

Conducting Productive Team Meetings¹

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Introduction

Individuals who are responsible for running meetings and **facilitating teamwork** should encourage timely, consistent, and clear communication of goals and expectations. One of the more common ways teams engage and communicate across Extension is through meetings. Regular meetings are part of the processes and procedures (Beckhard, 1972) that keep teams on track and enable them to meet their goals. This publication outlines tips and strategies for team leaders running meetings.

How can leaders create productive meetings to achieve success? Kayser (2011) suggests that meetings can be made more effective if leaders establish a sense of purpose, know the desired outcomes, assign meeting roles, and set a structured agenda. Below are a few tips to ensure your next team meeting goes smoothly.

Before the Meeting

Determine meeting format. Larger teams may require a more formalized process for meeting and making decisions. For example, many organizations adhere to parliamentary procedures under Robert's Rules of Order (Robert et al., 2020) for running meetings to uphold structure. This format takes a more democratic approach to discussion and decision-making. Smaller teams who might not need as much formality may allow free comments and input

or use a designated mediator or discussant. If informal procedures are used, teams should still create policies for decision-making (i.e., consultative, democratic/majority, or consensus voting, etc.). It is important, regardless of the format you choose, for meetings to be held in a consistent way. This helps team members know what to expect and how to participate appropriately.

Identify goals for the meeting. Before scheduling a meeting, identify why the team needs to meet and write down the top three objectives you need to accomplish (Sennett, 2021). If you are only sharing information, think about whether a meeting is the most productive forum. If a meeting is not necessary, consider an email or memo to share information instead. However, your team should also meet periodically to build relationships and increase cohesion (Franz, 2012).

Determine the time and location of the meeting. Consider what location best suits the intended outcomes and needs of your team. If activities are primarily discussion-based and meeting in person does not add value, consider conducting the meeting virtually using an online platform like Microsoft Teams or Zoom. For longer meetings that require more active participation, in-person meetings might be better. If you have team members locally and at a distance, a hybrid meeting with in-person and virtual options might be most effective. The location and time should

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be determined ahead of time. Using scheduling poll tools through [Microsoft](#), [When2Meet](#), or [Doodle Poll](#), you can easily find a meeting time that accommodates everyone's schedule. Once the location and time have been set, send a [virtual calendar invitation](#) to your team.

Prepare and send an agenda in advance. Consider asking the team for items they would like addressed. This creates open lines of communication and shows team members their input is valued (Levi, 2017). Preparing and sending the agenda ahead of time ensures team members understand expectations for the meeting and can prepare accordingly. You should set standards for how far in advance the agenda will be provided, and the amount of time individuals have to add items to the agenda. Preparing and following an agenda will help the leader monitor progress and keep the team on track (Sennett, 2021). The agenda should include the meeting time, location (if in person), and online links (if virtual or hybrid). It should also outline any old and new business and items for discussion. You can develop your own agenda or use the Team Meeting Template in Appendix A. When the agenda is finalized, team leaders should email it to attendees or attach it to the calendar invitation. A good rule of thumb is to send the agenda a day or two (or more, if necessary) before the meeting to give participants plenty of time to review it.

Create a conducive environment. Creating an environment that supports productivity is an important aspect of meetings. According to Franz (2012), leaders should arrive early to:

- Ensure the meeting space is large enough to accommodate all members
- Arrange seating to optimize the meeting format or to avoid unnecessary distractions
- Prepare presentation items (flip charts, PowerPoint presentations, etc.)
- Test videoconferencing technology (i.e., Zoom or Teams) to ensure video, audio, and chat functions are working properly
- Distribute copies of the agenda
- Greet team members as they arrive in the room or online

During the Meeting

Prioritize culture. Team meetings are critical for enhancing community and strengthening the team's culture. Ensure your time is flexible at the beginning of the meeting to allow for socialization. Plan to allow 5–10 minutes for conversations to organically happen and consider

scheduling time in your agenda to provide intentional space for fostering relationships. This could be through a fun icebreaker, mental health check-in, sharing highs and lows from the week, etc. (Eller, 2004). These informal opportunities to engage on a more personal level increase trust and communication among team members.

