

ADMIN 3.6

Meeting Management

- **Version 2**



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Meeting Management

1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out the details of RISSB Meeting Management Process.

2 References

All Terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this document are defined in the *RISSB Quality Management Glossary*

3 Process

The Meeting Management Process is part of the RISSB Quality Management System used to develop Standards, Codes of Practice, Rules and Guidelines released by RISSB.

4 Overview

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1.1 Chairperson

The role of the Chair is to act as the facilitator for the meeting; his/her primary task being to orchestrate the flow of input in a meeting.

- It is important to note that the Chair does not control the direction of the meeting. The Chair is to act as the manager of the meeting process and not the manager of the final outcome.
- In some situations such as large meetings, or when dealing with highly charged issues, the Chair may choose to utilise another to keep track of time and monitor the meeting process.
- The Chairperson is to insure that the Minute Secretary accurately records each agenda item outcome before continuing to the next agenda item.

4.1.2 Minute Secretary

The role of the Minute Secretary is to record the minutes of the meetings. The minutes play an important function because they act as a written record of what has transpired.

The minutes are expected to:

- give a brief background of issues;
- explain the circumstances surrounding an issue discussed;
- summarise the arguments for and against a matter put forward by meeting participants;
- record an accurate summary of reasons leading to a decision or non-decision, including points of clarification;
- record any agreed amendments to the documentation;
- record each resolution passed at the meeting; and
- record any follow-up action required.

The draft Minutes should be distributed to all meeting members within the space of ten working days. The Minutes are to be agreed at the next meeting.

Accepted Minutes should be published and distributed in a timely manner after approval.

- For a Minutes pro-forma, please refer to Appendix 1.

4.1.3 Participants

The role of the participant is to contribute to the discussions of the meeting. Each participant should speak for the same amount of time; those who do too little or too much should be regulated by the discretion of the Chair.

4.1.4 Visitors

Visitors may be those who have an interest in the content of a meeting and attend as spectators. In order for a visitor to attend a meeting, they must first gain permission from the Chair.

As visitors often hold predisposition in their views, it is the responsibility of the Chair to monitor their behaviour so as not to allow visitors' comments to intimidate participants or the outcome of a meeting.

Visitors can be excluded from certain portions of a meeting (such as voting) or can be refused attendance entirely.

4.1.5 Meeting Practice

Agenda Review

A formal written agenda is prepared two weeks prior to the commencement of the meeting and issued to all participants via email by the RISSB project manager.. This agenda is created in consultation with those attending the meeting.

Introductions

When participants of a group meet for the first time they should introduce themselves, stating their names and the organisation they belong to. When a new member begins attending meetings the chairman will insure, everyone reintroduce themselves again.

It is also essential for participants to complete an Attendance Register. Separate to the minutes, this document records a list of all members in attendance as well as their company details. Apologies are also recorded on the register.

Discussion Management

In a large group format, several formalised processes have been used successfully to help make the discussion process workable. The process of "stacking" is a means of ordering members' input. Those wishing to speak raise their hands. The Chair generally uses body language to acknowledge them. Generally, no participant should speak twice on an issue until all participants wishing to do so have had an opportunity to speak. However, when discussion is heated, people often become too eager to speak or respond to allow proper attention to be paid to other's input. In this instance, "limited exchange" can be allowed after the person in the stack has spoken. The Chair, however, must carefully guide the discussion so that it doesn't get out of hand. When a "limited exchange" should be terminated, the Chair so indicates and calls on the next person in the stack.

Other allowed interruptions in the stacking process or in general discussion include "point of information", "point of clarity", and "point of process." If a participant has information unknown

to the rest of the group that is immediately relevant and necessary to what a speaker is saying, that participant should interrupt by saying, "point of information". The Chair should then allow that participant to briefly and concisely present their strictly informational, non-opinionated input. Following this interruption, the regular sequence of discussion is resumed.

If a participant is unclear about what has been said or what is going on and interrupts with "point of clarity", the Chair may suspend discussion briefly to respond to that participant's question. If the Chair is unable to clear up the confusion, another participant may be recognised to briefly offer the necessary information. This allows the participant seeking clarity to be brought up to speed so their input can be included in the ongoing discussion. Once the issue is resolved, or reasonable effort has been expended trying to do so, the Chair should direct the group back to the regular sequence of discussion.

The call for "point of process" should come from any participant who sees a problem developing due to the process breakdown. Once recognised by the Chair, the participant should briefly indicate what "point of process" is involved (such as an impending time limit, straying from the topic, dealing with a non-agenda item, etc) and offer a proposed solution.

