K4 - Facilitation: the Secret to Successful Meetings
Carol A. Watson and Wendy E. Moore, Univ. of Georgia Law Library
July 13, 2010 3:30-4:00 p.m.
AALL 2010 Denver

Foundation
- Create a written agenda and distribute it a head of time (see Examples)
- Use action verbs to define what the group wants to accomplish (see Examples)
- Formulate ground rules and stick to them (see Examples)
- Choose a meeting space that allows participants to sit in a circular arrangement

Facilitation Techniques
- Know what needs to happen at the meeting
- Keep the discussion focused – can use the “parking lot” method for new things that come up during discussion
- Engage attendees by asking them for input during discussion of agenda items – try a round-robin technique to ensure you hear from everyone.
- Summarize and bridge conversion to keep it moving forward.
- Determine if consensus or resolution of an agenda item is being reached.
- Ensure that actions/tasks that come out of an agenda item are agreed upon and responsibilities for them are assigned to individuals, departments, or committees.

Fly in the Ointment
- Off-topic discussion – redirect or cut-off discussion when it goes off topic.
- Too much discussion – when a discussion becomes repetitive and there is nothing new being added, then it is time to cut-off discussion and focus on creating an action plan.
- Rehashing old topics – can be managed better with written minutes from each meeting. Stay alert to topics that keep coming back as a sign that those topics are not fully resolved and may need to go to the “parking lot” of future agenda items.
- Spinning your wheels on a topic – sometimes decisions can’t be reached and there can be good reasons for that, such as philosophical differences, not urgent/important to decide about, or a poorly defined agenda topic.
- Only put out fires at meetings – sometimes if you find that you are only dealing with immediate problems at meetings, you may want to take time to create agenda items that look at larger issues that are more strategic in nature. Sometimes taking the time (may need a special meeting) to discuss strategic issues and creating action plans to address those needs can help reduce the number of small daily problems.
- Call out inappropriate behavior when necessary based on your Ground Rules – such as arriving late or leaving early, whisperers, dropouts, head-shakers, loudmouths. Usually inappropriate behavior can be redirected, such as a dominating participant can be acknowledged for their contribution, but then solicit others for input or point-of-view. (see Examples)

Finishing Touches
- Draft agenda items for the next meeting
- Establish the next meeting
- Distribute and archive minutes from the meeting
- Get feedback

Additional Resource
University of Wisconsin OQI/OHRD Academic Leadership Support – How the Lead Effective Meetings
http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/AcademicLeadershipSupport/LeadMeetings/tabid/74/Default.aspx
Agenda Template Examples

Collection Development Team Meeting
Date & Time
Location

Agenda

Awareness/News Items
1.

Selection Items
1.
2.
3.

Action Items
1.
2.
3.

Summary of Outstanding Tasks from Previous Meetings:
1.
2.

Items for Future Meetings
1.
2.

Reference Team Meeting
Date & Time
Location

Agenda

1. Approve minutes from previous meeting.
2. Agenda item
3. Agenda item
4. Agenda item
5. Agenda item
6. Agenda item

Future agenda items:

Acquisitions/Cataloging Team Meeting
Date & Time
Location

Agenda

1. Welcome and Approve Minutes from previous meeting.
2. Shelving Update
3. Student/Intern/Research Associate Update
4. Review Progress on Current Goals
5. Efficiency and Effectiveness Suggestions

Computing Service Team
Date & Time
Location

Agenda

1. Approve minutes from previous meeting.
2. Discuss budget expenditures since last meeting.
3. Share P.R. issues, news items or general open floor discussion items:
   a. carried over from previous
   b. new items
   c. new items
   d. from the open floor
4. Arrivals or Departures of Faculty or Staff
5. Hear reports from recent meetings or training seminars.
6. Review status of outstanding projects and assigned tasks:
   a. Individual’s report
   b. Individual’s report
   c. Individual’s report
   d. Individual’s report
   e. Individual’s report
   f. Individual’s report
Steering Group Agenda Template  
revised 2/6/2007

