

 Memo

To: Leaders

From: Sonia Crook, Vice-President, Human Resources & Strategic Development

Date: February 4, 2014

Re: Meeting Effectiveness

A number of initiatives are underway as the College strives to improve our working environment. The Grid training our leaders undertook this past summer focused on the importance of building and maintaining healthy and productive relationships that are characterized by trust, respect, openness and candour.

The Employee Engagement survey pointed out concerns around employees wanting their thoughts and voices to be heard in meetings. Further dialogue also highlighted the specific concern about the number of meetings that take place at Fleming, and the amount of time employees dedicate to attending meetings. In order to address these concerns, a team has been working on developing some guidelines and templates to assist employees with conducting effective meetings, sourcing differing perspectives and improving communication.

Recognizing that many meetings at the College are already effectively managed, this toolkit can help to embed pre-critique into meeting planning. It also provides an opportunity to use deliberate opportunities to access participant opinions not only on the topic in question but also as a way of looking at current methods of conducting meetings and, if necessary, making adjustments to enhance the effectiveness of meetings using the tools provided.

The recent learning leaders went through taught us that effective meetings result by keeping people informed, by addressing problems that arise and by involving only those people that need to be involved. The guidelines in this toolkit suggest ways to encourage thinking outside the box, to give all participants a chance to offer their opinions and truly be heard and to achieve balanced accountability for actions and results.

Please take time to read through the material provided and consider how it can improve meeting effectiveness for you and your team.

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**Guidelines for Meeting Effectiveness**

***Is a meeting really necessary?***

***(pre-critique)***

Does the meeting have a goal?

Is an agenda being created ahead of the meeting?

Who are the appropriate participants?

Could the information be covered by e-mail, memo or a personal conversation?

***Meeting Preparation***

**Meeting Planner** (prepares agenda, books room, advises participants)

* Determine the meeting’s desired outcomes and identify participants whose input is needed to accomplish the outcomes
* Determine best order for agenda items and assign a lead for each
* Prepare the agenda, complete with timelines for each item and send to participants along with any relevant supporting material, giving participants enough time to read and prepare for the meeting
* Assign a notetaker to record discussion and action items (who does what by when)
* Communicate in advance if food is being provided. Scheduling meetings during the lunch hour period 12:00 - 2:00 (depending on participants lunch hour) should be avoided and only used for urgent situations after all other times have been considered.

**Agenda Guidelines**

A meeting is only as good as its agenda. A well-drafted agenda can help the meeting to run smoothly and quickly, and maximize what you actually achieve as a committee.

Agendas should clearly identify a start time and an expected finishing time. An agenda is tentative (or draft) until such time as the group formally approves it at the meeting.

Items should be specific. Items should be grouped for Decision, Discussion, or Information (presentations).

Items should have the name or initials of the person introducing/speaking to the topic.

It is also a good idea to set a time for each item – this will assist the Chair in controlling the time of the meeting and ensuring it finishes on time.

**Name of Committee or Group**

**Meeting Date**

**Time**

**Location**

**AGENDA TEMPLATE**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Item** |  |
| 10 min10 min10 min 15 min5 min10 min5min  | **1. Call to Order/Welcome/Chair’s Remarks****2. Approval of Agenda****3. Approval of Previous Meeting Record**(Attached or previously distributed)***DECISION ITEMS*****4. Terms of Reference (XY)****5. Item** **6. Item*****DISCUSSION ITEMS*****7. Code of Conduct (J. Doe)****8. Item****9. Item*****INFORMATION ITEMS / PRESENTATIONS*****10. Report on Wxyz (M. Smith)****11. Other Business****12. Adjournment** | **2005-2010 Strategic Priorities**1. Achieving Excellence in Student Learning2. Providing Superior Services and Facilities3. Leading in Environmental Programs and Practices4. Growing with Positive Results5. Building Community Success6. Optimizing Organizational Culture and Development**Values**At Fleming College, we• Put student learning first• Value people and community• Commit to our environment• Waste northing – not time, talent or resources• Take inspiration from Sir Sandford Fleming: innovate with vision, then implement with excellence**Committee Mandate**The XYZ Committee / Team / Department is responsible for **Meeting Etiquette**1. Arrive on time and return promptly at breaks.2. Formally send regrets if unable to attend.3. Be courteous and respectful. Do no talk while others are speaking; if you would like to speak, ask the chair. 4. Give reasons to support your position rather than denigrating the opinions of others. 5. Do not carry on side conversations – you can only attend one meeting at a time.6. Focus disagreements on ideas, not on individuals.7. Use of electronic media (cell phones, laptops, and BlackBerrys) should be relevant to the current meeting (i.e. note taking, presentations, checking availability for future meetings, etc.) |

