workshop flow. Depending on time or the group needs, this can be generated by the participants or designed by you. More buy-in typically comes when participants create the agreement; however, it does take more time. You will need to assess which process is more beneficial to the workshop process. Depending on the group you may want to define this segment in a way that will work for the group. Some facilitators use the term "Safety Contract," "Workshop Norms" or "Commitments" as a way to connect the participants to this process.

Using the term "Rules" is usually off-putting for some audiences, however, "Safety" and "Norms" can be problematic as well. Pick the phrase that is right for you and that will best resonate with the participants in your workshop.

**5. Icebreaker(s):** These are activities that get your group energized and either mentally or physically moving.

**6. Focus Activity:** This is an activity or multimedia piece that brings focus to the topic and goals of the workshop.



**7. Main Activity/Lesson/Skill Development:** This is the main segment of the workshop; the part where your most of objectives are being achieved as it is the part where you are either teaching a skill, transferring knowledge, or creating the space for your participants to educate themselves, and each other through activities and other facilitation methods. Depending on time you can do one or all of these elements.

**8. Cool Down:** This is the closing of your workshop. This is the place where you recap the journey, review learning, and think about next steps. This can be done in a journal entry, a workshop, a group activity or discussion. The cool down should allow the workshop to feel finished, complete and provide the participants with closure.

**9. Questions and Feedback:** Establishing time to connect with your participants at the end of your workshop is easier said than done. However, if you plan with this segment in mind, you will more likely put in the time to do it.

**10. Workshop Evaluation:** The evaluation is critical to the workshop process as it assess whether you have achieved your objectives and allow you to receive feedback and testimonials from the participants on what worked well for them and what did not resonate. Once you do an evaluation, the most important element will be to APPLY the learning to your next workshop in order to grow as a workshop facilitator.



**Key item to consider when creating your workshop plan:**

**Debriefing:** The debrief is a question period that follows a clip, activity or icebreaker in which the participants can demonstrate that they understood the point or lesson that the facilitator has introduced and make connections to the next activity or their lives outside of the workshop. An excellent debriefing question allows the participants to discover the answers on their own. For example, when watching a clip that demonstrates a variety of stereotypes:



## MORE TIPS

### A good facilitator would say:

“This clip has a lot of stereotypes. Stereotypes are wrong.”

### An excellent facilitator would ask:

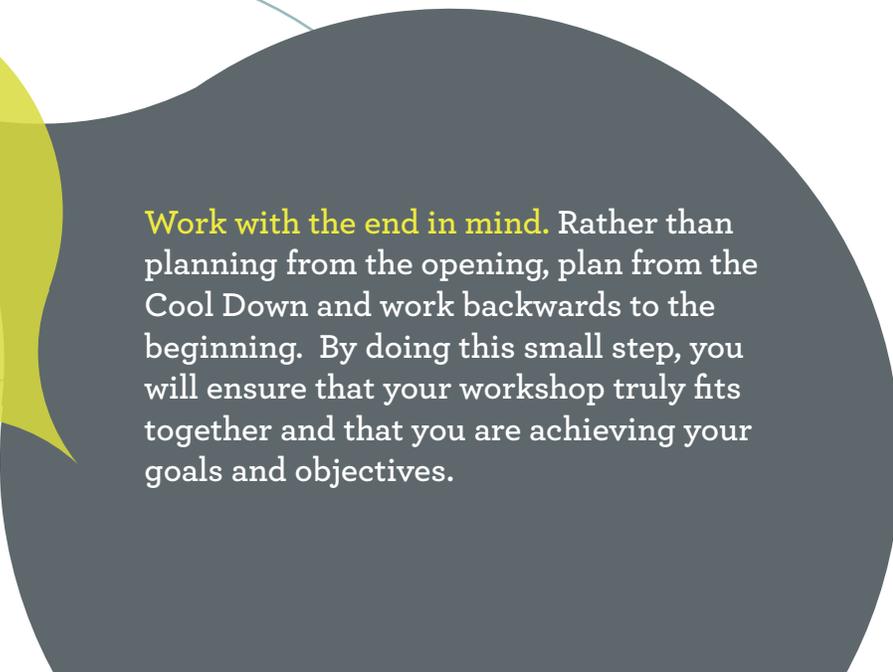
“What were some of the stereotypes that you saw in this clip? Where do you think they come from? Are these ideas that you have heard in the hallway/cafeteria? How can we combat these stereotypes in the media and in our community?”

