7

Internal Communication

Chapter 7

Meetings and Presentations

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Introduction

Use this chapter to help you plan and conduct face-to-face, telephone, and video meetings within PPQ. This information will be useful when conducting electronic meetings, too (**See Team Collaboration on page 5-11**).

Meeting Management

The following information applies to face-to-face, telephone, video and electronic meetings.

Planning a Meeting

Is this meeting necessary? Ask yourself the following questions before planning a meeting.

What is the purpose of this meeting?—If you cannot answer this question, don't call a meeting.

Are the people who need to attend this meeting available?—Before scheduling the meeting, poll the availability of participants. Pick a date that accommodates the majority of the key participants' schedules. Be sure that key decision-makers can attend.

Are meeting and lodging areas adequate?—Ensure there is a meeting room available, as well as lodging accommodations for participants.

Is this the right time?—Timing is everything! If the situation is not ripe or other things must be completed first, postpone the meeting to a time when it will yield more effective outcomes.

What will happen if I don't call a meeting?—If the answer is "Nothing catastrophic!", see if there is a better way to accomplish the task at hand. What alternatives do I have? Emails, memos, conference calls, and voice mail are some of the alternatives.

How much will this meeting cost?—Meetings can be very expensive when you take into account the salaries of the participants, overhead costs, and meeting preparation costs.

Is a facilitator necessary?—If you want to use a facilitator, contact him/her as soon as possible to ensure their availability. The facilitator can also help to develop an agenda.

Is an agenda necessary?—An agenda will help you achieve the outcomes you want from the meeting. Request agenda items from target participants at least one week prior to the meeting. Provide agenda items to subject-matter experts to address. These individuals may need several days to gather information to formulate a response. Last minute agenda topics may not be fully discussed at the scheduled meeting.

The following are good reasons to call a meeting:

- Hear a presentation on a completed report or project.
- Reach a group decision or judgment.
- Analyze or solve a problem.
- Gain acceptability for an idea, program, or decision.
- Achieve a training objective.
- Reconcile conflicting views.
- Communicate essential information to the group.
- Relieve tension or insecurity by providing information and management's viewpoint.
- Ensure that everyone has the same understanding of information.
- Obtain quick reactions.
- Reactivate a stalled project.
- Demonstrate a system or new business tool.
- Generate new ideas or concepts.

Conducting a Meeting

Use this section as a guide during the meeting.

Open the Meeting

- State the purpose of the meeting and desired outcomes.
- Review the agenda and time frames for each agenda item.
- Add agenda items and adjust times.
- Identify which agenda items have priority.
- Review ground rules.
- Introduce participants, if necessary.
- Assign meeting roles such as moderator and note-taker.
- Introduce agenda items.

Encourage Discussion

- Develop a set of questions to stimulate conversation on the task at hand.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Encourage members to ask each other questions.
- Ask for different points of view when one participant's contributions silences the group.
- Provide a theoretical model or document and ask participants for their reactions and thoughts.
- Have the group brainstorm subtopics or ideas and select the top 3-4 items to discuss at length.
- Record ideas on a flip chart or on a computer using an LCD projector.

Stay Focused

- Use meeting ground rules to help the group stay on track and to manage people who tend to dominate the conversation.
- Remind the group to focus on one topic at a time and bring it to its logical conclusion before going on to another topic.
- Use a third party facilitator for meetings that may include disagreements.
- Slow the pace down if the group seems to come to closure too quickly.
- Make sure everyone understands and agrees with the final outcome.
- Create a flip chart page to capture the tangential topics that arise and figure out how the group can address the issues during the meeting without extending the meeting or will address the issue at a subsequent meeting.
- If the group's energy stalls, provide them with a break or have them do some simple stretching exercise.
- Clarify or paraphrase key ideas relating to the topic; periodically summarize the key points and ask for agreement from the group.
- Check for the group's understanding of the discussion by summarizing where you see points of agreement and disagreement and asking the group if they agree or see the same; or ask a member of the group to summarize the issues.
- When the group has made a decision, state it clearly and/or write the decision on a flip chart and make sure the entire group is in agreement.

Close the Meeting

- At the end of the meeting, list and summarize the decisions the group made.
- Review what the group discussed and accomplished relative to the desired outcomes for the meeting.
- Review any action items and due dates the group might need to take either individually or as a group.
- Set the date and logistics for the next meeting, if one is needed.
- Review the next steps, i.e., what will happen after the close of the meeting.
- Thank the group for their participation.

Meeting Follow Up

After the meeting, distribute the minutes and request all corrections within one week. Follow up with group members who were absent from the meeting. Communicate the outcomes or documents, produced by the group, with other parts of the organization.

Support and Source	**Leadership Development and Training Support Systems, Professional Development Center, Frederick, Maryland [http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/pdc/nontech/nontech_function.html]**

Planning a Costly Meeting

Compare costs when planning large meetings that may require travel for many participants (Table 7-1).

