# Shaping the future of facilitation in Museums

Facilitation – the who, the how, the why and the why not!

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## Session overview

- Who are the different facilitators in museums and science centres?
- How are they organised within the overall staffing structure and what lessons can be learned from different models?
- Does the position in the organisation matter?
   SPOILER ALERT PROBABLY NOT THE END OF THE WORLD!
- A discussion about what matters and how we can ensure we excel in facilitation

# Some Case Studies

- Science Museum London
- Natural History Museum, London



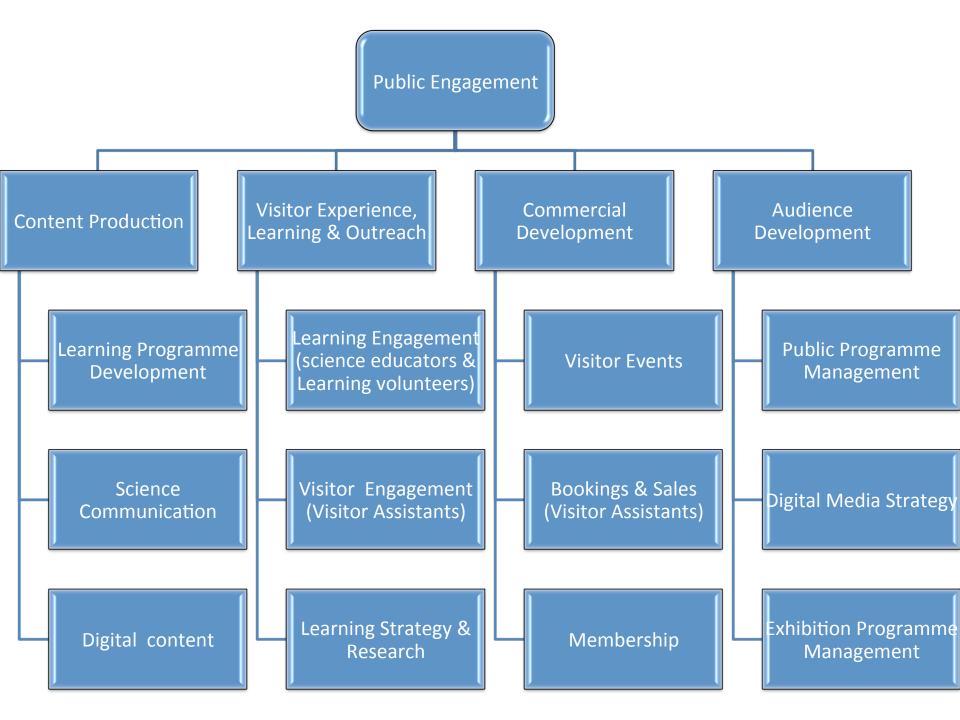
## **Natural History Museum**

#### Who facilitates?

- Big team of science educators and learning volunteers
- Learning Programme Developers
- Science Communicator Team
- Visitor Events Team
- Scientists researchers and curators
- Virtual facilitation social media, blogs, web content, apps etc.

#### How are the facilitators organised?

- Three large faculties Public engagement, Science & Development
- Majority of facilitators in Public Engagement
- Current structure separates out content production and delivery based on primary function



#### Lessons learned

- Positives around bringing visitor experience and learning delivery teams together
  - Learning journey, training, participation and specimen handling
- Challenges around separating learning programme development, science communication from delivery
  - Development teams isolated from practice
- Advantages around all content production being together
  - joined up practice and increased communication
- Scientist interactions
  - Increasing which is hugely beneficial but mostly separate from facilitation teams. How do we prepare scientists. Do we have a shared understanding of what makes good learning?
- Visitor Events
  - Fast-paced and commercial. Aligned with other content production team but can be challenging to determine outcomes
- We are about to change.....
  - Bringing content production and delivery under one leadership area.
  - New Learning Strategy

## Science Museum, London

#### Who facilitates?

- Explainers developer/deliverer role
- Learning outreach team
- Special events team
- Learning research and projects team develop and deliver some programming
- Curators
- Exhibitions team

