**How to organize a meeting - guidance**

**Before the meeting**  **:**

* What is the purpose of the meeting? (For example, to obtain feedback, brainstorm, make decisions, solve problems, etc.).
* What are SMART objectives for the meeting?
* Who needs to attend to achieve the goal and objectives? Why?
* Are the necessary people be available to attend?
* Who should facilitate the meeting?
* What are the expected benefits and costs to the organizers and participants?
* What will participants get by attending the meeting?
* Do the participants understand what they are supposed to contribute?
* Is the necessary information available to achieve the goals and objectives of the meeting?
* Do you need to talk to anyone before the meeting? (Eg, harmonizing a position to defend, etc.).
* What would be the most appropriate table arrangement? (Think about your goals and objectives)
* When should the meeting be held? Is it in conflict with other important meetings? Will the key participants be able to participate?
* Where should the meeting held? (Eg. capital or in the field, office, conference room, hotel, etc.).
* Will transport be possible for national actors? (If outside the city, etc.).
* Is an interpreter necessary for national partners?
* What logistical / support elements are needed? (Refreshments, flip chart, cables, buttons, list of participants and their contact information, conference facilities, etc.).

***Agenda:***

**Sharing:** has that the agenda been shared well in advance in a format accessible to all?

**Priority items:** are the most important / strategic issues the first points on the agenda?

**Method:** how will the meeting be organized / executed? (Eg. presentations, brainstorming sessions, demonstrations, etc.).

**Responsibilities:** who is responsible for each segment of the meeting?

**Timing:** How much time is allocated to each segment? Who is responsible for keeping time?

**Minutes:** Who will document the Minutes? What structure is most relevant? (Eg. Concise cummary, verbatim, action points only, etc.).

**Highlights / Key Issues:** Where can people go for more information?

***Other considerations:***

* Use breaks to discuss topics with participants.
* When participants return from a break, ask a quick question to ensure that everyone is on track, or briefly summarize the points before the break.
* Make sure the temperature is comfortable and the air flow is enough.
* Avoid getting distracted by minor or non-priority issues (for example, matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting) by requesting comments on the agenda/minutes before and at the beginning of the meeting.

**During a meeting**

***Start of the meeting:***

* Arrive early and ensure that all arrangements are in order.
* Start and end the meeting on time and do not wait for latecomers.
* Welcome and introduce newcomers.
* Be prepared. Lead the meeting and ensure clear results with action points.
* Ask someone to be the timekeeper who can keep the meeting focused and on track.
* Emphasize that everyone is responsible for the success of the meeting. Each person's role is critical.
* Take a few minutes to outline and agree on a format of the meeting (ie. the agenda is clear), and make sure participants know what to do, who will do what, and how it should be done (if relevant for given sessions).
* Remind participants of the basic rules and guidelines (eg. turning off phones, etc.).
* Remind participants of the results of previous meetings, if necessary, and review any action points.
* Cover any administrative issues

***Trust and relationships***

* Your mindset is crucial, you should try to really understand the point of view of the other person. You do not need to be agree with them, but to understand the root of their concerns.
* Listen actively. Take notes to summarize the main points and all suggestions.
* Check your understanding by paraphrasing what others have said.
* If you do not fully understand, do not make assumptions, ask people to explain.
* Observe the reactions and body language.
* Stay alert and listen with an open mind.
* Stay in charge. Use your body language to communicate this to participants.
* Prevent interruptions and distractions.
* Only allow a debate at a time, and keep the discussion on track.
* Remain neutral. Do not be involved in taking sides.
* Stick to the facts (do not jump to conclusions, but probe the extent of the problem) and do not manipulate people.
* Motivate and mobilize the group. Use proactive language.
* Call a time-out/break from time to time and check to see everyone’s on the same page.
* Put suggestions/issues on a flipchart (a "parking lot"), if necessary, in order to advance the discussion without forgetting the issues raised.
* Use plain language.
* Summarize and conclude.
* Clarify the expectations of participants before
* Make and keep commitments.
* Show your respect for each view.
* Invite participants to build on the ideas of others.
* Be transparent, do not accept hidden agendas.
* Be prepared to discuss sensitive issues in a courageous and considerate way.
* Leave your ego at the door and encourage others to do the same.
* Respect people who are absent (not talking behind his back).
* Produce results. Stick to the objectives of the meeting and hold others accountable.
* Thank participants for their time and valuable input.

**End of a meeting**

* How will those not present be informed of the outcomes of the meeting?
* Who should be informed of the outcomes of the meeting?
* Check minutes for accuracy and circulate within two days, if possible.
* Decide where to post the minutes (eg. email, websites, etc.).
* Clarify action points. What should be done? Who will do it? What are the deadlines? Who will receive the finished product?
* Set the date for the next meeting, if necessary.
* Agree on the details and purpose of the next meeting, if necessary/relevant.