



Training Curriculum: Facilitation and Co-facilitation through a PAR Lens

The “Facilitation and Co-facilitation through a PAR Lens” curriculum was designed by the Participatory Action Research Center for Education Organizing (PARCEO), an independent center that supports the work and organizing of community groups. All of PARCEO’s trainings are based on Participatory Action Research (PAR) and popular education, which value the experience and leadership of those most impacted by injustice as we collectively work to effect change and build community power.

This training grew from the needs of two New York City parent groups, the Center for Immigrant Families (CIF), which is now Parent Leadership Project (PLP) in upper Manhattan and La Union based in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. It also builds from the CIF curriculum created and implemented with low-income immigrant parents of color in Public School District 3, New York City.

Both parent groups wanted their organizing to be rooted in their communities and participant-led. This required a framework that could draw from personal experience and wisdom to build collective skills, establish shared leadership, and offer concrete planning for sustainable organizing. “Facilitation and Co-facilitation” was critical to the work of CIF and La Union as they built member leadership and organized for educational justice.

“Facilitation and co-Facilitation through a PAR Lens” provides concrete facilitation skills and methodologies rooted in community processes, which are modeled throughout the two sessions. The purpose of this training is to provide a foundation for facilitation that is participatory and helps to collectively envision and build sustainable processes.

In the first session, participants understand the ways in which PAR supports a process of facilitation and co-facilitation that is rooted in the voices and personal experience of community members. This session covers what PAR is, the principles of PAR and participatory processes of facilitation/co-facilitation, and the role of facilitators. Through group discussions, creative expression and activities, participants learn and model facilitation/co-facilitation rooted in PAR.

The second session continues to explore facilitation/co-facilitation rooted in PAR and the challenges that facilitators face. Participants collectively solve problems in different scenarios, address challenges that occur during facilitation, and develop skills and concepts for their own facilitation processes. In addition to group discussion and activities, participants also see facilitation/co-facilitation rooted in PAR through the video/s offered in this training.



FACILITATOR

Goal of this training: Participants gain the skills and resources for PAR facilitation/co-facilitation rooted in community processes and participatory wisdom and knowledge. Through the training, participants address their specific experiences and the needs of the group, and build a sustainable foundation for their facilitation practices. All of our trainings end with collective reflection, where participants have a chance to share what they learned from the training and what they hope to explore after the training.

Objectives:

- Gain a foundational understanding of PAR-based principles of facilitation
- Develop PAR-based communication skills and community leadership
- Identify concrete facilitation issues and challenges
- Begin to build on key concepts and skills of facilitation/co-facilitation

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Document List

- Training Curriculum Session I (FACILITATOR)
- Training Curriculum Session II (FACILITATOR)
- Material List (FACILITATOR)
- Agenda Session I
- Overview of PAR
- Facilitation Guide
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- Role-Playing Handout
- Evaluation Sheet (FACILITATOR)



Facilitation and Co-Facilitation Through a PAR Lens

SESSION I (Total Time: 2 HOURS)

Goal for Training: Participants gain a deeper understanding of facilitating within a PAR framework and strengthen their ability to address the needs of the group and to reach goals that have been set out.

Goals for this Session:

- Facilitators gain a deeper understanding of PAR: its nature of constant self-reflection, critical questioning, and commitment to a process rooted in people's knowledge and wisdom
- Facilitators understand how to integrate PAR principles into their facilitation process

Materials

- Markers for facilitators and participants
- 8.5 x 11 paper
- Chart Paper
- Pens
- Handouts, enough copies for each participant: [attached with curriculum]
 - Overview of PAR
 - Goals and Responsibilities for Facilitators
- Posters/written out (taken from curriculum):
 - Guiding Questions for Overview of PAR
 - 3 sheets with Guiding Principles of Facilitation



FACILITATOR

A. Welcome (30 minutes)

Framing: **Facilitators** welcome the group, guide introduction and icebreaker, and provide a brief overview of the training. The icebreaker activates the group's knowledge of what it feels like to belong to a group. Together the group develops discussion guidelines.

