The role of the facilitator is to help a group work effectively together and is key to the successful smooth running of all of the three lessons learned techniques. You have to develop trust and a relaxed, fun atmosphere for the group to work in so it's essential you clarify your role and what is expected of the day before the event. It will also help you in the planning stage, running the event and any follow up work.

**Before the event**
- Do you know what the objectives of the session are?
- Do you know what the desired outcomes are?
- Are you comfortable with the technique that is to be used?
- Are you comfortable with what is expected of you in your role as a facilitator? (See selecting a facilitator to see what type of things will be expected)
- Find out about your group - think through the issues or problems that may arise in a session and know how you will respond

**Planning the event**
With the project owner work out a schedule, making sure there is time set aside for you to explain the ground rules and your role as well as the objectives of the session.

Consider looking at the room before the event to make sure it is suitable for your needs and think about how you want the room set up so that it can be done in advance

Do you want extra space so that groups can move around?
Do you want to put people in groups in advance or have a particular seating plan?

Think about what materials and resources you need and make sure that they are available and in the room before the event.

**The room requirements**
Part of your role as a facilitator is to ensure there is a comfortable learning environment so you have to think about things like room layout, temperature, refreshments etc

- Is it large enough for your needs with room to move about?
- Is there wall space you can attach flipcharts to?
- Do you want a particular room layout or seating plan?
- When do you want to have refreshments and breaks?

**In the room you may find it useful to have**
- Flipchart stand and paper
- Flipchart pens
- Felt pens for writing on Post-it notes
- Post-it notes (enough for your needs and - if you are baton passing - in three different colours)
- Blu-tack

**Key Responsibilities on the day**
- Explain the ground rules to the group and ensure they are adhered to (see ground rules)
- Ensure that everyone understands the group's objectives
- Ensure that everyone understands it is up to the group to retain ownership of the outcomes / issues and solutions.
- Keep the group on track and start and end on time
- Encourage the entire group to participate and ensure ideas are valued
The Role of the Facilitator
Lessons Learned Toolkit

- Challenge the group to explore issues fully, question its assumptions and to maximise its potential.
- Ensure the group’s discussions remain constructive
- Mediate, to support the group and ensure that no-one dominates
- If appropriate provide feedback on how the group is working together
- Stay neutral and objective
- Listen to what is going on and where appropriate summarise and feedback to the group
- Ensure next steps are agreed on and there is an owner identified who will take it forward
- Make sure someone retains ownership of the outcomes, resulting issues and potential solutions

Getting the best out of the group
As facilitator it is your responsibility that the objectives of the session are met and where appropriate this could include action planning. If you feel it appropriate to aid discussions you could encourage participants to look at project documents. During the session you will have to prompt people for answers so you may find it useful to have a mental bank of prompt questions and below are a few suggestions as well as some things you should avoid.

Avoid
- Do not ask yes or no questions unless you are seeking clarification or seeking agreement
- Do not imply an answer in a question
- Do not ask questions that can be seen as threatening
- ‘Why’ questions can sometime elicit a defensive response so consider ‘what’ or ‘how’ questions.

Prompt questions
Use ‘yes…and’ to prompt for further discussions and to get details if you are finding it difficult use some of these prompts as a starting point.

- What was your reasoning for doing that?
- What happened?
- How did you come to this line of thinking?
  Why do you think that happened?
- What were the circumstances that caused this?
- How did this evolve?
- Tell me what happened.
- Why was this important for you?
- What was important about this for you?
- Why do you feel or think this way?
  What is the reasoning or experience behind your current outlook?
- What in your experience has led you to this viewpoint?
- Explain this to me in more detail.
- What do you think could have been done differently?
- What do you think needs to be done now?
- Is there anyone else that would benefit from knowing this?
- What needs to be done with the information gathered today?
- What actions need to be taken forward and who do you want to be involved?
**After the event**

The facilitator should officially end the session and ensure there is individual and group commitment to proposals or actions. If you are using the Baton Passing techniques this is made easier because there is a ready made template where you can list the action, the steps needed, an owner and a date in the future to check progress on. You could use a similar format for getting agreement with other techniques, including After Action Reviews, if you first get agreement from the group.