

# Unconference Tip Sheet (or Unconferences 101)

If this is your first time participating in an unconference, you may be thinking 'what should I expect?' To help answer that question, we've put together this tip sheet explaining what an unconference is and what you can expect at unconference sessions.

## WHAT IS AN UNCONFERENCE?

An unconference is a participant-driven event designed to be responsive to the needs and interests of attendees and to enable a collaborative exchange of both information and ideas. FFI will provide anchor content leading up to the event and in the first session. You'll help to determine the other sessions and discussions, some of which will be determined leading up to and on the day of the event.

## HOW IS THE AGENDA SET?

All those gathered will have the opportunity to put conference sessions on the agenda. All session ideas are welcome! Through a series of virtual touchpoints in advance of the event, FFI will share anchor content and will ask you what you find especially engaging in that content. At the start of the unconference, participants will be guided through an interactive process to create an agenda. The exact process is not important to understand in advance – the process will become clear as it happens.

## WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO IF I HOST A SESSION?

If you have particular interest in a certain topic or discussion, you may be asked to lead a session. Your primary responsibility will be to "hold the space" for your session. Holding the space can mean a few different things: leading a discussion, by posing a first question, or by sharing information to launch conversation. Your job is to shepherd the discussion, not to drive it to a particular outcome. You don't need to be an expert to lead a session! Your goal is to support an interactive, collaborative discussion.

## ATTENDING A SESSION

When you attend a session, you are an active participant in the session – not a member of the audience. If a topic is no longer of interest to you, follow the Law of Two Feet - join a different discussion that you believe may be more engaging. You can change sessions as many times as you would like. No one will be offended if you decide a session is not right for you.

## ADVICE FOR EVERYONE AT AN UNCONFERENCE

- Come with an open mind and let go of expectations for what a conference should be. It may feel chaotic at times, but what you get in return is a truly collaborative, participant - driven event.
- Engage with the content that's shared in advance of the event. Ask questions in advance.
- If you're leading a session or wondering if you'd like to lead a session, think about the ideas that you want to cover and how you want to approach them. But be sure to remain flexible to the direction that participants take the discussion at the event.
- Go to the sessions that interest you and take responsibility for your own learning.
- Don't assume people in the room know more or less than you do.
- Ask questions about the technology if you're confused. This is a new platform and format. While we've done our best to equip you to engage, we expect to do some troubleshooting during the event and have dedicated capacity to help.

## SOME POSSIBLE TYPES OF SESSIONS AT AN UNCONFERENCE

**Group Discussion or Brainstorm:** The host picks a topic and frames an interesting discussion or brainstorm around the topic for the group.

- **The Anchored Discussion:** This is a short presentation by the organiser used as fuel for the session, followed by an interactive discussion.
- **My Big Question:** You have a question and are interested in hearing others' perspective. This format could evolve into a group discussion or brainstorm.
- **Show & Tell:** You have a project, initiative, or application for the content that can serve as the springboard for conversation. Alternatively, you can invite others to bring their own items to show and tell (perhaps with a theme), and everyone takes a turn sharing.

