



Blue Mountains City Council

Meeting Kit

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Background

Blue Mountains City Council staff are likely to be involved in, coordinate or chair a range of meetings as part of their work in the Council. This Meeting Kit has been prepared to assist all staff in achieving better meeting practices through providing information, guidance and templates for use in meetings.

The Meeting Kit aims to:

- Provide staff with clear guidelines on what constitutes a meeting and how they can be managed;
- Provide tools for staff to produce consistent and standardised meeting documentation for records and follow up; and
- Provide a means for monitoring Meeting Actions and outcomes.

The Meeting Kit will:

- Improve meeting efficiency;
- Develop consistency and corporate branding of the Council's Meeting records; and
- Make staff accountable for Meeting Actions through record keeping.

The Purpose of Meetings

The primary reason for holding meetings is to allow the relevant stakeholders and staff to make decisions and monitor outcomes. However, meetings also serve a range of other important functions, providing a forum where:

- Members are regularly brought together to focus on their roles and responsibilities, identify problems and plan for the future;
- Members are encouraged and motivated;
- Ideas are shared and discussed and then discarded, improved or implemented.
- Tasks are allocated and reported on against outcomes;
- Regular updates about relevant issues are provided; and
- Members can get to know each other, professionally and personally.

Make sure the **purpose** of your meeting is clear to attendees prior to the meeting via the Agenda.

Types of Meetings

A meeting is when two or more individuals come together to accomplish shared objectives, give or receive information or to make a decision with the consent of others.

There are many different types of meetings, reasons for holding a meeting and definitions of meetings, some of these have been listed below. A meeting may be:

- A gathering for team members to share progress reports;
- A small informal social gathering to share information or ideas;
- A forum for management, councillors and the public to address concerns; A means of discussing the future direction of the organisation or business plans; or
- An off-site gathering including conferences, seminars, workshops, symposiums and associated gatherings, which bring people together for a common purpose.

Table of Meeting Type Examples

Meeting type examples	Formal or Informal	Documentation Requirements
Management Team Meeting	Formal	Agenda + Minutes + Actions
Branch/Team Meeting	Formal - Informal	Agenda + Actions
Strategic/Policy Meeting	Formal - Informal	Agenda + Minutes + Actions
Project Meeting	Informal	Agenda + Actions
Information Sharing Meeting	Informal	Agenda + Actions or Minutes
Operational Meeting	Informal	Agenda + Actions
Consultation Meeting	Formal	Agenda + Minutes + Actions
Public Meetings	Formal	Agenda + Minutes + Actions

**You are encouraged to use the Meeting Kit templates for Meetings.
If you choose not to use the templates, it *is essential* that your documentation contain all the elements of the templates.**

Tips for assessing the *need* for a meeting

Make sure that there is a *need* for a meeting. In some cases, discussion items may have already been resolved, or may be resolved through other means (for example, a group email, sending out a memo, etc) When you consider the purpose of the meeting, you are also considering the outcomes which you wish to achieve and identifying the need for the meeting.

Some points to consider when assessing the *need* for a meeting:

Issue	Consideration
Frequency	Perhaps you don't need to have weekly meetings - a fortnightly or monthly meeting may achieve the same result.
Meeting processes	Perhaps it is a matter of using time efficiently - a 2 hour meeting may be reduced to 30 minutes or 1 hour with better processes or revised Chairing techniques.
Benefits	What will participants gain from attending the meeting? What will the organisation gain from having this meeting? How will the work of others benefit from having this meeting?

The Agenda

The Agenda is the list of things that will be discussed during the meeting. It must be given to members at least three days in advance of the meeting to ensure everyone has a chance to read the agenda and supporting documents before the meeting. Agendas may be a simple listing of items for discussion or it may include attachments for items, details of who will address each item, recommendations for action and how much time each item is expected to take up.

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Building the Agenda

Clarifying the meeting's purpose will determine the meeting's agenda, which needs to be developed by the Chair in consultation with key participants. The purpose needs to be printed clearly on the agenda to be distributed to all meeting participants well ahead of the meeting. Only include items on the agenda that will contribute to furthering the purpose of the meeting.

To help develop an agenda for a purposeful meeting, ask the following:

- Are there any decisions that the meeting needs to make so that members can proceed in their work?
- Are there any key administrative decisions that have to be endorsed?
- Are there any matters coming out of sub-committees that are at a point where the full meeting has to make a decision on them?
- Are there any other matters from other meetings to be communicated that may impact people's work or the current meeting decisions or actions?
- Are all these items accompanied by clear recommendations for action?
- Are items accompanied by supporting documentation and attachments?
- Have you considered the natural flow of the meeting? Perhaps one item is related to another and should be placed consecutively on the Agenda.

Put any item that calls for energy and fresh ideas near the beginning of the agenda. Also put urgent items early on the agenda, in case the meeting has to break with unfinished business.