***Conducting the Meeting***

**Meeting Chair** (presides over meeting to ensure agenda/timelines are followed – the chair duties can be rotated)

* Empower members by guiding, mediating, probing and stimulating and allowing others to thrash out ideas
* Keep discussions on track by continually restating the issue under consideration or goal being sought
* Keep watch on non-verbal communication and provide an opportunity to articulate any sources of discomfort or displeasure
* Encourage dialogue, value everyone’s opinion and encourage silent members to participate
* Keep group focused on the central question and move towards a decision. ***Unanimity of thought is not required – consensus is***. The compromise necessary to elicit unanimous vote can diminish the value of a good idea.
* Deal with disruptive members. In fairness to other members don’t squander time and energy contributions but handle confrontation privately, during a break.
* Close the meeting by summarizing achievements and progress made so that members leave with a sense of accomplishment and motivation to continue.

**Meeting Participants**

* Be prepared to participate
* Read the agenda and materials prior to the meeting and seek clarification of anything that is unclear
* Stick to the agenda and bring up new business at the appropriate time
* Speak clearly and in a voice everyone can hear.
* If remarks are lengthy, sum them up at the end
* Provide documents in advance, whenever possible, allowing time for others to read and digest the information

**Meeting Etiquette**

* Give reasons to support your position rather than denigrating the opinions of others
* Arrive on time and return promptly after breaks
* Be courteous and respectful; do not talk while others are speaking. If you would like to speak, ask the chair
* Formally send regrets if unable to attend a meeting
* Use of electronic media (cell phones, laptops and Blackberrys) should be relevant to the current meeting (presentations, checking availability for future meetings etc.)
* Be mentally as well as physically present
* Do not carry on side conversations – you can only attend one meeting at a time.
* Focus disagreements on ideas, not on individuals

**Record of Meeting Guidelines – Minutes, Notes, Action Summary**

Regardless of style, formality or name, a written record of the meeting demonstrates that a committee/group has carried out its work properly (accountability). It serves as a reminder of the action that people have agreed to take or as a means of following-up to see whether the action has been taken.

This record mirrors the agenda so that people can see that the committee/group is getting through its intended business. It is a source of information for those who were not at the meeting – absent members should be able to understand exactly what happened by reading the document.

The meeting record is exact, self-explanatory, and succinct – an impersonal, objective document about what actually happened. It is NOT:

• a newsletter

• a verbatim report of what was said

• a means for the recorder to make assumptions and generalizations, to impose his/her own opinion(s) or an opportunity to record personal views and opinion

• a substitute for a proper information system or for good personal communication.

Themeeting record should include:

• the name of the organization/committee/group

• the date, time and location of the meeting

• the names of those in attendance

• decisions/agreements/requests made (whether by consensus or motion) and any items deferred/referred

• a statement of what a report was about, who presented it, if it was verbal or written.

The meeting record does NOT include:

• conversation, comments, or discussions which are off topic

• detailed chronicle of lengthy discussion that reach no conclusion

• direct speech or direct quotes except as formal motions

• emotional language

• each participant’s contribution towards the discussion.

For more informal meetings chairs might want to combine the agenda piece with minutes that record action only. What has been provided are suggested templates that can be modified to suit the type of meeting conducted.



