Strategies for Conducting Effective Community Meetings

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Our Focus

**Preparation Process**

confidence + framework allows leadership to emerge
Each of us will be better prepared for and more comfortable in guiding group meetings & processes
Agenda

• Use our OARRS
• Key Ingredients & 4 Ps for Effective Meetings
• Outreach and Engagement Tools
• Planning & Conducting the Meeting
• After the meeting & Evaluation
• Design your next community meeting
• Interventions
Meeting Challenges

What specific challenges have you had in facilitating or conducting community meetings?
Tool Discussion

The process
break
**OARRS**

**Outcome**

**Agenda**

**Roles**

**Responsibilities**

**Scope**
Tool Discussion

OARRS

Outcome
Agenda
Roles
Responsibilities
Scope

Each of us will be better prepared for and more comfortable in guiding group processes
Tool Discussion

**OARRS**

- **Outcome**
- **Agenda**
- **Roles**
- **Responsibilities**
- **Scope**

*How we’re going to get there.*
Tool Discussion

**OARRS**

- **Outcome**
- **Agenda**
- **Roles** → Who does what to make the meeting effective.
- **Responsibilities**
- **Scope**
Tool Discussion

**OARRS**

Outcome
Agenda
Roles
Responsibilities ➔ What are our shared responsibilities as members of the group?
Scope
Tool Discussion

**OARRS**

- **Outcome**
- **Agenda**
- **Roles**
- **Responsibilities**
- **Scope**

What are we empowered to do?
Shared Responsibilities

Ground Rules
Participant Guidelines
Group Norms

Some prompts:

• How will we agree to act as a group?
• What are our responsibilities to each other?
Let’s discuss what we just did.
The Check-In

Check in to confirm:

• understanding
• agreement
Tool Discussion

The Negative Poll

To ask specifically for any disagreement or dissent.

Is there any reason not to use this list?

Is anyone not willing to use this list?

Is anyone not willing for the group to take this action?
Community Meetings

Importance of Community Voices:

- Evaluate goals and objectives
- Keeps participants updated on current events
- Allows the group to pull resources together for decision making
- Provides opportunity or opinions and ideas to be expressed
Meeting Facts

• ~11 million meetings held each day in the US

• The “higher up” you are in an organization or system’s infrastructure, the more time you spend in meetings

• Most organizations spend 7-15 % of their personnel resources on meetings
Beginning to Plan

• Find people to work with to help plan
• Preliminary questions
• Think about logistics
• Assign tasks
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>GETTING READY: PREPARATION</strong></th>
<th><strong>GETTING UNDERWAY: GROUP FOUNDATION</strong></th>
<th><strong>GETTING IT DONE: GROUP WORK</strong></th>
<th><strong>WRAP UP</strong></th>
<th><strong>FOLLOW - UP</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Purpose made clear</td>
<td>Begin with opening that:</td>
<td>• Group works towards achieving purpose and outcomes</td>
<td>• Recap outcomes</td>
<td>• Meeting record/outputs produced and distributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Roles clarified</td>
<td>• Clarifies session objective</td>
<td>• May include group discussion, problem solving, and decision – making</td>
<td>• Next steps clear</td>
<td>• Informing and communicating with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Logistics planned</td>
<td>• Gives results to be achieved</td>
<td>• Most of the meeting time spent in the body</td>
<td>• Evaluate group process</td>
<td>• Monitoring implementation work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collect information on context, work, participants</td>
<td>• Explains the roles</td>
<td>• Managing group dynamics</td>
<td>• Manage the process and progress</td>
<td>• Identifying further needs for group work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Agenda determined and communicated</td>
<td>• Provide overview of agenda and/or process</td>
<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Deliverables defined</td>
<td>• Establishes Ground Rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Prepare opening statement</td>
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Key Ingredients

- Meet people where they are—convenient time & place
- Use language, exercises, games, visuals
- Allow time & space for participants to talk with one another & build relationships
- Get neighborhood involved before the meeting
Key Ingredients

• Partner with local groups to increase potential for follow up
• Focus on turnout...attendance is critical
• Involve facilitators and community leaders
• Use staff to manage logistics
• Provide food, transportation, childcare, homework support if appropriate
Good Meeting Planning...4Ps

**Preparedness** Checklist:

- Who should be in the meeting?
- Why?
- What information do they need to be prepared?
- By what date should they get the information?
4Ps

**Purpose** Checklist:
- Is this meeting important? Why?

**Process** Checklist:
- How will the meeting be conducted?
- Content & clear outcomes
- Setting
- Time management
- Facilitation
- Summary of closure
4Ps

Payoff Checklist:
- How does the meeting payoff for clients and customers...?
- For the organization
- For oneself
- stakeholders
• Have a system of communication worked out between staff and keep your team leader updated on all progress to avoid any confusion or conflicting plans
Possible locations:

- Community College or University
- Library
- Local Community Center
- School
- Town Hall
- Church, synagogue, etc.
Outreach & Engagement Tools

Outreach Tools

- Phone calls
- Social Media
- Email
- Fliers
- Signs/banners
- Door hangers
- TV & radio announcements
Outreach & Engagement Tools