Icebreaker (25 minutes)

Actions: **Facilitator A** guide introductions and icebreaker. **Facilitator B** distribute the group agenda.

Talking points: **Facilitator A** ask participants to share:

- Name
- Group affiliation
- A time you felt like you belonged to a group and why; also include one thing you liked about the group that made you feel welcome

Overview of Training and Discussion Guidelines (5 minutes)

Talking Point: Facilitator A

provide overview of the two sessions of the training.

Facilitator B introduce the group discussion with this **guiding questions:**

- What are some guidelines for how we want to engage with each other in this training?

Facilitator B write responses clearly on butcher paper for everyone to see and add comments.



Connection to next activity: Taking what the group shared about feeling a sense of belonging in a group, participants look at how PAR principles help facilitate an inclusive space.



B. Introduction to Basic Principles of PAR (30 minutes)

Framing: Participants develop an understanding of the basic principles of PAR through a group discussion based on the PAR handout.

Overview of Basic Principles of PAR (10 minutes)

Actions: **Facilitator B** give an overview before breaking into small groups. **Facilitator A** distribute the **PAR handout**.

Talking Point: Before the group reviews the PAR handout, **Facilitator B** frame the discussion with the following **guiding questions**:

- How are we experts in our own lives?
- Who is part of the community?
- What or who should determine what information is gathered and why is this important?
- What is “leadership” and who determines what this looks like?

Exercise – small group discussion (15 minutes)

Action: Participants break into small groups. Each group read one or two PAR principles from the handout and discuss the four questions on the butcher paper, using principles from the handout as the foundation for discussion. **Facilitators** participate in the groups.

Facilitator's note: be mindful of the time when participating in groups.

Regroup – large group share-out (5 minutes)

Action: **Facilitator A** guide the discussion.

Each group pick one question they discussed and share it with the whole group. This could be a reflection or question.

During the discussion, **Facilitator B** put up three sheets of butcher paper with the three principles of the goals and responsibilities of facilitation to be used for the next activity.

Connection to next activity: Using what participants discussed about the importance of community knowledge and leadership, the group considers why the method of facilitation matters in a group process.



FACILITATOR

C. Why does Facilitation within a PAR Framework Matter? (10 minutes)

Framing: In order to understand the importance of mindful and inclusive facilitation participants consider why it matters how one facilitates.

Brainstorm (10 minutes)

Action: Whole group brainstorm and share ideas. **Facilitator B** guide the discussion. **Facilitator A** write responses on a clean sheet of butcher paper.

Talking Points: **Facilitator B** ask the group to brainstorm collectively:

- Given what we just discussed, why does it matter how we facilitate?
- Why might a PAR framework make a difference?

Connection to next activity: Participants use the awareness of "how we facilitate" to develop the goals and responsibilities of a co-facilitator.

BREAK (5 minutes)

D. Co-facilitation (10 minutes)

Framing: Co-facilitation models mutual support, active listening and sharing. Co-facilitators provide diversity in voices, presentation styles and energy levels. A second person offers different skills and observations, helps notice and navigate the "vibe," guides conversations, takes the lead and steps back. Co-facilitators also help hand out materials, assist in monitoring discussions and support breakout groups and any problems that may come up.



FACILITATOR

Talking Points: **Facilitators** introduce the concept of co-facilitation, elaborating on the framing concepts, and using examples from the session so far.

Action: **Facilitators** explicitly model an exercise that shows co-facilitation in action. **Facilitator A** ask the group to think about a time when you felt supported or could have used support. Think about what shape that support could take and how you could ask for support. **Facilitator B** write the answers on board/butcher paper.

Connection to next activity: Participants explore the goals and responsibilities of facilitators, keeping in mind the co-facilitation discussion.

E. Goals and Responsibilities (25 minutes)

Framing: Working in pairs, participants consider the goals and responsibilities of a facilitator through an interactive “museum walk.”

