

Conducting Meetings

A well-planned meeting that accomplishes its objectives is worth the time and effort spent organizing it. Understanding how to run a meeting effectively will ensure that your district focuses on established priorities and progress towards district goals.

See 7-7 for information on the Open Meetings Act which governs how districts and other government entities conduct meetings.

See 7-16 for information on the [Public Records Act](#) which provides rules on what are considered public records and the public's right to access public records.

Although there are numerous types of meetings, the underlying intent of most involves the exchange of information. The following ideas can help to improve the quality of almost any meeting.

Plan in Advance

Determine what percentage of the meeting will be used to disseminate, exchange, or receive information and identify the specific results to be achieved in each category. Invite only the individuals who need to attend, and develop a strategy for communicating results of the meeting to other involved individuals whose presence is not required.

Cover the Logistics

Pay close attention to logistical items that can be easily overlooked but can take the steam out of a positive meeting. Arrive early and make sure you have enough handouts and supplies (pens, markers, etc.) for everyone. Use the physical setup of the meeting room to assist you in accomplishing your goals. In addition to having flexible seating, it is important to know how to control the lighting and the temperature in your meeting room. Some suggestions to consider when planning your meeting:

- ? Proposed dates and times, alternative dates
- ? How many participants, staff, guests speakers, visitor, etc. will attend
- ? What are the objectives of the meeting
- ? What type of atmosphere is desired
- ? What kind of interaction is desired: primarily between speakers, speak and participant, among participants or a combination
- ? What materials will the speakers or participants require
- ? What presentation methods are planned; what equipment is needed to accommodate these plans
- ? Will the total group be divided into small teams
- ? Are there're any special requirements needed or activities planned
- ? How much is budgeted for facilities, equipment, materials or supplies

Set a Clear Agenda

Each meeting should have a concise written agenda that is distributed in advance to all participants. The agenda should include a list of topics, identify the individual(s) responsible for

presenting the information, and estimate a realistic amount of time to be spent on each item. The agenda should also indicate whether an item requires discussion, a decision, or is simply an announcement.

Eliminate potential confusion by clearly indicating the starting time and location. Advise participants in advance of the meeting if they are expected to bring pertinent information with them. Be conservative in setting the agenda. Do not try to accomplish more than is possible in the time available.

Select a Facilitator

Each meeting should have a facilitator who is responsible for keeping the meeting focused and moving it forward. A good facilitator will be objective and will have the ability to tactfully prevent anyone from dominating the meeting. The facilitator should see that no one's contribution is attacked or overlooked. Sometimes the best facilitator is someone with no personal or emotional stake in the outcome of the meeting.

Establish Ground Rules

State the ground rules at the beginning of the meeting. Below are a few suggestions.

- ? Meetings will start and end on time.
- ? Everyone will participate.
- ? Comments will be non-judgmental.
- ? No one will interrupt anyone else.
- ? Assigned tasks will be done on time.
- ? Questions will be asked to clarify.
- ? Confidentiality will be maintained.

Reinforce with Visual Aids

The use of a flip chart, overhead projector, or other visual aids will allow participants to follow agenda items and help to maintain the group's focus.

Keep a Meeting Record

Every meeting should have someone assigned to record the key information and outcomes of the discussions, whether it be the district employee or the board secretary. It is extremely important to list any items requiring additional action, including the name of the responsible person and the date the action is to be completed. The record should also indicate how information will be communicated and coordinated between meetings.

Evaluate

An evaluation of the meeting should follow the session, even if the meeting continues longer than expected. Post-meeting evaluations provide immediate feedback to the facilitator and indicate the effectiveness and efficiency of the meeting relevant to its objectives.

With careful planning and preparation, meetings can be a valuable activity. By consistently reaching the objectives set, expectations for future meetings will remain high.