A strong debriefing session not only ensures that the message of your activity, clip or icebreaker came across to the audience but also acts as a transition into the next segment of your workshop. *The debrief is the glue that sticks all your segments together.*

Once you begin to slot various games, activities and ideas into the specific workshop planning sheet slots, you need *assess if what you have is a good fit for your participants.*



## WORKSHOP TIP



**Work with the end in mind.** Rather than planning from the opening, plan from the Cool Down and work backwards to the beginning. By doing this small step, you will ensure that your workshop truly fits together and that you are achieving your goals and objectives.

## STEP 4: REVIEW PHASE

The *Review Phase* is the final walk-through of your complete workshop. *Does your plan make sense? Does it hit your main point? Does it meet your skills/knowledge objectives? Is it fun and engaging?* These are all questions that must be addressed when reviewing your workshop plan. The review process is simple: go through the workshop as if you were facilitating it for a group. In doing this you will be able to discover if the workshop has a natural flow. The flow of the workshop is important as it is the element that ties each segment of the workshop plan together. Your workshop should feel seamless and not disjointed and abrupt.

The most difficult part of the review phase is establishing a “*WHOA!*” moment. It is the moment is your workshop that connects with the participants on a level where they have a paradigm shift in how they see or think about the world or themselves, learn something substantial that they never knew before, emotionally connect to the content or each other or an experience in the workshop that literally makes them say, “*Whoa! Wow! Amazing! Cool!*” These moments are what separate the good workshop from the phenomenal ones. Often with exceptional facilitators, these moments occur naturally, more often than not, these are moments that you have to really think about and plan for.



If you review your workshop and you don't say, "Wow!" chances are your participants won't either. So, go back to the mind map and pull something else out that might have a deeper impact. The beauty of this stage is that your workshop is not set in stone and modifications can still be made.



**Additional items to consider when reviewing your workshop plan:**

**Room Design:** How you set up the room has an impact on whether or not you will get the best results from your participants. Will your participants sit at desks? Do you want to create a "U" formation with their chairs? Do you want them to sit in a circle on the floor? There are pros and cons to every type of room design. Refer to your Needs Assessment to find out the type of space that the organizers are giving you and assess if it is a good fit, or if you may need a different location. For example, a lecture hall would not be ideal for a dance workshop. Ensure that the room fits your workshop needs. Know that it is perfectly ok to request a particular type of room for your workshops.

**Pre-workshop Prep:** These are all of the things you need to do BEFORE your workshop begins in order for your workshop to run smoothly. As you walk through your workshop, determine what materials and resources will be needed to execute that particular element of the workshop, and prepare it before the workshop begins. For example, if you are doing an activity that requires words to be cut-up and placed around the room, you carve out time to do this prior to the workshop, as during the workshop is too late and will make you look disorganized. Additionally, if you are using multimedia resources, this is as simple as ensuring that the equipment works and the clips that you are going to use are ready to go. If you need internet or are using on-site equipment that you do not have experience with, you want to test out all these elements so that you do not experience technical difficulties during your workshop. Having all your materials ready and on hand is the simplest way to make sure that your workshop does not go over time. On workshop day, plan to get to your location at least one hour prior to your start time in order to have enough time meet the organizers, set up your space and prep your materials.

**Time:** As you walk through your workshop, you want to establish how much time you can spend on each segment or activity. Typically, you want to plan for less time than you actually have by shaving off 10-20 minutes off of your total allotted time. For a one-hour workshop, this can be tricky as this only leaves you with 50 minutes to play around with. However, by planning this way, you are able to ensure that you do not go over-time and that you are not rushing through your material. While reviewing your workshop you realize that you are running over-time and unable to get through the plan effectively, this may be the time to reduce your offerings or work on ways to modify your lessons or activity in order to make the plan fit. Although there are 10 segments, the main activity/lesson should take up the most amount of time.

