



California Center for Cooperative Development
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GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS

Some Components of Good Meetings

- Good facilitation
- Commonly understood goals
- High level of participation

Be Prepared

1. Select a time and location convenient for most people.
2. If additional co-op members need to be recruited, publicize the meeting. Send press releases to your local media announcing your meeting and specify a contact person. Encourage word-of-mouth promotion. Post notices at strategic locations.
3. Clearly define the goals of the meeting and structure it accordingly. Begin the meeting with the most important items.
4. Arrange for a facilitator and note take in advance, and specify what should be included in the minutes (see *Keep Minutes*, below). Groups meeting regularly may consider rotating facilitation to give more people a chance to develop these skills.
5. Prepare a written agenda and post or distribute it (ahead of time if possible). Distribute a handout that includes the names and phone numbers of people to call for answers to questions.
6. It is best to limit meetings to 2 hours, but make sure that the meeting goals and agenda items can be met in the allotted time.

Sample agenda: (for an informational meeting)

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 7:00 p.m. | Introductions |
| 7:15 p.m. | Background and basic report: Describe what a co-op is, how it operates and how it can address mutual needs and interests. |
| 7:30 p.m. | Discussion and decision making: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe purpose and goals of co-op being organized.• Do we have a suitable business idea?• Does the concept make sense?• Present preliminary objectives – discuss and modify• Vote: Should we continue to research the idea of starting a co-op?• If so, divide organizing responsibilities among those interested or elect a steering committee to guide the organizing process.• Set the next meeting's date and time. |
| 9:00 p.m. | Adjourn (on time). |



Keep Minutes

Minutes record what happened at the meeting, including:

- date, location and who attended;
- The statement and source of a proposed resolution presented for vote;
- Who seconded the resolution;
- Note if there was a lot of discussion and briefly summarize it;
- The vote total – if consensus is used, note who dissented.

UTILIZE OPTIMAL FACILITATION TECHNIQUES

1. Keep the facilitator role neutral

- The facilitator's role is to ensure that the group accomplishes the meeting goals in a democratic manner.
- A facilitator should leave the facilitator role to offer an opinion by saying something like, "Stepping outside my role of facilitator, I think..."
- If the facilitator wants to support a particular position, s/he should turn the role over to a volunteer until discussion ends on that agenda item.

2. Keep the meeting moving, on track, and on time

- Call the meeting to order on time. Review the agenda and meeting goals. Ask participants to introduce themselves.
- Introduce each agenda item and call on those making presentations
- Make sure that discussion does not get stuck on an item. If a discussion wanders off the subject, remind the group of the agenda item being discussed and the objective of the discussion. If the group lacks sufficient information, cut off the discussion and clarify the information needed for the group to make a decision at a subsequent meeting.
- Conduct needed voting. Before a vote, clearly state the motion or proposal. If the outcome is close, ask someone to verify the vote by re-counting hands or ballots. If consensus is used and there are few dissenters, find points of agreement and work to redefine the motion.
- Conclude the meeting on time and on a note of achievement. Remind participants of the actions taken and decisions made. Ask participants to evaluate the meeting by stating what went well and what could be improved to promote more productive meetings. Close by identifying follow-up actions and announcing the next meeting date, time and location.

3. Encourage meaningful discussion

- Ask people to speak for themselves and to be specific. Do not allow statements like, "Some people seem to feel..." or "What s/he is trying to say is..."
- Keep the discussion on the topic, but encourage people to express their opinions
- Deal with differences of opinion. When handled forthrightly, differences of opinion can yield creative solutions.

4. Help everyone to participate

- Make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak. Do not let one or two people monopolize the discussion. Draw out those who tend to be quiet.



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- Encourage open discussion that allows for disagreement on issues, but do not allow participants to behave rudely.
- If the agenda is taking longer than anticipated, decide as a group whether to extend the meeting or to move some agenda items to the next meeting.

5. Dealing with disruptive behavior

A. Prevention techniques

- Get general agreement on the agenda before the meeting.
- Use group input to set ground rules at the beginning of the meeting. For example: be brief; allow everyone to participate; do not interrupt. Restate the ground rules at the beginning of each meeting.
- If certain people continually cause problems, encourage the other participants to point out their offensive behavior.

B. What to do when problems occur

- When a person's comments are off track, repeat the goals of the meeting ("That is an interesting point, but we are focusing on _____").
- If someone is dominating the discussion, explain the importance of group participation and call on others to express their thoughts.
- Take short breaks to relieve tension
- Form small committees to deal with specific problems or issues instead of using valuable group time.

--Adapted from "Facilitating Meetings," by Gayle Haberman