

Meeting Procedure

Our meeting procedure is based on a commitment to strive for a balance between process and achievement of tasks.

The following has been extracted from "The Art of Facilitation"¹ and adopted as a guide for facilitators of meetings, or, where marked (#) and shown in bold type, as firm procedure to be followed.

A. Preparation Checklist : (Useful guide for facilitator)

1. What is the meeting purpose? Is it clear?
2. Who needs to be at the meeting? Are these key people available?
3. Decide date, time and venue
4. Does an agenda need to be circulated? ... discussed? ... with whom?
5. What equipment is needed? Generate a list
6. Does resource material need to be circulated? .. available before the meeting?
7. Do any key people need to be reminded?
8. What outcomes are needed from the meeting?

B. Arrival

1. People need time to arrive,
2. Is there adequate seating, light, etc.
3. (#) Ensure a commitment to arrive on time.

C. Ritual

We have an opening circle and we will evolve a means of indicating when each of us has completed sharing

D. Establishing Roles

1. Facilitator - May have volunteered or been appointed at previous meeting
2. Minute taker
3. Timekeeper

E. Confirm Meeting Details

The facilitator confirms :

1. Ending time of meeting
2. Any required outcomes (be specific).
3. Apologies

F. Review Previous Decisions

1. Review and confirm minutes. Facilitator ensures a member signs and dates minutes.
2. Check out action taken as a result of decisions
3. If action has not been taken on a decision, bring it forward, and re- enter it in the records of this meeting.
4. If action is no longer practical or relevant, note this alongside the decision in the previous minutes.

¹ Ref: <http://www.thenile.co.nz/books/Dr-Dale-Hunter/The-Art-Of-Facilitation/9781869418175/>

G. Open Agenda Setting

1. Agenda Items:
Each person puts forward agenda items, which are preferably recorded on a white board or similar (the name of the person who initiated the item is placed alongside it.)
2. Time Setting:
The initiator is asked by the facilitator to estimate how long it will take to discuss the item. This time is checked with the others and noted beside the item.
3. Priority Setting :
The times of all items are added together and priorities are set (perhaps by having a round where everyone nominates their two most important items). This will generate a priority list (on white board).

H. Discussion, Decision Making, and Action Planning

Each agenda item is now discussed in turn. The following process may be useful :

1. The facilitator invites the initiator to :
 - a. Introduce the item (issue and background)
 - b. Say what they want from the group (feedback, ideas, alternatives, or a decision)
 - c. Suggest the process they would like the group to use (e.g. rounds, brainstorm, pros and cons)
2. The facilitator seeks clarification and group agreement ... the use of rounds is often useful ... common ground and differences will become obvious.
3. When this process is complete the facilitator summarizes and checks to see what else is needed for the initiator's request to be fulfilled.
4. If group agreement is needed, request proposals from the group ... continue this process until a proposal meets general agreement ... it may be helpful to reach minor agreements along the way ... record these ... if a decision is being held up by one or two people, the facilitator can ask what they propose to solve the difficulty ... if agreement is still not reached, check with dissenters to see if they are directly affected by the outcome ... if not see if they will allow the decision to be made anyway.
(#) Those directly affected by a decision need to be directly involved with the decision making.
5. The time keeper keeps an eye on the time, and informs the group. The group needs to make updated decisions as to how to spend the balance of time available. It is usually better not to extend the time (as this educates the group to be intentional in decision making)
6. If a decision is not made, you may need an interim decision such as :
 - a. Deferring to another meeting
 - b. Delegating one or more people to decide on behalf of the group within given parameters.
7. (#) Decisions made can be revisited once only, at the next meeting.

I. Minutes

1. People present
2. Date and time
3. Agenda items
4. Decisions made (write down each decision as it is reached, including specific actions to be taken ... by whom ... by when ... Always be very specific).
5. Minutes will be read and confirmed at the following meeting.
6. Minutes are to be a fair record of events. Any personal comments are to be acknowledged as such.

J. Next Meeting

1. Arrange time and place and planned agenda - the agenda whiteboard may be useful here.

K. Completion

A closing round may be held in which people express anything that is still incomplete for them, or any feedback they would like to give to other members of the group.

Ending

The group may have a ritual for ending

L. Follow Up

1. After the meeting, circulate the Minutes/decisions. A minute/ decision book will be kept in a central place.
2. Develop a system of regularly reviewing Minutes to ensure no issues remain unattended.