**Name of Committee or Group**

**Meeting Date**

**Location**

**TEMPLATE for Minutes, Notes, Action Summary**

**Present:** those persons attending the meeting as members, i.e. with a vote, named in the terms of reference

Regrets: identifies the members not attending

**“as circulated” = as distributed in advance**

**“as presented” = as provided at the meeting**

***Others who attend***

**Staff:**

**Guests:** Name (Title), the item the person is presenting

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Key Points / Actions** | **Follow-up / Status** |
| **1.** | **Call to Order/Welcome/Chair’s Remarks**The Chair called the meeting to order at x:xx a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. New members, xxx and xxx, were introduced. |  |
| **2.** | **Approval of Agenda**Moved (name), seconded (name) and carried that the agenda be approved as circulated\*.**OR**Agenda was accepted as circulated. |  |
| **3.** | **Approval of Meeting Record of xxxxx OR Acceptance of Notes**Moved (name), seconded (name) and carried that the minutes of the meeting of xxx xx, 2009 be approved as circulated.**OR**Notes of the xxx xx, 2009 meeting were accepted as circulated. |  |
| **4.** | **DECISION ITEMS****Terms of Reference**The latest draft of the Terms of Reference as prepared by the sub-committee was discussed with the entire team. Moved (name), seconded (name) and carried that the Terms of Reference, dated xxx be approved as circulated.**OR**Consensus to accept the Terms of Reference, as circulated. | Review in one year |
| **5.** | **Item, as listed on the Agenda**  |  |
| **6.** | **Item, as listed on the Agenda** |  |
| **7.** | **DISCUSSION ITEMS****Code of Conduct**John Doe reviewed the Code of Conduct and welcomed comment from members. There were a number of opinions expressed, which lead to agreement to postpone acceptance of the document. Members agreed to provide specifics to John within two weeks; John would revise the document and present at the next meeting | Comments to John Doe by xxxFinal draft for approval at next meeting |
| **8.** | **Item, as listed on the Agenda** |  |
| **9.** | **Item, as listed on the Agenda** |  |
| **10.** | **INFORMATION ITEMS / PRESENTATIONS****Report on Wxyz**Mary Smith provided an update on the status of the review process.  | Ongoing |
| **11.** | **Other Business**None brought forward. |  |
| **12.** | **Adjournment** at x:xx a.m. |  |

**Meeting Types**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Meeting** | **Purpose** | **Who Attends** | **Frequency** | **Structure** | **Record of Meetings** |
| Operational* Dept. Staff Meetings
* Divisional Meetings
 | Information sharingPlanningProblem-solvingProcess improvement | Dept./Divisional staffLeader(s)Guests as required | Regular as determined by the team | AgendaMeeting notes capture decisions and action itemsTypically lead by the Manager | Informal meeting notesDistributed to all team membersRecord attendance at the meeting |
| Organizational Committees- ELT, ALT, SLT, FLT, EMSC, etc. | Decision-making on key prioritiesDevelop corporate strategyBroad cross-functional process approvals and oversightAdvisoryNetworking | Determined by function, role, and stakeholder representation | Regular as determined by the team | Structured agendas with time allotmentsAssigned Chair and agenda-setting processAlignment of topics with operational cycles and key prioritiesFormal meeting note template | Formal meeting notes that can be shared Group approves notes |
| Task Teams - Conversion Team, Timetable Task Force | Team of experts pulled together for a period of time to focus on a specific project or outcomesProblem-solving in nature | Determined by function, role, and stakeholder representation | # of meetings and frequency is determined by the scope of the projectRegular status meetings are typical | Lead by a Project LeadAgendas are issues-based | Brief, informal meeting notes that capture status, action items and milestone dates |
| Ad hoc  | Impromptu, issue-basedProblem-solving or information gathering | By function or role | One or two meetings | Informal discussion | May not be requiredVery brief note (email) to capture a shared understanding of the outcome |
| Mandated and/or Legislated- APDC, AUCC, SUCC, H&S, CCAC, PAC **-**Program Advisory Committees | Interpretation and implementation of fiscal, legal, and formal agreement mattersCollaborate and resolve issues of mutual interestInformation sharing | Elected and/or appointedStakeholder representation | Regular as required | Formal agendasMembers represent interests of constituents at meetingsQuorum requirements  | Formal meeting notes to demonstrate accountability and complianceWidely distributed Group approves mtg record |
| Governance**-** Board of Governors and its Standing Committees | Broad organizational oversightDirection settingApproval body | Mandated in Regulation; appointed and elected membersELTGuests invited | Established in By-law | Formal agenda and meetings, following Rules of OrderElected officersQuorum requirementsFormalized administrative support | Formal minutes with motions that demonstrate accountability and complianceMinutes approved by the BoardLimited distribution; public session available widely |