

# WRITESHOP

/ An intensive workshop for creating a complete publication or written knowledge product /

## WHAT IS A WRITESHOP?

A Writeshop is an intensive workshop that brings writers, editors and subject matter experts together to develop a written knowledge product, such as a publication manuscript or a case study, in a relatively short time – from a couple of days to a week or longer, depending on the length and complexity of the product. By concentrating writing efforts within a fixed time, and by providing focused support (editing, peer/expert reviews, and access to resource materials), a well-run Writeshop can enable quality written products to be produced very quickly – in days, rather than weeks/months. It can also reduce the total amount of time required from the individual contributors. A Writeshop does require a significant chunk of dedicated time with few or no distractions, as well as appropriate facilitation and organization of logistics.

A Writeshop takes the solitary process of writing into a hyper-collaborative environment where several writers work simultaneously, each one developing selected sections of a publication from a proposed outline. The resulting drafts are then shared with everyone in the Writeshop for comment and critique using a facilitated process that is inclusive and respectful. Based on the feedback, the writers then revise their drafts over several iterations with the help of editors and subject matter experts to produce near-finished coherent final drafts that can be collated to create a seamless manuscript, ready for online or print publishing.

An effective way to document learnings from field experience, project results, and research findings, a Writeshop is also good for producing case studies, brochures, information briefs, training manuals, books or even websites.

## REQUIREMENTS:

- **Required participants:** Organizer, facilitator (who may also be the organizer), writers (who may also be subject matter experts), editor(s) (number depends on number of writers).
- **Additional participants (depending on the scope and requirements of the desired end product):** Content reviewers (who can be subject-matter experts or other stakeholders depending on the content to be reviewed), logistics manager (if different from the organizer), production manager and graphic design/layout specialists, IT support.
- **Total number of participants:** normally 10 – 30.

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(Requirements, continued)

- **Facilities:** A venue preferably away from participants' everyday offices (to encourage focusing on writing rather than routine tasks). Venue should be equipped with a large meeting room for plenary sessions, with projector and screen, tables and chairs; and several smaller breakout spaces for small group discussions/reviews or individual writing, each with a projector and screen, table(s) and chairs.
- **Materials:** Reference materials (preferably online/digital) as appropriate for the topic(s). Laptop computers (participants' own, or provided by organizer), stationery (USB memory sticks, paper, pens, staplers, highlighters, marker pens, post-it notes, etc.), shared online document workspace (e.g. SharePoint document library), pin boards with flipchart paper, projector and screen, printer, photocopier, scanner (optional), and editing style guide.
- **Optional but desirable:** Approved outline of the publication/product. For urgent or challenging projects, consider voluntary suspension of email access by all participants, to further increase focus and productivity.
- **Time:** normally 2 - 5 days for the Writeshop itself, depending on the scope of the desired product and the available resources, plus time before (for preparation, which may take up to a month or two) and after (for finalization of the written product).
- **Budget plan and resources:** to cover facilities rental (if needed), refreshments, materials and production costs.



## WHEN AND WHY TO USE

The typical use case for application of a Writeshop is to capture a focused body of knowledge that is not yet written down (i.e. it is still tacit knowledge) from a group of people, each of whom has only part of the complete knowledge. Thus, a Writeshop can effectively support staff to capture and distil knowledge from

recent experiences in meeting a challenge on the ground or during a shared project – resulting in authentic documents based on real-life observations and challenges. The Writeshop provides an opportunity for the group to discuss and work out any areas of disagreement, fill gaps and capture the complete body of knowledge for subsequent use elsewhere.

The Writeshop process is also an effective approach for combining knowledge from experience with existing scientific literature and other sources. It is also suitable for many other contexts where knowledge is required from a diverse group of contributors, and the objective is producing a high-quality, rich and coherently written product. It can be a useful device for carving out time from the busy schedules of essential contributors, potentially accelerating the creation of publications and key documents, and improving the efficiency of the writing process (but see also the paragraph on challenges and limitations below).

The Writeshop process is flexible. It can accommodate different numbers of participants with varying levels and types of expertise, allowing them to write, to review and provide expert commentary on others' drafts, to participate in group discussions, to support pre-tests of content with end users (if appropriate), or all of the above.

