



How to run an  
Effective Meeting

# Who We Are

The Lakeland District for Sport, Culture and Recreation Inc. is a non-profit volunteer based organization. We exist to facilitate the development of sport, culture and recreation programs and services to the residents of our District. We are governed by a volunteer board of directors and employ four full-time staff. Our main office is in Prince Albert at 99 Terry Simpson Lane and we have a satellite office in Naicam. The Lakeland District for Sport, Culture and Recreation is one of 12,000 organizations and groups that receive funding from Saskatchewan Lotteries.

## Mission

To facilitate capacity building in our communities to sustain a sport, culture and recreation delivery system that enhances the quality of life of the people within our District.

## Vision

Citizens live active, creative, healthy lifestyles through engagement in sport, culture and recreation.

## Values

We value ....

- Effective partnerships and collaborations that are mutually beneficial
- Meaningful youth and community engagement
- Understanding of and respect for our communities
- Sharing innovation and best practises
- Nurturing organic, sustainable community and district development
- Effective communication
- Volunteerism that is inclusive, provides meaningful opportunities, and encourages involvement
- Diversity of experience, abilities, opinions, and traditions
- Accountability and transparency to our stakeholders



# Meetings meetings & MORE MEETINGS

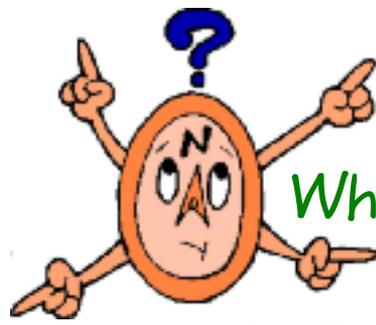


## Introduction

Meetings, meetings and more meetings....we've all been there. Meetings are usually an essential part of conducting the business or affairs of an organization. In fact some meetings are a required part of provincial legislation. Unfortunately too many of us actually dread going to meetings. We lead busy lives and another meeting tends to cut into our quality of life, particularly when a meeting tends to go on forever or nothing ever gets accomplished at the meeting. Do you dread attending meetings because they are boring, unproductive, disorganized and seem to go on forever? With proper planning and preparation meetings can actually be very productive, effective and yes, even enjoyable!

Meetings can have several functions. They can give members a chance to discuss organizational business, evaluate goals and objectives, update on current events, provide an opportunity for communication and keep the organization cohesive. But perhaps most importantly meetings allow organizations to gather resources for decision making.

The purpose of this document; *"How to Run an Effective Meeting"* is to provide some guidelines and tips that will help to make your meetings more effective, efficient and productive.



## Why do some meetings NOT WORK?

Despite our best efforts, sometimes meetings just do not work. The reasons can be varied and many, but all too often the following are indications and examples of what is wrong with your meeting:

### **Not setting an agenda**

What's the purpose of the meeting?  
.....What are we going to discuss?

### **People arriving late**

many excuses can be used...."I had another meeting"...."Why be on time when nobody else is"...."Could you catch me up on what I missed?"

### **Distracted people**

people taking calls in the middle of a meeting.....side conversations....."I've got to get to another meeting"

### **Not being prepared**

those who do not pre-read their meeting packages.....no agenda.....no goal for the meeting

### **Meetings that start late**

As long as you have a quorum...start the meeting on time

### **Meetings that run late**

People start tuning out.....people are leaving.....side conversations.....socializing

### **No follow-ups**

Are minutes being taken and distributed?  
.....Are actions being recorded?

### **Poor participation**

Meetings that are dominated by one or two people.....people who do not contribute to the process....the right people are not at the meeting

### **Talkers**

Those people who just love to hear themselves talk

# Planning an Effective Meeting

The following are some tips for helping you to plan a meeting that is effective, productive and enjoyable:

## THE AGENDA

It is imperative that a meeting agenda is developed that clearly outlines the topics to be discussed at the meeting and the order in which they will be dealt with. The agenda should also clarify when and where the meeting will be held. The agenda is the "road map" for the meeting and will help the minute taker to document the meeting. It is also important to analyze the meeting topics to make sure that this meeting is the proper place to handle the issue....could any of these topics be handled in a different manner?

