

The key to meeting facilitation is keeping people on time, on task and onboard as a group. Meeting facilitation takes time and practice in order to find your best leadership style. Don't worry if you have little experience facilitating meetings. Your fellow board members are there to help. Ask for feedback and suggestions on ways to improve your meetings. Ultimately, running on-time and effective meetings will help your neighborhood association make decisions and also show that you respect the time and energy of your volunteers.

Tips to Make Facilitating a Meeting Easier

Be Prepared

Plan out your agenda and make sure notice has gone out at least one week prior to your meeting. Contact presenters to make sure they will be in attendance. Be prepared to discuss any items that were tabled from last month's meeting.

Do Introductions

Introduce yourself at the beginning of each meeting. Don't assume people know who you are. Also, be sure to have everyone at the meeting introduce themselves to build a sense of trust among the group. Also, consider incorporating icebreakers or appreciations of volunteers as part of their opening activity.

Review the Agenda and Ground Rules

Get buy-in from the group on both items and make sure everyone understands the way the meeting will be run.

Be Organized and Stay on Time

It is often helpful to assign the role of timekeeper to another board member so that time will be better monitored and conversation can be ended more easily. Respect everyone's time and end the meeting at the time planned.

Direct the Discussion and Keep People on Topic

Remind the group that there will be time for new business at the end of the meeting. If people are being repetitive, recap information for the group. If a decision needs to be made, call for a motion from the group.

Facilitate Voting and Decision-Making

Never assume an agreement has been reached without a vote. Encourage all members to participate and minimize long-winded conversations.

Always Maintain your Role as Chair

Facilitate the group's discussion, making sure all are being heard. Do not abuse your position and monopolize the floor. Limit your own opinions and stay neutral.

Mediate Arguments

Give each side the chance to state their point of view. Remain impartial and fair.

Wrap-up at the End of the Meeting

Review all discussions, decisions to be made and tasks to be assigned. Make sure there is clarity by the end of the meeting.

Follow Up After the Meeting

Offer help to other board members as needed and contact new members.

Ways to Make Sure Everyone Feels Heard and Participates

- Minimize cross talk and consider the needs of different personalities and cultures in your meetings.
- Have discussions that mix large and small groups when appropriate.
- Be flexible and allow time for questions to ensure understanding.
- Control the flow of discussion and guide your group to making decisions and reaching consensus.
- Summarize the discussion, so far, so that others have a sense of conclusion, i.e. *"So far, what I've heard you say is...? Is that accurate?"*
- Address disruptive influences and make meetings more accessible, welcoming and productive for all in attendance.
- Don't allow others to take over the meeting through intimidation, anger or outrageous behavior.
- Set boundaries, but validate participants' contributions. *"I see that you are frustrated that this issue is not on the agenda and that it is important to you. Perhaps a few of us would be willing to stay after the meeting and set a good time for having this discussion."*
- Offer solutions and ask the group for support.