



QUESTIONS and ANSWERS about JLP FACILITATION

Thank you for your interest in joining the dynamic team of facilitators of the PSAC-PSHRMAC Joint Learning Program (JLP). Below is a list of questions commonly asked by new or potential JLP facilitators.

1. What is a “facilitator” and why does the JLP use this term?

JLP learning events are based on the methods and methodology of experiential learning. Facilitators guide learners through a series of exercises that promote participation, discussion, reflection, critical analysis and problem solving. When learners are encouraged to think for themselves and discover their own answers to issues and problems, the focus is on “learning” rather than “teaching”.

2. So we’re not “trainers” or “instructors” and don’t need to have a sound knowledge of the subject matter of JLP learning events?

While you are not expected to be a subject matter “expert”, you are expected to develop a sound knowledge of the topic, be it an intimate knowledge of the parties’ policies on harassment or how to correctly interpret the collective agreement. Having this kind of subject matter knowledge is not so you can “give information” but it allows you to more effectively design and facilitate learning experiences. Each learning kit (for the most part) responds to this need by providing facilitators with briefing notes, answer keys, handouts, references from various web sites and detailed explanations within each learning activity.

So you need a balance between subject matter expertise and competencies as a facilitator.

Examples of facilitator competencies include the ability to create a safe yet challenging environment, set up and debrief an exercise, work effectively with a co-facilitator, engage learners and encourage full

participation, “read” a group, adjust the pace or method at a moment’s notice or facilitate challenging group dynamics.

3. Why is there an additional experience requirement for delivery of “Respecting Differences/Anti-discrimination”? What does “experience with diversity/anti-discrimination work” mean?

Facilitating in what can be an emotionally charged environment requires skilful facilitation and a high degree of sensitivity and respect. Facilitators will need to rely on their own knowledge and experience to not only create a safe, supportive yet challenging environment but respond appropriately by drawing on their own analysis of discrimination and anti-discrimination when faced with difficult or potentially difficult group dynamics.

Therefore, each facilitation team must include a member of a group that has been historically disadvantaged in Canadian society and continues to face discrimination in the workplace. Both facilitators must be committed to the elimination of discrimination in all its forms and have experience with diversity and anti-oppression work. This might have been developed through direct experience with discrimination, by taking courses and reading about privilege, racism, homophobia and other human rights issues or through involvement in an employment equity committee or delivering diversity training.

4. How does a person become a JLP facilitator? What are the selection criteria?

An applicant must be selected to participate in a five-day JLP Facilitator Orientation. The JLP has developed a facilitator profile (see below). Based on the profile, selection criteria include facilitation skills (or potential) and commitment to strengthened union-management relations. In addition, to fulfill our mandate, the JLP requires a representative and available pool of both employer-sponsored and union-sponsored facilitators from different departments and regions that can meet our delivery needs.

5. I am not interested in delivering all four of the existing JLP topics. Will that put me at a disadvantage?

No. Some facilitators become interested in joint learning because it is a means to pursue an interest in a particular topic such as diversity or anti-harassment. Others have decided to “specialize” because it allows them to focus their preparation and delivery efforts. We will use your stated preferences (on the application form) to plan the five-day orientation and subsequent facilitator clinics. Besides, you will not be “tied” to your preferences because once you are exposed to the learning kits, your interests may change.

6. What expectations does the JLP have of JLP facilitators?

You are expected to fulfill the commitment to facilitate a minimum of five JLP learning events. There is also the expectation that you will be an ambassador of the program and use every opportunity to promote the advantages of joint learning. You and your co-facilitator will be a working model of union and management cooperation, so you will need to invest in the necessary preparation to ensure your learning event is a success.

7. How much preparation time is involved?

This will vary. Thoroughly familiarizing yourself with the learning kits will take a few days - reading, making notes, downloading additional materials from the JLP web site, gathering resources, researching to fill gaps in your own understanding of a particular topic, and so on.

In addition, each learning event requires contact with worksite organizers to gather information and materials relating to the group you will be working with and then drafting a facilitation plan based on the learning needs you identify.

For a first delivery of a one-day workshop, you might want to set aside at least two more days for both individual preparation and work up with your co-facilitator. For a first delivery of a two-day session, three days is the suggested minimum. Delivery of subsequent sessions will require less preparation time as you become more familiar with the materials and the subject matter and are able to better focus your

preparation time. The JLP supports the minimum standard of “one to one” - for each day of delivery, one day of preparation is required.

