

Meeting Agenda Template

The template and example below are designed to create engaged participation, creative, solution-focused thinking, and clear, actionable outcomes.

Every Meeting Agenda Should Include:

- 1. Purpose of Team:** We meet (*how often*) with the purpose of X (*i.e. improving work processes; governing organization x; planning y event; etc.*). We commit to having specific, shared outcomes articulated for each meeting, to ensure that we only meet when we need to and that our meetings result in clear decisions and actions.
- 2. Desired Outcomes For This Meeting:** By the end of this meeting, we will have (for example):
 - A clear list of ... (*i.e. the parameters for site selection for the conference; the questions we need to answer before we decide Y; people we want to ask to join the board; etc.*)
 - An understanding of ... so that ... (*i.e. An understanding of the experience of last year's committee so that we can avoid similar problems this year; ...of the needs of X group of people so that we can design our new program to meet those needs; etc.*)
 - Agreement on... (*i.e. Who we will invite to join committee Z; the timeline for project X; the wording of the amendments to the bylaws; etc.*)
- 3. A List of Agenda Items With the Following Information Clearly Stated:**
 - **What** (content – *i.e. Anniversary celebration; year to date financial report; etc.*)
 - **Desired outcomes** for that agenda item (see format examples above, *i.e. choose date for anniversary celebration*)
 - **How** the group will get to those outcomes (process – *i.e. quick update by planning team followed by group brainstorm; facilitated discussion followed by consensus decision-making process; small group brainstorming followed by collective list-making, facilitated prioritization and a vote; etc.*)
 - **Who** will lead the process, take other roles
 - **Time allocated** for that item (preferably organized as an agenda with clear start and end times – it's much easier to keep track of where you are that way)

Example of Agenda Item:

10:10 Anniversary Celebration – Event Committee co-chairs co-facilitate (25 minutes)

- Brief update: new info since report went out (3 min)
- Date for the Anniversary Celebration – choose between 3 options (6 min)
- Goals for Anniversary Celebration – brainstorm a list of possible goals for the committee to consider and prioritize using dots exercise (10 min)
- Identify any other questions or concerns for the committee to consider (5 min)

Tips for Creating Successful, Engaging Meetings

1. **Focus on work best done when you are all in the same room.**
2. Be very clear about what the goal is for this particular agenda item – **what do you need from/for the team?**
3. **Send the agenda and reports on agenda items out ahead of time.**
4. **Minimize in-meeting reporting.**
 - Put stuff in writing and send it out ahead of time.
 - Build a culture where people are expected to read things ahead of time (and to send their reports in ahead).
 - **With rare exceptions, the meeting should focus on interacting about the information, not presenting it.**
5. **Create an Outcome-Based Agenda** (see reverse).
6. **Be clear about when and what you are deciding** – Often we don't clearly identify the decision we are making; this can lead to a lot of confusion and resentment later.
 - Write the proposal up where everyone can see it before asking for a final decision, or,
 - If you think a decision just got made, stop and write down what you think just got decided and check to make sure everybody else thinks so too.
 - If the decision involves actions to be taken, make sure you are clear about the **who, what and when.**
7. **Include structured opportunities for relational engagement between participants.**
 - Don't skip over "ice breakers" – Ice breakers are about building relationships, and about getting people to be mindfully present.
 - Such exercises can serve the agenda as well as the relationship building. Pick a question that gets people sharing, in pairs or triads, experiences that are related to some decision that needs to be made, or issue that needs to be explored.
 - It's best to move people out of their heads and into their own experiences; this brings them into the room, and into connection with each other, in a more powerful way.
 - Include other small group work – brainstorming, question identification, reflecting on experience, proposal drafting, etc.