

HOW TO RUN EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

People:	People running meetings, ideally al your group reads it.
Time:	30 minutes to read and discuss the guide
Resources:	This guide and a place to meet

How can this help us?

Running effective meetings is key to making Transition happen in your community. People running meetings should read this guide so they understand how to run an effective meeting. It is great if all people in your group can also read it, but this is not essential.

The guide:

Plan your meetings to be effective:

Have an agenda:

- This a list of the things you want to discuss at the meeting
- You can ask for agenda items beforehand off people

Have a good facilitator:

- The facilitator helps keep the meeting on track, makes opportunities for all people to participate
- You can decide who will facilitate at the start of the meeting or beforehand which means that they can prepare for the meeting

Some tips for running an effective meeting

The first time you run a meeting it may feel a bit chaotic and hard, every meeting is different so don't worry as there will also be easy ones.

Make sure people know how the meeting works:

- Agree together what behaviour is acceptable in the meeting and what isn't. You can agree this at the start of the meeting if nothing is already in place. If you write this down then it can become your group agreement for future meetings
- Explain and agree how decisions made, see our guide to decision making

Agree roles for the meeting:

- Facilitator - if not already in place
- The keeper of time - to make sure meeting runs to time
- The keeper of the record – noting the decisions and action points
- The keeper of the heart – speaking up when the meeting gets charged, tense, tired, conflicted or out of balance in some other way

GUIDE

Agree on the agenda:

Involve people at the start of meeting by asking them for more topics and to agree the agenda.

- Decide together on what is a priority, you could tackle difficult issues in the middle so people have had a chance to warm up, but are not yet tired
- Maybe some of the points can be discussed in smaller working groups.
- The agenda usually has "standing items" - the same for every meeting, at Transition Network we use the following:
 - oA go round - everyone says a few words of how they are, and something they're enjoying at the moment
 - oSet up roles and agree the agenda and timings
 - oCheck if actions from the last meeting have happened, and celebrate them
 - oTHE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING, this will be the topics you have agreed and is the main part of the meeting
 - oCheck the actions for this meeting are clear
 - oReflect together on how the meeting was run
- It is good to have your agenda visible so everyone can see it, then you can cross out points as you complete them

Agree on timings for the meeting will make sure you get everything done:

- Decide when meeting will finish and how much time will be spent on each agenda item
- Have breaks to revive people (for drinks, toilet, cigarettes) and for informal chatting, especially if the meeting lasts longer than 1½ hours
- If during the meeting it looks like it won't finish on time get everyone's agreement to continue

Take one point at a time:

- Make sure the group doesn't stray from that point until it has been dealt with.
- A common way of starting is to go through action points of the last meeting and recap recent events
- Summarise regularly
- Make clear decisions
- VERY IMPORTANT: Record action points and who has agreed to do them

Don't let the same people take on all the work:

- This can lead to tension and informal hierarchies within the group
- Encourage everyone to feel able to volunteer for tasks and roles
- More experienced members can offer to share skills and experience with newer members

Encourage participation at all times:

- You can use tools such as idea storming, go-rounds, talking sticks and small groups to encourage inclusivity
- Don't let the same few people do all the talking or let everyone talk at the same time

Don't let the meeting get too heated:

- Challenge put downs and discriminatory remarks.
- Have breaks for cooling off or split into pairs or small groups to diffuse tension.
- Try to keep discussions positive, but don't ignore conflict - deal with it before it grows.

Ending the meeting well, will help you enormously

- Get people to read out their action points
- Decide on a date, time and venue for the next meeting
- Ask people what went well and what needs to be improved about the meeting
- You might also want to decide on points to be discussed at the next meeting
- Get people's contact details so you can send them minutes and let them know about future meetings
- Remember to thank everyone for turning up and contributing.

It can be nice to follow the meeting with an informal social activity like sharing a meal or going to the pub or a café. Think about any special needs - not everyone drinks alcohol, you might have vegetarians or vegans in your group and so on, so try to choose an inclusive venue or activity.

After the meeting

- Send minutes (including action points) to everyone who was at the meeting and don't forget those people who could not make it, but would like to be kept informed
- Evaluating your meetings can help to constantly improve them, the organisers can get together afterwards and discuss what worked and what didn't

Most importantly, remember to celebrate what you have achieved!

More support:

For more support and information on developing healthy groups go here:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/healthy-groups/>

Check out the 7 essential ingredients of Transition here:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/>

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