

# Effective meetings

**Meetings are essential to communicating in disasters. But they frequently produce limited outcomes. Creating a format and process that produces results is key.**

**The role of the chair** is to facilitate the meeting in such a way that the collective wisdom of the attendees is tapped into, while keeping discussions in line with the meeting's objectives.

**The participants' role** is to prepare for, and engage constructively in meetings, so that results can be accomplished.

## PLANNING & PREPARATION

<b>WHY</b>	<p><i>What is the purpose and expected outcomes of the meeting?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Give or share information, feedback, reports</li> <li>▪ Generate ideas</li> <li>▪ Find solutions / solve problems / make decisions</li> <li>▪ Develop trust, relationships, teams</li> </ul> <p><i>Who needs to agree these objectives?</i>  <i>What do participants want from the meeting?</i>  <i>Is the meeting part of an on-going process?</i></p>
<b>WHAT</b>	<p><i>What topics need to be on the agenda?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use the agenda to explain how different topics will be handled, and for how long. List what people need to bring.</li> </ul> <p><i>Is the agenda circulated beforehand? Bring spare copies!</i></p>
<b>WHO</b>	<p><i>Who should attend? Are the right people available?</i>  <i>Is there a protocol for invitations?</i></p>
<b>WHERE</b>	<p><i>Which is the best location and venue to suit everyone?</i>  <i>Does it have the space, equipment, ventilation, catering needed?</i></p> <p><i>What is the best layout for the style of meeting – formal or informal?</i></p>
<b>WHEN</b>	<p><i>When is the best time for this meeting? Is there a clear start and finish time which is culturally acceptable to all? Is there sufficient time to achieve the objectives? What breaks will be needed? Is it free from interruptions?</i></p>
<b>HOW</b>	<p><i>What is the best way to start, engage all cultures, encourage contributions, and clarify purpose and expectations? e.g.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introductions, ground rules, ice-breakers</li> </ul> <p><i>What translations and interpretation is needed?</i>  <i>How will you record, clarify and circulate decisions and actions? e.g. on a flipchart or whiteboard; in minutes?</i></p>
<p><b>When you run a meeting you are making demands on people's time and attention – use it wisely.</b></p>	

## Running effective meetings

1. Ensure relevant information is available and/or circulated beforehand.
  - ensures critical decisions can be made, and people can come prepared.
2. Clarify, and get agreement on, the purpose, agenda and timing.
  - helps set a purposeful tone to the meeting, and helps keep to the agenda.
3. Start and finish on time
  - avoids time wasting and helps ensure people take the meeting seriously.
4. Agree groundrules – do's and don'ts for the meeting.
  - encourages respectful behaviours.
5. Take time to build trust and involve everyone, i.e. good introductions; encourage listening; use smaller discussion groups.
  - encourages open and honest discussion and debate.
6. Keep to the agenda
  - avoids time wasting and keeps focus on the purpose.
7. Record agreed actions
  - encourages commitment to action and purposeful meetings.
8. Ask at the end of each meeting how the next meeting could be improved.
  - enables better, and better meetings.

### All In Diary CD Resources:

© RedR (2005) Walker B., Better Ways to Manage Meetings,

### Web links for further information

<http://www.genderdiversity.cojar.org/resource/MulticulturalMeetingsFinal2.ppt>

