



Grower Group Alliance

How to Run an Effective Meeting Guide

There are no certain rules to a meeting process, however there are some tips and tricks that can be used to run more effective and efficient meetings.

Meeting structure

Board or committee meetings should be structured to allow for both formal and informal proceedings. Included in the formal proceedings should be time for relaxed discussion of issues which then enable strategy and ideas to develop effectively. The informal part of the board meeting, normally lunch or dinner is an opportunity for members of the board/committee to interact.

Housekeeping and setting up

Seating plays a large part in the effectiveness of meetings and it should be set so that all participants can see any presentation material (e.g. whiteboard or screen) and are facing away from windows to avoid distractions. Tea and coffee should also be available throughout the meeting. Housekeeping procedures, such as location of toilets, air conditioning and exits, should be noted before the meeting commences.

Chairing the meeting

To begin the meeting, the chair should thank all participants for investing their time, effort and passion in the meeting. The chair should clarify the proposed meeting outcomes and be clear on why the meeting is being held. The chair is the person facilitating the meeting and they should have a plan that ensures the board achieves their outcomes. This plan should include a focus question which will act as an anchor and bring people back on track, any materials required and the approximate timing for each session. When moving between different sections of the meeting, each discussion should be briefly summarised prior to moving on.

Meeting reports

The secretary should set and circulate a meeting agenda prior to the meeting and members must be aware that if they want something discussed during the meeting, this must be on the agenda. It is the secretary's job to take minutes throughout the meeting and then produce a formal set of minutes to be distributed to all members of the board/committee. The treasurer should prepare a brief financial report for each meeting.



Ten quick ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a meeting:

1. Provide name tags for everyone at every meeting.
2. Make a poster of frequently used external and internal acronyms and post on the wall of every meeting.
3. Write an 'anticipated action' for each agenda item.
4. Ensure that each person contributes by saying at least one thing at every meeting. This is the chair's responsibility but everyone can help.
5. No on-way communication from staff. If you have a regular CEO's report on the agenda, or if a program director is giving you a briefing, be sure that such presentations get a response from the board.
6. Don't include committee reports on the agenda just to make the committee feel useful. If a committee has done work but doesn't need it discussed, put the committee report in the board papers.
7. Get on top of the big issues first. What are the three most important matters facing the organisation?
8. Encourage 'dumb' questions, respectful dissent and authentic disagreements. Find a chance to be encouraging at every meeting.
9. Make sure the room is comfortable – not too hot and not too crowded. Offer water, tea and coffee and something light to eat such as biscuits or fruit.
10. Keep to time, adjourn on time, or agree to stay later. Twenty minutes before the scheduled end of the meeting, the chair should ask whether the group wants to stay later.

Closing the meeting

At the close of the meeting, the chair should present a brief summary on topics covered and some of the results from each section. Identify the key outcomes and describe how the information gathered will be used in the future. To finish, thank all participants for their commitment and participation.



Sample Meeting Structure

Welcome by the chair

Apologies

Receive and accept previous minutes

Business arising – a report from each person responsible for tasks set at the previous meeting

Correspondence tabled

Specific business (address each objective)

General business

Set next meeting date

Acknowledgements: The Grower Group Toolkit for effective farmer groups Volume 3; Australian Company of Directors, Introduction to Board Meetings and Governance