



Make Meetings Meaningful!

A guide to building caring communities
with great meetings & facilitation

Meetings are one of the most common things groups do together. Why have boring, exclusive, tedious meetings, when they can be inclusive, fun, and effective? Let this guide you.

What makes a good meeting?

Before:

- An agenda
- Day-of-meeting reminders

During:

- A Facilitator
- Introductions
- A Check-in question
- A Note-taker
- A good meeting space
- A regular, convenient meeting time
- Different activities during meetings
- Real discussion
- Snacks, Laughter, Fun
- Clear next-steps

In-Between:

- Send out meeting notes
- Connect one-on-one
- Hang-out together
- Sub-groups meet to do tasks

Only 1/3 of what it takes to have a good meetings happens during the actual meeting. Good meetings happen when you have a strong group, not just a bunch of strangers who show up. You have to do stuff during & outside of meetings so people get to know each other & care about each other, to do good work together!



What is a Facilitator? Someone who:

Encourages full participation: helps with turn-out for good attendance to the meeting, & structures the meeting to make sure everyone gets to participate and be heard

- Send personal reminders about the meeting
- Plan for many different ways to participate (a go-around question, pair-shares, large and small group discussion)

Cares for conflict: allows space for challenges, healthy disagreement, and creative tension while upholding group guidelines and values

- Ask for alternative or conflicting perspectives
- Acknowledge disagreement is happening when it arises
- Uphold group guidelines amidst disagreement

Promotes mutual understanding: creates opportunities for people to share their values and stories, helps group stay focused on goals and next steps

- Ask for examples & experiences related to group discussion and plans
- Provide questions & frameworks (such as using campaign planning tools) to help connect ideas
- Check for consensus when discussion gets confusing or intense

Cultivates shared responsibility: ensures space for all group members (especially new people) to participate, share, and step up to take on tasks & leadership

- Explain facilitation role (and other roles) as you do them
- Share and rotate roles
- Discuss & match roles with leadership styles, strengths, & interests,
- Offer support when people take on tasks and new roles

Facilitators do not have to be the same thing as the group leaders. Facilitation is a role, and it's often best to rotate facilitation to bring new perspectives, ideas, & opportunities to the role.



One-to-one Meetings

Good community organizing includes intentional one-on-one meetings to get to know participants in your group or campaign. One-on-one meetings create the opportunity to learn about someone's interests and skills, and how they might like to further participate and grow their leadership in the group or campaign. These conversations can last around an hour. It can be nice to do them over coffee, or in a comfortable, common space on-campus.

1. Intro/Credential -- why you are meeting with this person, how you got their name

- "I wanted to follow-up since you were so interested after our event" "My friend said you were really interested in our campaign"
- "I wanted to meet with you so we can get to know each other better and talk about how we could work together"

2. Break the ice -- be friendly! Start with usual conversational questions,

- "How was your weekend?" "What did you think of that event?" "How did you find out about our group?"

3. Storytelling and Listening -- share about yourself to the extent that it allows the other person to feel comfortable doing so. Focus on listening, to learn about the other person.

- Share your story -- What events or decisions shaped you, or influenced why you are involved in community organizing? Where are you coming from?
- Ask & listen -- What events or decisions have shaped or influenced them? Where are they coming from?
- Share your vision -- what do you want to be a part of building and organizing towards? Ask for their vision, and reflect on what you have in common and what is different.

4. Learn about interests, skills

- Share how you first got interested and connected to the campaign or group -- why you care about food issues, or how you've been involved in the organization.
- Ask about what food issues concern them
- Find out about how they've been involved. What do they like to do? Get a feel for their skills & interests

5. Proposition -- based on what you have learned about their deeply felt interests, you can make a proposition or proposal about some next steps. Here are some options:

