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## GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

### Some Components of Good Meetings

- Good facilitation
- Commonly understood goals
- High level of participation

### Factors that Promote Productive Meetings

#### 1) Be Prepared

- Select a convenient time and location.
- Provide sufficient notice (at least 2 weeks), and provide a reminder a few days before.
- Clearly define the goals of the meeting and structure it accordingly. Begin the meeting with the most important items.
- Arrange who will facilitate and take notes in advance, and specify what should be included in the minutes (see Keep Minutes, below). 5. Prepare a written agenda and post or distribute it (ahead of time if possible).
- It is best to limit meetings to 2 hours, but make sure that the meeting goals and agenda items can be met in the allotted time.
- Distribute a draft agenda before the meeting and ask for needed changes. Calculate how much time should be spent on topics and record that into the agenda; include the name of the person leading the agenda item. If the topic takes longer than the allocated time, members can vote to allocate more time or move the topic to another meeting.

#### Sample Agenda:

7:00 pm	Welcome and Check-ins (Alex)
	Agenda review and acceptance (Alex)
7:15 pm	Board Reports
	- Minutes from the last meeting (Jose)
	- Financial Reports (Pat)
7:30 pm	Personnel Committee Report and Recommendations
8:00pm	Review and Decision: Proposed Legacy policy
8:25pm	Next meeting date/time
8:30pm	Adjourn (on time).

#### 2) Keep Minutes

Minutes are a record of what happened but not a transcription. Include:

- Date, location and who attended;
- The statement and source of a proposed resolution presented for vote;
- Who seconded the resolution;
- Note if there was a lot of discussion and briefly summarize it;
- The vote total (# Yes; # No; X); note who abstained. If consensus is used, note who dissented.

#### 3) Facilitation Tips

##### A. Keep the facilitator role neutral

- The facilitator's role is to ensure that the group accomplishes the meeting goals in a democratic manner.

- A facilitator should leave the facilitator role to offer an opinion by saying something like, “Stepping outside my role of facilitator, I think...”
- If the facilitator wants to support a particular position, s/he should turn the role over to a volunteer until discussion ends on that agenda item.

**B. Keep the meeting moving, on track, and on time. *Ask someone to help by being the timekeeper***

- Call the meeting to order on time. Review the agenda and meeting goals. If appropriate, introductions. May also ask each person for 1 minute check-in (e.g. my day was happy/frustrating/sad... because...; I have to leave early because...).
- Introduce each agenda item and call on those making presentations
- Make sure that discussion does not get stuck on an item. If a discussion wanders off the subject, remind the group of the agenda item being discussed and the objective of the discussion. If the group lacks sufficient information, cut off the discussion and clarify the information needed for the group to make a decision at a subsequent meeting.
- Conduct needed voting. Before a vote, clearly state the motion or proposal. If the outcome is close, ask someone to verify the vote by re-counting hands or ballots. If consensus is used and there are few dissenters, find points of agreement and work to redefine the motion.
- Conclude the meeting on time and on a note of achievement. Remind participants of the actions taken and decisions made. Ask participants to evaluate the meeting by stating what went well and what could be improved to promote more productive meetings. Close by identifying follow-up actions and announcing the next meeting date, time and location.

**C. Encourage meaningful discussion**

- Ask people to speak for themselves and to be specific. Do not allow statements like, “Some people seem to feel...,” or “What s/he is trying to say is...”
- Keep the discussion on the topic, but encourage people to express their opinions
- Deal with differences of opinion. When handled forthrightly, differences of opinion can yield creative solutions.

**D. Help everyone to participate**

- Make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak. Do not let one or two people monopolize the discussion. Draw out those who tend to be quiet.
- Encourage open discussion that allows for disagreement on issues, but do not allow participants to behave rudely.
- If the agenda is taking longer than anticipated, decide as a group whether to extend the meeting or to move some agenda items to the next meeting.

**E. Dealing with disruptive behavior**

**i. Prevention techniques**

- Get general agreement on the agenda before the meeting.
- Use group input to set ground rules at the beginning of the meeting. For example: be brief; allow everyone to participate; do not interrupt. Restate the ground rules at the beginning of each meeting.
- If certain people continually cause problems, encourage the other participants to point out their offensive behavior.

**ii. What to do when problems occur**

- When a person’s comments are off track, repeat the goals of the meeting (“That is an interesting point, but we are focusing on \_\_\_\_\_”).
- If someone is dominating the discussion, explain the importance of group participation and call on others to express their thoughts.
- Take short breaks to relieve tension
- Form small committees to deal with specific problems or issues instead of using valuable group time.