

Effective Meetings

Meetings are important, they help an organization:

- Communicate
- Stay on track with the work plan
 - Gauge progress on activities and adjust as needed
 - Identify next steps, details, deadlines and responsible persons
- Evaluate projects through focused discussion
- Introduce new ideas

An Effective Agenda should:

- Contain a brief description of what will be covered
- Outline key items and time frames
- Have precise objectives – states what the meeting is intended to achieve
- Use labels: for discussion, decision, or update
- Arrange items in necessary order and logical sequence
- Deals with important items first, puts updates/discussion towards the end

Job of the Chair

- Coordinate the preparation of the Work Plan
- Report back to Board
- Conduct meetings
- Identify/recruit volunteers
- Develop agenda
- Start & end meetings on time
- Keep meeting focused on tasks and mission
- Clarify expectations
- Make sure all are heard
- Send out meeting minutes
- Call people who did not attend
- Consider highlighting action items for individuals
- Ensure decisions are made and that responsibilities are clear

Job of the Participant

- Show up on time
- Show up prepared
- Listen
- Be open
- Speak up
- Follow up

Job of the Staff

- Coordinate activities of the Four Committees
- Act as an information resource to each Committee
- Meeting facilitation as needed

Six Signs of an Effective Meeting

- A clear agenda and purpose
- Starts and finishes on time
- Good facilitator/leader
- Agreed-upon ground rules
- The right people in the room
- Active group discussions and reaches conclusions

Avoiding Committee Conflict

- Disagreeing *privately*, not publicly
- Committee is opposed to a board policy, but still must support board's decision
- Chairperson is key link between the board and the committee
- Your support of the Board's decisions

Nine Tips for Managing Discussions

- Make a plan
- Zip your lip
- State the obvious
- Tackle big things first
- Cut trivial topics
- Make it safe
- Reward positive participation
- Make it fun
- Wrap it up

Evaluate Your Next Meeting

- What was the best thing about this meeting?
- What was the worst thing?
- What would make it better?
- Do you have the right people in the room?
- Do you have people who shouldn't be there?

Fact Sheet on Board Minutes

Accurate board minutes are an important resource to governing and advisory boards of public and private organizations. Minutes also support sound risk management by providing a written record of board deliberations and decisions. Board minutes provide evidence that a board has exercised care in decision making. Board minutes also substantiate that a board is operating in accordance with legal requirements, including the organization's own rules (found in its Bylaws and other documents) and rules established by regulatory agencies (including the secretary of state in which the organization operates) or other oversight bodies.

Despite the importance of board minutes, many organizations continue to make inadequate records of board meetings. The most common mistake made is the tendency to record too much—from casual but inconsequential statements made during the meeting to the ultimate mistake of recording every spoken word.

Appropriate board minutes should contain the following:

- The names of those members who are present and who are absent.
- The time the board meeting begins and ends.
- The existence or absence of a quorum.
- A concise summary of the action taken by the board.
- The names of the persons making and seconding motions.
- A summary of votes, indicating when motions were adopted by unanimous votes or the breakdown in yeas and nays and abstentions.
- A summary of documents introduced during the meeting.
- A summary of discussion points—concise statements of the issues raised and concerns reflected during the discussion.
- A summary of key action items, future steps, and who will take them.
- The name and title of the person responsible for taking minutes.

Minute Taking “Don’ts”:

- Minutes should never be a verbatim documentation of every statement made during a board meeting. A document that purports to record every uttered word is a transcript, not “minutes.”
- Minutes should be concise and informative, but never voluminous. Minutes that require more than 15 minutes’ reading are of little (or no) value to the staff and volunteer leaders of an organization.
- Minutes should be taken by someone who understands the substance of the issues being discussed. This is necessary to reflect, in a concise manner, the key points made during the meeting. A sound grasp of the issues facing the organization is also necessary to discern “chatter” that need not be included versus actions taken that should constitute the bulk of the minutes.

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