

Effective Meetings

Be purposeful in your thoughts and planning for a meeting, starting with first considering if and when a meeting is most appropriate. Meetings are best for:

- Discussion of shared information
- Sharing of complex information likely to result in a lot of questions
- Facilitating group decision making
- Brainstorming ideas
- Considering solutions to complex issues
- Networking and strengthening relationships
- Building and showing support for others

Preparation

When planning a meeting, be sure you...

- are clear on the objective(s) or desired outcome(s).
- determine who needs to be invited to participate.
- thoughtfully structure the meeting – including topics, timing, format, technology needs, and room setup.
- consider scheduling needs in order to best support attendance and active participation.
- prepare an agenda and share it in advance, along with any other materials that will support the meeting discussion.

Facilitating the Meeting

- **Begin and end on time.** People will quickly learn that this is the practice and also respect it.
- **Assign roles.** Roles can rotate from meeting to meeting. It is key that you have a meeting leader, a note taker, and a time keeper. Depending on the content of the meeting, you may also choose to assign a scribe (for keeping viewable notes – think white board or flip chart).
- **Follow the agenda.** The meeting leader and time keeper work together to keep the meeting on track with the agenda. If tangential items or questions are raised, keep track of them for follow-up at another time or in a later meeting.
- **Encourage participation.** The best meetings are those that encourage many voices and diverse discussion. Depending on the topic, you may benefit from additional facilitation help, or structuring the meeting in a different way to encourage participation and sharing.
- **Take notes and assign action items.** Often progress is derailed because specific actions are not assigned or deadlines are not established. The note taker should note action items as well as who is responsible for each of them and due dates – this can be reviewed for clarity at the end of the meeting.
- **Continuous improvement.** Solicit feedback from participants at the close of the meeting. How was it? What worked, what didn't? This can be a simple quick-check to give you a barometer on meeting effectiveness, and help you know what to adjust for next time.