

FACTS AND OPINIONS

Source: Sam Kaner et al (1996) *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* pp 158

WHY

This activity enables a group to trade a lot of information without getting bogged down in a discussion of who is right and what is true.

For example, suppose a group needed to begin thinking about next year's budget. The Facts and Opinions tool would help them to generate numerical statistics ("last year we spent \$4000 on legal fees") and speculation ("we might want to initiate two new lawsuits next year") both within a short period of time.

Note that in this example, Facts and Opinions postpones the debate over the budget. Instead, the thrust of the exercise is to gather a lot of material on many different subjects. Once group members see the big picture, they can decide which topics to discuss and in what order.

HOW

1. To prepare for this activity, hang two large pieces of paper on a wall. Title one "Facts" and the other "Opinions". Also make available sticky notes in two colours, with enough for every member to receive at least ten of each colour.
2. Ask the group members, "What do you know about this topic?" Have each group member write his/her answers on the sticky notes, using one colour for "Facts" and the other colour for "Opinions." Note: When someone asks, "How do we know whether something is a fact or an opinion?" answer, "You decide for yourself. If you're not sure, write it both ways."
3. When a person is finished writing, s/he should post his/her sticky notes on the wall. After reading what others have written, s/he will probably want to add more items. If so, great!
4. After all data has been collected, ask the group for their observations and reflections.