Instructions:

• The Leader sends out the agenda by noon the day prior to the Steering Group Meeting. The agenda should be sent in plain text in an email to all Law Library staff. The below html template text can be cut and pasted into the body of an email.
• The Leader during the course of the meeting should summarize for the group the outcomes/action items at the end of each agenda item.
• Group members distribute any written documentation, supporting info, policies for review, etc. that will be discussed at the upcoming meeting no later than 10:00 a.m. the day prior to the Steering Group Meeting.
• Group members utilize action verbs in constructing agenda items and submit an anticipated outcome and an estimated discussion time with each agenda item they propose.
• No longer an “open floor” section. Send all items to the Leader before 10:00 a.m. the day prior to the meeting. Items that come up after that should be added to the list of Future Agenda Items at the end of the meeting. Any announcements can be sent via email.

Agenda
Steering Group Meeting

Date:
Time:
Location:
Leader:
Minutes:

1. Approve minutes from previous meeting.
   Note: include a link to the minutes from the previous meeting and the date of the previous meeting.

2. Review Status of Assigned Tasks:
   Note: include a cumulated list of assigned tasks from previous meetings

3. Hear Brief Updates on Work from Subteams:
   Note: include a cumulated list of subteams reporting to Steering Group from previous meetings

4. Information Exchange about Faculty Services:
   Anticipated Outcome: Listen to, compare, and problem-solve issues related to Faculty Services
   Estimated discussion time: 5-10 minutes

5. Agenda topic:
   Anticipated Outcome:
6. Agenda topic:
Anticipated Outcome:
Submitted by:
Estimated discussion time:

7. ITEMS FOR NEXT STAFF MEETING AGENDA:
Next staff meeting date:
Note: include cumulated list of pending agenda items suggested at prior Steering Group meetings.

8. AMICUS BRIEFS
Note: include a link to Amicus Briefs index page.
Last issue published:
Next newsletter publication date:
Next newsletter article submission deadline:

Review status of any unpublished articles:

•

Article ideas for Future issues to assign publication dates::

•

Brainstorm articles for future publication:

9. Any items to add to our Accomplishments Bullet Points list or to the WISHLIST?
Note: include hypertext link to wishlist

10. Exchange of professional volunteer and continuing education opportunities:

11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:
Note: include a cumulated list of suggested agenda items from prior Steering Group meetings.
### Action Verb Examples

**Examples of Anticipated Outcomes / Action Verbs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Anticipated Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add</td>
<td>Agree on</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>Audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check</td>
<td>Classify</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compile</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confirm</td>
<td>Continue</td>
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<td>Delegate</td>
<td>Delete</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Divide</td>
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<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Explain</td>
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<td>Force-rank</td>
<td>Gather</td>
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<td>Illustrate</td>
<td>Judge</td>
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<td>Listen to</td>
<td>Make</td>
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<td>Organize</td>
<td>Persuade</td>
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<td>Preview</td>
<td>Rank</td>
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<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Recommend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Revise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule</td>
<td>Select</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simplify</td>
<td>Sketch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Tell</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Anticipated Action</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>Approve</td>
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<td>Build</td>
<td>Build</td>
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<td>Combine</td>
<td>Combine</td>
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<td>Compute</td>
<td>Compute</td>
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<td>Debate</td>
<td>Debate</td>
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<td>Deliver</td>
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<td>Draft</td>
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<td>Find</td>
<td>Find</td>
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<td>Give</td>
<td>Give</td>
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<td>Jump-start</td>
<td>Jump-start</td>
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<tr>
<td>Map</td>
<td>Map</td>
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<td>Plan</td>
<td>Plan</td>
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<td>Rate</td>
<td>Rate</td>
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<td>Report</td>
<td>Report</td>
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<td>Rewrite</td>
<td>Rewrite</td>
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<td>Set-up</td>
<td>Set-up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solve</td>
<td>Solve</td>
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<td>Trace</td>
<td>Trace</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Anticipated Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assign</td>
<td>Assign</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calculate</td>
<td>Calculate</td>
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<td>Compare</td>
<td>Compare</td>
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<td>Conduct</td>
<td>Conduct</td>
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<td>Decide</td>
<td>Decide</td>
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<td>Determine</td>
<td>Determine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edit</td>
<td>Edit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finish</td>
<td>Finish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hear</td>
<td>Hear</td>
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<tr>
<td>List</td>
<td>List</td>
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<td>Negotiate</td>
<td>Negotiate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare</td>
<td>Prepare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Read</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resolve</td>
<td>Resolve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Round-robin</td>
<td>Round-robin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share</td>
<td>Share</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suggest</td>
<td>Suggest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write</td>
<td>Write</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Examples of Agenda Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Better</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sohn Library Usage</td>
<td>Review and Approve a Sohn Library Usage Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreat Planning</td>
<td>Schedule date for Retreat and brainstorm Retreat agenda topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serials Solutions Update</td>
<td>Share status of Serials Solutions implementation and give a description of how it will look in GAVEL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Law Library Ground Rules for Meetings
Approved September 4, 2001; Revised & Approved January 12, 2005
To make our work in the Steering Committee as effective as possible, we all agree to:

