

The Big House Project

Document: Meeting Procedure

Version: 1.0—20/02/2022

This document forms part of a package of ratified policy documents, that are intended to be read in conjunction with the "Associate Membership Agreement". The documents may be updated from time to time by the project's Decision Making Process. The full set of supporting documents includes, but is not limited to: the "Membership Process", "Decision Making Process", "Meeting Procedure", "Minutes Template" and the "Spending Policy". We wish to credit Earthsong Eco-Neighbourhood for the basis of these documents, adapted under Creative Commons 4.0 BY NC SA, and these documents are released on the same terms.

MEETING PROCEDURE

The following is a guide to facilitators and members of Full Circle meetings. Sub-circles may choose to follow this guide or adopt a more relaxed procedure at their discretion. Our meeting procedure is based on a commitment to strive for a balance between process and the achievement of tasks. Note that having a meal or some other social occasion prior to the meeting tends to make things go smoother.

Preparation:

- Decide date, time and venue well in advance.
- What is the meeting purpose? Is it clear?
- Are members prepared (eg agenda/sub-circle minutes circulated?)
- Does other resource material need to be circulated before the meeting?
- Are key people available to attend?
- What equipment is needed?
- What outcomes are needed from the meeting?
- Write the agenda on the white board before the meeting starts.

Arrival:

- Ensure a commitment to start on time and arrive with enough time to settle.
- Is there adequate seating, light, childcare etc.
- A decorative centrepiece adds a sense of ceremony.
- Is there a quorum?

Opening:

- We start with an opening ritual or a checkin sharing round.
- In any checkin members speak briefly, not so much about the details and story of our week, but about anything that is alive at the moment or that might influence participation.

Assigning Roles:

- Facilitator – Appointed prior to the meeting starting.
- Optional co-facilitator – someone to keep an eye on the energy of the group, and/or who is being mentored into future facilitator-ship
- Minute taker
- Timekeeper

Confirm the Agenda:

- Confirm the ending time of the meeting
- Ask for apologies
- Confirm that the minutes of the previous meeting are an accurate record.
- Add any items to the agenda, and assign times to each item.
- If there is not enough time to complete all items then prioritise them.

Item Discussion and Decision Making

- The facilitator now invites the item sponsor to introduce the item, say what they want from the group (input or decision), suggest the process they would like the group to use (e.g. open discussion, round, brainstorm etc)
- Try to avoid doing too much proposal formation in the meeting, instead relying on sub-circles to do this work in advance.
- Use systems to ensure that each members voice is heard.
- The facilitator seeks clarification, summarizes and finds out what else is needed for the sponsors item to be completed.
- If group agreement is needed, clarify the proposal, ensure the proposal is first recorded in the minutes, then card the decision according to the Decision Making Process
- It may be helpful to reach minor agreements along the way. Record these. If a decision is being held up by one or two people, the facilitator can seek the dissenters ideas about how to resolve the matter.
- Those directly affected by a decision need to be involved with the decision making
- The time keeper keeps an eye on the time, and informs the group when near the time allotted for that item, whereupon the meeting needs to decide whether to extend, delegate or defer. It is usually better not to extend the time.
- Minutes taken should adopt the format outlined in the Minutes Template document.

Completion:

- Try to end on time.
- Make sure that the time, place and facilitator for the next meeting are clear.
- A closing round may be held in which people express anything that is still incomplete for them, or any feedback they would like to give to other members of the group.
- The group may also develop a closing ritual

Adapted from Dale Hunter, *The Art of Facilitation*.