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Facilitation Plan Template

Purpose of this template: To develop a plan for an effective (and smooth running) meeting and plan for what might go wrong.

Directions: Use this template to begin creating a facilitation plan similar to the table below. The following tips provide guidance and things to consider when planning a meeting/event. After the initial attempt at a facilitation plan, it is a good practice to connect with stakeholders to fill in gaps and check your assumptions.

Draft Facilitation Plan

#	Time	Amount of time (# of minutes)	Agenda Item	Lead Person	Notes
1	9:00	15 mins	Welcome and Introductions	Sarah Rubin, Facilitator	Blah, blah...
2	9:15				

Tips for Planning and Facilitating Meetings

What is a facilitator?

A person who focuses on the structure of a meeting and group processes; this allows participants to focus on substance and move effectively toward their desired outcomes. A key role the facilitator plays is to recognize what meeting processes or tools are needed and when to use them.

A facilitator can play a number of roles:

- Scribe
- Record
- Timekeeper
- Lead discussion
- Keep a queue for comment

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The facilitator can plan and facilitate. Key components are outlined below. The facilitator needs to be careful not to be perceived as “an advocate for the project”. Or if they are an advocate, to be clear about that up front. It is best, however, in the spirit of public participation if the role of the facilitator is to assist with the process of gaining all perspectives and see if there is a path to building consensus.

Planning Meetings

Initial Preparation

Item	Fill in
Why is the meeting being held?	
What is the purpose of the meeting? Why are we gathering?	
What tasks are planned?	
What are the goals of the meeting?	
Is this meeting part of a larger goal/ effort?	
Who is invited? Are the right people there?	
When is the meeting to be held? How much time is planned for the meeting? Is it the right amount of time?	
Where is the meeting to be held? Is location appropriate?	
Is the meeting room set up properly?	

Public Agenda

The agenda that will be distributed to the meeting participants and/or public.

Annotated or Facilitators Agenda

As seen at the top of page 1, this type of agenda can include all the detail you desire. If it helps you to feel more confident, you can write out your talking points in the notes area of the annotated agenda or facilitation plan.

Developing Desired Meeting Outcomes

Meeting goals or desired outcomes can be developed before, during, or after you outline your meeting agenda. Be sure each one of your agenda items connects to a meeting goal/ desired outcome. Conversely, be sure each desired meeting outcome has a related agenda item.

Tips for Building a Successful Agenda

1. Ensure multiple voices are heard (not just yours as facilitator) as far as presenters.
2. Use icebreakers that create opportunities for participants to know who is in the room.
3. Consider appropriate length for presenters. Ideally do not present information “at” people for more than 10 minutes.
4. Will there be an opportunity for everyone to speak?
 - a. Structured opportunities for all to speak include:
 - i. Pairs. Have ‘neighbors’ (or dyads) discuss an issue
 - ii. Structured Go Around. Have each person share a thought on an issue
 - iii. [To a lesser degree but another option] Divide group into two “sides” of room (two medium size groups)
5. Consider learning styles (visual, tactile, auditory).
6. Acknowledge the efforts of those who helped plan the meeting and/or those who have completed action items from the previous meeting.
7. Provide short 5-10 minute breaks for participants every couple of hours.
8. Consider the final “take away” your most influential members will leave with.
9. Always use a method that properly closes out a meeting. Provide next steps, any follow ups and/or announcements.

Sample Agenda Template

TITLE

DATE | 9:00am-2:00pm

LOCATION

Lunch Provided

Purpose of the meeting:

Agenda

Time	Item	Lead
9:00-9:30am	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Review Agenda 	_____, Program Manager; All
9:30-10:00am	Informative Agenda Item <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 1 • Topic 2 Outcomes:	Expert 1, Organization; Expert 2, Organization
10:00-10:45am	Interactive Agenda Item <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives and Desired Outcomes • Awards Program <i>Large and small group feedback</i> Outcomes:	____ (Facilitator); All
10:45-11:00am	Break	
11:00-11:20am	Informative Agenda Item <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 1 • Topic 2 Outcomes:	Expert 1, Organization
11:20am-12:15pm	Interactive Agenda Item <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 1 • Topic 2 <i>Small group breakouts.</i> Outcomes:	____ (Facilitator); All
12:15-12:45pm	Lunch	

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12:45-1:45pm	Interactive Agenda Item <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 1 • Topic 2 <i>Large and small group feedback.</i> Outcomes:	_____ (Facilitator); All
1:45-2:00pm	Wrap Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize Outcomes • Next Steps • Meeting Evaluation 	All
2:00pm	Adjourn	All

Ground Rules

Ground rules help meeting participants establish appropriate ways to interact with each other during the meeting. You can suggest a set of ground rules or ask the group members if they would like to set ground rules. Example ground rules include:

- Listen to and show respect for others opinions
- No side bar conversations

Ground rules are not necessary for every meeting. It will be up to you to decide. Consider: how contentious are the issues at hand. How often will the group meet? Will new people come in and out? Will the participants remain the same?