A Writeshop can offer a very efficient means of pre-testing a written product with members of its intended audience – for example, potential trainees can review content for training manuals, or beneficiaries such as children and/or families can respond to drafts of programme communications materials. By holding such reviews in the context of a Writeshop, the content creators are empowered to very quickly revise and strengthen their content according to audience requirements.

A collateral benefit of the Writeshop process is strengthening of networks or communities of practice. Participants in a Writeshop work together intensively and thus tend to forge or reinforce professional relationships that continue after the event. Community is also bolstered by the shared sense of accomplishment at the end of a Writeshop, when participants have completed their task of creating an important output together.

The Writeshop is most effective when a strong outline of the publication/product already exists which has all its needed approvals from the product's owner (the executive editor or the steering committee); when the various topic sections making up the final product can be worked on in parallel (i.e. all at the same time); and when the organizer or the coordinator (see below for role definitions) is also the head of the team to which most/all Writeshop participants belong.

The Writeshop method does have challenges and limitations, which you should be aware of before you decide to use it:

▲ To reap the benefits of a Writeshop – chief among which are capture of a coherent body of knowledge from multiple contributors, and rapid production of a high-quality written product – you will need to invest logistical effort, and potentially some resources, into booking venues, preparing invitations, securing time from participants, and finding an appropriately skilled coordinator/facilitator.

▲ The process is time-intensive, especially for the writers and editors, who will likely face tremendous pressure to complete their drafts and revisions within a short time. They will also need to commit several days of time, or even a week or more. Constraints in time or work schedules may prevent your best writers from participating in the Writeshop, which could mean you are better off using a more traditional approach.

▲ Are there many stakeholders or partners who insist on having the final word on the written product? This may slow down the post-Writeshop phase considerably.

▲ While Writeshops are good for many types of knowledge products, they may not be the best method to produce highly technical scientific papers or extensive literature reviews. Such publications are inherently more time-consuming, require exhaustive research, and are best left to dedicated writers, whether staff or external consultants, to produce in a more gradual, systematic way.

## Participants and roles

All Writeshops require access to appropriate reference materials (reports, technical literature), online or printed. But more essential for the success of a Writeshop are the contributions of its participants. Every Writeshop needs the following types of participants:

▲ **Writers** produce and iterate on drafts that together will make up the product of the

Writeshop. Writers may themselves be subject matter experts (provided they have adequate writing experience), or they may be full-time writers, with at least adequate background in the subject(s) to be written about. In the latter case the writers may require support from subject matter experts to review their drafts.

▲ **Editors** ensure consistency and quality among outputs from multiple writers, and meld these into a coherent whole according to the predetermined requirements. Editors should be able to work quickly. Experience in the topic(s) of interest is a strong asset.

▲ **The organizer** convenes the process before, during and after the Writeshop to ensure that the objective of producing a well-written output is met. The organizer also oversees/manages the logistics in the absence of a logistics manager.

▲ **The coordinator/facilitator** oversees and manages the Writeshop event, ensures that it is conducted in a participatory manner, facilitates respectful but robust discussions for the review and validation of drafts, and ensures participants' needs are met. Good facilitation skills and appropriate experience are important: Writeshops are time-intensive activities and need to be managed effectively so that everyone can give their best without feeling stressed or pressured, while at the same time adhering to the timeline. Subject matter knowledge is an asset for a coordinator, but is secondary to facilitation and coordination skills. The organizer, if appropriately skilled, can also act as coordinator.

### Other types of participants

Writeshops can also benefit from, and may sometimes require, participation from the following at key points during the Writeshop:

▲ **Subject-matter experts** (as reviewers rather than writers): Experts can validate what is written from a technical and substantive viewpoint, and add important details and nuances.

▲ **Stakeholders**: These may be project beneficiaries, or persons from the target audience, or end users of a manual/instructional document, or other key stakeholders. These participants can review and react to drafts to validate the clarity and desired impact of the product, and can highlight any issues or gaps from their perspective.

