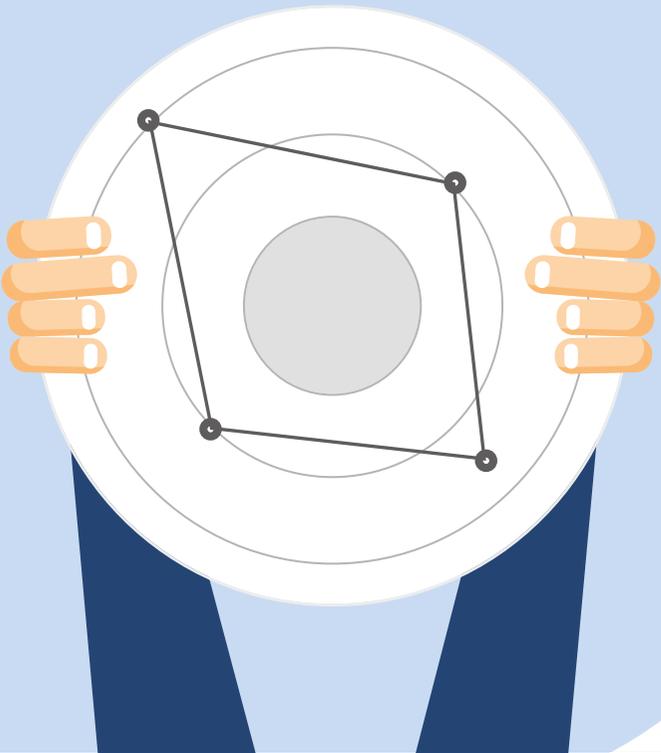


# Toolkit for dialogue

Are you keen to organise a discussion about Recognition & Rewards in your institution? This step-by-step plan will guide you through the relevant points you need to consider during your preparations. You will also find a number of handy tools for making choices.



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## Recognition & Rewards

A lot of questions around 'Recognition & Rewards' are typically 'adaptive' questions. There is often no clear starting point or obvious person with ultimate responsibility, and as such the answers often emerge through dialogue. Culture changes in interaction. That calls for a careful process comprising multiple discussions, in which you allow time and space to go into more depth.

If you can you predict the outcome of the discussion beforehand, consider discussing the topic in a regular meeting.

## Where do you start?

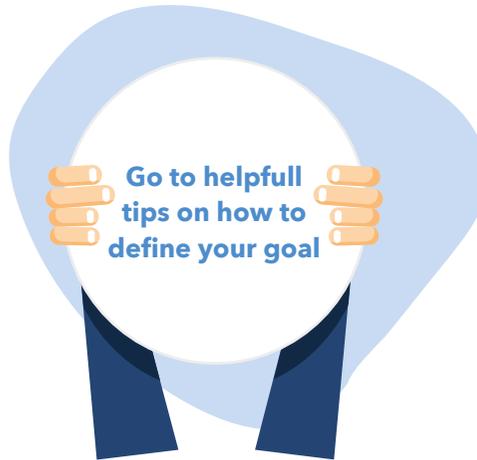
An effective discussion calls for a careful design, with various elements being considered and prepared. What do you start with? That varies. The topic of discussion is an iterative process. Preferably take what is already fixed as your starting point. After all, sometimes the date or the composition of the group are already decided. If you are free to choose, start with the end point (the desired outcome) in mind. The central question is: 'What action do you want the participants to take after the end of the discussion?', however small that action might be.

Another question that can help is: what story do you want people to tell after the end of the discussion, for example to their colleagues? Obviously, that goes beyond

the content and the outcome. People also like talking about who was there, the atmosphere, what went well and what went less well. So think about those things too.

*What action do you want the participants to take after the end of the discussion?*

# 1. Define your goal



If you are organising a discussion about Recognition & Rewards, you naturally have an aim in mind.

- So start by defining your goal, as precisely as possible. What is your intended result? And what will the discussion end with? Will you have defined a vision of talent management? An elaboration of different career paths? Or a plan to apply Open Science in your department?
- Choose one goal. You may have a tendency to pursue multiple goals (and you may think 'Since I've got everyone together anyway...'). However, 'aggregating goals' nearly always results in disappointment. It's better to achieve one goal together and to get it bedded in. That way, you are also setting a positive expectation for a subsequent discussion.

