

TIPS FOR PLANNING AND RUNNING SUBCOMMITTEE & SUBGROUP MEETINGS

SOUTH SACRAMENTO/FLORIN STEERING COMMITTEE,
SACRAMENTO METROPOLITAN AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT



Prepared by
**Consensus and Collaboration Program,
College of Continuing Education,
California State University, Sacramento**

Leading a Subcommittee or Subgroup: Planning Your Group's Time

Your group may need to spend at least part of its first meeting planning its activities. The group leader can assemble a proposed agenda for the first meeting that the group can confirm at the start of the meeting.

The group members may want to get clear on:

- What is our purpose? Or, in other words, what do we expect to have in hand when we are done with our work?

The group leader may want to start the first meeting with a proposed purpose or set of goals for the group to consider and finalize.

- How will we work together? For example, we will work toward consensus, and if we can't achieve it, we will report back the range of different viewpoints, with pros & cons for each one.
- How can we organize our meeting time to best use our time to achieve our purpose/goals?

Here is one typical way that a group may use its time. These activities might take one but usually multiple meetings:

- Discuss why the group has formed and what participants hope it can do
- Agree on a purpose or set of goals for the group
- Brainstorm a number of ideas on activities or actions to achieve the goals
- Discuss to make sure everyone is clear on each item, and to share perspectives on the pros/cons of how each item would help to achieve the goals
- Then prioritize: through discussion or individual voting (each person gets 5 dots to vote, for example), choose most important items
- Identify how each activity/action would best be undertaken – who, when, what, how will it be done?
- Settle on recommendations to bring back to the larger Subcommittee or the Steering Committee

Planning Your Meetings: Developing Agendas

Things to consider as you develop an agenda for your meeting:

- What are your goals and objectives?
What is the specific outcome that you need from the meeting? Is it to gather information? Deliberate? Recommend? Decide? How will each part of the agenda build towards what you'd like to accomplish?
- What conversations do you need to have? What questions will the group discuss?
What – specifically – do you need attendees to think about, talk about, and decide on? **Powerful organizing questions are a leader's gold.** They focus the conversation and open space for new thinking and dialogue.
- Who needs to be involved in the conversation?
Who has the information, perspective, or expertise to ensure your group has what it needs to discuss and act? Who has a perspective you'll need to take into account in order to craft a way forward that will be successful?
- What materials are needed to make informed decisions?
You can easily overwhelm people with information. Ask yourself, what is most directly relevant to the questions you are organizing the meeting around? What must people be aware of and consider? How can you make it easiest for people to find and see this information?
- Who have you invited, and how can you make the meeting work for them?
Anticipate your audience – its composition and its size – and then use methods to bring everyone's voices into the conversation, regardless of their style.
Possible activities include: individual and paired thought exercises, small groups, full group discussions, worksheets, reviewing visual materials together, succinct presentations, brainstorming, mind-mapping, and more! Once in-person meetings resume, activities might include field trips, and using blank paper on the wall or table to generate ideas, review ideas, and dot vote.
- How much time will we need?

The next two pages are forms you can use:

1. A Meeting Planner sheet you can print out to help you think through and plan your meeting's agenda
2. A basic agenda template you can customize for your meeting

Planning Your Meetings: Sample Agenda Template

TITLE

Day, Date, Time Start-Time End

Zoom link & telephone call-in information (Dial-in number, Meeting ID, Passcode)

AGENDA

Meeting Purpose/Objectives:

1. Item
2. Item

Time	Agenda Item	Lead
Start time- Stop time	Welcome, Introductions & Agenda Review	Subcommittee/subgroup lead
Start-Stop	Information Item <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 1 • Topic 2 	Information sharers
Start-Stop	Discussion Item <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context: any background information, key questions for the discussion • Group discussion • Public comments if not yet heard • Next steps 	Lead Information sharer (staff, etc.) All
Start-Stop	<i>Comfort Break</i>	All
Start-Stop	Activity Item (Prioritize from a list of options; develop a recommendation, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context • Group discussion • Public comments if not yet heard • Group action • Next steps 	Lead Information sharer (staff, etc.) All
Start-Stop (usually 5-10 minutes)	Wrap Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary: what we accomplished • Action Items: who to do what by when • Meeting evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What worked well? ○ What to do differently next time? 	All
Stop time	Adjourn	All

Planning Your Meetings: Meeting Logistics and Materials Checklist

This checklist includes possible preparation and announcement steps as well as possible materials for your meeting.

Pre-Meeting Preparation

- Prepare meeting agenda
- Identify complete list of handouts/related materials
- Prepare any PowerPoint slides
- Ensure your Zoom or other remote meeting is finalized
- Line up staff support as needed
- Ensure you have a list of group members and interested members of the public and their contact information
- Advise your group members how to prepare, where to find materials, and who to contact with questions
- Coordinate with other group members around who will do what at the meeting (for example, who will take notes)

Meeting Announcement

Make sure your group members and interested public have the information they need about the meeting:

- Day and time
- Link and/or call-in information
- Pre-reading materials
- Agenda (so they understand the context of their discussion)
- Who to contact for more information

Possible Meeting Materials

- Agenda
- Copy of SC Code of Conduct
- Any handouts/related materials
- Any slides
- Any summaries from previous meetings

Running a Meeting: Guidelines for Working in Groups

When working in small groups, it is helpful to share roles and responsibilities among different group members. Here are some of the responsibilities for running a small group that you and your group members may want to share:

A FACILITATOR OR GROUP LEADER: One volunteer works to ensure that the group stays with the assigned task and that all participants have opportunities to share ideas. This person and all group members work to ensure use of the ground rules or code of conduct.



