



# RETREAT FACILITATION TIPS

Creating a facilitation plan is key to an effective retreat or off-site training experience. After all of the hard work it takes to locate a site, plan the meals, and coordinate transportation, it would seem logical that the discussion and group productivity would follow easily. Taking your members away or dedicating a day to intensive group time does establish that you care about the group. It doesn't, however ensure long attention spans or group participation. It is important that you do not serve as the **ONLY** facilitator. Operating on this basic principal, let's start with ideas for other facilitators and guest "celebrities" who can add a special touch to your retreat.

## **Professional Consultants & Trainers:**

There are numerous options of consultants and trainers available for hire. Expect to spend a chunk of change to hire someone who is professional. A professional trainer can spark creativity and create an atmosphere that is conducive to participation. We do not recommend relying solely on a professional trainer for a retreat experience. A mix of trainer time and team leader time is the best recipe for productivity and success.

## **Well Known Community Member:**

Don't be afraid to ask someone who is well known in your community to be a part of your retreat experience. This is especially effective if you are staying in town but want to offer something special to your group. Perhaps a political figure, senior citizen, University Professor/Administrator, Chamber of Commerce Director, etc. would be willing to come for lunch and facilitate a discussion with your group.

## **Sports Team Figure:**

If you live in an urban area that supports a professional sports team, requesting a sports celebrity may be an enticing option. If you are a non-profit agency, there is a possibility that an athlete (it is off-season) might be willing to be a part of your retreat. Be sure to shape the topic of discussion so that it is germane to your organization's needs.

## **CEO/President:**

Ask a local CEO or President of a company to speak to your group. Your group members will appreciate hearing about leadership from a leader of a different organization. You may also be able to create connections for future collaborations.

## **Past Members:**

Ask members who used to be a part of your group to come back and share their experiences.

## **Group Exchange:**

Bring someone from a group that is similar to yours but is in a different location. This is a great way to swap ideas and learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of your group.

## **Leaders & Veterans:**

Ask the leaders or returning members in your group to share in the facilitation responsibility. Give them the opportunity to sharpen their leadership skills and offer variety to the facilitation mix.