Time Limits

When a significant issue arises and everyone wants to address it, the Chair may need to impose time limits. Generally, limiting each speaker to one or two minutes encourages speakers to be concise, emphasise only the most important ideas, and not dwell on long, rhetorical arguments or rebuttals.

Proposals

Proposals may come complete from a single author, group, committee, or may be formed through discussion and brainstorming during the meeting.

During discussion of a particular item, a "sense of the meeting" often emerges that can be put into words. When a participant feels that it would be helpful, he or she should state their understanding of the "sense" as a proposal. A Proposer should have the proposal written out for clarity.

Questions

When the Chair or any participant of the meeting feels that discussion is complete and no new input is forthcoming, he or she may say "call the question". The Chair should briefly restate the proposal or decision at hand, check to see that there is general agreement on calling the question, and ask, "Is there any call for clarification?" At this point the proposal is modified, if necessary. If there is no call for clarification, the Chair will ask, "Is there any call for concern?"

Participants should clearly indicate their position either with body language or vocally so that the Chair has no difficulty determining the sense of the meeting. If there are no questions or concerns, consensus has been reached and should be so recorded. The Chair should then move the group on to the next item. If there are questions and concerns, discussion should continue.

Clarification

The Chair will state the proposal and ask if there is any call for clarification. Questions about the proposal are answered during this part of the process; concerns are saved for later discussion. Once the group is satisfied that the proposal is clearly understood, the Chair will ask if there is any call for concern.

Concern

The Chair will re-state the proposal and ask if there is any call for concern regarding the proposal as stated. A concern is a statement of how the proposal might conflict with the group's stated purpose and shared values.

The Chair will recognise those with concerns, distil the concerns into short phrases and list them. Listing concerns in this manner helps the group focus on the concern, not the presenter or the person raising the concern (concerns should be impersonal).

After all the concerns have been listed, the Chair will deal with each in turn to resolve the concerns through group discussion and friendly amendments.

Group Resolution

Concerns are resolved as the proposal is explained or changed to address them. To make consensus more easily attainable, it may be possible for a participant having difficulty accepting a proposal decision to offer a "friendly amendment" that expands somewhat on the original idea or changes it to a minor degree in a manner that satisfactorily addresses their concerns without altering the "sense of the meeting" on that issue. If accepted by the group, the friendly amendment should be worded into the proposal being discussed.

If, after further discussion, the proposal seems satisfactory, it should be carefully restated and the Chair should call the question. The accepted proposal should then be written down by the Proposer in its final form and submitted to the Minute Secretary for inclusion in the minutes.

Stand aside/withdraw

If, after reasonable discussion and exploration, the group cannot resolve the concerns through amendments, then the Chair should try to determine the depth of the concerns. The Chair will ask if those with concern wish to stand aside to allow the proposal to pass. If not, the Chair will ask the Proposer if they wish to withdraw the proposal or the part raising concern to allow the proposal to pass. If not, the proposal shall be referred to a smaller committee of resolution to resolve the issue.

Committee of Resolution

This smaller group should include skilled representatives of all sides of the issue who are acceptable to all members of the larger group. They may meet during a break or temporarily withdraw from the larger group, which should then occupy itself with some other relatively minor issue, and attempt to come to consensus. The resolution they develop is then carried back to the larger group and introduced for discussion and approval. It may be necessary to reconvene the smaller group for further attempts at achieving a workable solution before consensus can be reached.

Consensus Voting

Prior to the adoption of the document as a Standard, the responsible Development Group DG (through a formal ballot of committee members) approves the content of the Standard. It is the responsibility of the committee members to submit votes at the ballot stage on behalf of their nominating organisation, either in the affirmative or in the negative. All negative votes are required to be accompanied by technical reasons for the vote. Only when consensus has been achieved can the document proceed to become a Standard.

Where a DG member casts a negative vote, the committee is obliged to give thorough consideration to the reasons for the negative vote and to attempt to find a resolution that is acceptable to the DG as a whole. Note that DG members are voting on behalf of their nominating organisation and not acting as individuals.

Consensus is achieved when all of the major stakeholders (as described in ADMIN 4.1 Proposing a Standard) that are involved with the subject of the Standard have collectively accepted the content of the document and have voted affirmatively. This normally implies a unanimous affirmative vote, but occasionally it may be achieved where there are one or more outstanding negative votes.