- Make sure that you list the topics in order of priority
- Don't leave the most important items for the end of the meeting
- Decide on a time-line for the meeting, usually anything over 2 hours is too long
- Schedule time at the end of the meeting to review information and clarify any duties and responsibilities.
- Make sure that you send the agenda out a minimum of 24 hours prior to the meeting. A few days before hand would be better!

And perhaps most importantly....notify the participants as far in advance of the meeting as possible and identify the purpose of the meeting.



## START ON TIME

It is so important to start the meeting on time. Never wait for anyone.....this shows respect for those who are on time and ready to start. This means people should arrive early (5 to 10 Minutes). Anybody who is late can catch up on what they missed after the meeting....do not interrupt the meeting to bring latecomers up to speed. This slows down the meeting and shows disrespect for those who showed up on time.

## GROUND RULES

Setting the meeting ground rules is also very important. Some of these can and should include:

- Put all cell phones on vibrate...better yet turn them off
- No phone calls unless you leave the room
- Everyone has the right to speak
- Only one person speaks at a time
- Respect one another's opinion.....it's fine to disagree
- Avoid side conversations
- Meetings should be used to address problems and discuss solutions.....they are not to be used for complaining



## STICK TO THE AGENDA

As important as the agenda is, it is probably even more important to ensure that you stick to the agenda. Straying from the agenda or allowing people to side-track discussion by going off on unrelated tangents is not productive and can be very frustrating. It is also a sure way to derail the meeting by not getting everything done. If you do not stick to the agenda chances are you will not achieve the goals of the meeting.

- Your agenda should be organized in order of importance
- Keep discussion on track – don't allow side discussions
- Try to eliminate or minimize tangents
- Utilize a "Parking Lot" for topics and issues that cannot be covered in the meeting but that are of interest to the group
- Enforce the ground rules – if necessary remind people of the rules
- Use reminders to keep discussion on topic and on track  
....."you've got two minutes"....."sorry but we need to move on"
- Make sure each agenda item is wrapped up before moving on
- Identify and record all motions
- All motions need to have somebody to make the motion and somebody to second the motion
- All motions need to be approved by a majority of the quorum present in order to pass
- Once a motion has passed, discussion ceases.....move on to the next item
- Identify and record all actions to be taken ...including what, who and when

## THE "PARKING LOT"

This is a method for recording issues and topics that are not on the official agenda, but that occasionally come up during the meeting. Quite often this can relate to or has some kind of relevance to the topics at hand, but for which there is not enough time during the meeting or on the agenda to properly address.

- Ideally this should be posted somewhere  
....white board, flip chart or even somebody recording on a sheet of paper
- Anyone can post to it
- The purpose is to avoid tangents and non agenda items
- The Parking Lot should be reviewed during the last 5 minutes of the meeting
- At that time you need to decide whether to ignore, table or decide on a plan of action for the item



## ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITIES

Develop a roles and responsibilities document for board or committee members. You will require a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a recording secretary and usually a treasurer. Make sure that members understand their role in the organization and how it relates to the meeting.

- It is the role of the chairperson to set the agenda, run the meeting and keep discussion on track
- The role of the vice-chairperson is usually to fill in for the chairperson in their absence or assist the chairperson as required
- The recording secretary keeps minutes of the meeting and sends the minutes out to the members
- The treasurer is responsible for issuing cheques, conducting the financial business of the organization and reporting on the finances



## RECORD THE MINUTES

There is no point in having a formal meeting if the discussion, action items and decisions are not recorded. It is extremely important that a recording secretary is appointed to take the minutes of the meeting. In some cases this is also a legal requirement. Meeting minutes do not have to be extremely detailed and discussion does not have to be recorded verbatim. The basic purpose of the minutes is to record the topics of discussion, any motions that are made and any actions that need to occur. They are also utilized to record who is present and who is absent from the meeting.