**A 1 hour workshop should look as follows:**

- (2 min) Opening
- (1 min) Introductions
- (1 min) Agenda
- (4min) Community Agreement
- (7 min) Icebreaker(s)/Focus Activity
- (20 min) Main activity/Lesson/Skill Development
- (5 min) Cool Down
- (5 min) Workshop evaluation
- (5 min) Questions and Feedback

Total: 50 MINUTES

**Once you have reviewed your workshop and solidified a concrete plan of action for your workshop, you are now ready to facilitate and share your workshop with others!**

**WORKSHOP TIP**

**Document your stuff! Take photos and video! Capture all the moments that make your workshop great.** Before doing so, please ensure you have consent from the participants and the organizer's to do so. However, once you have a green light, document away! Having tangible photos and videos of your workshop will be great aids in sharing what you do with others! Remember, if you didn't document it, it didn't happen!



*PLUS* KEY  
RESOURCES

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# NEEDS ASSESSMENT FORM

Please fill out the following form and send it back to (name) \_\_\_\_\_  
(email) \_\_\_\_\_ by (date) \_\_\_\_\_.

Name of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name.: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 1 of 2: Event Logistics (Questions 1-9)

1. Proposed Date for event: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Proposed Time for event: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Location of the event: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of participants: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Number of workshops: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Requested length of workshop: \_\_\_\_\_
7. What age ranges will be represented at this workshop? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What are the main themes that you would like addressed in this workshop?
9. What kind of space will the workshop be in?

## Part 2 of 3: Workshop Details (Questions 10-15)

10. What is motivating this need for workshop within your organization?
11. What is the major point/message that you want the participants to leave with?
12. What skills/knowledge do you want the participants to leave with?
13. Please list any other workshops that this group has participated in?
14. Please describe the diversity of the participants (ethno-cultural background, gender, religious background, ability, any forms of self-identification)
15. Are there any additional comments that you wish to share?

# WORKSHOP PLANNING FORM

	Time	Description	Resources Needed
Pre-workshop Set Up			
Opening			
Introduction			
Agenda			
Community Agreement			
Icebreaker			
Focus Activity			
Main activity/Lesson/Skill Development			
Cool Down			
Questions/Feedback			
Workshop Evaluation			

# WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM

Workshop Title:

Date:

Please hand in your completed form.

3 words to describe this session: \_\_\_\_\_

The organization of the session was: Excellent—Poor

5      4      3      2      1

The effectiveness of the presenter(s) was: Excellent—Poor

5      4      3      2      1

The material presented was: Excellent—Poor

5      4      3      2      1

I will use the ideas from today's workshop: Agree—Disagree

5      4      3      2      1

What did you learn from this workshop?

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How can this session be improved?

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Other comments?

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Planning a workshop may appear to be a daunting task. However, in time and with practice, it becomes less stressful and the process is easier to work through and create. This toolkit only scratches the surface of what it takes to make an effective workshop. But by following the steps outlined, you will surely have a plan that you and your participants will be proud of. Happy planning!

## ONLINE RESOURCE LIST

For your convenience, this toolkit has a links to some resources will assist in the creation of your workshops:

***100 Ways to Energise Groups: Games to use in Workshops, Meetings and the Community***

[http://www.aidsalliance.org/assets/000/001/052/ene0502\\_Energiser\\_guide\\_eng\\_original.pdf?1413808298](http://www.aidsalliance.org/assets/000/001/052/ene0502_Energiser_guide_eng_original.pdf?1413808298)

***Arts-based Activities for Workshops***

<http://www.pyeglobal.org/resources-for-social-artists/workshop-activities/>

***Presentation Tips***

[http://www.cio.gov.bc.ca/local/cio/priv\\_leg/documents/training/sec2\\_tips.pdf](http://www.cio.gov.bc.ca/local/cio/priv_leg/documents/training/sec2_tips.pdf)

***Group Dynamics***

<http://www.plusoneperformance.com/resources/GroupDynamics2.pdf>

***Facilitator Toolkit***

<http://oqi.wisc.edu/resourcelibrary/uploads/resources/Facilitator%20Tool%20Kit.pdf>

[artreach.org](http://artreach.org) | [niacentre.org](http://niacentre.org)

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