

# PLANNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Meetings have several functions. They give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives, keep updates on current events, provide a chance to communicate, and keep the organization cohesive. But most of all, meetings allow organizations to pull resources together for decision-making. Meetings have the potential to be meaningful and effective, or a complete waste of everyone's time. A thoughtfully crafted plan can help you make your next meeting successful, productive, and fun.

## Before The Meeting

1. Define the purpose of the meeting.
2. Develop an agenda with the officers and advisor.
3. Distribute the agenda and circulate background material, lengthy documents or articles prior to the meeting so members will be prepared and feel involved and up-to-date.
4. Choose an appropriate meeting time.
5. If possible, arrange the room so that members face each other, i.e., a circle or semi-circle. For large groups, try U-shaped rows.
6. Choose a location suitable to your group's size. Small rooms with too many people get stuffy and create tension. A larger room is more comfortable and encourages individual expression.
7. Use visual aides for interest.
8. Vary meeting places if possible to accommodate different members. Be sure everyone knows when and where the next meeting will be held.

## During The Meeting

1. Greet members and make them feel welcome.
2. If possible, serve light refreshments; they are good icebreakers and make your members feel special and comfortable.
3. Start on time. End on time.
4. Review and follow the agenda and set priorities for the meeting.
5. Encourage group discussion to get all points of view and ideas.
6. Encourage feedback. Ideas, activities, and commitment to the organization improve when members see their impact on the decision making process.
7. Keep conversation focused on the topic.
8. Keep minutes of the meeting for future reference in case a question or problem arises.
9. As a leader, be a role model by listening, showing interest, appreciation and confidence in members.
10. Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a unifying or positive note. For example, have members volunteer thoughts of things they feel have been good or successful or reiterate the organization's mission.
11. Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.

## After The Meeting

1. Write and distribute minutes within 3 or 4 days. Quick action reinforces importance of meeting and reduces errors of memory.
2. Discuss any problems during the meeting with other officers; come up with ways improvements can be made.
3. Follow-Up on delegate's decisions. See that all members understand and carry-out their responsibilities.
4. Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely process.
5. Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.