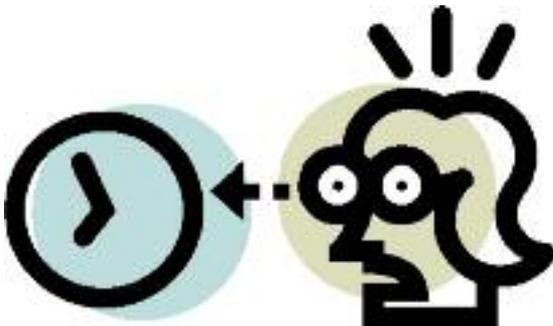
- Write the minutes in concise phrases – not necessarily full sentences
- You should be able to read the minutes and have a good idea of what transpired
- The minutes should be an overview or synopsis of the meeting – not a verbatim review
- Record all motions
- Make sure all motions identify who makes the motion and who seconds the motion
- Record and highlight all action items – including who, what and when
- If it's easier, record the minutes on a copy of the agenda
- Copy your notes immediately after the meeting....it's DONE!
- Send the minutes out as soon as possible....or designate a specific period of time when the minutes need to be distributed
- Follow up on the action items from the previous meeting to ensure they have been dealt with



## FINISH ON TIME

We've all been at those meetings where time seems to have stopped. Eyes are glazing over, people are yawning, no meaningful discussion is occurring, somebody is droning on and on about a specific topic, people are looking at their watches or playing with their phones; in essence, the meeting has stalled. Nothing is more boring or disheartening than a meeting that simply won't end. This is also a good way to lose board and committee members....why would anybody want to attend a meeting that does not accomplish anything or drags on for hours? This is every bit as important as starting on time.

- Set a start and finish time.....and keep to it
- Warn the members when the end time is approaching (15 minutes)
- Don't be afraid to limit and end discussion on a particular topic – this ensures that a few people don't dominate the discussion
- Feel free to finish early....if everything has been covered....  
**go home!**
- The parking lot is always the last action item
- If you absolutely must go over the designated time to finish important business – ask for permission, state a new end time, don't do it too often



## CONTINUE TO IMPROVE

Remember the old adage that practise make perfect. It is important that efforts are made to continually improve upon your meetings and how they are run. In order to accomplish this you need to solicit feedback from your board members. This can be formally, through a feedback or evaluation form or informally by initiating discussion about how things went. Ideally this should be done at the end of every meeting or at the very least once or twice per year. This depends upon how often you meet.

- Ask for feedback and input about the ground rules, timing, agendas, minutes, what went well, what did not go well
- Develop a simple evaluation form....no more than one page that is easy to complete
- Make sure that everybody contributes to the discussion – meetings are a democracy
- Add this as an agenda item...no more than 10 minutes at the end
- Set a date and time for the next meeting
- Review where you have been and where you are going
- Be organized
- Share food and a pot of coffee