Logically, multiple goals can be addressed over several discussions:

Goal	This is how you do it
Creating insight	→ Dreaming, brainstorming
Forming choices	→ Converging, working out scenarios, talking through consequences
Grasping the nettle and getting things moving	→ Taking decisions

Obviously it is important that not just you but all the participants understand and endorse the goal of the discussion. So beforehand, talk about what you expect of the participants during the discussion, but also afterwards. Perhaps not everyone will feel able to commit to that - in that case, adjust your expectations based on what does enjoy general support and is feasible.

Always keep this goal in mind: from the invitation to the conclusion. So establish now who will have the responsibility to take decisions on which elements after the discussion. That might sound obvious, but when faced with (adaptive) challenges like 'Recognition & Rewards', it is often not self-evident or clear who the 'owner' is. Also agree who will be responsible for maintaining the momentum and how those who were not present at the discussion will be informed.

## 2. Delineate your topic

When you know what you want to achieve, it is time to define your topic. Focus helps, so clearly delineate it. Bear the following in mind:

- What has already been said (or not said) about this topic?
- What did everyone already agree on ages ago?
- Which other themes link to this topic? And how might this influence the discussion?

Having clear boundaries to your topic provides direction and helps avoid participants raising different expectations, wishes and concerns and start associating (emotionally). For this reason, also make clear what questions are not up for discussion.

Managing expectations is important. For example, if you actively listen to people's concerns, that doesn't necessarily mean you are committing to eliminating them.



**TIP** It helps to formulate the topic of discussion with a well-worded question. Formulate your question positively and in terms of action, so that people will want to commit to it.

# 3. Select your participants carefully

Which people (from within and outside the university/University Medical Centre) will you include in the discussion? Select employees and other stakeholders who can approach 'Recognition & Rewards' (or the topic/sub topic your discussion relates to) from different angles.

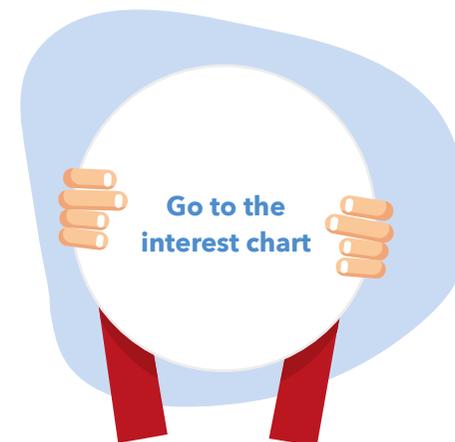
Choose both those who are responsible for implementation and those who will feel the greatest impact from it. When choosing your participants, be open-minded and selective at the same time. Don't automatically go for the 'usual suspects' but approach the matter from the perspective required for your discussion. That could mean considering a person's role, position, degree of influence or seniority, but also very different aspects, such as the motivations, values and [philosophy of life](#) that influence their attitude with regard to the topic.

Find out more about your participants. How much do they already know about the topic for discussion? Have they already encountered it and how did they deal with it? What are their points of view and emotions? How well do they know each other? Does one participant feel pressured due to the presence of another? In short, establish what the participants require for an effective discussion and provide it.

The interest chart will help you identify the backgrounds and interests of the relevant participants/group. It was compiled with the help of communication advisers from various universities.



**TIP** Consider inviting speakers 'from outside' who can shed a very different light on the issue.



# 4. Design your discussion

**M**ake sure that the set-up for the discussion is appropriate to the goal, the topic, the momentum and the level and tempo of the participants.

Devote extra attention to the following important moments in the discussion:

- The opening: Who will make the introduction and what will they say?
- The conclusion: Who will sum up and what will the follow-up be? It is not unusual for energy to drain away, for time to 'suddenly' be up and agreements therefore to be rushed. Consider beforehand how you can avoid that.
- Moments when the participants need to take a decision or reach agreement as a group. Emphasise these moments.

Choose appropriate formats. Make sure there is a good narrative arc that keeps the participants focused. People tend to be most motivated when they come up with ideas for themselves, so offer plenty of scope for them to do so.



**TIP** In line with the 'guiding principles' of 'Recognition & Rewards', it is advisable to do the preparations with representatives of the participants, rather than alone. In this way, you utilise all the available expertise and knowledge about what is important to those involved and start building support.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Culture change is a **fundamental change of beliefs**; not just a change in the rules of the game
- **A broad dialogue in academia** is needed: we listen to concerns, questions & dilemmas from the academic community
- **Balance**: giving room for ideas (**diverging**) and bringing together good practices (**converging**)
- Changing culture is difficult and **takes a long time**
- **Sharing good practices** and experimenting will initiate the desired movement
- The importance of **good leadership in academia** to make change work

Do you want to know more about discussion design in general? These books are very useful:  
['Moments of impact'](#) by Chris Ertel and Lisa Kay Solomon  
['Good talk'](#) by Daniel Stillman

# 5. Help the participants

Realise that people don't find it easy to speak up. Group pressure, patterns of expectation, unwritten rules and power relationships mean that people are cautious about doing so. So make sure you really facilitate everyone to have their say: by 'going around the group', first sharing experiences in a low-key way in pairs and/or having a facilitator who is very alert to this.

