

# Managing meetings

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

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

When you run a meeting you are making demands on people's time and attention – use it wisely.

## Tips for effective meetings

Ensure relevant information is available and/or circulated before.

- ensures critical decisions can be made, and people can come prepared.

Clarify, and get agreement on, purpose, agenda and timing.

- helps set a purposeful tone to the meeting, and helps keep to the agenda.

Start and finish on time

- avoids time wasting and helps ensure people take the meeting seriously.

Agree ground rules

- encourages respectful behaviours.

Take time to build trust and involve everyone

- good introductions, setting ground rules, use of small discussion groups all encourage open and honest discussion and debate.

Keep to the agenda

- avoids time wasting and keeps focus on the purpose.

Record agreed actions

- encourages commitment to action and purposeful meetings.

Ask for feedback on how to improve meetings

- enables better meetings.

### Additional resources on All In Diary website:

A Consensus Handbook, Seeds for Change, 2013  
 Organising Successful Meetings, Seeds for Change, 2009  
 Better Ways to Manage Meetings, Walker B., © RedR 2005

### Web links for further information

Tips: <http://james.shepherd-barron.com/clusterwise-2/21-managing-effective-meetings-2/>  
 Tools: <http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/free/resources#grp2>