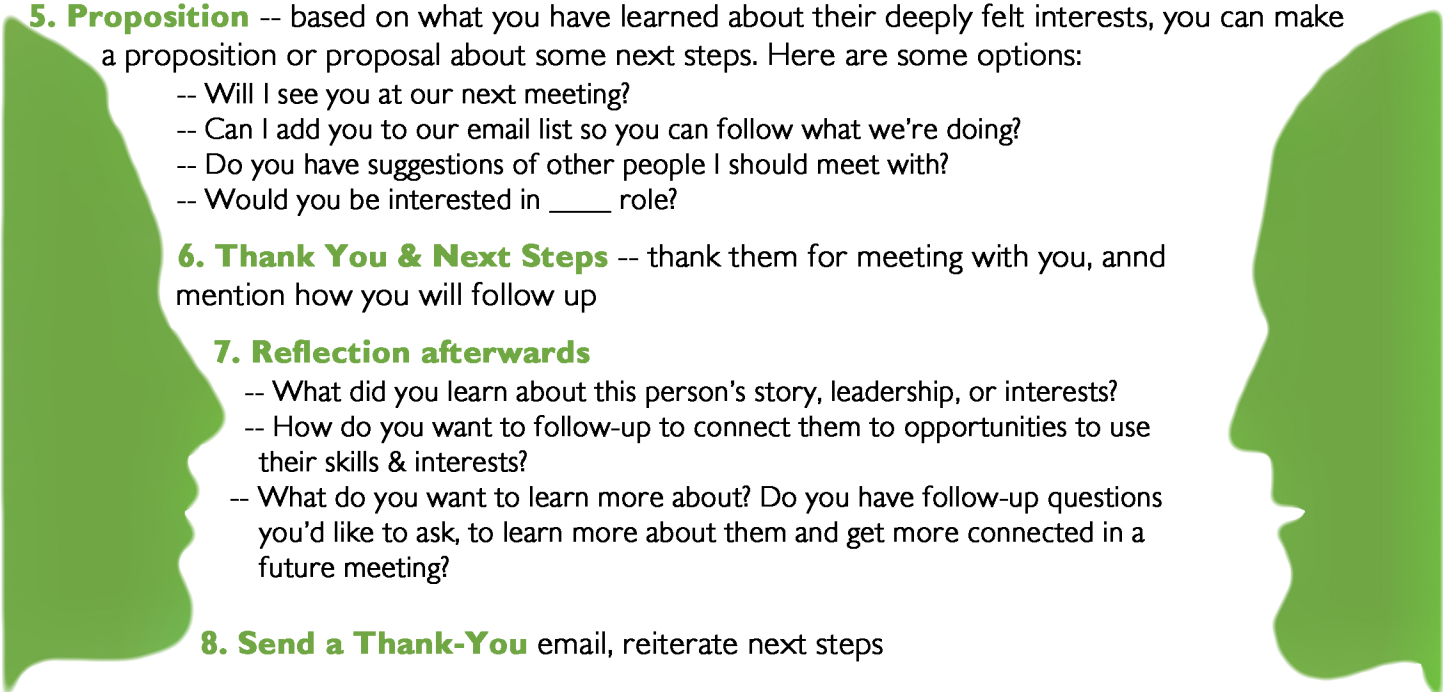
- Will I see you at our next meeting?
- Can I add you to our email list so you can follow what we're doing?
- Do you have suggestions of other people I should meet with?
- Would you be interested in ____ role?

6. Thank You & Next Steps -- thank them for meeting with you, and mention how you will follow up

7. Reflection afterwards

- What did you learn about this person's story, leadership, or interests?
- How do you want to follow-up to connect them to opportunities to use their skills & interests?
- What do you want to learn more about? Do you have follow-up questions you'd like to ask, to learn more about them and get more connected in a future meeting?

8. Send a Thank-You email, reiterate next steps





Your Best Meeting Ever

REAL FOOD MEETING May 5th - AGENDA-

- Report-backs from last week
- Announcements
- Plan upcoming meeting with the Vice President
- Write budget report
- Vote: next event
- Next meeting time?

Welcome everyone to the meeting. Say a little bit about your group so everyone is on the same page. Do introductions: go-around.

Even if the group already knows each other (though ideally you are always recruiting new people!) ask a check-in question to let everyone speak and settle into the meeting together.

Consider your decision-making practices -- has your group talked about how it makes decisions? You don't just have to vote! Consensus models are another great option.

Where's the fun? Or sharing? Or learning? Play games, have discussions, and share ongoing training! You can totally use meetings to do more than talk about tasks.

