

# Do You Run Effective Meetings?

*“During a recent meeting of the Housing Coop, I walked away feeling we had done an excellent job and was energized to do more!”*

If this has never happened to you, you know a thing or two about how meetings should be run. Meetings are effective when they achieve the group’s objectives in a minimum amount of time to the satisfaction of all participants.

## MEETING CHECKLIST

Compare your group’s meeting to this checklist of the characteristics of an effective meeting.

- An agenda is prepared prior to the meeting.
- Everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the agenda.
- Advance notice of meeting time and place is provided to those invited.
- Meeting facilities are comfortable and adequate for the number of participants.
- The meeting begins and ends on time.
- The use of time is monitored throughout the meeting.
- Everyone has an opportunity to present his or her point of view.
- Participants listen attentively to each other.
- There are periodic summaries as the meeting progresses.
- No one tends to dominate the discussion.
- The meeting typically ends with a summary.
- The participants periodically evaluate the meeting.
- The meeting typically ends with a summary of accomplishments.
- People can be depended upon to carry out any action agreed to during the meeting.
- Minutes of the meeting are provided to each participant following the meeting.
- The meeting chair follows up with participants on action agreed to during the meeting.
- The appropriate and necessary people can be counted on to attend each meeting.
- The decision-making process used is appropriate for the size of the group.

How did your group do? Do you see lots of check marks? If not, you should identify the areas where you need improvement. Volunteers value their time and want to feel that their time is being well spent.

## WHEN CONFLICT ARISES

One way to get to the core of conflict is to approach it from a “how do we make peace?” approach instead of a “who is to blame?” perspective. This technique proposes four simple steps to resolving conflict in a meeting situation:

1. **Observe what is happening in the given situation.** Listen to the messages coming from both sides. What might they be feeling? What might they need or want? Read between the lines if necessary and prompt them to uncover their feelings and their needs.
2. **Identify what each party is feeling.** We often talk more about what we “think” is going on than actually expressing what is going on for us. Urge people to talk about the facts and their feelings.
3. **Identify what each party needs.** When we clearly express what we actually need in a given situation, we show respect for ourselves. And by “owning” our truth in this way, we show respect for the other person as well.
4. **Have each side make requests for desired outcomes.** Once each side understands what the other feels and needs, we have a chance to use our energies to create win-win solutions.
5. **Implement the solution.** Once all parties have agreed upon a potential solution, make it happen!

There is an approach to finding, involving and keeping dedicated volunteers. It’s called **Volunteer Development** and it is made up of five stages. This **Fact Sheet** (no. 8 of 14) addresses the importance of **volunteer orientation and training**.

For more information on the Volunteer Development Cycle or Volunteer Involvement, contact your local Volunteer Centre ([www.volunteer.ca/volunteercentres](http://www.volunteer.ca/volunteercentres)).

## Volunteer Development Cycle



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