

## Manage the Meeting

One of the meeting facilitator's key roles is to ensure that the CRCG's meetings are effective and efficient. Effectively managed meetings will:

- Help maintain active attendance and participation of the members.
- Ensure that important items are brought to resolution.
- Ensure that all participants are clear about expectations.
- Help everyone leave with a sense of accomplishment and time well spent.

Essential elements of a well-managed meeting include keeping the meeting moving and on subject, the orderly discussion of issues, and firm consensus on resolution of issues. Providing structure to the meeting will help ensure that:

- A comprehensive, coordinated ISP is developed.
- The individual or family is engaged and respected in the process.
- Commitments are clear.
- Expectations are well understood.
- Follow up is conducted.

## Set Ground Rules

Clear, agreed upon ground rules are an effective meeting management tool. Ground rules should be developed and agreed to by all CRCG members, written down, and be prominently posted at each meeting. If the meeting will be virtual, remind CRCG members of any additional rules or guidelines that were added for the virtual setting.

Refer to Determine the CRCG's Organizational Structure for examples of ground rules.

## Keep Time

Keeping time is a critical component of CRCG meetings. The meeting facilitator can be respectful of everyone's time by ensuring that the meeting starts and ends as scheduled.

To start the meeting on time, follow some of these suggestions:

- Arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting. Be sure the meeting room is set up well before the scheduled start time. The meeting room should be set up with an open structure to feel inviting and to promote a collaborative setting. Place chairs in a circle or horseshoe arrangement to avoid isolating the individual or family.
- Establish a strong expectation that meetings will start on time. This can be accomplished by starting at the appointed time regardless of who is present.
- Ask members to call you before the meeting if they will be late.

- Have a 30-minute informal networking time prior to the meeting and encourage members to come early to meet each other. This can also be done for virtual meetings.
- If a member is consistently late, meet with them one-on-one to discuss your concerns and discover ways to assist the member to be timelier.
- If lateness to the meeting is a consistent problem with multiple members of the group, put it on the agenda for discussion and have members develop a plan to solve the problem. Explore solutions such as changing the meeting time or location to better fit members' schedules or offer the opportunity for members who travel long distances to virtually participate.

To move the meeting forward, follow some of these suggestions:

- Start by having an idea of the time required for each agenda item.
- Be clear about the goals of each agenda item: is it just an update or is a formal discussion needed?
- Bring discussion items requiring a conclusion to a close.
- Move discussion items that cannot be resolved to a future meeting for further discussion.

Ending the meeting on time is important and respectful of others. Members schedule their day around the CRCG meeting and generally have appointments or assignments needing their attention after the meeting. To close a meeting on time, follow some of these suggestions:

- Start on time.
- Determine which agenda items are most important and are most urgent prior to the meeting.
- Cut or defer agenda items until the next meeting if the meeting is running late.

One of the quickest ways to impede participation in a CRCG meeting is to start late, end late, and get hung up on agenda items. Poorly managed meetings with inconsistent start times discourage attendance, timeliness, and productivity.

## **Guide the Discussion**

Guiding a discussion means keeping it on subject, minimizing repetition of points, and moving the discussion toward closure. One of the dangers to clear and focused discussions is going off topic. The meeting facilitator is responsible for tactfully bringing the discussion back on topic. Some approaches to consider are:

- Maintain a "parking lot" to save ideas for future discussion. When the conversation goes off topic, use language such as, "You know, that's a great idea, but I think we should pick back up on what Maria is saying. Can we put this in the parking lot and come back to it later?"
- Visit the parking lot before the end of the meeting and decide what to do with the items there. Items may be discussed at that time or may be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. The members may decide to drop it or to refer it to another group.

- Get the help of the members. Discuss the problem of going off topic. Ask the members to signify, in some agreed upon manner, when the group goes off topic.

Repeating the same point can bog down a discussion. When this happens, consider using the following cues:

- "As I understand it, the point you are making is... Is that correct? Is there anything else you want to add?"
- "Does anyone have something different they want to add to the discussion?"
- "Are there others who would like to support this point? Perhaps those in support could raise their hands and we'll note it and move on to the next point."

To move the discussion toward closure, have the endpoint in mind. Some things to consider are:

- Is action required by the CRCG or is this an informational discussion?
- If it is informational, ask if there are one or two final points to be made. Ask a discussion leader for summation.
- If it is an action item, ask if someone would offer a tentative consensus.
- If there is no agreement, ask someone not in agreement to state their concerns or offer an alternative. This process continues until a consensus statement is offered that all can live with.
- If no consensus can be reached in the allotted time, you may ask the group how to proceed. Continue the discussion but drop the other agenda items? Defer further discussion to the next meeting?

## **Clarify Consensus**

It is important all the members understand the decision that was made through consensus. Sometimes members might have different opinions about the decision. To address this, the Chair or meeting facilitator states the consensus and asks if all concur. The Secretary records the consensus as stated.