

FAQ for Facilitators of “Tapping into the Spiritual Power of the Arts”

A Project of the Wings to the Spirit Foundation, Inc.

(NOTE: RECRUITMENT OF FACILITATORS HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED, UNTIL THE PROJECT’S “HOME CLUSTER” IS DESIGNATED.)

~ About the Deepening and Study Group ~

The Registration Form asks for completion of the deepening in a four- to seven-month time frame. Is this required?

It is not required. However, we strongly encourage completion of the deepening within seven months of one’s enrollment as a facilitator, if possible. One reason is that this allows for a moderate pace of about two hours per week. Another is that the Foundation needs to know the results of your study group’s experience without too much delay, in order to continue evaluating and making the necessary changes to the deepening before carrying its development to the next stage.

Naturally, the deepening can be completed in a much shorter time when some or all of a study group’s sessions are intensive.

How many hours does the deepening take to complete?

Study groups on average have taken about 40 hours to complete the deepening. However, this does not include the Practices. Facilitators are asked to track their study group’s cumulative hours so they can report, on the evaluation form, the total hours it took to complete the deepening.

After registering online, how soon should I initiate the study group?

The Foundation encourages you to try to organize and begin the study group within a month of your registration. Again, this is not required, for it is understood that circumstances in people’s lives may temporarily prevent some of those you invite from participating in a study group. In such cases, it is preferable to carry out the study group with a smaller number of participants than to wait until everyone is available.

How large should the study group be?

There is no absolute maximum to the number of participants in a study group, but 8-10 at a time appears to be about the most that allows for meaningful group participation. There is no minimum, either. It could consist of the facilitator plus one participant. But naturally, the more participants, the more lively the discussion and exchange of insights, and the more input the project will receive for the deepening’s development.

Is there a minimum age for participants in the study group?

In most cases, for the experience to be optimal, the minimum age would be approximately 15. This can vary somewhat, depending on the maturity of the individual, so the minimum age is not rigid. Facilitators can use their judgment in this matter when inviting people to take part in the study group.

How often should the study group meet, and how long should sessions last?

The frequency and length of study group sessions depends on how much time the participants have available. Any arrangement that people can manage is agreeable, including intensive, all-day sessions if desired. At the same time, the facilitator should arrange things so the pace of the deepening does not feel rushed, and the quality of interaction with the Sacred Word and with the concepts in the deepening, is maintained.

Deepening material should never be skimmed or skipped to save time. It can be studied at home, but the answers to deepening questions should be filled in only during group sessions. The quotations from the Writings in the deepening have the potential to transform and elevate the participants' understanding of the arts, and to galvanize them to action. This can happen only if they are allowed the time to fully engage with the Writings and uncover their implications. In this process, the sharing of different participants' perspectives on the Writings in the group sessions is very valuable.

If I plan to have an intensive deepening, what preparations should I make?

The joy and effectiveness of the deepening depends largely on the arts-related activities the participants have while in session, and the "practices" in which they engage between study sessions. Facilitators need to give some thought to how these activities and practices can be carried out in the physical surroundings and the short time frame of an intensive deepening. After you have a group willing to take part in an intensive deepening, it would be helpful to let them know what artistic activities and practices they will be involved in, so they can prepare by gathering any materials or examples of art works they wish to share with the group.

~ Inviting Others to Take Part in the Project ~**How am I supposed to involve others in this Pilot Project?**

The project counts on facilitators to involve others by **inviting people locally to participate in the study group you are organizing in the "home cluster"**. A letter to be used for inviting people to join your study group is also provided. When the deepening has been completed, you and the participants take part in the deepening's development by filling out an evaluation form to provide the project with valuable input.

What do I do as a facilitator?

To be a facilitator:

- you need to have taken at least Book 1 of the Ruhi Institute
- you will not need any previous training or experience with "Tapping into the Spiritual Power of the Arts" or its subject matter. The only preparation you need is to read the deepening and a few pages of orientation

- you will not be required to travel within the “home cluster”
- you will not be expected to have experience practicing an art form

Basically, what you do as a facilitator is:

- register online on the web site wingstothespirit.org
- download and print the deepening and related materials from the site
- if you have not taken Book 7 of the Ruhi Institute, ask someone who has, to guide the learning process in your study group
- invite some friends to join you in forming a study group
- explore and study the deepening together
- have the participants fill out an evaluation form at the end of the deepening
- send the evaluations to a designated person

Should I invite people to become facilitators only in the “home cluster”?

Yes. The project is contained within its home cluster, so facilitators should live in the cluster.

Do the people I invite to become facilitators in the home cluster need to have any special qualifications?

Facilitators, as well as participants, need only to have taken Book 1 of the Ruhi Institute, and to have a desire to bring the arts into the service of the Faith and humanity. The deepening is designed to be taken by members of the general community, with no particular experience in the arts. However, when it comes to *facilitating* the deepening, the majority of those who have responded positively to invitations and have volunteered to facilitate have been people who practice an art form, as a hobby or professionally, or who have a strong interest in the subject.