Planning your preparation time is also a factor. For example, for sessions on union-management consultation, you will want to build in the distribution and return of a questionnaire on union-management relations. Sufficient time will also be needed for workplace organizers to gather other information and materials about the committee.

8. What exactly are my roles and responsibilities?

You will liaise with your JLP Regional Field Coordinator on scheduling. You will work with a co-facilitator on preparation and delivery. You will be provided with learning kits and other materials requiring some adaptation to meet the needs of each group of learners. You will liaise with organizers who will coordinate the administrative and logistical requirements and provide you with valuable information on the learners and their needs.

9. Who are these “organizers”?

Each learning event will have two organizers - one named by the union and one named by the department/agency. Organizers are responsible for such things as finding facilities, recruiting and selecting participants and generally looking after the logistics, thereby freeing you and your co-facilitator to concentrate on the “learning” part of program planning and delivery.

10. Who will look after the learning materials?

When you and your co-facilitator design a learning event, you will choose only some of the handouts and exercises from the learning kit. You might amend some of these materials. Therefore, you will coordinate your exact printing requirements and shipping arrangements.

Some materials will be centrally shipped - JLP notepads, pens, tent name cards, bookmarks, and so on.

11. Will I be expected to deliver sessions outside my own department or agency?

Yes. In fact, some facilitators express a preference for facilitating outside their own department or agency, at least at the outset. If you are a member of a Union-Management Consultation Committee (UMCC), you will want to be there as a participant and not as a facilitator. Because facilitators volunteer for specific learning events, where and which sessions you deliver will depend on your interest and availability.

12. Will there be a requirement to travel?

Yes, in some cases. The goal is to organize learning events as close to the workplace as possible so this will mean that some facilitators will need to travel. We are also conscious of the need to keep travel time and costs of both participants and facilitators to a minimum. For the most part, facilitators will deliver sessions within their home regions.

13. Who will pay?

The salaries of all participants and facilitators will be paid by their respective departments or agencies. All other costs will be paid by the JLP (e.g., facilitators' travel, off-site facilities, printing & shipping of learning materials or participants' travel where required). The benefits to workplaces are enormous in that quality learning events are organized for staff and facilitators' knowledge and skills are being developed through the JLP. Strengthened union-management relations benefits us all.

14. What happens if I need to work overtime?

In an ideal situation, all preparation and delivery will take place during regular working hours. That having been said, because salaries are paid by facilitators' departments, and circumstances will vary from employee to employee, this is a matter best left to each individual facilitator and his/her supervisor to discuss and determine.

Some facilitators are covered by a collective agreement and others are not. For those employees in a bargaining unit, language varies from agreement to agreement. For example, Clause 28.01 of the Program and Administrative Services Agreement states that “Compensation under this Article shall not be paid for overtime worked by an employee at courses, training sessions, conferences or seminars unless the employee is required to attend by the Employer.”

There may be circumstances where employees are “required to attend by the Employer” and other situations where they are not.

15. What if I encounter difficulties in obtaining support within my department/agency for the program or my work as a facilitator?

Lack of support may be linked to lack of information. Obtain the necessary information and put it in the right hands. Assemble JLP information kits and distribute them to the union and management leadership. Encourage the parties to discuss the Joint Learning Program at the union-management consultation table. As a facilitator, ask for an invitation for yourself or another speaker to address a meeting of the management team or the UMCC.

Identify how your work as a JLP facilitator can benefit the workplace. Explore with your supervisor or manager ways to balance your obligations to the program with the demands of your job.

If you require information or advice, contact the JLP National Administration Office at (613) 560 2595 or jlp-pam@psac.com.

16. How will I be matched with a co-facilitator and a specific learning event?

Facilitators sign up for specific sessions on-line. In addition, JLP Regional Field Coordinators coordinate scheduling by recruiting and matching facilitators.

Factors such as experience, availability, costs and equitable distribution of facilitation assignments are taken into consideration.

17. So I won't necessarily be working with the same co-facilitator for different learning events?

No. Facilitators' availability for specific dates will be a factor. While there are advantages in working with the same person, there are benefits in working with different facilitators with varying knowledge and skills. Team facilitation can be a valuable developmental opportunity.

