

FACT SHEET : How To Run Meetings

Running Meetings:

Well run meetings save a lot of time and can help you and/or your group to achieve your goals. For a meeting to be effective it is important to have a clear agenda and a meeting process that everyone can understand.

It is important to keep minutes to record all motions and decisions. Well recorded minutes make it easier for your organisation to keep track of decisions and provide a reliable record of your group's activities.

Effective minutes can help funding agencies assess your applications as activities and decisions supporting your application are clearly identifiable.

Meeting Preparation:

To ensure a smooth running and successful meeting:

- make sure an appropriate meeting time and meeting space is confirmed and any specific requirements such as presentation equipment or catering requirements are booked ahead.
- a notice of the meeting should be sent out in advance to enable people to make arrangements to attend.
- as early as possible prior to the meeting documents such as the 'Agenda', most recent 'Minutes' and any other required reading should be sent to members / meeting attendees to give them time to read.

Meeting Roles and Processes:

Group members involved in the meeting should know ahead of the meeting what their roles are and what they need to do to ensure the meeting is a success. The 'Community Resource Kit' suggests the following roles and processes are helpful to run a successful formal meeting. See pages 3-7 in Section 10: Meetings @ www.community.net.nz.

'Chair' or 'Facilitator':

This is the person responsible for facilitating the smooth running of meetings – they;

- guide the meeting procedure and make sure the meeting starts on time.
- welcome members and organise appropriate opening, and introductions.
- list any agreed ground rules.
- read and call for apologies.
- where appropriate, advise of housekeeping details e.g. time and length of meeting breaks.
- keep to the agenda and time-frame.
- allow time at the beginning of the meeting to add additional items to the agenda.
- facilitate discussions and avoid introducing their own opinion unless it's necessary.
- clarify 'Actions' : ensure that it is clear what is to be done by whom and when.
- thank everyone for attending the meeting, offers appropriate closing words.

‘Minute-taker’:

This is the person responsible for recording the ‘Minutes’ – the record of meeting proceedings which should be recorded from the start of the meeting until it closes. Minutes should include all the agreed decisions and tasks from each meeting. The minute-taker does not record everything that is said; but they should record the following:

- meeting time, date and venue
- names of those present and any apologies
- name of meeting chair or facilitator and minute-taker
- meeting purpose
- the matters for discussion, agreed action points or decision made and person responsible for and completion dates for those actions (minutes should be very clear and concise – it is helpful to outline agreed actions in ‘bold’ type)
- date, time, venue and purpose of next meeting

Agenda:

The agenda outlines what will be covered in the meeting. People attending the meeting should have an opportunity to contribute to the agenda before the agenda is completed and sent out. This Agenda is usually prepared by the meeting Chairperson and / or Secretary. A sample Agenda:

1. Welcome and Opening
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the previous meeting
4. Matters arising from the minutes
5. Correspondence
6. Matters arising from the correspondence
7. Formal Agenda Items
8. General Business
9. Reports (Financial etc...)
10. Date for next meeting

Procedures:

While the agenda determines what the meeting is ‘about’ - Procedures determine how the meeting should be run. Formal procedures are legally required for many organisations (such as incorporated societies) and as such are set out in the formal ‘rules’ of the organisation. If the group has a less formal structure they may be decided by the committee or members attending.

Follow Up:

After the meeting has finished, the following jobs need to be carried out:

- action plans and follow ups confirmed
- minutes checked by the chair or meeting organiser and the minute-taker
- the timeframe for circulation of minutes, new reports, background papers, and the next agenda arranged
- minutes circulated

Ground rules:

If required (particularly for any 'contentious' topics) 'Ground rules' may be developed by the group at the start of the meeting, facilitated by the Chairperson.

These rules should cover:

- respect for other people – no interrupting, no long monologues, no personal abuse, allow space for everybody to express their views
- confidentiality – agreement on whether meeting content may be discussed outside the meeting
- responsibility – everybody agrees to take responsibility for timekeeping, keeping to the agenda and voicing their opinions in the meeting rather than afterwards
- decision-making – how are decisions to be made, by consensus or voting? If consensus can't be achieved, at what point will alternative decision-making methods be used, and who will decide?

Formal Meetings (e.g.: AGM's):

Formal meetings are often required by a group's constitution or rules – check your rules to see if your group is required to hold 'formal meetings'. An example of a formal meeting is an annual general meeting (or AGM).

Sample AGM agenda:

- Chairperson's Welcome
- Apologies
- Minutes of the previous AGM
- Matters Arising from the previous minutes
- Correspondence
- Chairperson's Report
- Treasurer's Report / Financial Statements
- Election of Officers
- General Business
- Next Meeting Date

Procedural Details of Formal Meetings and AGM's:

Voting Rights

Voting at formal meetings can be by a '**voice vote**' (if the issue is not very contentious), a '**show of hands**' (if a voice vote is not decisive), or a '**ballot**' (especially if there are more than two outcomes, as when electing officers). In the case of a ballot, two scrutineers are appointed (one from each opposing faction, if any) and they give each member a slip of paper with a list of candidates on it. Members cross off names of candidates they do not support, then the slips are collected by the scrutineers and counted outside the meeting room. After counting is completed, the chair moves that ballot papers be destroyed. In the event of a tied vote the chair has the final (or casting) vote.

Quorums

The rules governing groups generally require a '**quorum**', or minimum number of people,

to be present before a meeting can be held. This is usually, but not always, a third of the membership. If a quorum is lost during the meeting, it's declared closed. Decisions at meetings are valid only if there is a quorum present.

Motions and Resolutions

A '**motion**' is a formal recommendation put by a member to a meeting for debate and consideration, by saying "I move that...". Motions must be clear and direct e.g.: "I move that \$250 be spent on a new whiteboard". *All motions should be minuted.* The name of the person putting forward the motion and the name of the person seconding it must be recorded in the minutes. Where possible a motion should be put in writing before the meeting, to make it easier for the secretary or minute taker to accurately record it.

There are two types of motions: those that deal with the business of the organisation itself ('**substantive motions**') and those that deal with the way the meeting is run ('**procedural motions**'). Each motion (except motions "from the chair") has to be supported ('**seconded**') by another person before it's open for discussion. The Chair then asks the proposer to speak to the motion. Other members can add to this discussion. If there is no discussion, the motion is then put to the meeting for a decision, and members indicate (by vote) whether they agree or disagree with it. If a substantive motion is passed, it becomes a '**resolution**'.

To explain this further please see www.community.net.nz for 'MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS FLOWCHART' © Crown copyright 2006

Acknowledgements, Resources and Websites

Much of the information in this fact sheet was sourced on-line on the Community Net website in the 'Community Resource Kit' first published in 2006 by Family and Community Services, Ministry of Social Development, The Local Government and Community Branch, The Department of Internal Affairs, ISBN 0-478-29339-9 © Crown copyright 2006—available www.community.net.nz

www.fis.org.nz - This fact sheet also contains information from the 'How to Run a Meeting' guide available on-line from the Funding Information Service, © 2006 Funding Information Service

www.effectivemeetings.com - EffectiveMeetings.com is an online resource centre providing information about meetings in the form of articles, tips and quizzes.

<http://www.3m.com/meetingnetwork/readingroom/meetingguides.html> - This 3M website also contains some innovative ideas for running meetings.

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