An independent facilitator can help the discussion proceed effectively.



*It helps to agree on the rules beforehand, for example:*

## Take responsibility

*Don't blame the other person/the circumstances*

## Speak up

*Make sure you are heard, contribute and have an influence on your conversation*

## Check your interpretations

*Don't fill in the gaps for someone else, don't make assumptions*

## Be clear about expectations

*Avoid confusion, disappointment and time wasting*

## Work on positive relationships

*Don't get drawn into complaints and criticism*

## Speak up

*Make sure you are heard, contribute and have an influence on your conversation*

## Formulate precisely

*Be clear, avoid misunderstandings*

Use tools that:

- give the participants insight into (the complexity of) the subject
- help the participants stay focused.

For example:

- visual support (a timeline or a mind map that shows all the elements of 'Recognition & Rewards' at a glance)
- a video that expresses the essence of your subject or, alternatively, shows a different perspective
- real-time visual reporting by a quick sketch artist
- a clear feedback template

In RRview (the online platform of the Recognition & Rewards community) you can find a 'Recognition & Rewards' slide set you can use. By focusing on this, you also demonstrate how seriously you take the discussion and the contributions of your participants.

## 6. Choose a suitable location

Think about the location where you will hold the discussion. The environment you choose will create expectations. Make sure those expectations are in line with the goal of your discussion. Does the room exude a sense that something special is about to happen, or that this will be a run-of-the-mill afternoon? How are the chairs arranged? Is the room configured for open dialogue or for passive listening?

If the group is not yet used to openly discussing vulnerable issues with each other, it may be useful to choose a [location](#) away from their usual place of work. Provide a calm, closed space where others cannot interrupt or listen in. Also consider practical matters such as size, shape, acoustics, lighting/daylight and possibilities for connecting equipment. In other words, finding

a suitable location is not something you should take lightly. Details like these can make a big difference to the quality of your discussion.

*The environment you choose will create expectations*

## Afterwards

The value of your discussion is determined by what everyone involved does with the results:

- Make sure there is a clear report that sets out clear actions and looks ahead to the next step. That will make taking follow-up steps easier. Do this quickly, so that the discussion is still fresh in everyone's minds. By doing that you are also demonstrating that the topic, the participants and the discussion are important to you.
- You may wish to thank people for taking part, making it as personal as possible. That might be a verbal acknowledgement the next time you speak to someone.



### COLOFON

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This toolkit was created with the help of



## INTEREST CHART RECOGNITION & REWARDS (R&R)

This chart is intended for your own use, as a checklist to establish what the interest of a specific group of stakeholders might be. We invite you to make your best (initial) assessment, without too much refinement and nuance. If there is something you don't know, or you are in doubt, that should prompt you to investigate and ask the stakeholders yourself. Naturally you can also complete this chart together, with one or more representatives of the relevant stakeholder group.

### STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Brief description of the group. What does this group do? What characterises them? Note down the characteristics you consider relevant.

### INTEREST

In one sentence, describe the most important interest with regard to Recognition & Rewards.

### SUBGROUPS

For example, different professional groups or career phases, but also differences in attitude with regard to recognition and rewards.

- 
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### CONNECTIONS/RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

What important contacts does this group have with other stakeholder groups? And how would you roughly characterise the quality of those relationships? Positive, neutral or negative?

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### MOST RELEVANT ASPECTS OF R&R

What are the most relevant aspects of Recognition & Rewards for this group of stakeholders? Write down what comes to mind. For example, career paths, quality, balance between the individual and the collective, Open Science and leadership in the academy.

### EXPECTATIONS

What expectation does this group have when it comes to Recognition & Rewards? To what extent do they 'believe' in it? What do they feel will work? And what won't?

**Resistance** | Where might any resistance lie with this group? Roughly speaking, indicate to what extent you think this is an issue.

