The heart of every club or organization can be found during its meetings. Meetings can range from a lighthearted, informational gathering of general members to a heated decision making session for executive board members. Good meetings are always a result of careful planning and preparation! There are different styles to running a meeting. Whether you use parliamentary procedure or a more relaxed format, it is important to know what your purpose and goals are, how you hope to accomplish your goals, and how you communicate.

**Agendas**

Preparing an agenda not only communicates to your group what the meeting is about, but also makes you think in advance about what information you would like to cover during the meeting.

When creating an agenda, keep in mind who will be at the meeting, in what kind of space the meeting will be held, and how long you wish the meeting to run. Miscalculations of any of the above can lead to a disorganized and unproductive meeting!

The following is a detailed checklist that you can use when creating your agenda!

**General Information**

- Name of Club/Organization
- Title of meeting (ie., Retreat Planning Meeting, Executive Board Meeting, etc.)
- Who is calling the meeting
- Date
- Starting time
- Ending time
- Place
- Agenda put out ahead of meeting (at least one day but not more than one week ahead of time, so it will be fresh in people’s minds)
- Desired outcomes, tasks (ie., determine who will hang flyers, ratify a constitutional amendment, etc.)
- Meeting procedure (ie., any of various problem-solving techniques, presentations, discussions, etc.)
- Decision-making method (ie., voting agreement of all members)
- Final decision maker (team, leader, other)
- Preparation suggestions (ie., background materials)
- Other notes to participants

**People Attending**

- President/Leader/Chairperson
- Club members
- Role assignments (for example, subject-matter experts, implementation specialists, recorder, facilitator)
- Guests

**Agenda Schedule**

- Sequence of items
- Person(s) responsible for each item
- Procedure for dealing with each item
- Time allotted for each item
**Running Meetings**

Here are some helpful tips to help guide you through a productive meeting:

1. Begin meetings on time, and don’t interrupt your progress to fill in stragglers on what they have missed. Have all resources (agenda, handouts, etc.) easily available to all participants.

2. Do not waste time reading through information that can be easily distributed or posted.

3. Establish time limits for potentially lengthy agenda items and make all participants aware of these limits.

4. Stick to your agenda!

5. Accomplish purposes; restate conclusions as needed.

6. Speak clearly and confidently.

7. Encourage individuals to speak up and respect each opinion.

8. Finish on time, and on a positive note.

(Adapted from “Productive Meetings,” distributed by the University of Missouri Columbia)

**Things to Watch Out For in a Meeting**

- No clear, agreed upon agenda.
- Leaving the process of the meeting to fate. A meeting leader must facilitate, not wait for luck. Facilitating is helping the organization stay on track, on time, reaching for the goal, etc.
- Speeding off without a map. Where does this meeting fit in the overall plan for dealing with the issue? Take time for the planning process.
- Mixing purposes. One purpose at a time.
- Too many agenda items. Do not set your organization up for failure with too ambitious of an agenda.
- No mutual agreement on what the problem is.
- Jumping in with a solution.
- Shifting focus. Stay on the same subject.
- Lack of visual helpers. Find a way for participants to follow the subject as the meeting proceeds.
- Unclear of incomplete action items or descriptions. Pin down the who, what, when, where, why, and how at the meeting.
- Missing key people.
- Meeting being dominated by one or two people.
- Not taking time to assure mutual understanding. Learn the issues facing other members. Explain your position.
- Uneven participation. Varying levels of understanding.
- Premature motions. Do not make a motion until the problem is adequately discussed and analyzed. If you are unable to agree on the problem, you probably are unable to agree on the solution.

*Taken from the Leadership Resource Center at Grand Valley State University.*