#### How are the facilitators organised?

Majority of facilitators in Learning Operations Team



## **Lessons Learned**

- Explainers
  - Development/delivery roles work well
- More engagement with volunteers family programme and temporary exhibitions – vision across the Science Museum Group
- Training
  - Learning about to do more training across the board to help break down silos
- Communications can be challenging desire to engage learning earlier in projects and events
- Strategy
  - About to redevelop group- wide learning strategy to articulate a museum-wide approach to learning

## Summary

- Regardless of overall structure, similar challenges exist.....
  - If you have separate learning delivery and development teams, how do you keep the delivery/operational role interesting?
  - How do you foster ownership amongst the delivery team?
  - For a learning programme development team, how do you maintain a balance between developing programmes (is there always a need?) and keeping up to date with delivery?
  - What is the balance between communication expertise and scientific expertise?
  - With scientists/curators delivering, is the experience of meeting an authentic scientist enough for the audience?
  - How does the organisation understand learning? Is there a shared understanding?

# Your experience....

- Group exercise to share experiences to include:
  - Who are the facilitators in your organisations?
  - Where do they sit in the organisation?
  - What are the challenges and how do you tackle them?



## Does it matter?

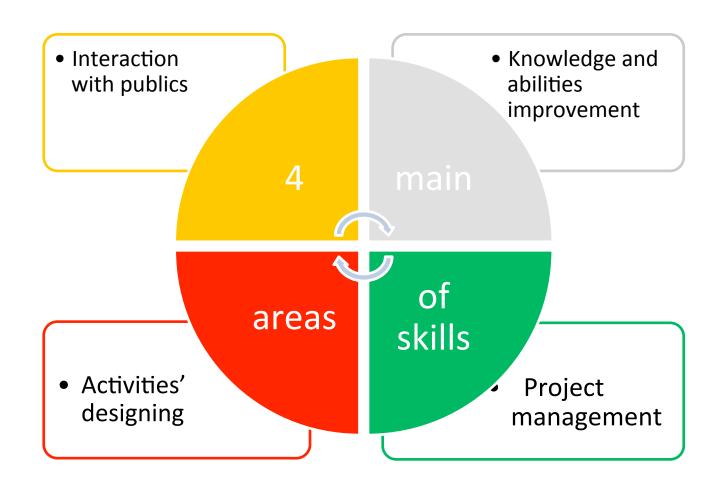
- What matters might be the strategy for facilitation in the organisation – what makes a good activity, event, format
- What matters might be the how they are trained and the approach to conversation, understanding of the audience etc.
- …..leads us nicely into the next section…..

## **Training Facilitators**

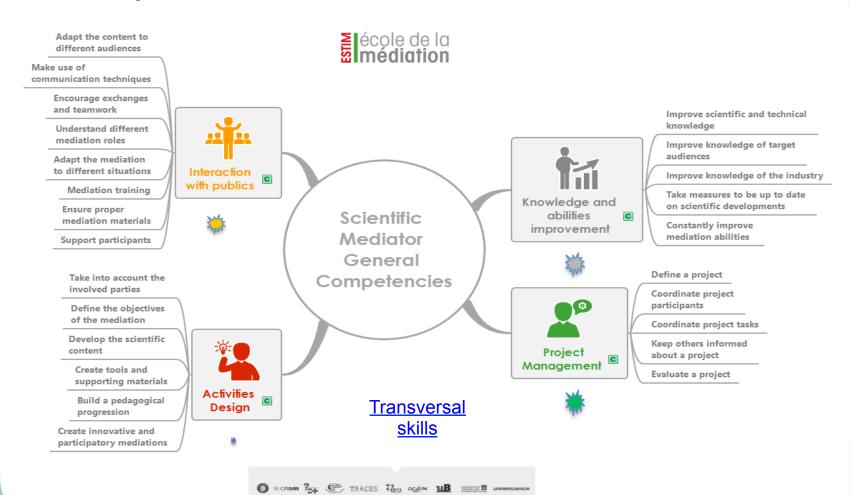
To identify training needs and then design training, you must first