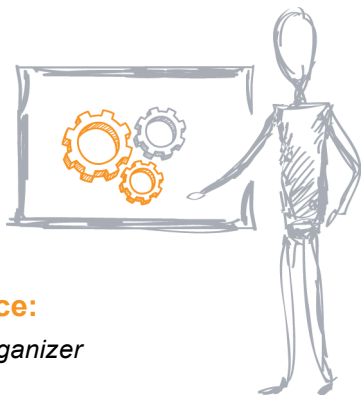
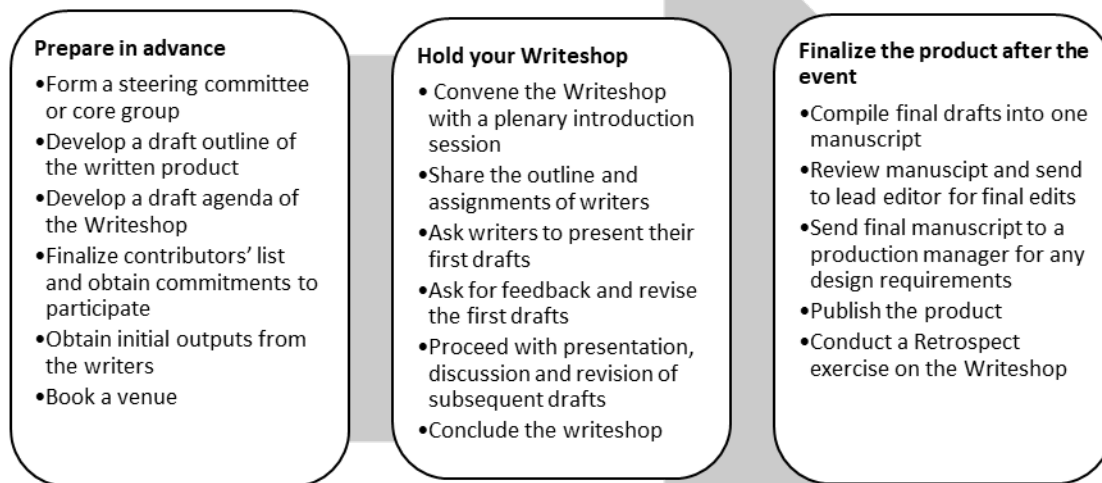
▲ **Logistics manager**: In long/complex Writeshops, or ones in which the organizer also acts as facilitator, a logistics manager can be very helpful for taking care of details relating to facilities, materials and participants.

▲ **IT support**: This may be required during the preparations and initial setup, or for occasional troubleshooting during the event.

▲ **Production manager, graphic design/layout specialists**: These roles are required when a formal publication or external website is to be produced. They may be involved during the Writeshop, or (more commonly) afterwards, once a final manuscript is ready.

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## HOW TO APPLY



### Prepare in advance:

#### *Instructions for the organizer*

The Writeshop process begins with identifying the need for a specific written product – a book, article, key document, or other product – and with a recognition of the potential benefits of the Writeshop (outlined above). Once the need is identified and a decision to use the Writeshop method has been taken, the planning process can begin. Effective planning is crucial because the Writeshop process is intensive and requires considerable coordination and commitment from a significant number of participants.

**1. Form a steering committee or core group** to guide the Writeshop process. The steering committee should include key writers for the desired written product, subject matter experts,

and senior management sponsor(s); it may also include stakeholders. If appropriate, the steering committee may be chaired by a team leader/manager acting as executive editor for the product/publication. The suggested size is 3 - 6 people. This number may vary with the size of the product/publication or with inclusion of stakeholder representatives (if any). Once established, the steering committee develops the concept for the product/publication at an appropriate level of detail, by fleshing out answers to the following questions:

- ▲ What are the objectives?
- ▲ Who is the target audience? (Including demographic information, location, whether internal or external, and other relevant characteristics.)

- ▲ What type of product/publication is envisaged? How will it achieve its desired impact on the audience?

**2. Develop a draft outline of the written product.** The steering committee takes stock of available relevant source materials and potential participants; identifies a theme and key content/messages to be included; and prepares an initial draft outline. The outline will guide the work of the writers at the Writeshop. It may be revised before, or even during, the Writeshop, with appropriate sign-off from the steering committee or executive editor.

