

**“Facilitating Great Coalition Meetings”**

Co-facilitated by Anne Rogers from the Maine Office of Substance Abuse (OSA) & Erica Schmitz from MESAP, Maine’s Environmental Substance Abuse Prevention Center at MCD

A. Introductions

B. Warm-up

- What was one of the WORST meeting experiences you have ever had, and what were 3 things that made that meeting terrible?
  - A last minute logistical change such as location, causing people to go to the wrong place or be late to the meeting.
  - One person taking over and monopolizing the group’s time.
  - The meeting did not stay on track .
  - Side conversations were going on.
  - No clear leadership.
  - There was negative participation, turning the meeting into a gripe session.
  - Lack of agenda
  - Lack of attendance despite commitments to attend.
  - People not contributing
  - People not knowing what they were there for
  - Running too long
- What was one of the BEST meeting experiences you have ever had, and what were 3 things that made that meeting great?
  - Good suggestions, feedback, and participation
  - No interruptions, participation in an orderly manner
  - Facilitator being concise about what he/she was asking and having a protocol for speaking turns
  - Facilitator sticking to the agenda and being mindful of the time
  - To help the group deal with some conflict and communication issues, the facilitator led an activity using the Myers-Briggs personality test which helped group members to understand each other’s different styles of communication.
  - People volunteered to do things and showed up motivated and driven
  - Facilitators used a free online meeting reserver through which people could check off their availability as a way to ensure people could go to the meeting. Here are two examples:
    - [www.doodle.com](http://www.doodle.com)
    - [www.meetingwizard.com](http://www.meetingwizard.com)
  - The meeting began with a specific goal in mind and by the end of the meeting the goal was accomplished.

C. Resource overview

- Great Book: *Great Meetings* by Plumb/Kelsey. You can order the book on Amazon, and you can also take a class by the author at USM. Free summaries from the book are available online:  
[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/archives/greatmeetings.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/archives/greatmeetings.shtml)
- Great Website: Community Toolbox, Ch. 16: Group Facilitation and Problem-Solving  
[http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter\\_1016.htm](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter_1016.htm)
- Great Book: *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-making* by Sam Kemer. For book ordering information: <http://www.communityatwork.com/book.html>

#### D. Q & A

##### 1. How do you get the right people to attend a meeting?...And how do you get them to keep coming back?

- At least annually, review with the group why you are there. Meet with each person to ensure that you are meeting their needs and they are meeting yours and that everyone is getting what they need.
- Be clear and up front about the purpose of the meeting.
- When there is an opening for a new member, brainstorm as a group to see what you are missing in the group and who could fill that space. This way the person is invited for a reason and to serve a real purpose.
- Extend a personal invitation to new members so that it is clear to them why he/she is being asked to serve on the group, why their participation is so important, and what role they are being asked to play.
- Allow potential new members to “test out” the group to see if it is a fit for them.
- Provide each member with an orientation manual that includes the purpose of the group, as well as any participation guidelines.
- Provide new members with 6 months of past meeting minutes so that they are up to speed.
- Ask every group member to assign an alternate who will attend meetings when they are unable to.
- Get the right balance of how often you need to meet. Often this is every month or every 6 weeks. Meeting less often can sometimes cause a loss in momentum. Depending on who you work with, it may also make sense to meet only during the school year.
- Resource: *Great Meetings* – Is a meeting really necessary?!  
[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/greatmeetings/greatmeetings004.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/greatmeetings/greatmeetings004.shtml)
- Resource: *Community Toolbox* - Handy meeting checklists for leader and participants:  
[http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub\\_section\\_tools\\_1153.htm#checklist](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_tools_1153.htm#checklist)  
[http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub\\_section\\_tools\\_1154.htm](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_tools_1154.htm)

