

## L'Arche USA New Leader Online Training

### August 2017: Effective Meetings – Self Study

**What makes a good meeting?** Think back to a good meeting you attended. You might have called it, facilitated it, taken notes or done your part as a participant. What made it stand out? Organization, agenda, energy, participation, clarity of purpose, accomplishing something, necessary discussion...

**What makes a challenging meeting?** Now think about a recent meeting that was unhelpful, maybe even painful to be at. Again, you might have had a featured role or not. Consider what made it hard: late start, late end, unfocused discussion, overambitious agenda, etc.

Keep these in mind as you consider how to improve your own meetings with the tips below.

Check List for Helpful Servant Leader Meetings: Do you:

1. **Consider whether the meeting is necessary?** Ineffective organizations meet too much. Consider if an email, phone call or quick conversation will do the trick.
2. **Schedule with appropriate advanced notice?** Your colleagues are just as busy as you are. Respect their schedules and efforts to organize their work days.
3. **Invite the right people?** Inviting people who don't need to be at the meeting wastes their time. Not inviting people who do need to be at the meeting can erode trust.
4. **Provide reading materials in advance?** Give people a chance to review documents before the meeting. Not everyone can process documents "real time."
5. **Start on time?** A respectful habit for everyone.
6. **Have an agenda?** Think through what needs to be covered. Review the agenda with the team before starting, ask if other items need to be added and agree on it.
7. **Turn off the phone, close the laptop and disconnect?** Model it and hold others to it.
8. **Stop anyone from dominating?** Some people talk too much in meetings and crowd others out. As a servant-leader in a meeting, your job is to stop this from happening.
9. **Make sure everyone is heard?** Some people are reluctant to share their input. Be sensitive to the introverts in your meeting and give the quiet ones a chance to speak.
10. **Listen?** To what is being said. *And to what is not being said.* To words as well as well to facial expressions and body language.
11. **Express your opinions after others have expressed theirs?** The leader who asks others to give their opinions first will hear a greater range of views than the leader who speaks first.
12. **Develop someone?** Inviting the right people can include inviting a team member who would benefit from the meeting as a professional development matter.
13. **Celebrate a success?** What gets celebrated gets done. Celebrate an achievement or good practice in the course of your meeting and you will encourage more of the same.
14. **Connect to the mission?** The best servant-leaders will connect the dots between a particular meeting and the mission of the organization.
15. **Empower someone?** When deciding follow-up actions, *delegate, don't dump.* Servant-leaders empower others by setting them up for success.
16. **Have fun?** There is no law against having a little fun in a meeting (if the subject matter doesn't make doing so inappropriate.) Smile, laugh – you get the idea!
17. **Summarize what just happened?** A great meeting without some sort of record or list of next steps can easily be forgotten – and therefore become a waste of time.
18. **End on time – or early!?** It is respectful of everyone's time and engenders good will!

From Cairnway: <https://serveleadnow.com/meeting-checklist/>

## L'Arche Meetings Check-list:

Most meetings in L'Arche also include the following:

- An opening reflection: When it is a full meeting, this can be brief, but helpful to have something to center the group.
- A check-in: How are you coming to the meeting, or a fun update – a way to engage.
- Gratitudes or check-out at the end.
- A facilitator: someone who is aware of time and moving the meeting forward.
- A note-taker: Someone to record the highlights – decisions made, to-dos and next steps.
- It can enhance participation of some of these roles (reflection, facilitation, notes) are rotated among the team.

### Inclusive engagement

- When core members are present and even when not, it is helpful to make use of multiple ways of communicating during a meeting. We all benefit from engaging in new ways and get more practice so that it becomes normative all the time.
- Preparation: If a meeting covers a topic that warrants it, plan to offer material ahead in smaller group settings where questions and concerns can be raised ahead of a larger meeting.
- Visual: Agenda, notes, decisions, calendar can all be better understood by more people if images and drawings accompany words.
- Decision-making: If a decision is being made, be clear who is making it (the full group, a particular person or team, each person) and how input is being received and considered. It can be particularly helpful to use images and stickers/tokens to allow each person to offer input (or vote).

## Agenda Building

- Name Date, time, length of meeting, facilitator, note taker, and overall focus.
- Agenda and prep materials should be sent out a day ahead (or longer for topics that need more consideration).
- Have a set way of soliciting items (email to facilitator, agenda-builder at close of prior meeting, etc.).
- Items should tell facilitator and everyone else what to expect and how to participate:
  - Topic
  - Presenter
  - Goal
  - Time
- Recurring items: Recurring meetings will have regular items (reflection, check-in, announcements, core member concerns, etc.). It is still important to note the particulars so they are taken into account.
  - Reflection – Sally - 3 min
  - Check-ins – ALL – 5 min
- A few more words about Goal
  - Key to a good agenda item and a good meeting – what are you doing with this topic – getting an update? Offering input for someone else's decision? Making a group decision? Make sure there is a verb in there – the right one!
- Add up the time!
  - The point of putting times on each agenda item is so that the sum total of minutes will not exceed the time allotted. In fact, allowing leeway for overtime is a more practical build.

## Take the pulse of a meeting!

If you have a sense that a meeting you are leading could use improvements or energizing, ask the group for feedback and suggestions. It builds ownership and offers fresh, helpful perspectives.

**What inclusive practices do you already use in house and community meetings? How effective are they? What benefits do you see from beginning to use them at other team meetings as well?**

