



Practical Resources for Community Groups

CHECKLIST 4

Running an Effective Meeting

Make sure you...

- Have a regular deadline for submitting agenda items. Agendas should be distributed no less than one week before a meeting, so that people have time to prepare for specific items if necessary.
- Give priority to agenda items that need discussion. Items which are simply feeding back results can be done via email if necessary.
- Set a start and finish time for your meetings and strictly adhere to them. If a particular agenda item is taking too much time, consider assigning the discussion to a sub-committee for discussion and reporting back.
- Allow everybody the opportunity to contribute. If some members are dominating the discussion, ask others directly for their ideas.
- Lead by example and keep your comments positive and productive.
- Summarise the results of each agenda item as you go. Pay particular note of any details that need further discussion, and any actions which are to be taken and by whom. Check that everyone agrees it is a fair summary of the conversation had.
- Keep the meeting discussions on topic. A simple 'Can we get back to the item at hand please' is usually enough. If a pressing item is raised in conversation, consider adding it to the agenda if there is time, or set a time for a special meeting for further discussion.
- Watch the body language of members and take appropriate actions. You may need a 5 minute stretch to get everyone refocused, or perhaps body language will signal the need for an anonymous vote on sensitive issues. If people look confused, try to re-summarise or clarify a point without singling them out and causing embarrassment.
- Set a date and time for the next meeting. Having a regular day (eg. first Monday of the month) means people can plan the rest of their schedules around this regular commitment.
- Distribute minutes of the meeting within 48 hours. This prompts people to take their required actions and signals that the meeting was indeed important, and not just a matter of routine. Early distribution also allows for corrections or amendments to be made quickly.

This checklist has been written by Kerri Tilby-Price. Kerri is the author of 'The Seriously Good Guide to Fundraising' and the CEO of Exult Ltd, one of New Zealand's leading training providers for the non-profit sector. Kerri is also the editor of Tonic Magazine – a publication providing practical information and advice for grass-roots community organisations. For more information visit www.exult.co.nz