

## Task 7: Establish roles, responsibilities, and decision-making channels

---

### Developing Meeting Planning and Communication

**Effective Meeting Planning** – Carefully plan, facilitate, and document any follow-up steps from your advisory council meetings.

#### Meeting Preparation

1. Brainstorm ahead of time the desired outcome for the meeting.
2. Design an agenda that allows everyone's voice to be heard (round robins, check-ins, and check-outs).
3. Make sure individuals who are critical stakeholders in the desired outcome can attend the meeting.
4. Identify materials that should be submitted to the committee in advance to prepare members for a productive discussion.
5. Deliver the agenda to advisory council members in advance. You may also want to compile an organizational update, key background needed for decision-making points, and highlights of your progress to date.
6. Collect materials and send them to committee members at least one week in advance.

#### Keep Meetings on Track

1. Begin with a clear, focused, vetted agenda. Include meeting topics and outline goals for discussion in your agenda.
2. Try to stick closely to the agenda during the meeting to make good use of everyone's time. Focus on getting results and critical input at every meeting. Note: Also be alert to signals from participants that the agenda needs to be altered. Do not continue when an inscrutable energy overtakes the room; try to find out what is happening.
3. Only have agenda items that you have time to fully process (keeping in mind you want to get input from everyone).
4. Develop policies around meetings to keep both the strategic planning team and the advisory council accountable. If your strategic planning team is not ready to get input from the council, do not waste members' time. Reschedule for another day.
5. Ask for advisory council input on future agendas. This helps to keep the council engaged and can also help the strategic planning team better understand where members stand on important issues.

## Structures for Effective Communication

Encourage and facilitate dialogue, discussion, collaborative inquiry, cooperative problem solving, consensus, collaborative conflict management, and mediation. These are some communication structures that shape how differences are viewed, addressed, reinforced, and challenged. The following are also important for effective communication with diverse groups:

- Being culturally and linguistically responsive, having the capacity to respond effectively to language differences (including sign language)
- Finding commonality, avoiding blame, showing respect, and listening actively, all of which demonstrate the competency of the diversity professional)
- Examining the role of assumptions in our thinking and communication processes
- Heightening awareness of how social group identity affects thinking and behavior
- Effective handling of interactions and reactions of diverse people in interpersonal and group settings
- Understanding and managing the process of resistance for diversity change
- Practicing negotiation skills when working with diverse teams
- Demonstrating cultural humility
- Developing the following diversity competencies:
  - balancing intention and impact
  - holding multiple realities, identities, and perspectives
  - moving from certainty to curiosity
  - using power and privilege effectively

## Meeting Tips for Effective Communication

### 1. **Focus on strategy, not administration.**

Handle routine issues quickly. Spend the majority of your meeting time talking about deeper issues that can help you meet your goals. Share materials in advance so advisory council members can come prepared to engage, ask insightful questions, and provide informed opinions.

### 2. **Invite candid discussions.**

Create an environment in which all advisory council members feel that they can safely express their opinions. Consider bringing in an outside facilitator to discuss complex issues. This will help balance the conversation and ensure that all members have the opportunity to share their thoughts.

3. **Consider small group discussions if your advisory council is large.**  
Smaller group discussions allow for creative thinking and create space for quieter members to join in and offer their expertise.
4. **Facilitate the advisory council's ability to give input and act.**  
Use real examples, discuss strategies you want to implement, and talk about how you intend to get there.

### Meeting Follow-Up

1. Make sure someone is taking minutes that clearly identify action items and the person responsible for them.
2. Distribute minutes and a list that includes action items, the accountable person, and the time lines agreed upon.
3. Make sure to thank committee members for their participation and to provide minutes to members who could not attend the meeting.

Adapted from Center for Nonprofit Management, [Nonprofit Answer Guide](#) .