**3. Develop a draft agenda for the Writeshop.** Based on the draft outline, the complexity of topics and the expected level of editing and content validation required, a draft agenda can be crafted. The agenda should allocate times for writing, peer review, editing, and content validation which can be done through a combination of individual work, paired work, parallel group discussions and plenary discussions. A draft of the agenda is important to give your Writeshop invitees an idea of how the Writeshop will unfold. However, it will have to be revisited as writers complete their initial outputs (see step 5), as these will give the organizer and steering committee a better idea of what parts of the Writeshop may need more time for writing, editing and validation work, as compared to others.

**4. Finalize contributors' list and obtain commitments to participate.** The steering committee identifies potential participants based on the type of product/publication desired, the thematic content, and (if relevant) requirements

for final document production and publishing. The number of participants will depend on how long/complex the written product will be, how much input is needed, availability of material resources and subject matter experts, etc.

Aim for between 10 and 30 participants depending on your requirements. Increasing the number of participants beyond 30 is possible, but this will require additional coordination and support, may result in a Writeshop that takes longer than 2 weeks to conclude, and is therefore not a feasible undertaking for first-time Writeshop organizers.

The composition of your group should consider the following:

- ▲ You should have one **coordinator/facilitator** with strong facilitation skills who will oversee and manage the Writeshop. In this role, substantive knowledge of the topic is secondary to facilitation skills.
- ▲ The **writers** form the largest group in the Writeshop. Any writers who are members of the steering committee should assist in identifying other writers based on their knowledge and experience.
- ▲ The number of **editors** will depend on the number of writers in the Writeshop. Ideally, arrange for one editor for every five writers, as this will speed up the writing and editing process. No Writeshop should have fewer than two editors participating.
- ▲ The number and profile of **subject matter experts and other stakeholders** who will validate the content will depend on the topics to be covered, the expected quantity of text, and the audience of the final product. The draft agenda developed in #3 above should define at what point during the Writeshop the experts and/or stakeholders are needed, so that they can be invited to join only when they are expected to be needed, optimizing the

use of their time. In some cases their presence and participation may be required throughout the Writeshop.

- ▲ Depending on the number of participants at the Writeshop and the nature and extent of the desired final product, you may require a logistics manager, a production manager, graphic design/layout specialists, and/or IT support.

Make sure all participants are aware of what will happen in the Writeshop and what are expected of them. Do this by including the following information in your invitations:

- ▲ The objectives of the Writeshop and its importance.
- ▲ The roles you would like them to play, responsibilities that come with it, and clear indications of the expectations, especially regarding time commitment and workload during, and in case of writers, before the Writeshop.
- ▲ For writers and editors, the portions of the final product that you would like them to contribute to, and the relevant topic(s).
- ▲ If your participants have never experienced a Writeshop before, include an explanation of the process, the other roles they will interact with, and the intended outputs.
- ▲ The Writeshop agenda and production timeline from conception to publishing, so that they can see the big picture.

From each invitee, ask for a commitment on their participation. Once commitment is given, provide them with additional guidance needed for them to perform their function: For writers, assign their pre-work (see next step). For writers and editors, provide editorial guidance addressing writing style and format, to help maintain adequate uniformity in the final product. For other roles,

describe in more detail what is expected of them at the event.

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**5. Obtain initial outputs from the writers.** Once participation of writers is confirmed, assign each to relevant topics/sections from the outline, taking into account their expertise and project/programme experience, and the overall writing work required to deliver a viable end product.

Request the following two items of pre-Writeshop work from each writer, and assign appropriate deadlines.

First, ask each writer to prepare an abstract of their assigned topic/section(s), and send it to the steering committee. The committee will review the abstracts against the outline for context and relevance. Based on this screening, the outline can be revised to edit existing topics and add new ones, if needed.

Next, send feedback on the abstracts to the writers, and give them detailed instructions on how to develop the abstracts into initial draft texts, which they must prepare and share before the Writeshop begins (make the deadlines clear). Provide resources such as writing style guides and templates, to make it easy for first-time writers.

If you will ask participants to read drafts on their own laptops at the Writeshop (see 'Ask writers to present their first drafts' below), then either ask writers to send links of drafts to you for distribution, or create a shared online space where they can upload their drafts.