The messenger → 'I want to decide for myself'

LITTLE      MUCH

The message → 'I have reservations about the content'

LITTLE      MUCH

Requirement to take action → 'I don't have the time/the head space, I can't do it (now)'

LITTLE      MUCH

### INTEREST IN RECOGNITION & REWARDS

#### Goals

What are important goals in their work for members of this group? Consider things that are 'non-negotiable' in order to do their job properly. These goals may have an impact on how they view Recognition & Rewards.

#### Concerns

What concerns does this group have in their daily work? Consider things that may be in conflict with achieving their most important goals.

#### Circumstances

What circumstances does this group have to deal with?

**Commitment** | How committed is this group currently to R&R?

MUCH      LITTLE

**Influence** | How big is the influence of this group on R&R?

BIG      LITTLE

**Attitude** | What is this group's attitude with regard to R&R?

POSITIVE      NEGATIVE

# Recognition & Rewards formats

Here you will find a number of practical formats that are suited to issues around 'Recognition & Rewards', listed in alphabetical order.

Most, but not all, are based on the principles of dialogue. Which format is most suitable for you naturally depends on your goal and situation. Applying these formats in practice calls for knowledge and expertise. Some are relatively simple, whereas others require experience. You can learn these skills yourself or call in the help of an expert.

Need help choosing? Contact Mascha Weijers of the National 'Recognition & Rewards' programme team. You can contact her via RRview, at [mascha@vank.nu](mailto:mascha@vank.nu) or on 06-22459389. She will be pleased to help you with:

- background information about the various methodologies
- external parties who can help you with implementation - ranging from facilitators, minute-takers, sketch artists and photographers to locations scouts, event organisers and caterers.



**TIP** *If you have positive experiences with one of these formats or a different one, or suggestions on how they can be applied online, share them on RRview.*

For those who would like to gain an initial impression

*Quick format that is suitable for almost any meeting*

Dialogue doesn't always have to take a long time. Sometimes you just want to quickly pick up some ideas. After all, as a group you can come up with more ideas, opportunities and creative solutions than you could alone.

Want to quickly gather some ideas in a regular meeting? Then try this short, practical [format](#). It will only 'cost' 12 minutes of your time and will help you make sure everyone has equal input. Which is handy if the same members of your team tend to hog the floor! Or indeed if you have a tendency to steer the conversation too much.

## Appreciative inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is based on the **constructive strength of the collective**. By viewing your issue in terms of opportunities, you can transcend problems and obstacles. At the same time, you are working towards greater ownership and shared responsibility. The result is more energy for those involved, a shared ideal and an action-based process approach that participants commit themselves to.

→ What you need is an appreciative starting question. Appreciative inquiry is suitable for 2-200 participants. Depending on group size, you will obviously want to organise it differently.

### DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Do you want to use (elements of) appreciative inquiry yourself? If so, 'Het waardereend werkboek' ('The Appreciative Workbook') by Robert Masselink and Jelmer IJbema is recommended. In this book, you will find more information about the underlying principles and practical implementation.

## Arena discussion

Do you want to know what your researchers **really** think about their **career prospects**? Or how the faculties recognise and evaluate your work as a support department? Ask them!

Organise one or more arena discussions (or mirror discussions) in which your 'clients' (students, colleagues, external contacts, ...) discuss and analyse your services. This can be quite confronting, but above all it gives you valuable insights which you can use to make improvements. An arena discussion is also an interesting way of gaining knowledge if you are curious about what employees think about the management.

→ What you need is courage: in an arena discussion, you will often hear things that would otherwise remain unsaid. You also need an experienced facilitator.

### DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY ★ ★ ★

You can find facilitators who specialise in this type of discussion at [www.arenacompany.nl](http://www.arenacompany.nl)

## Campfire discussion

A campfire discussion is the ideal form if you need to take a **decision** and want to be sure you have heard the voices of all those involved, including critical and concerned voices. A campfire discussion follows set rituals, derived from different cultures. It is an excellent method to reach decisions in a very conscious way and with complete focus. Once you have received everyone's input, you take a carefully considered decision and you give all the participants, as well as those who were not able to attend, clear feedback.

→ What you need is a carefully worded question, the issue that requires a decision. In the '[choose goal](#)' tool, you can check whether you are collectively ready to take a decision.

### DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY ★ ★ ★

Looking to hold a campfire discussion? Make sure you have an experienced facilitator, with a background in deep democracy, who will help you create a safe climate for the conversation. The latter is important, because all the participants will be urged to express their own viewpoints. Would you like to learn how to supervise a campfire discussion in a relatively short time? If so, this is a two-day training course you can follow.