Clarify roles. Say who is facilitating, note-taking, welcoming, snack-making, etc. This is a good time to also ask for volunteers for roles for the next meeting

Remember: you shouldn't do everything during a meeting. Maybe the budget report can be done by a small group in-between meetings and then they can report-back to the whole group

Use small groups! Do you really need 10 people to write a budget report? There are probably 5 people who would love to and 5 other who would love to do something else -- like plan the meeting with the Vice President

Small groups are also a great way for people to get to know each other better during the meeting. Be sure to report-back to the whole group, briefly, so everyone knows what happened in small groups.

Facilitator should go over the agenda and ask for any additions or changes

see back for more tips and ideas!

Brainstorming & Visioning Activities

- **Big Paper, Little Paper:** everything just becomes more fun & interesting when you use giant poster paper or little post-it notes - for campaign planning, planning an event or brainstorming.
- **Drawing:** sketch the world-as-it-should be. Sketch your dream campus food system, your visionary dining hall. Sketch your ideal event. Sketch your vision for the group. Let people get colorful and dreamy.
- **The Spectrum of Allies & Powermapping** are particularly good campaign-planning tools for brainstorming and “what’s next?” moments
- **SWOT Analysis:** A great tool to check-in on your campaign tactics, and think about what threats you need to consider and what opportunities you should seize. Make a box with 4 quadrants that say: Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats. Fill out each box!
- **What could be better?** Do a big post-it note brainstorm of all the ideas for an event or a campaign tactic. Post them on the wall, then ask “what could be better” and do another brainstorm. Then do it again. Go there! Get creative!

Mix-it-up

Use go-around questions, pair-shares, small & large group discussions to keep meetings interesting and give people many different ways to engage.

Storytelling and Community-Building Activities

- **Real Food Wheel:** paint one with your group, & use it as a story-sharing tool with group members: What issue first interested folks? What feels most urgent? What most inspires them?
- **Opinion Line:** one side of the room is Agree, one side is Disagree, the middle is No Opinion, Don’t Know. Pose questions about the campus food system, your campaign plan, your goals, etc and ask people to respond by moving their bodies. Observe and share about the spectrum of opinions.
- **Gallery Walk:** pose prompts or challenges on large paper around the room -- people can circulate to write responses for several minutes, and then go to certain prompts for further discussion.
- **Concentric Circles:** An inner circle of people looks outward & pairs with people in an outer circle. Pose questions & prompts for discussion & storytelling: first, the inner circle shares for 1 min, then the outer circle. Rotate circles to share with new partners.

Decision making processes

What does it take for a decision to be made in your group?

- Unanimous agreement
- Unanimous minus 1 or 2
- Super majority thresholds -- 2/3, 90%, etc
- Simple majority (50% +1)
- Executive committee/core leaders decide

What is your process for coming to a decision?

- Collaborative: Participants form proposals, bring to the whole group for feedback, proposals evolve from initial ideas into a group decision through group feedback
- Agreement-Seeking: individual preferences are considered and group moves towards a decision that includes maximum agreement among participants
- Co-operative: Participants hold the good of the whole group as equal to or more important than individual preferences, move to a decision best for the whole group

How do you track the decision-making process, or come to a final decision? These tools can both be used during the decision-making process to check where people are at, and also to make the final decision.

- Voting: raise hands, click a button, send in an email vote.
- Fist-to-five. Ask people to record their feelings with their hands or a number
 - Five: Full support, I will lead the effort
 - Four: Full support
 - Three: Support, some reservations
 - Two: Many reservations
 - One: Don’t support
 - Fist: block: I will leave the group if this decision is made
- Thumbs: Use thumbs to indicate position: thumbs-up is support, down is disagreement, middle is lack of clarity or unsure

Reflection & Evaluation

- **Draw/write** - individual time to sketch, write, and reflect about how something went. You can provide specific prompts or just have general reflection.
- **Small groups/pairs** - answer reflection & evaluation prompts through discussion
- **Poz/Delta/Insight** - On a flip-chart or chalkboard, make 3 columns with a plus sign, a delta sign and a lightbulb (to represent insights). Record group reflection about what was positive, what do we want to change/improve for the future (Δ = change), and insights about an event, action, or semester’s worth of meetings.