Don't make the agenda too long. A good meeting shouldn't run for more than 2 hours. After that people are tired and unproductive. Thus it is a good idea to put time allocations next to items, more or less depending on their importance. Don't be obsessed with clockwatching, as you want to be able to give the important things the time they need. Also consider alternating procedural meetings, where you hear reports and move motions and follow a regular agenda, and planning meetings, where you brainstorm, analyse and work on strategy.

The Minutes

The Minutes are the official record of the actions and decisions of the meeting. They are taken every meeting and approved at the following meeting. Council meetings use consensus to reach decisions. The Minutes and Actions of the meeting show that consensus was achieved. Minutes and Actions are an official record and need to be written accurately and checked properly.

Generally, meeting Minutes will include:

- The date and time of the meeting (including start and finishing times);
- Attendees (including absences and apologies – and noting when people have left and re-entered the meeting);
- A summary of the main points made during the discussion of each item; and
- The result of each item discussed (decisions made or deferred, sometimes also including the number of votes for and against).

Writing Minutes

Minutes of meetings should be taken by a Minute Secretary or designated minute taker and ratified at the following meeting as a correct statement of proceedings. Unless otherwise specified during a meeting, the Minutes will generally note the following and should be brief and concise:

- The title of the meeting, the date and the location of the meeting;
- Names of those present and names of those absent;
- A point form summary of the agenda;
- Details of significant information shared;
- A table of Action decisions listing actions to be undertaken, by whom and by when (See Meeting Actions Template);
- Any agenda items for future meetings; and
- The date, time and location of the next meeting.

Meeting Actions

“Meeting Actions” refer to the tasks assigned to various members of the meeting for completion by a specified date. During the meeting, Actions are recorded, assigned and a due date is agreed upon by the members. It is the responsibility of the assigned member to complete tasks in the timeframe and report them back to the designated future meeting.

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Expectations

- Formal meetings must use the Agenda Template, **plus both** the Minute Template and Actions Templates.
- Informal meetings must use the Agenda Template **and either** the Minute Template or the Action Template.
- You are expected to give your apologies if you are unable to attend a meeting that you have been invited to attend.

Deadlines

In order for meetings to remain efficient and effective there must be guiding principles that enable both deadlines and expectations to be met. The following is a listing of meeting requirements at Blue Mountains City Council:

- Agendas must be distributed no later than three (3) days prior to the meeting;
- Minutes must be distributed no later than one (1) week after the meeting;
- All corresponding documentation must be read prior to the meeting;
- Actions assigned to you must be completed within timeframes agreed upon by members and reported on as per the Agenda; and
- Meetings will begin and end on time. You are expected to arrive on time and only leave when the meeting is concluded.

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The Role of the Chairperson

Meetings cannot take place without a Chair. The role of the Chair is to ensure the meeting is conducted efficiently and that meeting rules are adhered to. The critical factors for a Chair are:

Facilitate discussions, keep members on track;

The meeting on time; and

When a topic has been fully discussed, summarise the points and put the Action to the members for agreement.

It is important that the Chairperson starts and ends the meeting punctually, regardless of late arrivals. If members are late, the Chair may need to decide if the meeting will proceed or be rescheduled.

Between Meetings

Before meetings, members should make a careful reading of the agenda and any supporting documentation and ensure they clarify any points that are unclear. After meetings, members should review the Minutes as soon as they are circulated (while they are fresh in their minds) and make note of any amendments they think are needed. Members should also carry out any tasks they have been assigned and keep track of their progress for reporting purposes at the next meeting.

Evaluation

Consider evaluating your meeting to seek ways to improve for future meetings. You may evaluate your meeting in many ways, some key areas to evaluate are outlined in the table below:

Issue	Criteria
Review the meeting process	Consider how the meeting was structured and if it may be improved by changing the order of proceedings.
Review your own performance as the Chair of the meeting	Consider how you may improve the flow, timeliness or enjoyment of the meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you communicate with the members? • Do you think that all members were able to participate equally and openly? • Did the meeting achieve its required outcomes?
Request feedback from members	Request written or verbal feedback on the various elements of the meeting (meeting processes, Chairing techniques, etc) - what are their likes, dislikes and suggested changes or improvements.

Meeting Etiquette

Meeting etiquette is really just a matter of manners and common sense, being considerate of others and keeping to the purpose of the meeting. Make sure you are on time, arrive prepared and are open to sharing ideas and information.

Don't make personal attacks, divert from the issues at hand or interrupt others. Consider different points of view and potential conflicting opinions as opportunities to assist in making good and well-informed decisions.

Keep confidential issues in the meeting room.

Please download the Meeting Agenda, Minute and Action Templates from the Council Intranet or TRIM F02048

How to find and use the Meeting Templates

You can find the Meeting Templates in two easy to access locations:

1. Go to the *Council Intranet*, then go to *Forms* and then *Corporate Templates*.
2. Go to TRIM file F02048

Open the Agenda, Minute or Actions Template, insert your meeting details and 'save as' to the appropriate T Drive or TRIM file.