



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONSULTATION BEST PRACTICES and TIPS for SUCCESS

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## PART II MEETING FACILITATION



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# Meeting Facilitation

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Meetings are a necessary part of working in any group – they give us the chance to share information, to reach decisions and to get jobs done. But too often they drag on and on, with tempers running high, people talking over each other, and no decisions being made. Bad meetings leave you wondering why you bothered turning up. Unfortunately, this pattern is very common in groups. However, by using some facilitation skills it's easy to turn around the style of meetings and actually make them an enjoyable and inspiring experience.<sup>1</sup>

### **FOR MEETING MODERATORS: Facilitation Best Practices**<sup>2</sup>

- 1. Know the Meeting Goals:** Was the meeting successful? What got done? Did you get the necessary results? Were problems solved, and were the objectives of the group met?
- 2. Know the Group Dynamics:** How did it get done? How did people feel and how will this affect morale and group cohesion? Did the meeting make good use of the pooled talents? Was it enjoyable?
- 3. Set the Agenda:** Help the group plan the meeting agenda. Think about timing and order of agenda items, and how to tackle each point.
- 4. Prepare the Venue:** Whether a physical room or a virtual meeting, arrange the venue so everyone can participate.
- 5. Moderate the Discussion.**
  - Introduce the meeting, what it's about and how the meeting works (e.g. consensus or voting, hand signals, breaks).
  - Keep the group to the agenda and decision-making process.
  - Keep the meeting focused on one item at a time.
  - Help everyone to participate. Keep track of who wants to speak. Draw out quiet people and limit those who talk a lot.
  - Challenge aggressive or discriminatory behavior and put-downs.
  - Introduce techniques such as idea storming, go-rounds and working groups to make the meeting more efficient and participatory.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/shortfacilitation>

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- Clarify and summarize points, make sure everyone understands the discussion.
- Test for agreement and get clear decisions made.
- Ensure that action points and decisions are recorded.
- Keep the meeting to time.
- Help the group deal with conflict.
- Listen for underlying issues, concerns or emotions. Help bring them out so they can be dealt with.

#### 6. Top Tips for Facilitators

- Design a good agenda. Be realistic about what the meeting can achieve. Set time limits and tackle all points.
- Be aware of both content and process.
- Keep the group moving towards its aims.
- Use a variety of facilitation tools to keep everyone interested.
- Create a safe and empowering atmosphere to get the best contribution from everyone.
- Put a stop to domineering, interrupting, put-downs and guilt trips.

### **FOR MEETING PLANNERS: Inclusion and Accessibility Considerations**<sup>3</sup>

Communicate with attendees beforehand to ascertain their needs. That will help ensure that meetings involving people with differing abilities is productive.

1. **Locations** where meetings are held must be completely accessible, from accessible parking spaces, into the building, into the meeting room, and around the meeting table.
2. Make sure the **room** where the meeting is held, and the table where participants will sit, is large enough to accommodate everyone who will be using a wheelchair. Having able-bodied attendees around the table and individuals who are wheelchair users in the background looking on, is not acceptable.
3. Many individuals with disabilities do not have full-time jobs or own cars. Many live on limited income, so it is important that you **reimburse travel** costs to anyone coming in from out of town. People with significant disabilities often have to pay others to drive them to meetings and appointments, and some have full-time attendants, so you must take these individuals into account when you calculate meeting attendance. This means you may have to have meetings at off-site locations in order to accommodate everyone.

4. For long meetings over mealtimes, **provide a free lunch**, with a variety of choices, including vegetarian. A lunch-on-your-own meeting can create significant logistical and financial hardships for people with disabilities.
5. **Snacks** such as granola bars and fruit should be provided, along with water for those who prefer to eat small amounts frequently, rather than larger meals three times a day.
6. **Bathrooms** must be plentiful and accessible.
7. **Information** presented at the meeting, whether spoken, written, a slide show, or video, must be presented in a form that can be understood by everyone.
8. Make sure that all attendees get the **opportunity to speak** and be heard. People with disabilities may speak slower, and softer, and may take longer to organize their thoughts and express their opinion. This doesn't mean, though, their opinions should be valued less. They can provide valuable insights that can make a project successful.