##### 2. How do you organize an effective meeting agenda?

- Be focused on the purpose of the group meeting and why you are there. At the beginning of the meeting, set out your objectives to accomplish that day.
- Create a balance between updates and decision making items. Spending too much time on updates can create a loss in momentum.
  - Keep in mind the group and how much they need to know so that you keep reporting out to a minimum. Sometimes you can leave out most of the detail and focus on the bigger picture in report outs.
  - Have people reporting out and giving updates send bullets to you before so that it can go into the agenda. You can go over a few at the meeting and leave the others for people to read over.
  - Find other ways to get updates to people other than at the meeting so that the meeting time can be used for decision making. You can distribute written project updates by email and/or as a handout at the meeting.
- Handout: Sample agenda builders

**3. How do you make your meetings fun and interesting, while still getting the job done?**

- Free food!
- Start with an icebreaker that is silly or unrelated to the topic.
- If you are stuck, sometimes you need a silly icebreaker in the middle of a meeting as well.
- Handout: Alternatives to open discussion (idea-listing, small groups, individual writing, go-arounds)
- Handout: Selecting High Priority Items from a Long List – Methods/Formats

**4. How do you encourage member participation and engagement (including getting quiet people to talk, and vocal people to stop)?**

- Make an agreement with everyone at the beginning of the meeting to start and end on time.
- Set up a “Parking Lot” where you can write down ideas that are off-topic or that there isn’t time to go into right then, but can address at a later meeting.
- Let the group know how much time you have for a particular topic.
- At the beginning, reinforce your role as facilitator to get everyone out on time.
- Assign someone else in the group to be timekeeper – sometimes it can be hard to keep track of time while you are facilitating.
- Throw out different questions to get different people to answer.
- Handout: Dealing with Difficult Dynamics

**5. How can you make sure members feel like their voice and input is valuable, while also making sure that any final decisions also reflect grant requirements, evidence-based practices, strategic priorities, etc.?**

- Be clear up front about the purpose and role of the committee, committee members, and be clear on decisions of the group and whether they are final or not.

- Make sure people feel valued with what is important to them. You can do member spotlights to give people a chance to show what matters to them.
  - Sometimes the work can be different from people’s interests and reasons for joining. Help to get them focused beyond their personal investment, to the broader community interest in the issue.
  - If an idea is given that doesn’t fall under what a grant is for, etc. you can say something like, “I like that idea, but we have to focus on this for the grant. But, maybe we can talk outside of this meeting about ideas that you might want to pursue separately.”
  - Handout with suggestions from MESAP: Balancing group decisions with other factors
6. How can you use meetings to delegate tasks and make sure that there is follow-through after the meeting?
- In the minutes, include a list of tasks for the upcoming month and who will do them.
  - Have someone oversee the tasks that need to be done and check in with people periodically to see how they are doing with their task.
  - Handout: Closing the meeting

Please send additional feedback and questions about the Facilitating Great Meetings materials to Erica Schmitz at [eschmitz@mcd.org](mailto:eschmitz@mcd.org); 773-7737 or Anne Rogers at [anne.rogers@maine.gov](mailto:anne.rogers@maine.gov).

An evaluation of this conference call will be sent out through surveymonkey. Feedback on any and all parts of the call is greatly appreciated!

We hope that everyone can join us for the next call:

**Pricing and Promotions: Resources & Ideas for MCP Objective 3.11**, Thursday, June 18, 1-2 pm.

Online registration: <http://mcdregistration.org/signup.asp?ID=151>

**SAVE THE DATES! Upcoming calls...**

Facilitators/Moderators	Topic	Date/Time of call
Maryann Harakall (OSA) and Erica Schmitz (MESAP)	School Policy Updates	Thursday, SEPTEMBER 17, 1-2 pm
Geoffrey Miller (OSA) and Erica Schmitz (MESAP)	Using Student Survey Data	Thursday, OCTOBER 15, 1-2 pm

Call topics may change to reflect community needs. For this reason, registration is not available until 1 month prior to each call. To register: <http://www.mcd.org/registrations.asp>

If you have specific materials or resources you would like to share with call participants, or if you have any specific questions you would like to see addressed during a call, please contact Erica Schmitz from MESAP (Maine’s Environmental Substance Abuse Prevention Center) at Medical Care Development, (207) 773-7737, [eschmitz@mcd.org](mailto:eschmitz@mcd.org).