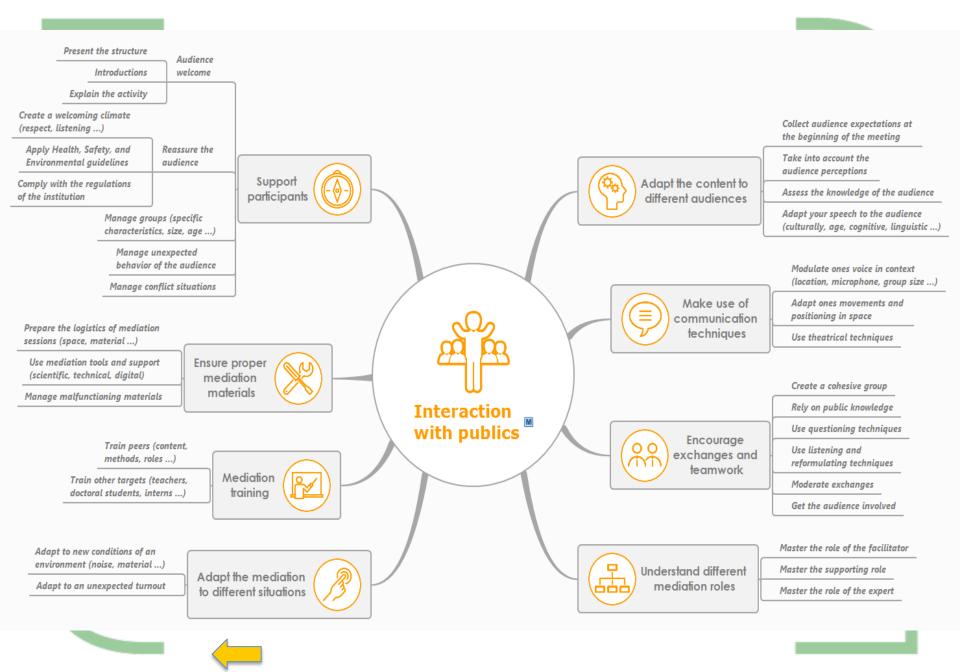
- Clarify what your facilitators are doing or what you want them to do
- Identify the skills required to do these activities
- Identify what are their profile

## A repertoire of Skills



## A repertoire of Skills





Rely on digital and technological innovations

Propose participatory activities

Create innovative and participatory mediations



Choose an existing form of oral, written and/or digital mediation

Choose appropriate teaching methods (expositive, active, participatory ...)

Organize an educational progression

Test and validate ones mediations

Build a pedagogical progression



Develop educational tools and materials

Write educational material for professionals

Write educational material for the audience

Create tools and supporting materials





Take into account the involved parties

Identify audience expectations

Identify audience perceptions

Take into account the diversity of public

Integrate knowledge of learning patterns



Activities Design



Define the objectives of the mediation

Define the impacts of mediation

Set clear and precise objectives

Define appropriate resources

Develop consistent and relevant criteria and evaluation indicators



Develop the scientific content Choose an angle for the subject matter

Select scientific concepts

Verify the legitimacy of scientific content





Take into account new mediation practices

Evaluate ones own abilities

Allow others to evaluate your abilities (peers, audience, leaders)

Question ones practices in ethical terms Constantly improve mediation abilities



Seek new sources of information

Use search engine tools

Validate and verify sources of information

Develop and research new mediation topics to remain up to date

Process information: sort, analyze, prioritize, synthesize

Take measures to be up to date on scientific developments



Know the current practices and players of CSTI

Know ones institution (directors, project structure, values ...)

Know the national or regional institutional partners (state and territorial ...)

Know the laboratories and research institutes

Improve knowledge on the field of activity



Knowledge and

abilities

improvement



Improve scientific and technical knowledge

Understand the psycho-

sociology of the audience

Know the specific characteristics of

certain groups (young children, the disabled, seniors ...)

Understand the audience's perceptions about science

Know the cognitive models (memory, learning ...)

Know the pedagogical approaches (formal, informal, new ...)