1. arrive on time at each meeting.
2. begin the meeting on time.
3. turn off cell phones and pagers, or set them to 'manner mode', if it is absolutely essential to remain available.
4. end each meeting at one hour and 15 minutes, unless the group agrees to extend the meeting.
5. participate actively.
6. bring all relevant issues to the group.
7. appreciate all issues and ideas as important.
8. share all relevant information.
9. test assumptions and inferences; be willing to be challenged and influenced.
10. deliver and respond to statements, questions and actions with respect and consideration.
11. discuss “undiscussable” issues.
12. explain the reasoning and intent behind statements, questions, and actions; avoid broad generalizations; use specific examples; agree on what important words mean.
13. keep discussion focused.
14. be patient with the process and with one another.
15. support and accept responsibility for the work of the group.
16. be willing to have fun, find renewal and satisfaction.
Guidelines for Participation in Staff Meetings

**DO YOUR P·A·R·T!**

**BE PUNCTUAL**
Arrive on time, start on time, end on time

**BE ACTIVE**
Listen, question, evaluate, and comment

**BE RELEVANT**
Stay focused on the topic

**BE TOLERANT**
Treat others and their ideas and opinions with respect
Facilitation Examples

As Facilitator, you are in control of the structure of the meeting. Sometimes as Facilitator, you have to redirect the discussion to keep the focus on the agenda items and to ensure participation from all participants. One method to help maintain a meeting’s structure is to ask questions of participants to keep the focus on the agenda item. Some phrases you might use are:

“John, I hear you saying that you think X, does anyone have an alternate view?”

“Are there other ideas of how to approach this problem?”

“Sarah, you haven’t weighed in on this, what do you think is the best approach?”

“You have made your point, and have made it very well, but we need to move on so we can formulate our plan of action.”

“You have all reviewed the proposal, what do you each see as the strengths of it and any areas of concern?”

“We have heard from some of you about the negatives of this proposal, what are there some positive benefits?”

“John, I’ve notice that you seem irritated by this proposal, but you haven’t said anything, what is it about this proposal that you finding problematic?”

“We have all had a chance to look over the proposal before the meeting, let’s go around the circle and each share the positive and negatives you saw in the proposal.”

“Obviously we have a lot of interest and need to talk about X, but let’s put that down as a future agenda item, and go back to the agenda item we are covering now (repeat the agenda item), so we can make progress on it.”

“It sounds like maybe we need more time to think about how to address this issue. Let’s place this item on the agenda for our next meeting and continue with the rest of today’s agenda.”

“This has been a good conversation and many important considerations have been brought up. I think we can feel good about the progress made on this item. Since our discussion was longer than planned, if everyone agrees, let’s hold agenda item number 6 until the next meeting, since it is not so timely.”