## Debate

Sometimes a debate rather than dialogue is a very effective way of holding the discussion about Recognition & Rewards. A debate forces you to **word your point of view clearly and provide strong reasoning to back it up**.

Of course, a climate of safety is a requirement so that participants feel comfortable defending and attacking viewpoints. For this reason, in debates about organisational policy, a game element is often introduced in which you are challenged to defend or refute a viewpoint, regardless of what your own opinion is. The effect is that you learn to put yourself in the position of others, which sometimes leads you to adjust your opinion.

→ A high degree of safety is needed for a debate. A facilitator who keeps an eye on this is crucial. In addition, you naturally need stimulating propositions and people who want to present/represent themselves in this way.

### DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY ★ ★ ★

Do you want to organise a debate in your university or University Medical Centre? University of Twente has had positive experiences with [the Netherlands Debating Institute](#) in terms of the structure and guidance.

## Dialogue chart

Want to get groups of people talking about Recognition & Rewards on a big scale? At a time and place that best suits them? **Without a facilitator**, but with a bit of support so that the right subjects are discussed in a focused way? Why not consider making a tailored dialogue chart, or having one made for you - containing smart questions, creative formats and step-by-step instructions and input fields so you can immediately record the results. A chart like this functions as a step-by-step plan and provides a clear beginning, middle and ending for the discussion, to help the participants keep their focus.

### DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY ★ ★ ★ ★

Leiden University has made a dialogue chart [LINK] in partnership with [www.dekoers.nl](http://www.dekoers.nl)

## Dinner debate

A dinner debate is an ideal way to further explore a complex, fundamental issue in a sociable way, in order to share knowledge and experiences and gain new ideas and insights in a special setting. A **relaxed** dinner encourages openness to everyone's contributions - instead of discussions and attempts to convince the other person, tonight is all about dialogue.

→ Quite a bit of preparation behind the scenes is needed to make sure a dinner debate proceeds smoothly. For example, well-worded questions, a carefully considered seating plan, good coordination with the kitchen (including on timing), and possibly real-time (visual) recording. A dinner debate is a suitable form for roughly 6-20 participants, although you can also organise it with multiple tables as a world café.

### DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY ★ ★ ★

It is recommended that you bring in the support of a professional. The approach can differ quite a lot (from philosophical/Socratic to very practical), so choose someone who matches your goal and context.

## Future search

If you want to tackle things **thoroughly** and you are prepared to set aside a few days to get to grips with significantly changed circumstances, this methodology is ideal for you. During a future search, you spend three successive days with a wide selection of stakeholders considering – the clue is in the name – the future of your issue. You seek to identify common ground and establish how individual responsibility (self-organisation) in this area can be promoted. The future search leads you from strategic choices to a concrete action plan. In just a few days' time, you generate enthusiasm, energy and motivation and you move from exploration to concrete steps.

→ The success of the future search stands or falls by the in-depth interviews beforehand and the selection and briefing of the participants. In addition, you need an experienced facilitator who will make sure the search process proceeds properly.

### DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A future search demands a lot of time and effort on the part of the participants. So choose a facilitator who specialises in future search and is therefore able to get the most out of your meeting. You can find one via: [www.futuresearch.net](http://www.futuresearch.net)

## Open space

The open space approach is very suitable for resolving complex and long-term issues by a large group of participants who normally have little or no contact with one another. The participants talk to each other based on their passion for the subject. Open space is **self-managing** and has four 'principles' and one 'law'. The four principles are:

1. Whoever comes is the right people.
2. What happens is the only thing that could have.
3. Whenever it starts is the right time.
4. When it's over, it's over.



The Law of Two Feet states: anyone who during the meeting finds themselves in a situation where they are not learning or contributing anything needs to use their two feet to move to a more productive spot. This means that, more so than with other formats, the result is dependent on the inspiration and effort of the participants.

→ Naturally it starts with a clear question that is important to all involved. A facilitator will help you formulate it and make sure the process proceeds smoothly.

### DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY ★

For your first open space, it can be useful to seek support from someone with experience. When you have seen how it is done, you can easily supervise an open space yourself. [Han Rakels](#) supervised a session in 2022 as part of E&W-breed.

## World Café

In a world café, you intensively discuss important issues from different perspectives. You gather **lots of different ideas** which you then share directly with the group participants. Often, real-time and action-based (visual) reporting is used that is visible to all the participants in situ.