Take into account scientific and interdisciplinary curriculums



Improve knowledge of target audiences



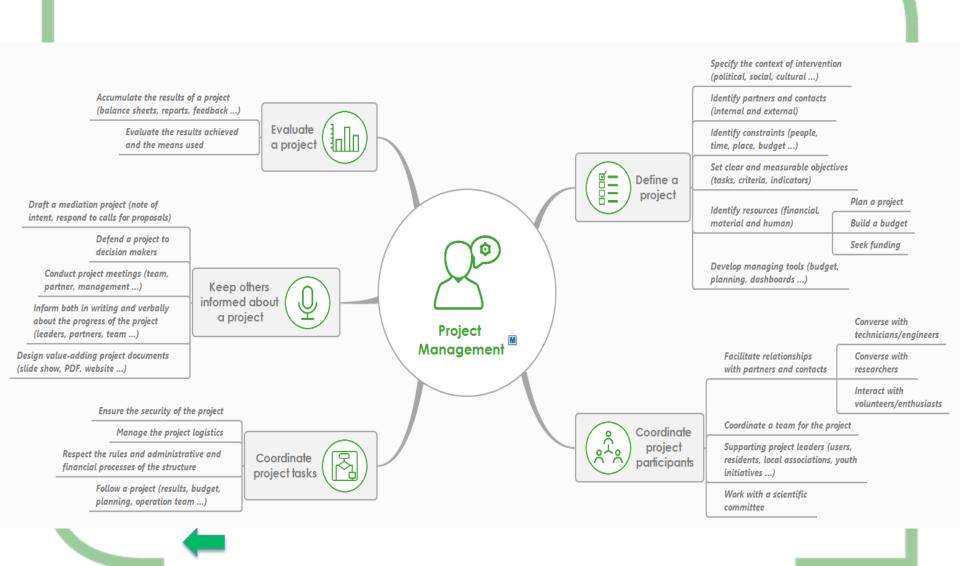
Master the field-specific vocabulary

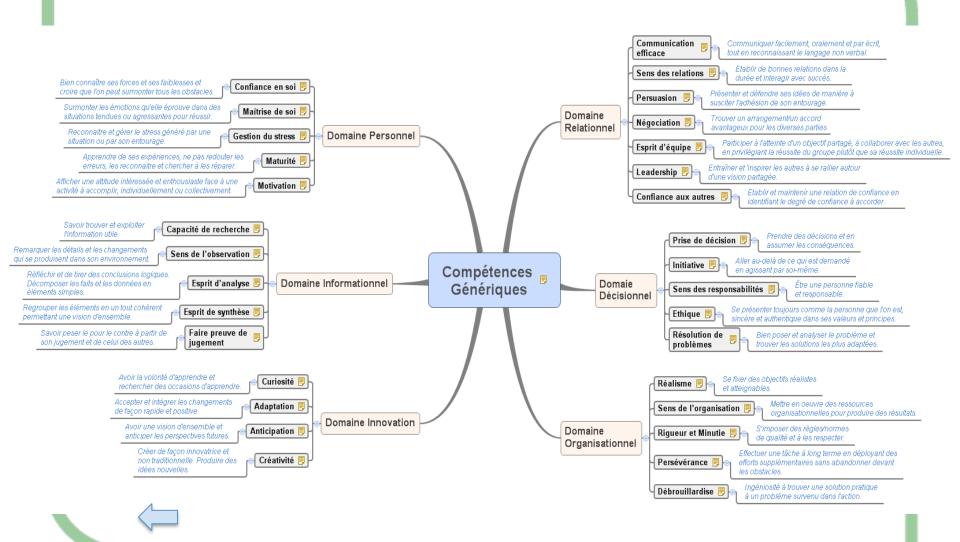
Master the scientific approaches (experimental, ...)

Acquire new knowledge in one or more disciplinary fields

Understand the history of science and technology

Know the scientific, technical and environmental issues and the emerging challenges





## A repertoire of Skills

#### **Activity**:

Using the repertoire of skills and starting with the profile of your facilitators

- Identify the trainings they require
- Those you already do
- Those you need to develop.
- (20')
- Presentation to other groups & general discussion
- (15')

