

Building Community Capacity
Getting Facilitators in Our Communities
 February, 2004
A Key Message from the Individualized Funding WorkFest

When community services respond to a person's need for disability supports, they traditionally "place" the person in a program or service that they think is most suitable. Sometimes there is a "good fit" between the person and the program, often there is not. In approaches that focus on individualized planning, support, and funding, people are no longer placed. Instead, individuals and families have an opportunity to plan, based on the person's dreams, strengths, and needs. We are learning that this approach works best when a facilitator is available to assist. Facilitate comes from the Greek word meaning "to draw out." A skilled facilitator brings people together, and creates good process that enables people to work well together as a small group. Facilitators ensure that everyone can express themselves and that the person with the disability is front and centre to all decision-making. Facilitators function most effectively when they are independent from the service system. When facilitators are knowledgeable about their community, they recommend a variety of options and ideas, and are not restricted to services and programs. Facilitators also assist people in developing their personal relationships and networks, an important strategy that reduces isolation and increases citizenship. Facilitators may be paid by an agency or by the family. Some organizations are beginning to build the skills of facilitators, both paid and volunteer. As the province moves to expand Individualized Funding, options hopefully will be available for people to access facilitators from a local organization or be able to hire their own facilitator. In the meantime, it is important that we build the capacity of our communities to expand the number of skilled facilitators who are available to assist individuals and families.

**Common Processes and Strategies of Facilitators:
 Findings from a Research Study***

1. Get to know people well; *build relationships* with individuals with disabilities, their families and networks, and the local community.
2. *Provide information* about network building, individualized support options, community resources, direct funding.
3. Help the individual to build his/her *social support network* (circle, cluster, group, network), that would be willing to meet regularly.
4. Assist individuals, with their families and support networks, *to plan* what the person wants, using a strengths approach.
5. Help individuals and their networks to develop *detailed support plans and budgets* for submission to the funder.
6. Facilitate community connections in both formal and informal settings.
7. Assist people to *find, create and purchase supports* that may be required and provide *ongoing implementation support*.

* J. Lord, B. Zupko, P. Hutchison (2000). *More Choice and Control for People with Disabilities: Individualized Support & Funding*. Toronto: Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy. This list is based on eight "promising projects" in three countries.

Values and Vision of Facilitators in Our Communities

Facilitators are skilled and qualified

- Good listener; listens to what people want at all times
- Creative and empowering of person
- Good communicator and networker
- Well versed in life planning
- Skills and abilities to pull it together into proposals
- Competent in support network development and skills to help group keep going
- Well versed in Individualized Funding
- Has access to stories and information about Individualized Funding
- Relates to people, it's not just a job... has to believe
- Unbiased, no ties to agency or funding sources
- Knows community well
- Good broad knowledge of disabilities
- Accountable to person
- Has had formal training to be a facilitator.

There is a strong Support Network of Facilitators provincially

- Facilitators should not work in isolation – hard to be creative when working alone
- Facilitators should have connections locally, regionally, provincially
- Core provincial group should be experienced and independent
- Network will provide information to facilitators, also receive information from facilitators
- Linked with provincial groups – Individualized Funding Coalition, etc.

Facilitators have clear Roles and Responsibilities

- May be the single point of access for families for support... act as 'the librarian'
- Planner may or may not be a separate role from Facilitator where the planner helps with the life plan, the facilitator is experienced at lobbying/advocating for Individualized Funding
- Research on facilitation studied to understand best approaches (see chart)

Communities have access to Independent Facilitators

- Agencies could free up money for a pool of independent facilitators
- Government could create planning centres with facilitators
- Train the trainer model where families could be trained to be facilitators
- Every community will be aware that Individualized Funding is an option to pursue.

Strategies for Getting Facilitators in Our Communities

Strategies related to getting facilitators in our communities are designed to build capacity for increased facilitation. These strategies are not meant to do what government should do, but to assist communities in shaping how this valued resource can be developed. Specific strategies include:

1. A Web based directory for information sharing will be developed.
It will include:
 - Where Individualized Funding is happening
 - Training opportunities for facilitators/planners
 - Different models of independent facilitation/planning (i.e.: where planners are separate from facilitators, where it is within the same role, how train the trainer works, agency models that have separated planning out, etc.)
 - Links to planning resources
 - A list of trained facilitators willing to work with families (including their specialty and costs)
 - Stories from families about facilitation/planning
 - Information about Individualized Funding, or a link to the IF website.

2. Resources or money will be found to either pay for local facilitators and/or to Train the Trainer where families and others could be trained.
Ideas include:
 - Identifying leaders for Train the Trainer
 - Working with local organizations to access money or to get them to offer people resources
 - Support from the IF Coalition for local areas to implement this approach.

3. More discussions about the role of Facilitator and whether it should be a paid/non-paid role and whether Planner/Facilitator should be separate or within the same role will be encouraged.
 - Individualized Funding Coalition to facilitate such discussions and to share research and stories.

4. Facilitators will be connected provincially into a network.
 - Individualized Funding Coalition to be the 'library' of information about facilitators
 - Sub-group of facilitators to organize the network.

Outcomes by 2006

- The MCSS will be funding independent facilitation in every area of the province
- There will be a thriving provincial network of facilitators
- There will be an expanded facilitator training capacity and information on planning and facilitation.