Overview (5 minutes)

Talking Points: **Facilitator A** introduce the broad principles from the **Facilitation Guide** handout.

Pair Activity (15 minutes)

Action: **Facilitator B** place around the room butcher paper with one of the principles below written on each sheet.

- Create a space where all voices are valued equally
- Facilitation is never neutral, it's a political project
- Facilitators work to integrate themselves as genuinely as possible into the group
- Be conscious of issues of power and whose voices are being heard

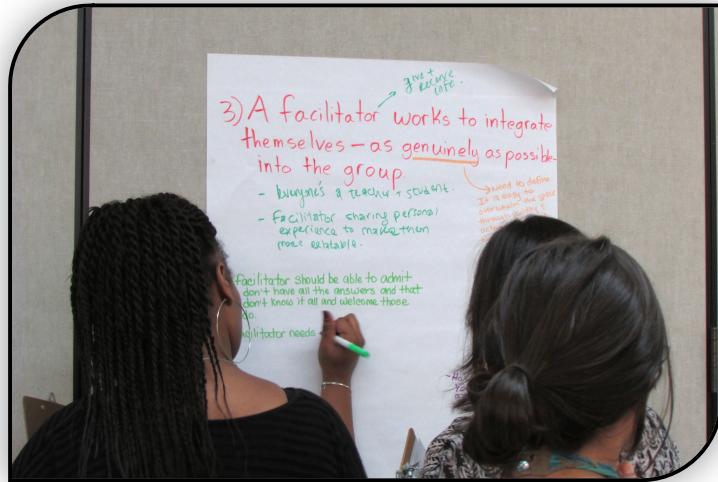
Participants break into pairs and walk around the room together, writing and discussing possible questions, and/or reflections about each principle that is on the butcher paper. **Facilitators** participate as well.



FACILITATOR

Group Discussion (5 minutes)

Facilitator B guide the discussion as pairs walk around the room and review the goals and responsibilities and responses, focusing on common issues.



Example of a Museum Walk with Facilitation Principles

Connection to next activity: Participants connect the discussions from all the activities from Session 1.

Closing for Session 1: Reflection and Evaluation

(20 minutes)

Framing: **Facilitator B** help tie together all of the first session's ideas and discussions as participants share questions/thoughts. **Facilitators** preview the next session and share how it connects to Session 1.

Group Reflection (10 minutes)

Talking Points: **Facilitator A** describe the next session; draw upon the questions that came up and explain that Session 2 involves role-playing and concrete facilitation methods.

Actions: Participants share one question that they still have or one of the discussions that they would like to continue in the next session.



Facilitation and Co-Facilitation through a PAR Len

SESSION II (Total Time: 2 HOURS)

Goal for Training: Participants gain a deeper understanding of facilitating within a PAR framework and strengthen their ability to address the needs of the group and to reach goals that have been set out.

Goals for this Session:

- Facilitators gain a deeper understanding of facilitating as active participants
- Through a PAR framework explore issues that arise in group dynamics

Materials:

- Large butcher paper with guidelines from previous session
- Markers
- Tape
 - Paper and pens
 - Laptop with Internet connection to play link
 - "180 Days Well Spent" video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp4obRb3yY&feature=youtube>
- Handouts, enough copies for each participants
 - Role-playing Scenarios



FACILITATOR

A. Welcome (15 minutes)

Framing: Review discussions and concepts from Session 1. **Facilitator A** give an overview of session 2 and draw connections to previous session.

Introductions (15 minutes)

Actions: Both **facilitators** welcome the group. **Facilitator A** distribute the group agenda.

Talking Point: **Facilitator B** ask participants to go around the room and say their names and group affiliation and how facilitation fits into their work. If group is meeting on a separate day also share one positive group interaction since Session 1 and why it was positive.

B. Introduction to the Training and Recap (15 minutes)

Framing: **Facilitator B** synthesize and guide discussion on the previous session and principles of facilitation.

