

Consumer Advisory Board Meeting Mechanics

Agenda

A comprehensive meeting agenda will include the following core components:

1. Welcome

(This is where the chair will call the meeting to order and welcome members and guests.)

2. Introductions

(This is always an important step, especially where group members and guests may change from meeting to meeting.)

3. Review/Approval of minutes from last meeting

(This is the group's opportunity to confirm or not confirm the report of what happened at the last meeting.)

4. Reports (e.g. lead agency, subcommittee, CAB, budget)

(This is when various subgroups have an opportunity to report back to the main group about what they have been doing.)

5. Old Business

(This item gives the group the opportunity to revisit any issues from previous meetings that have not yet been resolved.)

6. New Business

(This is where the group has the opportunity to bring up new items that have not yet been discussed.)

7. Presentation (if any)

(This is the time during which any members or invited guests would have the opportunity to give a presentation about a particular topic of interest to the group.)

8. Announcements/Information Sharing

(This is when group members may announce upcoming events, items of interest, the time and date of the next meeting, etc.)

9. Adjourn

(The chair may or may not ask for a motion to adjourn and then, after a vote if the group requires one, end the meeting.)

Role of the Chair

The chairperson of the group generally serves as the meeting leader. In the absence of a chair, the co-chair or vice chair will generally be the meeting leader.

The meeting chair is responsible for several things:

1. **Facilitate the meeting.** Facilitation includes many different responsibilities, including all of the following:
2. **Call the meeting to order.** The chair is the person who will decide when to begin the meeting.
3. **Move through the agenda.** It is up to the chair to ensure that the meeting moves smoothly and does not get stuck for too long on any one topic.
4. **Recognize people who want to speak.** The chair should decide who should speak when so that everyone does not speak at the same time.
5. **Acknowledge motions.** Once a motion has been made by a group member, the chair must acknowledge it and ask for a second. The chair must then be sure that the group follows established voting procedure when acting on the motion.
6. **Keep track of time.** Most people don't have all day to sit at a meeting. It is the chair's job to ensure that the meeting runs at a fluid pace and does not run over time.
7. **Close the meeting.** In some cases, the chair will request a motion to adjourn. In other cases, the chair will simply end the meeting if no one has anything else to say.

Minutes

The minutes serve as the official written record of a meeting. Here are some tips for ensuring that the happenings at your meeting are preserved on paper and that all group members are kept up to date:

1. **Have a recorder.** Without someone to take notes, you can't have minutes. This person can be the group's secretary, coordinator, or any other person who volunteers to listen and record what's happening.
2. **Record everything.** This does not mean that every word spoken at the meeting should show up in the minutes, but it does mean that every topic discussed should at least be mentioned. Some topics will require longer explanations than others.
3. **Include attendance.** It is helpful to note who was at the meeting, and who was not. This will also help the person responsible for maintaining attendance records. (See confidentiality section below.)
4. **Be brief.** Use as few words as possible to explain what happened. Members are more likely to read the minutes carefully if they're not too long.
5. **Distribute.** In order for everyone to be kept up to date, everyone must receive the minutes. This includes all group members, not just those who were at the meeting. It is also important to distribute the minutes quickly so that there is time to make necessary changes.
6. **Maintain confidentiality.** Some groups use only first names in their minutes, some use only initials, some use full names. It is up to each group to decide. Be sure that the person taking minutes knows what the group has decided. Also, be sure not to identify people as being HIV+ unless they explicitly request that they be identified as such.

Operating Procedure/Respecting the Process

Here are some helpful hints that will help you be a more effective member of your community planning group:

1. **Arrive on time.** The meeting process is often disrupted when people walk in after the meeting has begun.
2. **Stay for the entire meeting.** The meeting process is often disrupted when people get up and leave before the meeting has ended.
3. **Listen.** An effective participant in community planning listens to what others have to say.
4. **Wait to be recognized before speaking.** A meeting runs smoothly when people who want to speak wait until they are recognized by the chair instead of calling out.
5. **Be informed about the issues.** If you want to be a voting member of a group, it is very important that you understand the issues that are being discussed.
6. **Ask questions.** If you do not understand the issues that are being discussed, be sure to ask someone in the group to explain them to you.
7. **Focus on issues, not on personalities.** It is unlikely that you will like every person at the meeting. It is important to keep your focus on the issues at hand, and not on your dislike for someone in the group.
8. **Refrain from side conversations.** While the meeting is being conducted, it is disruptive for people to be having other conversations at the table.
9. **Be familiar with the group's bylaws.** Understanding the group's operating structure will help you understand what's happening at meetings.

Voting

Here are a few tips for making sure that voting goes smoothly at your community planning meetings:

1. **Be consistent.** Use the same voting procedure for every vote at every meeting.
2. **Use ballot votes for sensitive issues.** There is no need to embarrass anyone at the table.
3. **Have a quorum.** The group's bylaws should set out how many people make a quorum (that is, how many people are enough in order to take a vote).

If you want your group's votes to be fair, follow the steps below and you won't go wrong:

1. **Someone makes a motion.** A voting member of the group must "move" that an issue be voted on.
2. **Someone seconds the motion.** At least two people must agree that a vote should be taken.
3. **Issue opened for discussion.** At this point, the chair should ask if any further discussion about the issue is necessary before a vote is taken.
4. **A vote is taken.** The chair will ask who is in favor of the proposed motion, who is opposed to it, and who chooses to abstain from the vote. A person may abstain (that is, not take part in the vote) any time the person feels that voting is not appropriate.
5. **The votes are recorded.** The secretary, or whoever is taking the meeting minutes, should record how many people voted for or against the motion, and how many people abstained.
6. **Motion carries or doesn't carry.** If enough people vote in favor of the motion, it carries. If there are not enough votes to carry the motion, it fails.