Meetings and Facilitation

Presented by Max Barrows
Outreach Director
Green Mountain Self-Advocates
max@gmsavt.org
These slides are based on a presentation created by Finn Gardiner and used with permission.
Why have meetings?
Before the Meeting
Things to do (1)

- Know the purpose of the meeting
- Set your time and location
- Plan for accessibility
- Provide contact information to request accommodations
- Advertise
- Remind people
- At least one week before the meeting give participants all the information you will use during the meeting
- Write the agenda
Things to do (2)

- Gather needed materials
- Choose roles
- Check in with people about items on the agenda
Let’s talk about accessibility!

- Two major components:
  1. Universal Design
  2. Call for accommodations
1. Universal Design

• How do we make meetings and spaces as accessible to as many people as possible?
• We can’t predict every access need, but there are accommodations that can help everyone
• This takes the burden off the person needing the accommodations to ask beforehand
• **Examples**: physically accessible space, meeting agenda and notes that everyone can understand. (Easy Read/Plain language).
Universal Design

• **Physical Accessibility:**
  • Is the space accessible to people who use mobility devices?
  • What about people with vision disabilities?
  • People with hearing loss or difficulties

• **Examples:**
  • Wheelchair accessible space (not just elevator! look at door widths, bathrooms. etc)
  • Braille or Digital files of all documents
  • Close to public transport
Universal Design

• **Sensory Accessibility:**
  • Is the space accessible to people who have common sensory sensitivities (noise, fluorescent lights, perfume, etc)?
  • People with Epilepsy (Flashling lights)
  • Is the space accessible to d/Deaf people or people with auditory processing issues?

• **Examples:**
  • CART and/or ASL interpreters
  • Quiet room
  • Rules about perfumes and strong scents
Universal Design

• **Cognitive Accessibility:**
  • Is the space accessible to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?
  • Is the space accessible to people with mental illness/psychiatric disabilities?

• **Examples:**
  • Give clear information about the event.
  • Provide all material in different formats and plain language.
  • Let people know what to expect in advance
Accessibility is not just limited to accommodations for disabilities

- Examples:
  - Close to public transit
  - Meeting notes
  - For people learning to speak English provide an interpreter to translate what is being shared orally, and use a translator for written text
2. Call for Accommodations

• You can’t prepare for every single possible accommodation, so ask!

• **Example:** “If you have any specific accessibility requests, please email ________ at least one week before the meeting.”

• This also gives you time to prep for conflicting access needs.
Accessibility Resources

• ASAN has a lot of resources: https://autisticadvocacy.org/resources/accessibility/
• Checklists
• Look for resources about inclusion and equity in meetings!
  • Example: Best Practices for Inclusion of AAC Users
Online or Virtual Meetings

• Think about what platforms are most accessible
  • Text, video, or voice? You can also combine methods like we do in ACI.
  • Examples: Zoom, Discord, Facebook groups
The Agenda
Write the agenda

• What are the goals of the meeting?
• Meetings can have multiple goals
• You can have goals for how you want the meeting to go.
  • Examples:
    • Create a safe(r) space
    • Implement new accommodations
• You can have goals for ongoing or new projects. For example:
  • Make a plan to hold a Day of Mourning vigil
  • Discuss how calling your Congresspeople about Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) is going
• Think of and write down major points to be covered. Include group discussion question
Write the agenda

• Introductions
• Community Guidelines and Reminders
  • Use the space however you need to.
  • Accessibility Information
• Actions/Projects
  • What projects do we need updates on?
  • What projects do we want to work on?
• Discussion
  • What topics do we want to focus on?
• Final Thoughts
During the Meeting
Meeting Roles
Note-Taker

- Writes down the most important discussion points
- It is helpful to type the notes into a ‘shared google doc’ so others can follow along
- Writes down decisions made during the meeting
- Makes sure that all next steps are written down clearly in the notes
- Shares notes with everyone afterwards
Scribe

- Writes on a large piece of paper, whiteboard or blackboard during the meeting so everyone can see
- This is helpful for activities like brainstorming
Time-Keeper

- Makes sure time limits are set for agenda items.
- Keeps track of how much time is taken to discuss each topic.
- If more time is needed to talk about a topic, helps the team renegotiate times.
- Lets the group know when to move on from a specific topic.
- Says when the group should take a break (usually every hour).
Facilitator

- Introduces important topics to discuss
- Keeps meeting on track
- Reminds the group to get back ‘on topic.’ One option is to suggest ‘parking’ an idea or issue to be discussed later.
- Makes sure there is equal ‘air time’ for all
- Makes sure people are getting along
- Makes sure next steps or action plans are clear
Meeting Roles

• There are other roles that you can use in your meetings.
• You may also want to switch roles.
• You may want to have multiple facilitators or notetakers.
**Jargon Buster**

- Listen for jargon or unknown words.
- Ask for an explanation for the group.

**Uplifter**

- Provide a reading, music, or reflection, etc. which ends the meeting on a positive note.
Processor

Recap what was said.

Evaluate the process of the meeting. Think about:

- Was the agenda met?
- How respectful were the team members?
- What went well?
- What was challenging?
- What should stay the same?
- What should change?
Break

- Let’s break for 15 minutes!
After the Meeting
After the Meeting

• Check in to see how well the meeting went for people (evaluation)
• Send out notes
• Say thank you to people who played roles or shared good ideas
• Remind people about things to do after the meeting
Scenarios
Scenarios

• Discuss in groups how you will respond to these scenarios.
• There will be 3 groups.
• You will go over 2 scenarios each; then share afterwards.
• You will have 10 - 15 minutes.
Scenario 1

• A new member joins your group and is very excited to participate. However, they’ve supported groups that support a cure for autism.
• How do you change the conversation to something more positive?
Scenario 2

- You keep having great meetings where people are sharing lots of great ideas, but they aren’t following through with their plans.
- How do you get these people to follow through, either during or after the meeting?
Scenario 3

- You have a lot of enthusiastic non-autistic people involved in your project. You’re glad they’re involved, but it feels as though autistic people are participating less in your discussions and planning.
- How do you make sure things are fairer?
Scenario 4

• One member of your group stims by making loud noises with their mouth. Some other members of your group are very sensitive to loud sounds.
• How do you try to resolve this access need conflict?
Scenario 5

- You’re coming up with a new action plan for your group. Some people think one idea is better than the other. Another group of people prefers the other idea.
- How do you try to find agreement?
Scenario 6

• Some LGBT students in your group want to talk in today’s meeting about their experiences with homophobia and transphobia on campus. Other students, also LGBT, find this conversation too upsetting. They want this meeting to *only* focus on how to create welcoming spaces on campus.

• How do you facilitate a discussion so that all students feel heard? Can all students meet their goals in the same meeting?
Debrief

• Any final thoughts on the scenarios?
• Any issues you want feedback on or tips you would like to share?