How should I go about inviting people to participate with me in the study group I organize?

It is best to hand-pick your study group participants and invite them individually. We ask facilitators to refrain from using large-scale email lists to invite everyone in the “home cluster,” because that runs the risk of people forwarding the information in their email to larger lists such as Bahá’í Announce.

For that reason, when inviting friends to join your study group or to become a facilitator in the “home cluster,” you should use the invitation letters provided to facilitators for that purpose. These clearly ask recipients to refrain from sharing the information with email lists.

Is there a training specifically for facilitators of this deepening?

At the moment, there is no training specifically for facilitators. The project is in an early stage, so facilitators are pioneers in the sense that they are collectively developing a new tool to help the community better appreciate the spiritual potency of the arts, and to help channel that potency into the core activities of community life and the teaching work. The Foundation has not yet received enough input from those giving and taking the deepening to be certain of the aspects in which a facilitator would need particular training.

There are effective ways, however, to prepare oneself to facilitate the deepening:

1. The fact that many facilitators will have already taken Book 7 of the Ruhi series is the best overall training and preparation. (Those who have not taken Book 7 can cover this need by ensuring that a person trained as a Ruhi tutor will guide the learning process within their study group.)
2. The main points a facilitator would need to know that are unique to this deepening are covered in the present document and in the Orientation and Registration page of the Wings web site. (<http://www.wingstothespirt.org/WingsOrientationRegistration.cfm>) That page should be reviewed. It covers the nature of the project, how to offer the deepening to others, facilitating the deepening, and the evaluation forms. Please print the page out and keep it for reference.
3. After registering, print out and read through “Steps to Get Started.” Along with the deepening itself, this document is among the deepening-related materials available for downloading on the Wings to the Spirit web site, in the password-protected page intended for facilitators.
4. Print out and look over the two Evaluation Forms – namely, the Basic Evaluation (for all participants) and the Facilitator Evaluation (for facilitators only). These give a good idea of the kind of evaluation the Foundation is looking for. It will be helpful to both the facilitator and participants to have the general points of the evaluation in mind as they go through the deepening. To that end, we ask facilitators to share, orally and in a general way, the Basic Evaluation’s contents with the participants before starting the deepening. (Actual copies of the evaluation, however, should not be handed out to participants until the deepening has been completed, during the last session of the study group.)
5. Read through the deepening itself, become familiar with its contents, and meditate on the passages it contains from the Writings.
6. In advance, consider which art work you would like to share with the members of your study group in Unit 1, Section 1. It will go far toward setting the tone for the deepening.

~ Artistic Illustrations and Examples ~

Considering the subject is the arts, why doesn't the deepening include more illustrations and examples of art works? Will such material become available?

We hope such material will be generated over time by deepening participants. When the deepening is illustrated with a variety of art works, its concepts are more clearly understood and the deepening itself becomes more engaging. There are three reasons the book does not include more examples of art works. One is that many art forms, such as music, theater, dance and sculpture, do not lend themselves to being placed in a book, because they need to be heard or seen in three dimensions to be fully appreciated. Another is that including numerous art works would make the book much longer and expensive to print.

But the most compelling reason is that the deepening is designed to be meaningful to participants who come from a wide variety of cultures. Any artistic examples selected to illustrate the points made in the deepening would have to be drawn from a certain culture, historical period and style. As a result, the examples would be familiar and meaningful to

people belonging to that culture, but might be less meaningful or even incomprehensible to people of other cultures.

It would be impossible to represent fairly, in the few pages of the deepening, the diversity of art forms, approaches to art creation, and styles of art that even a single culture contains.

The Foundation feels that the best solution is to encourage study groups to create their own art works, or to find existing ones, which illustrate the concepts covered in the deepening. This appears to be the approach most likely to result in the use of art works that are meaningful and satisfying to the participants in a given study group. For those who are inclined, it also provides an opportunity to engage in creative activity, making the study group a more vivid and memorable experience.

To illustrate the themes and concepts of the deepening, can I obtain examples of art works that other facilitators found helpful for their study group?

The Wings to the Spirit Foundation is creating a special space on its web site to store original arts works submitted by deepening participants. The purpose of the bank of art works is to provide deepening facilitators with images, text, and recordings to choose from as a way to illustrate the themes in the deepening. The art works can be in any of the visual arts, any literary art, any of the crafts, performing arts, including music, and design arts, including architecture.

When submitting their work for consideration, the creators of art works use a form provided on the web site. They give permission for facilitators to use their art non-commercially, within the limited bounds of study groups, and are asked to specify which concept of the arts deepening their work is intended to illustrate.

It is expected that the art works, over time, will offer facilitators a growing range of cultural diversity that allows them to download and use works suitable for the cultural setting of their study group. Participants are invited to create art works in any medium which they feel captures a concept being studied, and to send it to the project through their deepening facilitator. As the deepening is developed in a growing variety of cultural settings, we hope this bank of art works will help meet the need for culturally-relevant artistic illustrations of the themes in the deepening.

