

Meetings and reflective sessions

Leading a successful meeting

Regular successful meetings can be a valuable way to build relationships and boost morale. They are an opportunity to come together, share ideas about practice, discuss improvements, problem solve, innovate, celebrate achievements and reflect.

The most effective meetings are those that are planned, thoughtful and inclusive. Think about where and how often you meet.

- Are your current meetings a time to connect with each other?
- Do they provide opportunities to engage in critical reflection about the service's programs, practices and policies, as well as share relevant information about children and families?
- Are they inclusive, constructive and vibrant?
- Do they welcome everyone's voice and lead to robust discussion to develop actions and goals?
- actions and goals?

Here are some tips you might like to consider when planning for and leading a successful meeting:

Tip 1: Be prepared

Keep everyone focussed on your service vision (philosophy) by planning regular and well prepared meetings.

How often should you meet? This can vary depending on your service needs, the number of teams in your service and the type of meeting you would like to hold. Smaller groups could meet frequently each week or fortnight, and whole service meetings could take place every 4-6 weeks. Some meetings can be planned well in advance and some as the need arises.

You might like to hold smaller meetings during the day if time and resources allow for this (such as organising cover for educators). Alternatively, these and/or larger whole service meetings could be held at the end of the day after children have left.

Prior to your next meeting:

- Send an **invitation** or reminder to those you want to attend and include the dates on the staff notice board. Let them know where and when the meeting will take place, how long it will go for, and if you are providing food.
- Develop your **agenda**. This could include standard items such as minutes/actions from the previous meeting, housekeeping, workplace health and safety, sustainability and service operations (though these depend on the needs of your service). Invite everyone to add items they wish to discuss at the meeting to the agenda, and circulate this prior to the meeting.



The agenda will reflect the type of meeting you are holding. You may wish to add a reflective session to the agenda or hold a separate reflective session altogether. In this case, the reflective session agenda will look different to a regular meeting agenda. Keep the agenda simple and focused – if you include too many items you may run out of time and people will lose focus on the important points.

Ensure each agenda item is allocated an appropriate amount of time. For example, some items like housekeeping should be brief so it can be addressed without intruding into the meeting. It might be appropriate to circulate housekeeping items in an email prior to the meeting, and only touch on these if necessary during the meeting. Also, you might like to include it as an agenda item closer to the end of the meeting so you can be mindful of closing the meeting on time.

Keep in mind that meetings should begin and end on a positive note, so it may be appropriate to discuss items that are raised during housekeeping at another time, either as a group or with individuals. There are a number of agenda templates you could source to decide which would most suit your service and the desired outcome of the meeting.

- Think about the resources you may want to take to the meeting. These could include paper, pens, post it notes or large pieces of paper for brainstorming, as well as relevant documents such as the Guide to the NQF, the Approved Learning Frameworks, service policies, your Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) or other relevant documents.
- Consider if you would like to provide food and if so what type. Depending on the where and the time the meeting takes place, this could range from snacks to a meal. Always have drinking water available.

Tip 2: Set the scene

As the environment sets the tone for the meeting, it's important to put thought into where you will meet and how you will prepare the space.

Consider making the meeting space a special place for everyone to gather.

- What could you add to the space to make it comfortable, aesthetically pleasing and welcoming for adults? Adult sized chairs, large cushions on the floor, and plants or flowers on the table are some examples.
- Is your staff room, outdoor environment, local café or even someone's home suitable for a meeting? A change in environment can encourage new conversation and ideas.



Tip 3: Create a space for sharing and listening

It's important that everyone is comfortable sharing ideas and thoughts with each other.

Meetings should be an inclusive space where:

- everyone's perspectives are respected
- everyone can openly contribute opinions, experience and knowledge
- conflict is managed considerately
- collaboration is encouraged
- the service vision and philosophy is echoed.



Tip 4: The meeting

It's important to open the meeting on a positive note. You might like to start with the highlights of the week/month and any positive feedback. Invite everyone to be involved in this sharing, and remember to acknowledge and celebrate successes, no matter how small they may be.

To encourage a relaxed and open sharing environment, you could include an ice breaker activity or use your Quest for Quality cards. If your meeting is a reflective session focussing on a particular NQS Quality Area, use your cards in that Quality Area.

After you have provided an opportunity to share, begin working through the items listed on the agenda. Let the discussion flow but at the same time keep everyone focused on the topic. Work through the agenda items being mindful of both the need to provide everyone with an opportunity to speak, as well as the time. Sometimes other important topics arise which could be noted for discussion at the next meeting or addressed some other time.

Tip 5: Start and end on time

Everyone's time is precious so it's important to start and end the meeting at the time stated in the invitation.

At the end of the meeting, it's also important to thank everyone for attending and for their contributions. This shows respect and appreciation for their time and ideas.



Reflective sessions



What is a reflective session?

A reflective session is time allocated for you and your educators to come together to specifically reflect upon what you do, how you do it, and why you do it. It could be part of a regular meeting as one of the agenda items, or a separate meeting scheduled specifically for critical reflection.

The above tips can also apply to the reflective sessions you will conduct, however here are some specific tips you might like to consider when presenting and leading these sessions:

Tip 1: Practice!

As the saying goes, practice makes perfect! Although you are not expected to deliver a perfect reflective session, practicing can make you feel more confident speaking and sharing in front of the group.

Try practising:

- on your own
- out loud
- in front of a mirror
- for a family member or a friend.

Tip 2: Know your stuff

Think about the core message of the reflective session.

What is your reflection about? How would you describe it to someone who is thinking of attending the meeting? Would you be able to present away from the script, only referring to it to support you along the way, rather than reading it the whole time?

Tip 3: Body language makes a difference

Think about the messages you might be sending if you stand or sit in a particular way. Make sure you are sending the right messages like, 'I want to be here with you', 'I think this topic is important', and 'your thoughts and ideas are valuable'.

Remember to make eye contact and smile and avoid body language like crossed arms, moving around too much, or slouching on a chair.

Also make sure that you avoid distractions (set your mobile phone to silent mode).

Tip 4: Be enthusiastic

If you are enthusiastic about the topic, others in the group will be more likely to share your enthusiasm and work with you toward the identified session outcome.

If you practice, know your stuff and consider your body language, you will feel more confident to lead your reflective session. When you are more confident you become more comfortable, and when you are more comfortable you are able to be yourself and therefore share your enthusiasm.

How enthusiastic do you sound? You might like to record yourself, which will not only help you remember the content of the session, but also give you an idea on how you sound. It will highlight where you might need to include a more enthusiastic tone in your voice.