# TIPS ON RUNNING A MEETING[[1]](#footnote-1)

PREPARE AN AGENDA

* Make a written agenda with clear objectives and approximate timing for each item.
* Ensure that the agenda states why the meeting is needed.
* Make sure the agenda is realistic (not too many items) and sequence the items appropriately.
* Put the difficult, important issues at the beginning (though perhaps deal first with something quick and simple).
* Plan breaks if the meeting is more than one hour in length.
* Avoid missing information sharing and decision-making in the same meeting – hold separate meetings for these functions.

SET CLEAR OBJECTIVES FOR THE MEETING

* Why is the meeting needed and what is the expected outcome? (Communication? Problem-solving? Planning? Decision-making?)
* Who should attend the meeting?
* Should the meeting be formal or informal?

STARTING THE MEETING

* Start on time.
* Have the participants introduce themselves if they do not know each other.
* Clarify the objective(s) of the meeting and review agenda and time limits.
* Outline how the meeting will be conducted (methodology).
* Identify the rapporteur or secretary for the meeting.
* Ask the participants if they agree to the agenda and be flexible on minor changes if there is consensus.
* If applicable, review action items of previous meeting(s).
* Make sure you have everyone’s attention before opening the meeting.

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

* Choose a circular over rectangular tables.
* Avoid a long, narrow table if possible as this makes communication more difficult.
* In an informal meeting, a semi-circle of chairs or standing facing a flip chart is the best.
* Everyone should be able to see each other.
* Participants should not be too crowded or too far apart.

DOCUMENTATION

* Circulate a detailed agenda, list of participants and any background documentation (such as minutes of previous meetings) in advance (but not too far ahead, 2 to 3 days before the meeting is best).
* Indicate the time, place and duration of the meeting.
* Prepare audio-visual materials in advance.

DURING THE MEETING

* Avoid getting personally involved in the discussion.
* Keep an overall view of the objective(s).
* Do not loose thread of the argument.
* Stick to the agenda (but be flexible within agenda items).
* Ask for information and opinion.
* Summarise and reformulate key points (have the rapporteur or secretary use the flip chart to record the points as they occur).
* Clarify and elaborate when needed.
* Concentrate on key issues and stop digressions.

DURING/AFTER THE MEETING

* Test for consensus.
* Ensure everyone gets a chance to speak.
* Assign responsibilities and deadlines for agreed tasks (action, responsibility, date by agenda item).
* Set date, time and place for next meeting.
* Close the meeting on time, on a positive note.
* Circulate a meeting note with: participants, next meeting date, decisions and recommendations and follow up items.

1. This material was developed from “*Tips on running a meeting”,* Global Protection Cluster: Workshop Materials 9-10 September 2014 Geneva. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)