A NOTE TAKER: A volunteer writes down ideas and points shared, as well as action items, on either paper, a flipchart or by typing into a computer. The note taker makes sure to promptly turn in the draft notes to the facilitator or group leader to share them with the group and possibly others.

A TIMEKEEPER: A volunteer keeps track of time and periodically reminds the group how much time is left for a particular activity.

A REPORTER (may be the facilitator/group leader): A volunteer reports back in a concise way to the Steering Committee, and may present questions to the Steering Committee or seek further direction to help the group accomplish its tasks and achieve its goals.

Running a Meeting: Steering Committee Code of Conduct and Other Working Agreements

All participants are asked to agree to basic working agreements for a productive meeting. Key aspects of the Code of Conduct include:

1. Treat everyone with courtesy and respect
2. Avoid personally attacking or demeaning anyone
3. Avoid interrupting others who have the floor
4. Avoid disrupting or delaying the meeting
5. Strive to be fair and unbiased towards each other, the public, and the District
6. Value each other's time and respect each other's opportunity to speak
7. Strive to reach consensus, but agree to disagree if need be
8. Listen courteously and attentively to the public
9. Strive to hold each other accountable to the Code of Conduct

Other possible agreements may include:

HONOR TIME

In order to achieve meeting objectives, it will be important to follow the time guidelines provided by the leader.

ALL IDEAS AND POINTS OF VIEW HAVE VALUE

You are not required to defend or promote your perspective, but you are asked to share it. All ideas have value in this setting. You may hear something you do not agree with. You are asked to listen to try to understand the needs and perspectives of the person speaking. If you do not agree with something, offer a constructive alternative that could meet everyone's needs.

HUMOR IS WELCOME

BUT never at someone else's expense.

MOVE UP, MOVE BACK

If you usually speak out and share often, you can take the opportunity to move back and listen more deeply instead. If you like to be in the background and share less often, you can take the chance to "move up" and be heard.

BE COMFORTABLE

Please take breaks as needed. If you have other needs please let the leader know.

ELECTRONICS COURTESY

Please turn cell phones, or any other communication item with an on/off switch to "silent."

OTHERS?

Running a Meeting: Participation and Reaching Recommendations

Participation

A group leader can encourage everyone at the meeting to roll up their sleeves and participate in the group's work, so the work benefits from a range of perspectives and energies.

Group Members

- Set aside enough time during discussion so that all group members and the public can share their thoughts and suggestions.
- You can ask people to raise their digital or physical hand when they want to speak. Zoom will show digital raised hands in order, top to bottom.
- To encourage thoughts from quieter people, you can:
 - Offer time for people to think and write down thoughts before discussion;
 - Ask, "Are there other ideas? Does someone see it differently? Who haven't we heard from yet?"
 - Wait during a bit of silence for new ideas to arise.
 - Use a round-robin so everyone gets a chance to speak.
- You can summarize what you think you've heard to check to make sure you and everyone else has understood someone.
- You can ask for volunteers to take on outside-meeting tasks.
- You can remind the group on time, so the group can make decisions about what work to prioritize if time is getting tight.
- You can encourage all group members to work together to enforce the Code of Conduct. As leader, you can encourage attendees to keep to the code and work together to ensure the meeting is productive and inclusive, attendees share the floor, and all listen to and respect the range of perspectives in the room.

The Public

Depending on how you've chosen to run your group, members of the public may function as group members, or as public participants who can speak during public comment sections.

- If you are treating them as group members, they would participate in the same way as SC members, although you may want to ensure that there is enough time for SC members to speak.
- Otherwise, make sure to set aside time to hear from the public. If tight on time, you can see how many members of the public would like to speak, and divide up the time between them.

Reaching Recommendations

As the group discusses how to proceed, it may become clear when members are generally on the same page about what to do or recommend. Or there may be different points of view.

If there are differences, here are some options on how to proceed:

- The group can move forward those recommendations that they agree to. You can use a green-yellow-red system for each to identify those items they can live with and see move forward (green), those items they prefer that the group revise or refine a bit (yellow), and those items they clearly oppose (red). If the group is tight on time, it moves forward only green items. If there is time, the group also works on refining yellow items to green.
- If there is enough disagreement that there are no items all group members disagree with, the group can bring a report back to the larger Subcommittee or the Steering Committee, sharing the different points of view and the pros and cons of different options.

Leading a Group: Tips for Helping Your Group to Be Productive

As group leader, you can help ensure that group activity keeps moving forward to achieve goals:

- The meeting note taker can capture the meeting's major activity:
 - Group recommendations
 - Themes and issues from discussions
 - Action items and next steps – who will do what when; what items the group will consider at a future meeting; when the group will next meet; what the group is reporting back to the SC
- You or the note taker can share action items with group members by email after the meeting, ensuring it is clear who will be taking on which tasks, and when those tasks need to be done.
- You may need to check in with District staff or the Co-Leads to get information or advice, to report out what the group did, or to secure resources from the District to help with upcoming group work or meetings.
- It can be helpful to check in with group members who have agreed to take on a task, to see how they are doing, and if they need any more information or any help or access to additional resources. As you start planning the next meeting, you may want to coordinate with these members to identify if everything is coming together for the meeting, and who will discuss the topic with the group.