If the DG has made all reasonable efforts, but is still unable to resolve one or more negative votes, consensus may be deemed to have been achieved if:

- a minimum 67% of those eligible to vote have voted affirmatively, and
- a minimum 80% of votes received are affirmative, and
- no major stakeholder involved with the subject of the Standard has collectively maintained a negative vote.

In all cases where unanimity has not been achieved on the ballot, it is the responsibility of the SC to arbitrate on whether or not these criteria have been met.

If the SC deems that consensus has not been achieved, it may make recommendations aimed at resolving the impasse or may determine that consensus is not achievable on this subject at this point in time.

A nominating organisation whose objection is not resolved is given the option to withdraw the name of that nominating organisation from the published standard.

A record of the votes must be collected, specifying exactly who voted and how.

Evaluation

If the process is to improve, there must be an opportunity to review what went on and why and a time to suggest ways to make it work better next time.

A suggestion for a large group is to make a list that the whole group can see. These headings should be placed at the top: a "-" on the left side, and a "+" on the right side. Then, in brainstorming fashion and without argumentation or discussion, list those things that did not work out well under "-" and those things that did go well under "+". After listing, the group should briefly discuss how to improve those items listed under "-" and, where necessary, ways of maintaining the "+" items. Suggestions and listings should be included in the minutes.

Closing Business

The closing of the meeting is a vital time where results can easily be lost by misdirection. The end of the meeting means that discussion is over, but to ensure a cohesive understanding from all participants, the following steps should be taken:

- Point out the decisions that were reached; this gets any and all conclusions out in the open. The summary of decisions reached in the meeting will bring to the surface any individual misunderstandings and disagreements. Naturally, this helps to avoid additional meetings.
- Point out differences; these disagreements may very well be vital for future discussions. State them clearly, evaluate them and indicate whether they are small or great. Try to define them to the satisfaction of all present. Point to future action; state clearly the next steps to be taken and announce if another meeting will be necessary, and when. Indicate how the decision(s) reached at the meeting will be used.

4.2 Additional Information

4.2.1 Emotional participants

It is common for individuals or groups to become emotionally charged or even develop personality clashes during a discussion.

If real, angry conflict arises:

- Call an immediate halt to any bickering. If necessary, take a break and speak to the contenders individually.
- Let all members know that it's fine to be passionate, but ask people who are unable to control their tempers to deal with their issues outside the meeting room.
- Reaffirm the norms for behaviour that have been agreed upon.
- Focus on the substance of ideas or opinions - not on the contributor's personal style or status in the organisation.
- Encourage members to keep their comments positive and constructive and try to see all sides of a contentious issue.
- Use probing questions to steer members away from entrenched positions and to help uncover the underlying issues.
- As a last resort, ask the contenders (offending participants) to leave the meeting.

4.2.2 Silent participants

It is important that all participants make a contribution to the meeting in some way. Therefore, attempt to encourage the participants who show signs of meekness. Be careful, however, not to put a reluctant person on the spot. Draw him or her into the discussion through a topic you know is familiar to them. This will reduce the danger of comments being made after the meeting, usually in the hallway outside the meeting room such as, 'I just don't think I can go along with the decision made in the meeting.'

These comments are important and pertinent. Unfortunately, they are being made at the wrong time and in the wrong place. They should have been made in the meeting for the enlightenment and consideration of all. Such comments afterwards usually mean yet another meeting.

4.2.3 Verbose participants

For the decorum of the meeting, see that only one person speaks at a time. Private discussions within the group can only cause conflict and disunity. The Chair must firmly refuse to allow the meeting to break up into smaller discussion groups. It is the responsibility of the Chair to see that each member is heard by all present. If a splinter group persists, focus the attention of the whole group on it. This will, more than likely, disperse the offenders.

4.2.4 Regular summaries

It is good practice to make regular summaries during the meeting of the key points of discussion. These act as a scoreboard of the success of the group in attacking the problem. Summaries also serve to check on disagreements and point out to the participants which problems demand their attention. Otherwise disagreements tend to get lost in the discussion, only to turn up at the end of the meeting, much to the dismay of all concerned.

Summaries should be kept under 30 seconds; this is plenty of time to do the job. Quick summaries will not interrupt the flow of the meeting. In fact, they will serve as an example to the meeting group that you are very conscious of time, and that you plan to keep the ideas marching forward.

4.2.5 Tangible Outcomes

There should be no items from the agenda open or unresolved.

APPENDIX 1