## OTHER ITEMS TO CONSIDER

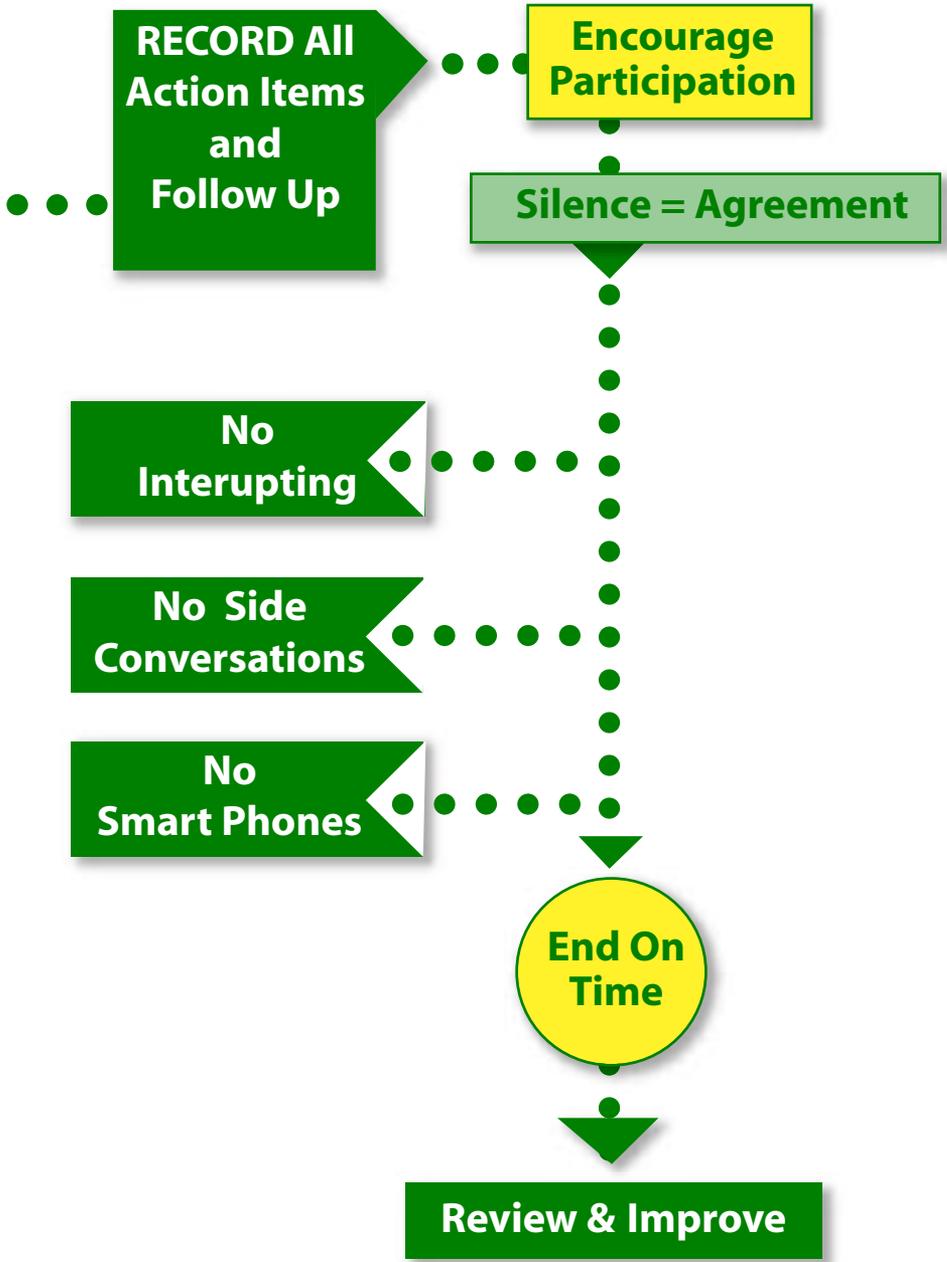
The following items are also important to consider in order to ensure that your meeting is being run as effectively as possible:

- Is this meeting the right format or method of discussion for the topic? Could this be covered in an email or sub-committee?
- Come to the meeting prepared.....don't open your meeting package for the first time at the meeting...pre-read the information.....be informed and prepared to discuss all agenda items
- Leave time at the beginning of the meeting to review the purpose of the meeting, set the ground rules and discuss any other introductory information
- Ensure that the "right" people are at the meeting....don't discuss a special project if the project leader can't attend
- Keep attendance so there is a record of who is at the meeting
- Meetings should be solution oriented.....not a forum for complaining
- Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak
- Make sure that the room is comfortable....seating arrangements, temperature, coffee, water, snacks
- A meeting is not a setting for socialization....this can be done at the end of the meeting
- Set a date, time and place for the next meeting
- Evaluate your performance...strive to improve



# Guidelines to follow for Running an Effective Meeting





Sources: manager-tools.com;The 5 Star Service Tool Kit; University of Oregon – Holden Leadership Centre; quickbase.intuit.com



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*Working with our provincial partners  
toward building healthy, active communities  
through sport, culture and recreation.*



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**LOTTERIES**