Guidelines – large group discussion (10 minutes)

Actions: **Facilitator A** frame the session and lead discussion on guidelines from the previous session and ask if group has anything to add. **Facilitator B** write down what participants share on butcher paper.

Recap of last session – facilitator-led (5 minutes)

Talking Points: **Facilitator B** ask:

- What is one principle about facilitating that you think is important?
- What are some principles or concepts that you still have questions about?
- If you facilitated something recently, share one aspect of that and what you thought about as you were facilitating?

Actions: **Facilitator A** write answers that participants share.

Connection to next activity: These principles will be put into action as common challenges to facilitation are addressed in the next activity.



C. The Role of a Facilitator: Challenges (40 minutes)

Framing: Participants work through facilitation challenges by role-playing common difficult situations and then reflecting on their process. Groups come back together and share their experience with the whole group, so that everyone can learn from each other.

Discussion on the Challenges– large group brainstorm (5 minutes)

Talking Points: **Facilitator A** ask participants to discuss a few of the challenges that came up during the last session (and in pre-planning or other meetings). Examples could include:

- How to bring new people into a group or process
- How to engage with oppressive/overarching power structures
- How to address a tough issue that comes up in the group
- Any other facilitation challenges that the group is interested in discussing

Actions: **Facilitator B** jot down the group's thoughts from the discussion.

Role-Playing Facilitation Challenges – small group exercise (20 minutes)

Talking Points: **Facilitator B** explain the exercise: Based on some of the challenges identified during session one and examples that raise common concerns, we will break into small groups and act out a possible scenario. Each group will be assigned a scenario to role-play or present to the larger group.

Actions: **Facilitator A** hand out scenario list to each group.

Through the role-playing exercise, participants should:

- Identify the problem in the scenario
- Identify who the relevant people are in the scenario
- Identify strategies to address and think about how to best resolve the problem in the scenario
- Discuss together the ways you would address the scenario as facilitators and come up with a few examples to share with the larger group

Facilitator's Note: It may be helpful to have these directions on chart paper or printed on the sheets with the scenario for each group



FACILITATOR

Regroup – large group discussion (15 minutes)

Actions: **Facilitator A** guide discussion. Each group perform or talk about their scenario in front of the larger group. After each performance, the larger group discusses what they saw in the scenario, their thoughts and what they would think/feel/do if they were in those situations.

Connection to next activity: After thinking about some of the challenges of facilitation, participants look at an example of a community PAR project and consider the role of facilitation in that process.



D. 180 Days Well Spent: PAR in Action (30 minutes)

Framing: Through the video “180 Days Well Spent” participants consider an example of PAR-based facilitation in action and ways that it brings out different voices.

Introduction to Video (5 minutes)

Talking Point: **Facilitator B** introduce the video and explain the process of how the 12-minute movie came to be, highlighting the PAR principles discussed in the previous session.

Facilitator's note: For more information on “180 Days Well Spent,” you can refer to PARCEO’s Website: www.parceo.org

Show Video (12 minutes)

Action: Show the “180 Days Well Spent” video that exemplifies how teachers facilitate through a PAR framework.

Discussion on Video (13 minutes)

Action: After “180 Days Well Spent,” **Facilitator B** guide the discussion on how the teachers facilitate and address the issues discussed in this training.

Talking points:

- What are your thoughts?
- What are some questions you have after watching the movie?
- How were these classrooms run?
- How did the teachers try to bring out the voices of their students?
- In what ways did you see power shift compared with other teaching/facilitating models?



E. Closing Session 2: Reflection and Evaluation (15 minutes)

Framing: Participants tie together everything they have learned in the two sessions and consider how these concepts and skills can be useful in their own processes.

Reflection – large group discussion (10 minutes)

Talking Point: **Facilitator A** lead group discussion:

- What is the next group in which you will be participating or facilitating?
- What is one new thing you might bring to that group based on this training?

Evaluation (5 minutes)

Actions: **Facilitators** collect feedback on training from participants. **Facilitators** take notes to incorporate for future sessions.



