

SICKKIDS FOUNDATION'S INCLUSIVE MEETING GUIDELINES

In an inclusive meeting, **everyone gets a chance to contribute** and **all voices have equal weight**, resulting in better outcomes.

To conduct **inclusive discussions**, consider the importance of **facilitating open discussions** where people can share different viewpoints. It is important to **seek out** and **listen** to **dissenting voices, ideas and perspectives**. Paying attention to who is and is not speaking creates a **comfortable environment** for **everyone to contribute** to the meeting.

MEETING GUIDELINES – FOR ALL FORMAL MEETINGS

What do we mean by 'formal meeting'?

A **formal meeting** is a pre-planned gathering for the purpose of achieving a common goal through verbal interaction – e.g. committees, working groups and team meetings.

Land Acknowledgements:

- For all internal organizational-wide events, and external SickKids Foundation signature events, open the event with a land acknowledgement, facilitated by a knowledgeable individual.

Planning and preparation for the meeting:

- Identify the purpose of the meeting and assess whether it is necessary –
 - Is it to gather input, to decide or report back? Status updates are rarely a good use to have a meeting.
 - Will an email, memo, phone call or simple conversation between two people suffice?
- Invite **a diverse group** to **ensure many voices, diversity of thought to inform this work**, including diverse representation from various levels within the Foundation.
- Provide an **agenda** and any **documents requiring feedback** in **advance** (preferably at least 48 hours) - not only is this good meeting etiquette, but it **also provides people the opportunity to prepare thoughts and questions**.
- For each agenda item, outline the **purpose** – informational, decision making, brainstorming, etc.
- Add a statement on the agenda **that invites people to come ready to share as well as listen**. If you would like to provide your feedback in advance of the meeting, please provide your comments to the Facilitator.
- Start every meeting by **acknowledging** the **value** and **importance** of **everyone's opinion** and encouraging people to **share ideas and respect the views of others**.
- Respect people's time: **start and end on time**. On the rare occasion that a meeting needs to be extended by a few minutes, check in with attendees to ensure they have the time.
- Consider any necessary visuals – Ensure that visual presentations are vivid and legible to all attendees.

- Think about sound – Ensure that mics are used in large meetings and there are adequate sound projections.
- Think about food/catering - Request for dietary restrictions and allergies ahead of time, if meals are provided at meetings, and ensure that there is a diverse range of options to accommodate dietary needs.
- If people are unable to attend part of a formal meeting, it is their responsibility to review the minutes, and follow up with the facilitator if a recap is required.

Amplifying Voices - create an environment where each person can participate, feels comfortable stating their opinion and feel meaningfully engaged:

- Greet each meeting participant warmly by name, so everyone feels welcome.
- Ensure materials are distributed in advance if possible, to allow reading/preparation.
- As needed, re-iterate the importance of communication from all parties
- Listen to those who have different perspectives and ensure everyone's voice is heard.
- Be mindful of the time to enable broad discussion
- Do not allow people to interrupt when someone else is speaking. If someone gets interrupted, the facilitator should give them back the floor.
- Body language plays a role in whether someone feels safe to voice their opinions – be aware of facial expressions, avoid rolling of eyes, head shaking or crossing of arms.
- Be open, receptive and an active listener.
- Be present and respectful to those presenting during the meeting – minimize cellphone and email use.
- Give time to think thinking is an internal process best suited to quiet moments. Allocate a few minutes of silent reflection throughout the meeting.
- After the meeting, facilitator or presenters to consider soliciting input from attendees that did not speak up during the meeting, in a supportive environment. (E.g. scheduling 121, sending email)
- For big questions, have the group take a few minutes to put their ideas on paper, then go around and have everyone present their ideas.
- Consider rotating the facilitator of formal meetings – this provides everyone with an opportunity to participate, and allows for different styles

For all attendees who are attending virtually:

- Encourage all attendees to mute their lines until they are ready to speak, to improve audio quality.
- Use the 'Raise your hand' function when you are ready to participate, and to allow other meeting attendees to finish their thoughts.
- Encourage all attendees to turn the video on.
- Use screen sharing to guide the conversation when presenting materials.
- Avoid multi-tasking – important for everyone to be mentally present.
- If any attendees are calling in or using video conferencing be sure to regularly engage them in the conversation – check in to see if they're able to follow the conversation and contribute.

Share Outcomes – with those who were involved and/or would benefit/impacted from the work

- Recap the actions the group might take so people have a chance to voice agreement or concerns, specifically for initiatives that have broader implications across the Foundation (i.e. hosting focus groups, Think Tanks, conducting surveys to solicit input)
- Post key project/committee deliverables and milestones on Info Hub to share information and updates to all employees

Ensure inclusive and accessible arrangements and facilities for all:

- Is the meeting/event space wheelchair-accessible, is it accessible by public transit, are there gender-neutral washrooms available, is there clear signage?
- Does the meeting/event conflict with an important religious or cultural observance?
- Will it accommodate various demands on participants' schedules (consider people who are working varying work schedules, have childcare/family responsibilities)?

Role of a Chair/Facilitator of the meeting:

The main goal of a chair/facilitator of the meeting is to 'make easy' and draw out knowledge and insight from other group members. A facilitator will use different skills, tools, exercises and natural abilities to keep a group discussion moving smoothly.

In general, facilitators have three responsibilities:

- to make sure that everyone has a chance to have their ideas and feelings expressed;
- to keep the discussion moving in a direction that produces a product without rushing the group (this product may be a decision, a plan, a proposal, or a brainstorm); and
- to maintain a safe and respectful group environment where the group has taken ownership of what safety and respect mean to them.