

Ten Tips for Planning Successful Meetings

Carefully plan and organize the meeting ahead of time.

1. Set meeting goals and decide what results or actions you want members to take. Ask yourself: What will we ask members to do after leaving this meeting? How will we use this meeting to increase participation in the union?
2. Develop an agenda that focuses on issues of importance to members.
3. Plan an activity or invite a guest speaker that appeals to members' interests.
4. Line up committee reports, officer reports, staff reports, etc.
5. Select a day of the week, time and location that is most convenient for the majority of members to attend. Consider rotating the time and location to reach more members.
6. Be sure the meeting room is comfortable and accessible. Consider a room set-up that will encourage participation (u-shape or round table).
7. Distribute the meeting notice to all members well in advance. The meeting notice should include the date, time and location; the topics to be addressed; and perhaps a theme for the activity or guest speaker (for example, Pizza and Politics).
8. In addition to written notice — leaflets, newsletters, bulletin boards, e-mail, website, etc. — use a MAT system (see Section 4) to contact members one-on-one. This is the only way to truly boost turnout.
9. Be thoroughly prepared to conduct the meeting smoothly and efficiently so that it starts on time and ends on time. People will be more likely to come back if their time is respected.
10. Consider an opening activity to help build a sense of community before the formal agenda begins (paired conversations on a specific topic, a fun activity, a video clip, etc).



Tips for Running Results-Oriented, Motivational Meetings

1. Start on time.
2. Have an agenda and stick to it.
3. Call the meeting to order with a welcoming tone. Recognize first timers and new members.
4. Keep reports from officers and staff short or ask people to give written reports.
5. Address old business items, but focus the majority of the meeting on new business and action.
6. Encourage lively discussion and debate on action items.
7. Encourage broad participation. Don't let the same person(s) dominate discussions.
8. Insist that all be treated with respect: no personal attacks, interrupting or foul language.
9. Look for opportunities for members to volunteer.
10. Assign new projects to committees and make sure that next steps are clear.
11. Allow time for announcements and for members to bring up issues or ask questions.
12. Thank members for attending the meeting.
13. Adjourn the meeting and end on time.



RESOURCE ALERT! How to Take Part in Local Meetings

This AFSCME publication will help new activists participate in local union meetings. It explains how to use Robert's Rules of Order from the perspective of a meeting participant. Consider making copies available at every local union meeting. To order copies, contact the AFSCME General Services Department at 202-429-1234 or email gshelpdesk@afscme.org.