PARCEO - Materials List for Facilitation Training Sessions

Materials for Session I:

- Paper
- Pens
- Copies of PAR handout (with translation)
- Copies of Facilitation Guide handout (with translation)
- Large Butcher paper with 4 questions on them (with translation)
- 3 sheets of large butcher paper with each principle on each sheet all three(with translation)
- Tape
- Additional Large butcher paper (blank)
- Markers

Materials for Session II:

- Large butcher paper with guidelines from previous session
- Additional Large Butcher paper (blank)
- Markers
- Roll of tape
- Paper
- Pens
- Role playing exercise handout (with translation)
- “180 days well spent” link or DVD
- Laptop with Internet to play link or DVD drive



Facilitation and Co-Facilitation through a PAR Lens

Session I Agenda

SESSION I

A. Introductions

1. Introductions and ice breaker
2. Introduction to the training and review of the two sessions
 - a. Overview of training and the two sessions
 - b. Group discussion about guidelines

B. Review of principles of PAR:

1. Introduce basic principles of PAR
2. Small group exercise
3. Regroup

C. Why does facilitation within a PAR framework matter?

1. Brainstorming activity
2. Introduce 3 broad principles from "Goals and Responsibilities of Facilitation" handout

D. Goals and Responsibilities

1. Introduce Facilitator Guide handout
2. Small Group/Pairs activity

E. Closing: Reflection

1. Share one question or reflection about the session. Group will decide what the next session will look like.

What is PAR?

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a framework for engaging in research and organizing for social justice that is rooted in a community's own knowledge, wisdom, and experience. PAR recognizes that those most impacted by systemic injustice are in the best position to understand and analyze their needs and challenges and to organize for social change.

In a PAR-generated process:

The outcomes can **take many shapes** and forms depending on what the group determines together, but it is the group's own agenda and not someone else's.

We engage in **collective research and organizing** to build community and make change.

The work is about **generating and building knowledge together** in order to define the change we seek to make. This begins with telling our own stories, which centers our own experiences.

Community members are recognized as experts, and all participants are considered both teachers and learners. Too often, outside "experts" come in to identify and address a community's problems, and PAR challenges this notion of who has the expertise.

We work intentionally and always think carefully about **whose voices are being heard, who is making decisions, and how we are moving forward**. We consider our roles, position, and privilege in relation to changing conditions of injustice.

Like popular education, it is a broad framework that is **participatory, collective, critical, and reflective**, building from the work of Orlando Fals-Borda, Paulo Freire, and many others. It is not a neutral process and actively builds community strength and leadership to change unjust conditions.



Facilitation Guide

Facilitation is a tool used to guide, support and move a process forward. Facilitation through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework is very reflective, intentional and participatory, ensuring that all voices are heard.

Goals of PAR-based Facilitation

- Foster an environment to build healthy, respectful relationships by developing clear goals and establishing the group's purpose together.
- Recognize who is in the room and remain conscious of issues of power, dynamics, different forms of expression so that all types of participation are valued equally.
- Guide the process while not dominating conversation.

What Facilitation Is

Facilitators engage the group in reflection, analysis, synthesis, and think about how to move forward as a community where everyone learns from each other.

Facilitators are responsible for the atmosphere and well-being of the group. They make sure that participants feel safe and included, create a physically comfortable space, make copies and provide snacks, depending on the diverse circumstances and realities of the group.

Facilitators work to ensure that all participants, including themselves are integrated as genuinely as possible into the group. Facilitators balance the various dynamics and engage as both a teacher and a learner.

What Facilitation is Not

Facilitators are not dominant or authoritative voices.

Facilitators do not use silence or distancing in order to take away from their assumed power, as the silence can unintentionally reinforce that power. Silence is different from allowing quiet moments for people to gather and reflect upon their thoughts and ideas.

Facilitation is never neutral, it is a political project. Facilitators should be able to express their thoughts and perspectives, since they are active members of the group.



