

What to Do At a Check Meeting

Whenever a group sets a goal, right then and there, schedule a date and time to check on progress. Check meetings have two kinds of aims. The rational aims are to update, coordinate, resolve problems and agree on next steps. The experiential aims are to inspire and motivate group members so that hopefully they leave the meeting confident of continuing success. The Institute of Cultural Affairs (2000) suggests these aims and a way to divide a check meeting into segments.

1. **Setting the context** involves reviewing the agenda, adding any items people need to discuss and having a *brief* check-in conversation. Check-in or trigger questions that have worked well for me include:

- Describe in one word or phrase how implementation is coming along.
- What if anything has changed since we first set this goal?
- Why did we set this as a goal in the first place?
- What are we hoping to accomplish?

The purpose is to help people focus on the meeting and task at hand which isn't necessarily easy when we are rushing from one meeting to another.

2. In **tracking the action**, individuals or subcommittees report on their assignments including:

- actions taken since the last meeting
- what has been accomplished including breakthroughs
- blocks or challenges that need to be addressed
- where more focus/effort/help might be needed

One-page summaries of these answers can be very helpful.

3. **Moving the plan forward**, says ICA, is the heart of the meeting where the group decides what to do to move the goal or plan ahead. This usually requires going back to challenges identified and deciding the best course of action. If there are several "sticking" places, is there a pattern? What might help get things moving again? What is working well that we should continue? Work might be done in subcommittees or all together.

ICA suggests that study or training may be needed and that the check meeting offers an opportunity for learning together. (Studying can mean inviting another department or office to discuss how they handle similar situations.)

4. The **Final check** recaps assignments and next meeting and invites announcements.

5. **Reflection** is a brief focused conversation on the meeting and the team's accomplishments and hopes, such as "What are some hopes you have about the next phase of implementation?" or "What part of today's check was most helpful to you?"

Reference

Group Facilitation Methods: Effective Methods for Participation © Institute of Cultural Affairs, 1991, 1994, 1996, 2000.

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