The collection of materials for facilitators will also include a list of recommended activities that facilitators have found effective for the “practices.”

~ The Practices ~

How important is it to complete the “practices” given in the deepening?

Facilitators must ensure that each participant, by the end of the study group, has completed at least one of the six practices recommended in the deepening. It is strongly recommended to go beyond the minimum and realize at least one of the practices associated with each unit. It is important to engage in the practices, particularly for those who are not experienced in an art form, because it gives participants a chance to gain basic skills and to see, first-hand, how the arts can be brought to bear in community life. This is an important step toward systematically developing the community’s human resources in the arts.

If a participant is not experienced with an art form, how can she or he do the deepening's "practices"?

This deepening is designed primarily for the general public, not only for those who are experienced with an art form. Therefore, the practices always give participants two options: A) Those who have experience in artistic expression may choose to create something in one of the art forms, or B) The participant may select an example of an art work created by someone else. In either case, the art work is intended to illustrate the subject matter the deepening is treating in a given Unit, and is to be applied in the context of one of the core activities of community life.

Of the six practices, why do three involve interaction with youth and children's classes?

As a facilitator, please make sure your study group understands the reason for this. We feel it is crucial to begin sharing with children and youth a general perspective provided by the Bahá'í Writings with regard to the arts. Until materials have been developed specifically to bring such a perspective to the young, it appears the best way to carry the spiritual effects of this deepening across to the next generation is through the practices.

Communities which do not currently have activities for children and youth can use the alternate practices given in the deepening. Moreover, the Foundation is open to participants developing and recommending new varieties of practice if they feel they would be more effective.

~ Co-Facilitators ~

Though I am organizing the study group, I haven't taken Ruhi Book 7. Meanwhile, there is more than one person in the study group who has taken Book 7. How is it determined which of them facilitates the deepening?

Let's say you have not taken Book 7 yourself, and there are two qualified people in your group willing to serve as a facilitator. It is up to you, as the one organizing the group, to decide whether one or both of them will guide the study group's learning process. On the other hand, if you have taken Book 7, you would facilitate the deepening yourself.

If I organized the study group, and found someone with Book 7 training to guide the learning process, which of us should fill out the Facilitator Evaluation when the deepening ends?

We ask that both of you, as co-facilitators, separately fill out a "Facilitator Evaluation Form," in order to share with the Foundation your views on what aspects of the deepening worked well and what needs improvement. These evaluations are the primary means by which facilitators are collectively shaping and refining the deepening.

What should the person who co-facilitates with me do to prepare for the study group?

First, they should register online as a facilitator, so we can welcome them and have a record of their participation. They can then prepare by observing the simple recommendations given in the question, above, regarding training for facilitators.

~ Miscellaneous ~

Why do some of the questions seem to have more than one possible answer?

This is another subject that you should make sure the members of your study group understand. As with courses of the Ruhi Institute, many of the questions posed in the arts deepening, including some marked True-False or Yes-No, can be answered in more than one way. Such questions are designed to lead to reflection and discussion. The reason for asking participants to discuss their responses is not only to find a convincing answer, but also to learn from one another's perspectives.

Instead of a complete evaluation at the end of the deepening, why not have a short one at the end of each unit, for a total of four mini-evaluations? At the end of each unit, it is easier for participants to remember what they wish to say about the material just covered.

This is a good idea. However, it would not work, because nearly all the questions in the evaluation form are about the deepening as a whole, not about individual units. Therefore it is important to make notes in the page margins and refer to them later for the evaluation.

Why is it necessary to make sure the evaluation forms are filled out in the last session of our study group? Why not complete the deepening, end the study group, and meet at a later date to fill out the evaluation forms?

The participants' impressions of the deepening and ideas for improvements will be freshest when they have just finished it, but would fade after a few days. Moreover, experience has shown that once the study group finishes and disbands, people reschedule their time with other activities. It is then extremely difficult to get everyone originally in the study group to meet again to fill out the evaluation. Noting the deepening's strengths and weaknesses is how members of the study group take part in the deepening's development. The Foundation attaches great importance to the evaluations and relies on them to improve the deepening.

As improvements are made to the deepening, how will I know if I have the most up-to-date version?

The most up-to-date version of the deepening and its related documents will always be posted on the Wings to the Spirit web site, on the page for facilitator documents. The version of the deepening is given at the bottom of its Contents page. If it says, for example, Version 4.3, this means it is the fourth major revision, which involves a re-working of entire pages. When the number after the decimal point changes, however, it means that only a few scattered words or paragraphs have been changed. So Version

4.3 would mean it is the fourth major revision, and on three occasions since then, some minor changes have been made.

How will I know if I have the most up-to-date supporting documents?

Each supporting document, including this FAQ for Facilitators, shows the date the document was most recently modified. It is found in the lower right corner of each page. Additionally, the date of the most recent change is built into the name of the document: for example, "FAQ for Facilitators (2010-08-16).pdf" You can see the name of the document when you download it to your PC or Mac computer.