

Funding Guide 3

Committees, Capacities and Capabilities

TOOL



Running your Meetings

It is useful to spend some time discussing as a group how you will run your meetings. Will you make decisions by taking a vote or trying to reach a consensus through discussion?

An appropriate venue is vital. Try to choose a location which is quiet and comfortable, where people feel relaxed and can concentrate. Things like natural light, a regular supply of fresh air and a neutral chair setting (round table) can instantly influence how the Committee work together and respond.

Provide refreshments, it may seem obvious but volunteers often have very busy lives, and a hot cup of tea and favourite biscuit is not only good hospitality, it shows that you appreciate the time and energy they are giving to the project.

The Chair Person

Don't underestimate how important having the right people and team on board will be. It is important that you involve the right people early on, and set realistic expectations when assessing your team's capabilities and capacities.

The Chair can offer certain levels of responsibility for certain aspects of the project. The meetings can provide an opportunity to update the Committee on their specific area of the project, and ask for further support or advice if necessary. It is useful for people to be informed by the Chair when it is most beneficial to listen and when to verbally contribute.

The Chair can also ask an individual's opinion directly, this enables those who don't always talk, to voice their opinions / any concerns, and those that have a tendency to talk a lot, to listen and consider their colleagues contribution.

Communication Methods

Identify the appropriate communication methods for the Committee, e.g. do people want to receive electronic minutes or paper minutes? Are people happy to communicate via email or SMS?

It is a good idea for the Committee to have access to everyone's contact details so people don't feel excluded. Equally, people don't want to be continually spammed regarding every small detail of the project. Approach the Committee and ask if everyone is happy for those that need to communicate between meetings about the project do so privately, and then update the rest of the Committee at the next meeting.

Meeting Minutes

It is crucial to enlist an experienced and skilled Secretary to take the minutes and record decisions taken, the agreed actions and who will undertake them. The minutes need to be produced and circulated quickly and at every meeting actions should be reported back on.

Ask everyone to bring along their diaries so you can schedule in advance meetings, this will strengthen project momentum.

Committee Values

You might also want to agree a set of values and have them somewhere visible during the meetings. Try to ensure that everyone contributes at least one value, that way it will be a set of group values, and everyone will have joint ownership. It can sometimes be helpful to remind everyone to spend the first minute of every meeting reflecting on the Committee's core values.

Suggestions could include:

- Respect your fellow Committee Members
- Be democratic in your decisions
- Help one another
- Listen to one another
- Don't be afraid to ask for help!