

Volunteer Resources

Region and County Governance Toolkit

How to Run Effective Meetings



About this tool

In 2018 Counties and Regions reported feeling confident about planning, running and following up on meetings. A great meeting is well planned, effectively chaired and focused on decision making. There are a huge amount of simple and easy to adopt techniques you can use to constantly improve your meetings to ensure that they are well organised, well managed and that all members participate fully.

Why is it important?

Whilst current committee members report positive feedback about meetings generally on their governance health check, we do know that committee meetings are a major barrier currently to fresh talent including younger and more diverse volunteers taking on leadership roles. Ensuring that meetings are efficient, friendly, participatory, prepared, focused and finish on time can ensure that you don't put off potential new volunteers.

Step 1 – Planning Effective Meetings

- Committee meetings are much more productive if the proper time is invested in preparation.
- Responsibility for planning lies with the Chair who will work with the secretary. All committee members should be given enough time to read the documents (also called the board pack) beforehand. Committee members who do not attend or consistently attend without preparing or contributing should be encouraged to step down. Refer to your constitution for guidance on this.
- Once a year the committee should set the meeting calendar for the next 12 months. This allows you to ensure that meetings are regular enough for decisions to be made (usually every 6-8 weeks), members have enough notice to be available and there is time to prepare.
- Using a digital shared calendar such as Google, or Teamup, can help you to be more efficient and paperless. Here is a list of [some examples](#). Setting a meeting cycle should involve the Governance lead, who can ensure that meetings fall at key times in the governance calendar e.g. AGM, financial reporting, start of the new season.
- The secretary should gather, prepare and share the board pack including the agenda and previous minutes and information relevant to all the agenda items before the meeting in plenty of time. Volunteers are busy people, 2-4 weeks in advance is ideal to ensure that all papers are read.
- Do encourage committee members to read all the information not just the area they are interested in to ensure that you are working as a team.
- Make it clear that members should read the information ahead of the meeting and that time will not be wasted on the day on members who have not prepared.

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Step 2 – Running an Effective Meeting

- On the day good preparation and skilful chairing make a great meeting.
- A good Chair will actually say very little if the meeting is effective. They will be facilitating, summarising and probing the committee supporting them to make decisions.
- It's important to ensure that every committee member contributes equally, too often some people can dominate and others can contribute nothing, both of which are very frustrating for other members and difficult for the Chair.
- We would recommend a technique called the Running Effective Meetings Style which involves:
 - 1) Asking everyone to come prepared and focused. If someone has not prepared they may become flustered and dominate the conversation – which is very unhelpful if they haven't prepared.
 - 2) Replacing agenda items with focused questions helps the committee search for solutions rather than describe problems. For example, instead of "SuperLeague" asking "How can our RMB build a great relationship with our local SuperLeague club?" instantly asks people to focus on the real agenda item whilst setting a positive and aspirational tone.
 - 3) Using a rigid "rounds" system which requires strong chairing but utterly transforms meetings. A round is simply asking everyone to answer the question posed concisely, one at a time around the table. Everyone has the same amount of time to answer so it's not possible for certain members to dominate or avoid the conversation. If anyone has more comments outside of the round they would need to put their hand up. Be clear that interrupting other members is not tolerated. The meeting should open with a round that acts as an ice breaker and end with a round that asks members to honestly evaluate the meeting.
 - 4) The Chair is required to focus tightly on the timings of each agenda item. If more debate is needed than has been allocated, the item is unresolved and discussed either in a separate session or at the next meeting.

"Ensure that the venue is conveniently located for all who travel. Our Region is over 200 miles long and so we always meet in Somerset to make it easier. Having hot food really helps to make the meeting run well as well as plenty of tea and coffee."

South West Regional Chair

Step 3 – After the Meeting

Hopefully if you have prepared well and used the effective meeting style techniques outlined above everyone should leave the meeting feeling energised and that you've achieved a lot together. But the work doesn't stop there.

- Sending out short, concise, jargon free minutes promptly helps to keep the activities moving in between meetings.
- Try to focus on only the key points and actions, good minutes should be very concise and detail key decisions and next steps, rather than give a written record of a two-hour conversation.

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- Although there are many schools of thought on how best to take minutes ICSA, the Governance Institute, described them as a record of what was done rather than said in the meeting. It is well worth listening to this interesting free podcast and Blog from ICSA about all aspects of minute taking.
- There are a whole host of free templates and resources available online for example [Wild Apricot](#) and [Microsoft](#).
- Minute taking well, like chairing a meeting well is a highly skilled ability and worth investing in regular training and learning. In your local area there will be charities and other organisations who run training free or at no cost to voluntary groups like netball committees. You can find your local provider on the [NAVCA](#) website. For example, Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Service and Voluntary Action Leeds both run monthly training on minute taking and chairing meetings effectively for around £40 - £50 per organisation.

For further information on how to run an effective meeting visit the [Club Matters](#) website.

How does this link to the Governance Code?

Running effective meetings is the key element of Mandatory Requirement 2 of Tier 1 of the [Code for Sports Governance](#).

“The governing committee meets regularly, and decision making is recorded.”

This is because ensuring that meetings are regular, well organised, recorded and publicised is an important part of being a healthy and effective committee. Once this is in place you will be able to tick the corresponding boxes on your Annual Governance Health Check.