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**6. Book a venue.** Use your draft agenda and list of contributors to determine the size of venue required, and the duration of the Writeshop. Book a suitable venue (see details under 'Facilities' in the **Requirements** section above).

## When you are ready to start: Hold your Writeshop

### *Instructions for the event coordinator/facilitator*

Participants, especially writers and editors, need to be aware of the time-intensive nature of Writeshops and be prepared to meet the daily goals. Coordinators/facilitators need to organize and manage these events effectively so that everyone can give their best without feeling stressed or pressured.

The time allocated for presentations, peer reviews, feedback and editing will vary based on the type of publication or written product, the length and complexity of the drafts, and the number of writers in the workshop, among other factors. The coordinator/facilitator should plan for the Writeshop keeping these factors in mind.

**7. Convene the Writeshop with a plenary introduction session** to ensure all participants have a shared understanding of:

- ▲ The objectives and expected outcomes: to produce a final or near-final manuscript of a written knowledge product. Try to communicate an inspiring vision of the importance and impact the product is expected to have.
- ▲ The agenda/schedule for the Writeshop (2 days to one week, or more).
- ▲ The Writeshop process.
- ▲ Who's Who (with roles clearly defined).
- ▲ Resources and support made available to participants.

**8. Share in plenary the outline of the written product/publication, and the assignments of the writers by topic/section.** At this point, the outline has already been reviewed once by the steering committee. Ask participants for their comments and suggestions. The outline is flexible: if participants believe it is incomplete or lacks cohesion, they should have the opportunity to add or remove topics/ sections. It is important to stress that the outline and drafts are meant to enrich the final knowledge product and as such, are all subject to change, especially at this early point in the Writeshop process.

**9. Ask writers to present their first drafts.** The plenary session continues with presentation by writers of the first drafts developed before the Writeshop.

- ▲ Writers present in order based on the sequence of the outline, for approximately 15 minutes each.
- ▲ Each writer is given up to 5 minutes to introduce the concept and thinking that went into their draft. The remaining 10 minutes is for participants to read the draft 'as is', either from a projection on screen, or on their own laptops (if you arranged for upload of drafts by writers).
- ▲ Ensure editors are assigned to each writer. This should be done in advance, but if there are any discrepancies, e.g. if assignments need to change due to changes in participation, then address these at this point.
- ▲ Invite participants to give feedback on the draft (15 – 30 minutes). They may also share relevant experiences or suggest content. Depending on the scope of the expected final product and the number of sections, as well as the natural flow of the topic(s) to be covered, you may request feedback after



each draft, after a section composed of several drafts, or after all drafts have been presented. Ask participants to follow these guidelines for feedback:

- Pay attention to the context as you read the draft. Understand the intent and the message that the writer is trying to convey.
  - When giving feedback, use a two-step critique: what you liked or thought worked well; what could be improved on.
    - **What you liked:** Look out for text that engages you as a reader, that reads well, is clear or particularly vivid, or contains especially useful information.
    - **What could be improved on:** Note what was unclear, wordy, or extraneous/irrelevant. Be sure to maintain a constructive approach in your critique: Before making a comment, ask yourself if it is warranted and if it is truly beneficial to the process. Stick to the facts and provide, not just critique, but also suggestions for improvement.
  - Discussion may be needed to address potentially unclear portions of text: these may simply be the result of unfamiliar writing style.
  - Identify content – repeated terms or sentences, or concepts that recur in multiple sections – which need to be made consistent across drafts by different writers.
  - Maintain a respectful, non-confrontational stance at all times.
- ▲ The writer listens to feedback and responds as needed. If needed, you (in your role as facilitator) may remind the writer that the critique is addressed to the draft, not to the writer. Try to ensure the discussion remains objective. You may ask questions to

clarify vague suggestions, or you can prompt for additional concrete feedback to help build on the current draft. Keep an eye on your available time, and keep the discussion moving.

- ▲ The editor takes notes during the feedback discussion for later use when editing the draft.
- ▲ If there are many drafts to discuss, you may need to take occasional breaks.

**10. After all presentations and discussions are complete, move on to the revision of the first drafts:** The plenary session closes, and editors meet with writers, usually one at a time, to discuss the feedback received, and writers revise the draft accordingly.

