

Before beginning work with an **independent facilitator (see definition)**, OIFN encourages people, along with their loved ones (family members, friends, support circles, other people you trust), to take some time to learn about the facilitator and decide if you think that the facilitator will be a good fit. To assist you to decide if a facilitator has the experience, values, and qualities that are important to you, OIFN offers the sample questions below. When first meeting with a facilitator, you may consider asking some or all of the questions, in order to learn if the facilitator meets your needs before beginning the relationship and getting started on the work.

In some parts of the province, facilitators work within non-profit **Independent Facilitation Organizations (IFOs)**. If you engage with a facilitator who works for an IFO, your relationship is with not only the facilitator but also the organization. These organizations look after hiring of and/or contracting with facilitators and support facilitators to engage in reflective practice. Oftentimes, Independent Facilitation Organizations will partner with people and families and supportive community allies, such as Family Networks and People First groups, to provide opportunities for mentoring, training, evaluation, and community capacity development.

However, many facilitators are self-employed and are not working within and/or are not connected in any way to an Independent Facilitation Organization. In these instances, it is very important to carefully screen and interview facilitators, in order to choose the right person and to ensure that the facilitator works separate and apart from direct service delivery.

Whether you engage with a self-employed facilitator or with a facilitator connected to an IFO, in most cases, Independent Facilitation is offered on a fee for service basis.

Before thinking about the questions that you might want to ask of an independent facilitator, we suggest that you take some time to reflect on what you and your loved ones are looking for in the person:

- Why are you looking for Independent Facilitation? What is most important to you about an independent facilitator's role?
- What are the key values, traits, and capacities you are looking for in a facilitator?

Definitions

Independent facilitator: someone who supports people, along with their families and/or loved ones, to create change in their lives and who works separately from direct service delivery, advocacy, assessment, eligibility, and funding/resource determinations.

Independent facilitators remain “free of conflicts of interest” and do not:

- deliver residential or day services
- manage people's funding allocations
- employ or provide support workers
- have responsibility related to assessment or eligibility, funding determinations, and/or oversight
- in the role as a facilitator, also enter into or assume the role of community support worker

Independent facilitators are not employed or paid directly by and do not take direction from organizations that offer the services listed above. As well, to be “free of conflicts of interest” means that independent facilitators are accountable to the people and families with whom they work and, if applicable, to the Independent Facilitation Organization by whom they are employed.

Independent Facilitation Organization (IFO): any organization that offers Independent Facilitation separate and apart from direct service delivery, advocacy, assessment, eligibility, and funding/resource determinations.

Additional OIFN Resources

For a better understanding on the role of an independent facilitator, you may wish to review:

- [Guide for Ethical Conduct](#)
- [OIFN Scope of Practice of Independent Facilitation](#)

**Independent facilitators who list themselves on [OIFN's Facilitator Listing](#) agree to practice within the guidelines outlined in these documents.*

Questions to Ask when Considering an Independent Facilitator

Getting to Know You

- Why is this work important to you?
- Where and how will you begin to get to know me, my family members, and/or my loved ones?
- What do you believe matters most to people and their family members and/or loved ones?
- What do you think are the gifts and talents that you bring to the work?
- Describe a time when you had a difficult choice that you needed to make and how you worked through it.
- How would you approach a situation where my loved ones and I have different ideas or values from one another or different ideas and values from you?

Facilitator Experience

- How do you see the difference between facilitation and planning? What makes each of them challenging at times?
- How does this work compare to the work you have done before?
- Please share your personal experience of doing the work and describe what you have learned.
- Describe a “highpoint” experience in facilitation and planning with someone. What difference did it make to the person, their loved ones, and to you?
- What experience have you had as an independent facilitator that stretched you the most?
- Do you see yourself staying with the work of independent facilitation over the long run? Why? What keeps you at the work?

Supporting Goals and Dreams

- How do you go about strengthening a person to speak up and have a meaningful role in shaping the key decisions in their life?
- Share a story of what it took to support someone to find their voice and begin thinking differently about their life, their hopes, and their dreams.
- What role do you feel you would play in supporting me and my loved ones to broaden our social networks? How would you go about that aspect of the role?
- Have you ever had experience in supporting a person set up a “support circle”? If so, what can you say about how it emerged and how it has remained viable?
- What does an “ordinary, everyday life” look like to you? How would you support me, along with my loved ones, to create a full, meaningful life in my neighbourhood and community?

Accountability, Training, and Mentoring

- What kind of training have you had and what training has been most beneficial to you and why?
- What kind of mentoring have you had and what have you gained through your mentoring experience?
- Do you belong to a community of practice? If so, how has it shaped your practice? Why do you choose to belong?
- How is your commitment to ongoing, lifelong learning demonstrated?
- What outcome(s) can we expect from engaging in this process?
- As a facilitator, to whom are you accountable?
- How often will we be invited to give feedback about or evaluate our experience with facilitation?

Requesting References

We suggest that you speak to people and their loved ones who the independent facilitator has worked with before, to ask them questions about their experiences with Independent Facilitation.

You may also want to ask for a Criminal Records Vulnerable Sector Check.

Asking for References

- We are interested in talking with people and their loved ones whom you have assisted as an independent facilitator. Please provide us with the names and contact information of people we can connect with for a reference.
- Are you able to provide a Vulnerable Sector Check from within the past year?

Questions for References

- How would you describe the facilitator's style?
- How did the facilitator support you and your loved ones? Is the relationship still ongoing? If not, why did the relationship end? Would you engage this facilitator again in the future?
- How long did the facilitator work with you and your loved ones?
- Did the facilitator ever work through difficult conversations with you and your loved ones? How did the facilitator handle the situation?
- How did the facilitator support you to think differently about options, make connections, and become involved in your neighbourhood and community?
- Are you/is your loved one currently working, volunteering, living in your/their own home with supports, or thinking about getting your/their own place to live? What role did the facilitator play in making these things happen or taking steps toward these goals?

Evaluating the Process

After selecting a facilitator and beginning the work, you may wish to reflect on how the work is proceeding and whether a beneficial relationship with the facilitator has begun.

Evaluation Questions

- Do we all feel listened to and heard? Is everyone involved fully engaged in the process?
- Are we getting the information we need to make good decisions and think differently?
- Are our choices expanding?
- Are there more people in our lives now than before we started?
- Does the facilitator take time to ask us if we understand what is being discussed?
- Are things changing in positive ways for us?