With the help of stimulating questions, the participants are encouraged and challenged to reveal their knowledge and viewpoints. Thanks to clear and action-based (visual) reporting, you can immediately put all the valuable input to use.

→ Encourage a good flow and rhythm with stimulating questions that go to the heart of the matter. The seating plan also makes a big difference, so devise it carefully. Also take great care in choosing your reporters: not every quick sketch artist is a visual minute-taker.

### DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY ★ ★

You can easily find out how to set up a world café from books about formats and online. For example, [here](#).

## More information?

### *Suggested reading*

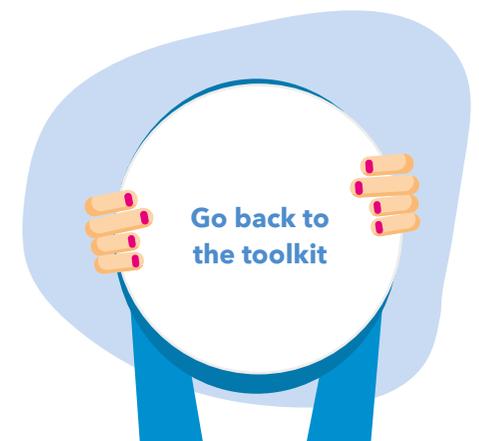
You can find lots more formats on the [Liberating structures site](#).

There are also various books about formats on sale, such as:

- 'Het groot werkvormen boek (parts I and II)' ('The big formats book'), by Sasja Dirkse-Hulscher et al.
- '75 werkvormen voor creatieve sessies' ('75 formats for creative sessions'), by Josine Gouwen and Rozemarijn Dols.

Want to know more about discussion design in general? Then we recommend these books:

- '[Moments of impact](#)' by Chris Ertel and Lisa Kay Solomon
- '[Good talk](#)', by Daniel Stillman



# Tips for the facilitator

If you will be leading a discussion about Recognition & Rewards, you'll find tips here to keep the discussion on the right track. They are general and do not stipulate a particular format, for example.

## Your task

As the facilitator, you can exert a lot of influence on how a discussion proceeds. You need to always be in touch with the group and to sense when you need to slow things down or speed them up or when the energy is draining from the discussion. That calls for a keen eye, judgement and occasionally 'putting your foot down'.

Your task as the facilitator is to ensure:

- space for diverse perspectives, being open to each other's insights;
- equal opportunity for everyone to speak;

- meta communication and process comments;
- understanding of what is required to alleviate concerns, mitigate risks, etc.;
- monitoring of the process and the time.

You therefore encourage the participants to listen and learn from one another. You invite everyone to actively participate and contribute concrete and personal experiences.

## Process supervisor

As the facilitator, you also have an important role in supervising the process and you are responsible for making sure that the discussion proceeds smoothly. For example:

### Start:

You kick off the discussion effectively, per-

haps after being given the floor by the initiator or the person with final responsibility.

- You welcome everyone, discuss the structure of the discussion and set out the rules you want everyone to abide by. You ask the participants whether there are any other rules they would like to add. That way, the rules are likely to enjoy more support.
- Ask everyone to introduce themselves. Set a 'good example'. If you are open and to the point, others are likely to be the same.
- Outline the topic for discussion: Pose an opening question for every participant to answer, for example: 'In one sentence, what do you hope this discussion will deliver?' One reason for this approach is to get everyone speaking right from the start. That will make it easier for them have their say later on in the discussion.

Ask for a personal angle on the central topic, for example an anecdote demonstrating the importance of Recognition & Rewards in a person's daily life.

### During the discussion

Also ask for personal experiences and examples during the discussion.

- Invite participants to describe them as expressively and concretely as possible. Questions you could ask are: 'What does that look like in practice' or 'Describe that situation to us'.
- Ask further questions, for example if:
  - someone makes a very general statement;
  - a relatively silent participant says something but then withdraws again.
  - someone makes an assertion and you want to know what they mean. Even if it is already clear to you what they mean,

asking follow-up questions can often bring underlying values, assumptions and justifications to light. A question like "Is that really true?" can result in extra reflection and insight.

### Conclusion

In the conclusion, you recap for all the participants what has been covered during the discussion:

- Summarise, free from judgement or weighting;
- Make a concluding comment that links to the follow up;
- Thank all the participants for their input.

### Need help?

Want to share ideas about your role as a facilitator? No problem - contact Mascha Weijers, via RRview, [mascha@vank.nu](mailto:mascha@vank.nu) or 06-22459389.