- ▲ Depending on the amount of revisions required, this may take a few minutes or several hours.
- ▲ The workshop schedule should be flexible enough to accommodate some variations in editing time. On occasion, participants may need to work through the evenings to keep up with the schedule.
- ▲ Once edited, drafts will be ready for the next round of review.

**11. Proceed with presentation, discussion and revision of subsequent drafts:**

- ▲ **Second draft:** Introduce the second round of presentations for review in plenary. Writers present their second drafts and participants share their feedback per the guidelines in #9 above. This review session will likely be shorter than the first one, as the drafts begin to approach the desired result.

▲ Conclude the plenary and commence revision, as per #10 above, with editors working individually with writers.

▲ Optional: If desired and if resources are available, invite a graphics designer or artist to join the discussion among writers and editors, to provide suggestions on enhancing the draft with images, illustrations, or infographics. Such visual content can be included, in final or (more likely) draft or sketch form, to be discussed during the next review session.

▲ **Third draft:** Repeat the presentation and review process in plenary. By now, the draft will likely be polished, with content that has been validated for accuracy and messaging, and including relevant supporting data, case studies, and potentially graphical content. The review process may again take less time than the preceding round.

▲ This might be a good point to pre-test the drafts with potential end-users, if appropriate.

▲ **Additional reviews:** Decide with support from the group whether any additional rounds of review are required and are feasible given the available time. By this point in the Writeshop you will have a sense for how long a round of review would take. If yes, proceed as above. If no further review is needed, but there is time available, you may proceed to discussions of layout and production-related issues (printing, web site creation, or whatever is called for in your plans).

▲ Your output should be a text that is highly readable and coherent across different sections. Further commentary and revisions should be minimal and easily incorporated into the text by the editor(s).

**12. Conclude the Writeshop.** Thank the participants and inform them of the remaining steps and timeline for producing the final product. Distribute evaluation forms if you would like their feedback on the process.

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**Finalize the product after the event:**

*Instructions for the organizer and steering committee*

**13. Compile final drafts into one manuscript** and share with the executive editor and/or the steering committee for final steps.

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**14.** The executive editor and/or the steering committee reviews the manuscript to **identify any loose ends or gaps. Make provisions to fill these** and to add pages such as the Foreword, Acknowledgements, Introduction, Contents and References, as needed.

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**15. Send the manuscript to a lead editor for a final edit,** which entails:

▲ Checking for inconsistencies and ambiguity, meaning, flow, and impact. The manuscript should read well and be fluid from start to finish. The language and writing style should be consistent, should accommodate house style, and each section should lead into the next seamlessly.

▲ Trimming the fat: reducing the word count to make the text leaner, more concise and more impactful.

▲ Fact checking, if required.

- ▲ Proofreading of the manuscript for spelling, grammar, sentence structure, paragraph structure, punctuation, formatting, etc.

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**16. Send the final manuscript to a production manager** to coordinate any needed design (including the cover, if needed) and layout.

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**17. Obtain final approval for publication** from the executive editor/steering committee, and ensure this is documented.

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**18.** The written product is **now ready to be published and/or distributed through appropriate channels.**

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**19. Conduct a brief Retrospect exercise** to learn lessons and become more effective with future iterations of the Writeshop.

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### Summary of Writeshop roles and responsibilities

You may share the following with participants as a guide before the Writeshop begins

- ▲ **Organizer:** Responsible for preparing the Writeshop process, arranging participation and venue, and following up after the event. May be the same person as the coordinator.
  - Form a steering committee.
  - Work closely with the steering committee during the planning phase to coordinate the

- agenda and selection of topics and writers.
  - Create a draft Writeshop agenda, ideally with the coordinator/facilitator.
  - Select other members of the Writeshop team (editors; optionally, logistics manager, production manager, support staff).
  - Coordinate invitations with logistics manager.
  - Follow up after the Writeshop to ensure production of final written product.

- ▲ **Steering committee:** Provides overall guidance and final approval for the product or publication to be developed.
  - Develop the product/publication concept.
  - Develop the draft outline.
  - Review abstracts of writers and provides initial guidance so they can prepare first drafts.
  - Review manuscript after the Writeshop, identifies any gaps to be filled.
  - Approve final product/publication.