TABLE 7-1 Decision Table for Planning a Costly Meeting

If your meeting:	Then:
Requires travel for many participants OR Will incur costs greater than $25,000	1. Compare costs of meeting at several locations. 2. Adhere to agency guidelines. 3. Consult with your administrative staff for guidance.
Will incur costs for the following: ◆Travel ◆Hotel and meeting room rentals ◆Refreshments ◆Costs associated with non-government employees	1. There is no requirement to compare costs. 2. Adhere to agency guidelines. 3. Consult with your administrative staff for guidance.

Telephone Meetings

Telephone meetings—also known as conference calls—are an easy way for groups to meet and avoid the trouble of travel, particularly if members are scattered throughout the United States.

Before you start, review **Meeting Management on page 7-1**.

Step 1. Plan the Conference Call

A. Select one of the following methods to hold a conference call:

- ➤ Use a telephone with built-in conference call capability.
- ➤ Arrange for an approved vendor to set up a conference call.
- ➤ Install a permanent bridge line (**See Telephone Meetings on page C-3**).

B. Notify members of the following:

- ➤ Date and time of the call in their time zone
- ➤ Toll free telephone number
- ➤ Pass code
- ➤ Instructions for operator assistance
- ➤ Agenda

Step 2. Conduct the Conference Call

A. Access the call.

B. Designate a member to take minutes.

C. Conduct roll call.

D. Set rules (**See Etiquette on page 7-7**).

E. Follow the agenda.

F. Prepare minutes and distribute to all members within one week.

Etiquette

Remember these rules of etiquette when participating in telephone meetings:

- Allow one speaker at a time.
- Identify yourself and your worksite prior to speaking ("This is Hester Pinhorn, from London").
- Turn off all cell phones.
- Use the mute button or *6 on your telephone to eliminate background noise.
- If possible, select a private office for the call to avoid disruptions to yourself and others in the work area.
- Do **not** place the call on hold; other parties will hear beeping or hold-music.
- If you must take another call, exit the conference and rejoin when you have finished.
- Moderator should keep discussions on track per the agenda.
- Manage time wisely to stay on schedule.

Source **MRP—BS (Marketing and Regulatory Programs—Business Services)—Information and Technology Division—Telecommunications [http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/atac]**

Video Meetings

Video meetings or conferences help APHIS employees work faster and smarter, making better use of time, money, resources, and personnel. Video meetings may also help in the following ways:

- Reduce the time and expenses of face-to-face meetings.
- Save on the expense of employee training by having interactive or broadcast training session.
- Build collaborative workgroups among geographically dispersed staff members.
- Save on recruitment costs by meeting with job applicants via video meeting. Performance reviews can also be conducted via video meeting.

Before you start, review **Meeting Management on page 7-1**.

Step 1. Set Up and Plan the Video Meeting

A. See Video Meetings on page C-4 if you need to establish a video meeting account.

B. Contact your long distance carrier for specific directions. Your carrier will provide you with a toll-free telephone number and pass code, or with instructions for operator assistance.

C. Notify meeting members of the following:

- ➤ Date and time of the call in their time zone
- ➤ Toll free telephone number
- ➤ Pass code
- ➤ Instructions for operator assistance

Step 2. Conduct the Video Meeting

A. Access the call.

B. Designate a member to take minutes.

C. Conduct roll call.

D. Review Tips for Video Meetings below.

E. Follow the agenda.

F. Distribute minutes to all members within one week after the conference.

Tips for Video Meetings

Remember the following tips when organizing a video meeting:

- Ask participants to arrive 10 minutes early.
- Start the meeting on time.
- Use an agenda and stay on schedule.
- Introduce all participants.
- Ask participants to turn cell phones off.
- Adjust the camera by using the zoom and pan controls; frame yourself on the monitor screen so that your image appears from the waist up, with 10 percent of the total picture appearing above your head.
- Be aware of the transmission delay and pause for others to comment.
- Divide the presentations into short segments.
- After each segment, ask if there are any questions.
- Look directly at the person you are addressing or the camera.
- Be yourself, speak in a normal voice.
- Use camera zoom only when you need a close-up.
- Avoid shuffling papers or tapping objects near the microphone.
- Send hard copies of materials to remote locations prior to the conference.
- Keep curtains and blinds closed.
- Make sure all appropriate lighting is on.
- For conferences running at slower speeds, avoid rapid movements during the call.
- Start and finish your video meeting on time.

Support	**APHIS Video Conferencing Sites**
Source	http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/atac

Electronic Meetings

PPQ work groups can use electronic meetings—also known as Web conferences—like an intranet meeting room on a computer screen. **See Meeting Management on page 7-1** and **Team Collaboration on page 5-11** for more information.