Set meeting ground rules. The team leader's role is to facilitate discussion and navigate through the agenda in a timely manner. At the start of the meeting, restate expectations, including key objectives or points of discussion. You may already have established team ground rules that will aid in these interactions (Greenhaw et al., 2024). Assign team members to designated roles to cover tasks such as note-taking and time keeping (Kreamer et al., 2021). If the [meeting takes place virtually](#), clearly set expectations for participation (when/how to provide comments, whether video and audio are desired, etc.) (Levi, 2017).

Engage team members. Whether it is an in-person, virtual, or hybrid meeting, use tools and materials that encourage participation. For in-person meetings, consider using flip charts and whiteboards to get participants physically engaged. You can also use interactive software like [Mentimeter](#), [Poll Everywhere](#), or [Slido](#) to gather feedback through questions and polls and present real-time feedback. In online and hybrid meetings, make good use of chat functions and polling tools built into Zoom or Teams. Use branded templates to create visually appealing, credible presentations. UF/IFAS Extension employees can find templates in the [UF/IFAS Branding Portal](#).

More technology and tools for virtual hosts can be found in the Ask IFAS series, [Don't Fake It, Make It!](#)

Address past items. If items on the agenda from the last meeting went unaddressed or were unfinished, make sure those are attended to first in the meeting before moving on to any new business.

Encourage timely discussion. Assign specific amounts of time for each agenda item and stick to them, but be intentional about creating space for input and questions. If questions or concerns go unanswered, make sure to follow up after the meeting and address them with the team (Levi, 2017; Sennett, 2021).

Redirect conflict. Leaders should be keen to identify tension rising toward conflict in meeting settings, remain objective where appropriate, and proactively redirect or intervene to help manage emotions and keep the group on task. Touch base after the meeting with affected team

members and decide on how best to address the conflict (Behfar et al., 2008).

Recognize wins and milestones. Team members want to contribute to groups where they feel seen, valued, and appreciated. Take time during your meeting to acknowledge recent individual and team wins, share progress, and celebrate your team's performance (Levi, 2017).

Clarify action items and prepare for the next meeting. Before concluding the meeting, make sure to summarize and ask for clarification on discussion points. Thank the team for their participation and recognize progress toward meeting goals. Restate action items for the next meeting and confirm deadlines as well as who will be responsible.

Set the next meeting. Take the last few minutes of your meeting to set a date for the next meeting, if necessary. Alternatively, you can create a meeting poll to send out after the meeting but use this time to let team members know it will be coming.

Honor team members' time. End the meeting on time. If you have not covered all agenda items, add them to the next meeting's agenda or address them in a follow-up email.

After the Meeting

Remember the follow-up. After the meeting, send a follow-up memo or email with relevant documents, meeting notes, and action items. Highlight or address responses to any unanswered questions from the meeting. Think about storing meeting documents in a shared space, like Microsoft Teams, or another appropriate cloud-sharing platform.

Seek feedback. In a follow-up email or a comparable medium, consider sending a form or poll to ask for feedback and suggestions for future meetings.

Conclusion

Do not discount the importance of team meetings. While meeting in lieu of an email is not recommended, it is valuable to periodically come together for a meeting. These checkpoints can help you build relationships and manage tasks and projects as you progress toward your team goals. While consistency in meeting structure is important, do not be afraid to mix it up. If you meet frequently, a break from routine can be refreshing. Consider rotating leaders, changing the venue, or building in time for activities that foster engagement and cohesion.

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Appendix A: Team Meeting Template

Team Name / Organization

AGENDA FOR TEAM MEETING: [DATE & TIME]

Location: [Insert Location]

Roll: [Insert names of team members in attendance]

Purpose and Meeting Objectives: The purpose of this meeting is to...

1. [Objective 1]

2. [Objective 2]

3. [Objective 3]

I. Introduction and Opening

- a. Socialization, icebreaker activity, etc.
- b. Restate ground rules and decision-making procedures
- c. Recognition of Team Wins and Milestones (Part I)

II. Minutes from Previous Meeting

III. Reports and Organizational Updates (if necessary)

IV. Unfinished Business

V. New Business

VI. Recognition of Team Wins and Milestones (Part II)

VII. Closing

- a. Action items
- b. Next meeting date