18. Are facilitators either union or management representatives?

No. A PSAC-sponsored facilitator is a member of a PSAC bargaining unit and recommended by the PSAC. Some are union representatives.

Some employer-sponsored facilitators are managers; some are members of PSAC (or other) bargaining units. They must not be union activists, union representatives or members of union committees.

Union-sponsored and employer-sponsored facilitators have many things in common, including a commitment to joint learning and improved union-management relations. In the pursuit of facilitating learning, most facilitators practise a level of neutrality where it is often difficult to identify which facilitator represents the union and which one represents the employer.

19. What is a "sponsor" and who qualifies as one?

A sponsor is someone who represents either the employer (e.g., a supervisor or manager) or the union (e.g., an elected local, component or PSAC representative) and nominates an applicant to become an employer-sponsored facilitator or a PSAC-sponsored facilitator. When selecting a sponsor, applicants usually choose someone who actively promotes the JLP and can support their efforts as facilitators.

20. Why is a copy of a completed application form sent to an applicant's supervisor or manager?

Having supportive supervisors and managers who recognize the individual and organizational benefits of JLP facilitation is critical to the

viability of the Joint Learning Program. When applicants make a commitment to deliver a minimum of five workshops, it is not possible to fulfill the commitment without the direct involvement of a facilitator's supervisor or manager. In effect, the JLP is expecting that an applicant's manager or supervisor will commit to find ways and means to allow a facilitator to prepare for and deliver a minimum of five JLP workshops.

21. What topics will be the subject of JLP learning events?

There are currently four topics - collective agreement interpretation, union-management consultation, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment. Additional projects may be added at a later date.

22. How are workshops scheduled? How are participants recruited and selected?

Union and management at any level jointly submit an application to host a JLP learning event. Once approved by the JLP, the event is posted on the JLP website, listing the topic and language of the workshop, date, location and names and contact information of both organizers.

Participants are named by the organizers. Given that a key goal of joint learning is to improve union-management relations, learning groups consist of participants who usually work together within the same workplace. The design of the JLP learning kits is based on this premise and the kits contain exercises and opportunities for participants to build relationships, practise their problem solving skills or identify actions they can work on together to implement back in the workplace.

23. How many participants are in each learning group and should they have 50/50 employer and employee balance?

Because of the participatory methods, each learning group should not exceed 20 participants. For most core projects, it is not necessary to have equal employer-employee representation. The ideal is to have a "mixture" - management, supervisors, staff and union representatives.

Most groups participating in sessions on union-management consultation will have a relatively equal balance of union and management representatives because most UMCCs are structured that way. These sessions are not for employees interested in learning more about union-management consultation but are actually working/learning sessions for the membership of one (usually) or more consultation committees.

24. What can I expect in the form of training and development?

All JLP facilitators will participate in a facilitator orientation session where you will be introduced to the methods of experiential learning and a maximum of two (usually) JLP learning kits.

JLP Regional Field Coordinators will coordinate mentoring and development opportunities as part of their scheduling and facilitator development responsibilities.

Facilitator clinics introduce existing JLP facilitators to additional learning kits (or updates) not examined at the initial five-day orientation. They also provide opportunities for skill development.

The JLP Facilitator Network is also an important source of support. The password-protected area of the JLP website for facilitators is a place for facilitators to download information and share ideas and materials. Each JLP learning event should be considered an opportunity for development and you will want to look for other opportunities to develop your skills.

Thank you for your interest in JLP facilitation. Should more information be required, please visit the JLP web site (www.jlp-pam.ca) or contact us at (613) 560 2595 or jlppam@psac-afpc.com.



Facilitator Profile Joint Learning Program

- practical knowledge and established experience in facilitation techniques based on the principles of adult, experiential and participatory learning
- excellent demonstrated skills in the area of difficult dynamics in an adult learning environment
- sensitivity and respect for the respective roles of management and union in a unionized workplace
- sensitivity with regards to union-management relations in the Federal Public Service
- credibility with the PSAC and the Employer, both within the workplace and in the context of union-management relations
- excellent preparation skills including the ability to assess and adapt learning materials against group characteristics and needs
- availability and commitment to prepare and deliver a minimum of five JLP workshops