Guide on a Side

Running Successful and Inclusive Meetings

If you are setting up a new group, project or network consider the make-up of the group. We are often tempted to 'recruit in our own image' and will miss out on the diversity of perspective that new people can bring.

Ensure under-represented groups have the opportunity to join and contribute. In doing so think about the messages that are sent out through the timing of meetings. Can part-time staff and those with caring responsibilities engage for example?

Set the tone for the way a group or network will be run. Let people know their opinion is valued and that they will be listened to.

Agree ground-rules or expectations; such as being non-judgmental, listening to each other, and valuing each other's view at the first meeting and remind people of behaviour that does not support these in practise.

Plan and circulate agenda and any papers in advance. This gives those who have more of a reflective preference thinking and preparation time.

Be realistic about what can be included in the agenda, don't be tempted to try to cram in too much.

Stick to the agenda and manage contributions to ensure everyone has the same opportunity.

Core meeting hours are generally between 10am-4pm. You should schedule within these hours, wherever possible.

Try and schedule key meetings on different days, to include those who work part time and with caring responsibilities.

Online meetings can be tiring. Schedule shorter, focused online meetings as far as possible.

Recognise and value the diversity in styles of members of the group. Ensure that agreed principles are followed and behaviour that contravenes these principles is addressed.

Many people are quieter and may need encouraging to contribute. Don't assume more vocal contributors speak for everyone.

Listen - Really listen to each other. This is a lot easier said than done and most of us could be better at listening.

Aim to develop your self-awareness and recognise when you are really rehearsing what you are going to say next.

Actively facilitate discussions making sure people are not cut off and can finish making their point.

A good way to do this when meeting online is to agree everyone stays on mute except for the person talking and members use the chat function to say when they want to contribute. Manage expectations by stating you want everyone to have a voice.