- ▲ **Coordinator/facilitator:** Responsible for management, coordination and facilitation of the Writeshop.
  - Finalize the Writeshop agenda.
  - Prepare guidelines for participant roles so everyone understands their part in the Writeshop.
  - Develop workplan for the Writeshop; if required, coordinate with logistics manager and production manager to ensure all equipment and facilities are available.
  - Moderate presentations, facilitate feedback/critique sessions.
  - Ensure all activities adhere to the time allocations; processes are participatory, engaging and respectful; participants remain positive and productive; and objectives are met.

- ▲ **Writers:** Responsible for developing draft text on an assigned topic.
  - Prepare an abstract and first draft before attending the Writeshop.

- Present draft to participants and take note of all feedback, asking questions for clarification.
- Discuss feedback and revise draft with an editor over several iterations until the draft is finalized.
- Be supportive of the process, and provide constructive critique of others' drafts.
- Liaise with graphics designer/artist should one be assigned.

▲ **Editors:** Responsible for editing of drafts assigned to them.

- Take note of feedback from participants during the presentation of the draft. Look for gaps and areas for improvement, language issues, writing style.
- Discuss the edits proposed and revise with the writer, until the draft is finalized.
- Liaise with artist/ graphics designer should one be assigned.

▲ **Subject matter experts and stakeholders:**

Provides feedback and validation of content.

- Provide suggestions on how to improve clarity and comprehensibility of drafts.
- Highlight issues and gaps that need to be addressed from their perspective.
- Identify additional content based on expertise and/or experience.

▲ **Logistics manager:** For large Writeshops, responsible for overall coordination of logistics before, during and after. (For smaller events, these activities are performed by the organizer and the coordinator.)

- Coordinate invitations, guidelines and schedules for participants.
- Organize workshop venue, equipment, transport and catering for participants.
- Advise/assist as appropriate with participant travel and accommodations.
- Work closely with coordinator/facilitator to ensure all workshop requirements are met, resources are available and support staff know what to do.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▲ All participants need to understand their roles and act accordingly. Inform all participants in advance so that they arrive prepared. The process is intensive, and participants must step into their roles quickly so that they can move fast.

▲ Using experienced writers will make success more likely, but sometimes you may want to include one or two first-time writers, because of their experiences or professional qualifications. First-time writers will need additional support:

- Share guidance materials on writing well, and examples of what you consider to be well-written content.
- Be clear on what is expected regarding the written product, length, tone, and style.
- Consider providing them with a set of questions as writing prompts: who, what, when, why, how.
- Ensure that you have experienced editors able to give them a little extra attention.

▲ Coordinators/facilitators who have appropriate facilitation skills, understand the subject matter at least to a degree, and know well the requirements of the desired written product, can make a huge difference by:

- Engaging and energizing participants, keeping discussions on track, and promoting a sense of learning, camaraderie and trust.
- Creating space for objective discussion and resolving conflicts quickly. Critical commentary on text is an essential part of the process, but it can be stressful both for

the person giving feedback as well as the writer whose text is being reviewed. A skilled facilitator will prevent discussions from getting personal and keep the focus on the text always.

- Tracking progress over the Writeshop and guiding participants towards the required product according to the schedule.
- ▲ Make sure there is sufficient time before the actual Writeshop for the preliminary steps: writers develop abstracts, the steering committee comments on them, and then writers develop first draft texts based on the abstracts and any comments. This process can easily take a month or two.

- ▲ Take a flexible approach to the outline: Be prepared to consider changes to it even during the Writeshop.

## VARIATIONS

- ▲ Engage consultants to lead the process with your team. A few consulting firms have experience in leading Writeshops (sometimes under other names, such as 'book sprints').



- ▲ Use other knowledge exchange techniques to enhance the process. Hold a World Café or an Online Discussion before the Writeshop, involving the steering committee, and possibly some/all writers, to explore the issues around the publication/product and get everyone onto the same page. Use Brainstorming to help fill in key gaps at any point in the process, before or during the Writeshop. Use an Icebreaker at the

start of the Writeshop if participants don't already know each other. Hold After Action Reviews during multi-day Writeshops, to ensure you make needed adjustments to the process on the go.



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 UNICEF, 2020

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