



Ground Rules for Sound Partnerships (& partnership meetings)

Setting ground rules in partnership can make a great difference in helping to build robust relationships and smooth partnership working. Ground rules can be built into partnership agreements as guiding principles, while mutually agreed rules for meetings and workshops can help ensure productive outcomes.

Governing the partnership

- focus on partnership added value - the difference that the partnership should make, to the benefit of the area/ customers/ beneficiaries
- spring no surprises
- deal promptly and constructively with issues needing resolution
- support each other
- adhere to decisions agreed by the partnership
- communicate effectively - being open, sharing information and knowledge
- learn continually - building common knowledge, understanding and skills to improve effectiveness

Effective Partnership Meetings

Meetings are an expensive use of one of our most valuable resources – Time. Meetings can be important tools for driving change. The types of change they can facilitate include

- changed views and alignment on issues and priorities
- decisions to change things – plans, processes, resources, expenditure or accountabilities

If nothing changes as a result of the meeting, then the investment has not been successful. The following suggestions are intended to ensure that we get the best value from meetings.

There are three important ingredients to successful meetings

1. preparation before the meeting
2. managing the meeting
3. concluding after the meeting

1. Preparation and planning

Chairperson	Secretariat	Attendees
Review if a meeting is really necessary	Maintain and publish a rolling programme of meeting dates	Submit papers in time for distribution
Consider what format or meeting structure works best	Issue agenda a papers in advance of the meeting	Be properly prepared for meetings – read papers beforehand
Define the purpose of the meeting	Ensure the venue, room layout etc are suitable	Be ready to start on time send apologies if not
Ensure papers are focused and clear		Present papers with clear recommendations



Remember : Basic factors like the suitability of the venue, heat and layout of the room can also affect meetings.

2. Managing the meeting

Chairperson	Secretariat	Attendees
Start promptly, and keep to time Review the meeting objectives & agenda with attendees Keep contributions & discussion on track Review and agree actions / decisions Close meeting and review success	Captures salient details such as, decisions actions, accountabilities (who, what when, how)	Participate actively Keep contributions relevant Listen actively Be honest and constructive

Where meetings are used, a **skilled chair and facilitator** makes a big difference. It may be necessary to change the partnership chair or provide some facilitation training for partners.

Ground rules can improve meetings too. Ideally, these ground rules are for policing by the partners themselves. Typical ground rules include.....

- avoid use of jargon and abbreviations
- take time to explain concepts
- don't hesitate to ask questions
- don't make assumptions about others (i.e. their positions, understanding)
- respect the contributions of others
 - listen
 - don't interrupt
 - no side chats
 - don't jump to criticise, or dismiss innovative ideas
- be open to challenge and being influenced
- be constructive at all times
- be willing to accept and give feedback
- be clear about what decisions have (and have not) been made
- mobile phones must be turned off (or at least to silent)
- follow up with minutes or action points promptly

3. After the meeting

- Issue the minutes as promptly as possible (ideally 24 hours)
- Complete the agreed actions or implement the agreed decisions

Hints & Tips

Why hold a meeting? – ask yourself...

- ✓ Are you sure that you need to hold a meeting?
- ✓ Is the purpose of the meeting clear?
- ✓ What format or meeting structure will work best?

