

Running Effective Meetings

Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation

Meeting Preparation

- Choose a meeting date and time that allows adequate time for participants to prepare and understand agenda.
- Have specific objectives...know what you want to accomplish and share these with participants so that they know what to expect.
- Keep meeting to a manageable size.
- Reserve a room that accommodates participants comfortably and with a regulated temperature.

Running the Meeting

- The chairperson, or meeting leader, needs to know his or her role. The chair can neither be too strong or too weak.
- Start on time.
- Review agenda and make any additions. Assign times for each item and stick to the times.
- Have a mixture of easy to accomplish and more difficult items (if there are any) on agenda.
- If someone had pre-assigned tasks, they should report early in the meeting.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Avoid side conversations.
- Encourage participation.
- Work to keep the meeting at a comfortable pace – not moving too fast or too slow.
- Summarize the discussion and the recommendations at the end of each logical section.
- Have a method of evaluation.
- Keep accurate notes.
- Follow Robert's Rules of Order.
- Give everyone a voice.
- If a meeting is going to be long, have built in breaks.
- Stick to the agenda and end on time.

Problem Solving Steps

Define procedure—How do I get from point “A” to point “B”

Define issues

Understand interests (including personal motivation)

Generate alternatives

Assess alternatives

Select alternatives—remember, sometimes you have to agree to disagree

Implement—convert words to action!

Avoid problems by monitoring people's expressions and body language; intervene early

After the Meeting

Send minutes to all participants in a timely manner
Highlight any commitments made by attendees and action items
Follow up on items that need attention
Put items that need to be revisited on next agenda

A Primer on Minutes (From Mindtools.com)

Minutes record the decisions of the meeting and the actions agreed. They provide a record of the meeting and, importantly, they provide a review document for use at the next meeting so that progress can be measured - this makes them a useful disciplining technique as individuals' performance and non-performance of agreed actions is given high visibility.

Praise! Praise! Praise! (From ic.org)

Praise people twice as much as you criticize. Never let any good deed or action go unheralded in the group. Say thank you publicly at every meeting. Recognize the value of people's contributions at the beginning or within the meeting. One of the best ways to boost group morale and keep it high is to notice people's work and praise it regularly. Keep in mind: volunteers are CHOOSING to be there, they don't HAVE to be there.

A Quick Note on Group Process

Understanding how a group works can lead to more productive meetings.

1. Assess communication—Who does and doesn't participate? What is the nonverbal communication that is occurring? Who is listening?
2. Assess influence—Who has it? Are there rivalries or struggles? Is anyone trying to dominate?
3. Decision making—How are decisions made?
4. Tasks—Who clarifies discussions? Who asks for suggestions? Who tests the group? Who keeps the group on target? Who invites others into discussion? Who is the harmonizer?
5. Atmosphere—What is the climate of the group? Are there shifts in the atmosphere—what caused the shifts? Are there subgroups in the meeting?

Web Resources

www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/RunningMeetings.htm

www.ic.org/nica/Process/Effmeet.html

www.meetingwizard.org/meetings/running-effective-meetings.cfm