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Session II Agenda

SESSION II

A. Introductions

1. Introductions and ice breaker
2. Introduction to the training and review of the two sessions
 - a. Group Discussion about guidelines
 - b. Recap previous session and overview of agenda for second session

B. Reflections about key ideas about facilitation principles from last session

1. Quick group discussion

C. The Role of a Facilitator: Challenges

1. Group discussion and quick brainstorm
2. Role play exercise
3. Regroup

D. 180 Days Well Spent: PAR in Action

1. Introduction to the video
2. Play video
3. Group discussion

E. Reflections

1. Reflections



ROLE-PLAYING HANDOUT

As a group, choose to act out or discuss one of facilitation scenarios below using the guiding questions. We will come together with the whole group to share the questions, challenges, or reflections that arose in the small groups.

Guiding Questions for Group Discussion:

1. Identify the problem or challenge in the scenario
2. Identify who the relevant/key people are in the scenario
3. Identify strategies to address and think about how to best resolve the problem or challenge in the scenario
4. Discuss together the ways you'd address this as facilitators and come up with a few examples to share with the larger group
5. Decide how to act out or describe the scenario for the larger group

Scenario I -- Facilitating Challenging Conversations

Roles: co-facilitators from your group, 1 parent who makes insensitive comment/assumption, 2 parents who agree

You are facilitating a meeting where parents from your community are discussing the issues going on in the elementary and middle schools and what should be different. Parents from across the district, as well as parents who are in leadership roles at the school. A number of issues focusing on discrimination and inequity are raised, and how race and class are connected to these issues. The issues are brought up by parents who have faced discrimination and inequality in their schools and school system.

One of the parents in the room dismisses these issues and also expresses assumptions about the parents who face discrimination and inequity, saying or implying that these parents are “too passive, and don’t care enough about their children’s education,” that the “fault lies with these parents, not the system.” Several other parents express agreement.

- As a facilitator(s), how would you address these comments?
- How would you engage the group of parents in this conversation?
- How might you center the voices of those who experienced the discrimination and inequality they spoke about?
- How would you frame the discussion? Why is this important?



Scenario II -- Power Dynamics and Building Community

Roles: co-facilitators, 1 city official

You are helping to facilitate a meeting that a group of engaged community members called for with city officials to address concerns your group has about racial profiling and lack of respect exhibited toward the community from law enforcement. In your group you have documented multiple occurrences that reflect this lack of respect and of the profiling that has taken place. When presented with the information, the city officials disagree about law enforcement's lack of respect for the community and become dismissive and defensive.

- As a facilitator(s), how would you engage with the officials in this conversations while insuring that the group's concerns aren't minimized, that their voices are not silenced?
- How would you frame the issue and proposed strategies? Why is this important?

Scenario III -- Integrating New Members and Valuing all Voices

Roles: co-facilitators, 1 new member

You are facilitating during a meeting and realize there is one new member in the group. The group already consists of individuals that have been coming for awhile and have built relationships with each other and as a group. The new member is very shy and is hesitant to participate.

- How would you welcome the new member?
- What are some ways to integrate him/her genuinely and organically?
- How do you keep the group moving forward while also making sure the new member's experiences and knowledge is valued?

Scenario IV--Multilingual Facilitation

Roles: co-facilitators, participants with two different language backgrounds

During a cooking workshop you have multiple language groups represented. You have translation available for most languages, but a few people show up last minute and you don't have translation for their language.

- How do you meaningfully integrate the individuals into the group?
- What considerations would make when dividing up into smaller groups?
- What tools or steps could you prepare ahead of time to help you in these situations?
- How do you allow for cross-conversation between language groups?





Reflection for Facilitation and Co-Facilitation Training

Please return to PARCEO via email within 2 weeks of completing the training

1. Share with us a little bit about your group—general focus/interest, geographic location, size of group, general demographics
 2. In what ways do you think this training will influence your future work?
 3. What aspects of the training did you find most useful?
 4. What suggestion do you have for improving the training?
 5. Would you be interested in other trainings? If so, around what topics or issues?