• Invite Elected Officials and Local Policy Makers
• Explain what the issue(s) you will be discussing, why it’s relevant to them
• Give them the opportunity to offer opening remarks…send talking points
• Explain what you’d like them to say
• Send formal Thank you after the meeting
Creating an Agenda

Agendas should include:

• Meeting date, time, location
• Meeting Purpose, Objectives, Outcomes
• Topics for discussion
• Time allotment for each topic
• Presenter or discussion leader
• Decisions & action items
Creating an Agenda

Agenda Outline:
• Welcome (5min)
• Introduction (10 min)
• Opening Remarks (10 min)
• Agency Rep. or Panel (10 min)
• Topic Discussion (30 - 45 Min)
• Question & Answer (15-20 min)
• Call to Action/ Next Steps (10 min)
• Adjourn
What to Bring...

Checklist of items to bring to the meeting:

• Copies of the agenda
• Informational materials about the topics
• Flip chart w/markers, paper, pens, markers
• Sign-in Sheet
• Name tags
Meeting Room Setup

Wide U-Shape

Interactive Circle Set-Up
Focus Question

Identify something you have done to make a meeting more effective.
Facilitating the Meeting

• Listen to understand

• Stay in your role

• Don’t be defensive
Before the Meeting

• Go into the community early, convene a small group meeting of local advocates & leaders ...let them help develop the agenda

• Set up meeting at a time, place & frequency agreeable to local conditions

• Plan 2-hour meetings and 20-minute presentations
Facilitating a Hostile Group

What are some practices that don’t work well?
Facilitating a Hostile Group

Collaborative approaches often lead to sustainable outcomes
• Include key stakeholders from the beginning
• Work in the best interests of all
• Build relationships and trust
• Practice open, honest communication
Facilitating a Hostile Group

• Consider multiple ways to engage the public...engage a neutral facilitator
• Determine whether or not a public meeting is the best approach
• Be honest about the purpose...don’t seek input if a decision is already made
• Determine what info/expertise is needed
Dealing with Adversarial Behavior

Why individuals are adversarial

- Taken by surprise
- They perceive something isn’t fair or unresponsive public process
- Stakes are high and they want to “win”
- Sources of info are untrustworthy or “experts” don’t agree
- No alternative avenue to express their concerns is available
Dealing with Adversarial Behavior

Controlling One’s Own Emotions

• Take responsibility for own emotions & behaviors
• Work to de-escalate the conflict, not escalate it
• Be prepared mentally
• Be aware that stress weakens your behavioral control
Before the Meeting

• Organize and practice your presentations...keep them at a level most members of the community can understand
• Know when to use audio/visual equipment...bring what’s appropriate
• Use a facilitator who is familiar with local conditions
During the Meeting

- Anticipate conflict ahead of time
- Be clear about the meeting process
- Be clear about who the decision makers are
- Be clear about next steps and how communication will occur afterwards
- Be as specific and concrete as possible
During the Meeting

• Arrive early to greet, meet, & mix with the local people as they arrive
• Have an agenda, nametags, key points and FAQs distributed before the meeting begins
• Make it clear to the audience that information should go both ways; local input on the issue is critical...use ground rules & microphones
• Record issues of concern on a flip chart for all to see and add to
During the Meeting

• Leave quality time for public comment and interchange of ideas
• Admit when you don’t know something or not certain
• Ask a local official everyone knows and respects to open the meeting
• Agency staff should stay at the meeting to take part in the conversation
• Use local geographically & socially familiar examples in pp presentations
During the Meeting

• Mix up seating so agency reps don’t sit together
• Use clear slides that illustrate the point
• Discuss the strengths, weaknesses, & uncertainties about the issues or the proposal
Concluding the Meeting

• Set a finish time and stick to it
• If more time is needed, move the spill-over discussion to after the last agenda item or plan another meeting
• Keep working groups under 30
• Conclude with a summary and announce the next meeting
• Celebrate success!
After the Meeting

• Be accountable to commitments

• Meeting Minutes stand as the record of a meeting and should list the decisions made, follow-up action and direct statements to avoid misquoting

• Minutes should be readily available to citizens...
After the Meeting

• Monitor local media broadcasts to ascertain community reaction

• Prepare a written summary of issues, suggestions and/or questions raised by attendees...distribute the report to all meeting participants, policy-makers & other interested parties

• Keep going back to the community to earn their trust
Evaluate

Evaluate the process and outcome

- Surveys, polls, mailed questionnaires

- Set a time to debrief or meet with partners and staff to discuss how the meeting event went
Design Your Next Community Meeting

What is the purpose of the meeting?
What are the key issues & concerns?
Who should play a role in the planning?
Do you need a facilitator?
Who, When, where, time, how long?
What’s the outreach & advertising strategy?
Role Play: Managing the Meeting

Preventions and Intervention

Preventions - help avoid disruption from the start

Interventions - use when confronted with disruption or problems during the meeting
www.ideapartnership.org
http://Mrsc.org
www.ctb.ku.edu
www.meetinggenie.com
www.mindtools.com
www.joe.org
www.orau.gov
www.sitepoint.com
“Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being.

Goethe
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