



## Unit: Group Decision-making

### Skill 36: Hosting Meetings And Open Forums

#### Activity A: How to Hold a Meeting

##### Activity Skills:

Small group role play.

##### Leadership Skills:

Understanding how to hold a meeting and have it be productive for everyone.

##### Suggested Level:

Beginning

##### Time:

30 minutes

##### Supplies needed:

- Paper
- Pens or pencils to write

##### Do Ahead:

N/A

##### Source:

Developed by:  
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##### Based On:

*Growing Communities Curriculum: Community Building and Organizational Development through Community Gardening*, Jeannette Abi-Nader, Kendall Dunigan and Kristen Markley. The American Community Gardening Association, 2001.

##### BACKGROUND:

We have all been to terrible meetings – those that drag on too long, or have no clear purpose. There is really nothing worse than spending time in a meeting where you feel your time is being wasted. As a leader, what can you do to ensure that your meetings are productive, maybe even fun?

Let's review some of the **basics guidelines** for having a good meeting:

- 1) **Have an agenda** – An agenda is simply a schedule for what will be discussed, when and by whom.
- 2) **Know who will play what role** – There are multiple roles to be filled in running a meeting; enlist support for the various roles.
- 3) **Encourage participation** – Don't just recruit others to fill certain roles to help guide the meeting, also work to engage participants in the meeting itself.
- 4) **Keep the pace moving** – Ideally not too slow or fast, with each item getting sufficient discussion but wrapping up when necessary and moving to the next item of business.
- 5) **Have a "bike rack"** – If an issue is becoming too much to work through, or people are getting upset, defer the topic to the "bike rack" list where it can be parked and dealt with another time.
- 6) **Take clear notes** - Taking notes in front of the group on a flip chart can allow for reflection and further discussion, while taking minutes of what was said by who provides a record of what occurred; both are important strategies.
- 7) **Summarize issues at logical breaks** – Provide a quick summary of the recommendations or actions at breaks between topics.
- 8) **Have action plans that result** – If tasks are generated during the course of the meeting, where are they noted?
- 9) **Assign who is responsible for the action steps** – Who will handle the tasks and when will they handle them by?
- 10) **Share minutes or notes in a timely fashion** – Once notes are taken, make sure they are typed and sent to all the participants, including those who couldn't attend.

##### WHAT TO DO:

Have participants break into groups of 5-8 people. Each group will develop a plan for running a meeting, including assigning roles (see descriptions on worksheet), developing a quick agenda, and taking notes. Allow 5-8 minutes for this planning step, and then give the groups 15 minutes to conduct their mock meeting.

## Skill 36: Hosting Meetings And Open Forums

### Activity A: How To Hold A Meeting

**Notes:**

Reconvene and discuss how the exercise went.

The meeting situation is as follows: One person is the leader of the Louis Avenue Block Club, and two others are members of the block club. Since there are only three hosts, some people will have to take on more than one role; for example, the facilitator might also keep time and the scribe might also greet and welcome people initially. Any remaining members of the small group are to play neighbors from the area who have come to hear about what the block club is doing and voice their concerns.

The Louis Avenue Block Club is trying to get the local alderman to put lamp posts along several blocks in each front yard, to help improve neighborhood safety. They'd like every household to sign a letter in support of the project, but a couple neighbors have come to object. One of the objecting neighbors says he doesn't want the glare shining in his front windows, and the other objecting neighbor is concerned about who is going to pay for the increase in her electric bill. How does the meeting progress, and what tasks need to be addressed to move things forward?

#### **TALK IT OVER:**

**Reflect:**

- How did you determine who would play what role? Were you comfortable in your role?
- What conversation and/or disagreements arose as you discussed the issue?
- How did the block club members hosting the meeting respond to the local neighbors objections?
- Which basic guidelines did you use to keep the meeting on task?
- What particular pressures rest on the shoulders of the facilitator?

**Apply:**

- What are some other meeting situations that you've experienced that might require careful facilitation?
- Have you observed good facilitators in the past? What made them successful?
- What other communication skills would be helpful to good meeting facilitation?
- Why do leaders need to be able to effectively manage meetings?

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#### **BEYOND THE BOX:**

##### ***Optional Homework:***

Ask students to attend a local meeting at their school or in their community. What are the key issues being discussed? Was there an agenda? Who led the meeting? How would you assess the facilitator based on this activity?

##### ***Resources and Web Links:***

Growing Communities Curriculum: Community Building and Organizational Development through Community Gardening, Jeannette Abi-Nader, Kendall Dunigan and Kristen Markley. The American Community Gardening Association, 2001. (p. 149)

[www.leaderinstitute.com](http://www.leaderinstitute.com)

[www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com)