Individual Contact

After you have created a draft agenda consider reaching out to one to three key meeting participants to ensure the desired meeting goals and related agenda content make sense to them. Adjust accordingly.

Design Team

For ongoing group meetings of a complex or controversial nature, consider having a “design team.” A design team would include two (or three) meeting participants who represent different perspectives. Having these folks participate in planning the meetings will help to ensure the meeting presents a balanced approach.

Distribute Meeting Materials

Be sure to distribute meeting materials on time. There should be agreement as to when materials will be distributed (i.e. two weeks, one week, three business days, etc.)

Refreshments

If possible, have refreshments at your meeting.

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Facilitating the Meeting

Arrive Early to Ensure Proper Set Up

Arrive with plenty of time to move tables around as desired, set out materials and sign-in sheets. Test any electronic equipment. Be sure to find out who to contact if your room is too hot or cold or if you have problems with any equipment. Find out where the restrooms are located. Pay attention to seating arrangement and room set up. Different room configurations work better or worse depending on the type of meeting and the level of conflict in the room.

Begin on Time/ Acknowledge Start Time

Ideally, you want to start all meetings on time. This shows respect for participants who arrive on time. There are instances where key meeting participants have not arrived and you need to delay the start of the meeting. In this case, make an announcement to the group that the meeting will begin in “about __ minutes”

Keep the Meeting on Track

Your job is to keep the meeting on track. Examples of common situations requiring intervention:

- 1) Side bar conversations
- 2) Staying on time
- 3) Never ending discussion
- 4) Returning from breaks
- 5) Challenging people

Side bar conversations

These folks might be bored. This may be because you have spent too much time on the topic, or because they are self-important, rude and unaware of the effect of their behavior on others. You cannot have an effective meeting when there are other meetings.

- Non-verbal.
 - Stand behind the people having the side bar conversation.
- Verbal.
 - Friendly reminder. “Just a reminder, we agreed to one conversation at a time today” or “We have about __ minutes of this presentation left; if everyone could please stay focused, and then we’ll have Q/A”.
 - Direct the reminder. Make eye contact, “One conversation at a time please”.
 - Personalize. “Jose, do you have a question of clarification” or “Jose, I can see you have something to contribute, when the speaker is finished I’ll put you first in the queue”.
 - If many are having side bar conversations. “Do we need to take a break?”

Staying on Time

- Off topic conversation. Consider using a “Parking Lot” list.
 - “You have raised an important issue; I am listing that on our Parking Lot list to ensure we discuss it at another time. At this time our focus is: _____.”
- Later agenda item. If something that will be covered later is brought up ask them if they can hold the thought. If it appears two agenda items should be combined, ask the rest of the group if they would like to combine them and take up the topic at hand now.

Never-ending Discussion

- Note the amount of time available for discussion at the beginning of the agenda item.
- Note how much time is left periodically during the discussion.
- Note how many additional speakers/comments you will likely have time for during the time allotted.
- If there are many in the queue, ask all to be very pointed to ensure all can contribute.
- If time looks short, ask the group what they want to do.
 - Shorten or eliminate another agenda item?
 - Take up the conversation at another meeting.
 - Extend the end time for the meeting (if so, by how many minutes).
- Acknowledge time constraint; ask if anyone need additional information before making a decision on the topic at hand.
 - If yes, more information is needed, propose another time to take up the agenda item.
 - If no, use that as an opportunity to close the discussion and move to action.

Returning from Breaks

- Do not be shy; find those in the ‘hallways’ to tell them you are starting.
- Enlist someone who is respected by others to tell folks you are starting back up.
- Find a couple key participants and start back with them; others will notice the meeting has started back up.
- Tell an individual that is in the hall you need their input on the next agenda item.

About the Institute for Local Government

The Institute for Local Government’s (ILG) mission is to promote good government at the local level with practical, impartial and easy-to-use resources for California communities. ILG is the nonprofit 501(c)(3) research and education affiliate of the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties and the California Special Districts Association.

For more information about the TIERS Framework and Learning Lab, please contact Madeline Henry at mhenry@ca-ilg.org

To access the Institute’s resources on public engagement, visit www.ca-ilg.org/engagement

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