

# Meeting Toolkit

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*Following are some simple, easy-to-follow guidelines that may be helpful each time your group meets.*

## **1. Establish and follow a set of norms for all meetings.**

Meeting norms set ground rules or expectations on how people treat each other at a meeting. The norms focus on respecting all participants and are a simple yet powerful statement about the way meetings can be run. You may wish to use these norms as a starting point for a group conversation about expectations of each other, adapt them to fit your situation, and post the norms in each of your meeting rooms as a consistent reminder of your fundamental meeting guidelines.

## **2. Provide tools and guides for participants to make meetings more productive.**

Following is a list of the helpful information contained in this document:

### **Agenda Template**

All meetings should have a written or unwritten agenda. This template provides participants with a template they can use to create a successful meeting agenda. The completed agenda would be shared with all participants in advance of the meeting so they are clear on the purpose and expected outcomes. The latter half of the template allows participants to record key agreements and action steps.

### **Tips for Meeting Participants**

This one page document outlines the key activities/tasks for participants to ensure they contribute to and get the most out of the meetings they attend.

### **Checklist for Meeting Convener/Facilitator**

This one page checklist gives participants who are convening or leading a meeting a list of suggested steps to follow before, during and after the meeting.

*It should be noted that since all meetings are not the same, we would encourage participants to select those meeting practices which fit each specific meeting. For example, a brainstorming session with 15 people should be treated differently than a staff meeting or a one-on-one meeting. However, all meetings should follow the meeting norms (Recommendation #1) and have an agenda (written or not).*

# Meeting Norms

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*Because many organizations and community members spend a lot of time in meetings, the following norms or ground rules are intended to make the meetings more pleasant, productive, efficient, and effective.*

## **Meeting participants and leaders commit to:**

- Treat everyone with respect: We will express our opinions responsibly, focusing on the issues and not on personal differences, and speak both honestly and kindly. The rest of the norms are related to this one.
- Prepare adequately for the meeting and participate fully. We will have read, reviewed or examined pertinent documents, gathered information or input, or simply assessed our own thoughts and ideas prior to the meeting.
- Not interrupt each other. We recognize that we all interrupt at times by mistake or to build on others' statements. However, we will strive to allow each person the space to finish his or her thoughts.
- Express ourselves completely and concisely. This norm recognizes the value of each other's input and time.
- Engage each other's thoughts, ideas and opinions. We recognize the value and richness of a meeting when everyone has a chance to participate. This norm also includes gracious acceptance of opinions different from our own.
- Stay focused on the topic under discussion. We will stay focused on the agreed upon topics unless the group makes a conscious decision to alter the agenda.
- Start and end meetings on time and arrive at meetings punctually. We need to respect each other's time. The people who are present at the announced time should start without waiting for anyone not yet present.

## Agenda Template

<b>Name of Group:</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>Time of Meeting:</b>	<b>Type/Mode of Meeting:</b>
<b>Title of Meeting:</b>		
<b>Meeting Called By:</b>		<b>Location:</b>
<b>Participants:</b>		
<b>Meeting Objective(s):</b>		

Agenda Item	Lead	Purpose/Action	Timeframe

### Key Agreements

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### Action Items

Item	Person Taking Action	Due Date

## Tips for Meeting Participants

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*The best-planned meeting, led by the most able facilitator, will be successful only if those attending are prepared to fulfill their role. While some meetings may require only that you show up and pay attention, others require careful preparation and participation.*

### **Here are some tips for meeting attendees:**

- ✓ Respond in a timely manner to requests for agenda items.
- ✓ Be on time.
- ✓ Be well prepared:
  - ✓ Be familiar with the agenda and objectives.
  - ✓ If uncertain about the purpose or your role, ask beforehand.
  - ✓ Review minutes of previous meeting, if any.
  - ✓ Read or gather background information ahead of time.
  - ✓ Have action items assigned to you at prior meetings completed.
  - ✓ Bring a copy for yourself (and others if appropriate) of the agenda and other materials distributed in advance.
- ✓ Be concise and to the point.
- ✓ Participate in a constructive manner.
- ✓ Stay on topic.
- ✓ Volunteer your time, talent and expertise to get things done.
- ✓ Be realistic in your availability and ability to carry out action items.
- ✓ Bring your calendar for scheduling future meetings.

# Checklist for Meeting Convener/Facilitator

*Before initiating a meeting, think about your need or goal and how best to achieve it (e-mail, memo, conference call, individual calls, meeting, etc.). If the most appropriate method is a meeting, then consider the type of meeting and participants and use the following checklist as appropriate to ensure it is successful.*

*Checklist items with an asterisk (\*) apply to all meetings.*

## Before the Meeting

### Planning

- Identify the meeting purpose and desired outcome (*By end of meeting, I want the group to.*)\*
- Identify appropriate participants\*
- Prepare and distribute agenda in advance; ask for input and revise as necessary\*
- For each agenda item, identify action to be taken (discuss, decide, for information) and assign appropriate leader and time limit
- Determine strategies to achieve purpose (brainstorming, small group discussions, voting, etc.)
- Identify a facilitator, recorder, minutes taker and timer as needed
- Reserve room, equipment and refreshments as needed

### Set-up

- Arrange tables, chairs, visuals and refreshments
- Bring copies of agenda and supplemental materials (markers, paper, tape, etc.)
- Set up and test equipment

## Facilitating the Meeting

### At the Beginning of the Meeting

- Start on time\*
- Discuss the purpose of the meeting and outcomes expected\*
- Review the agenda, time frame and format for meeting\*
- Have individuals introduce themselves; Consider an icebreaker activity
- Develop or review ground rules; revise if necessary
- Address facility logistics (restrooms, smoking, refreshments, parking, etc.) as needed

### During the Meeting

- Keep the group on track and on time\*
- Encourage participation and protect minority opinions\*
- Demonstrate respectful behavior\*
- Confirm group's decisions or agreements\*
- Respectfully enforce ground rules\*
- Provide breaks or activities when needed

## At the End of the Meeting

- Clarify next steps\*
- Confirm action items, person responsible and due dates
- Set next meeting
- Evaluate the meeting process (what worked well, what to do differently)
- Thank the group
- End on time\*

## **Follow-Up**

- Engage in appropriate follow up\*
- Distribute minutes of meeting soon afterwards including action items and responsibilities
- Check in with those responsible for action items to keep process moving