

Landcare Notes

Landcare Note 1.4
September 2010

Meeting types

Understanding the different types of meetings needed for a group to function effectively will help your group achieve all it wants to do.

Different levels of structure and formality are involved, but all meetings need a clear purpose.

What it is

Meetings are a way of coming together to share information and make decisions. If you are to run efficiently as a group, you will be holding several different types of meetings. Some will involve everyone in the group, some may involve only a small group of members and other meetings may include outsiders.

How to do it

Knowing what types of meetings are relevant to what you are doing will help keep everyone involved, informed and efficiently using the available time. Some of the meetings you will hold include:

The Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The AGM is a relatively formal review of the past year. It is mandatory for incorporated groups and is expected as part of good governance.

All members should be encouraged to attend because the group needs a given number to make the formal decisions. You may want to invite a guest speaker or organise an activity to create some extra interest.

The constitution of the group (see Landcare Note 1.1: *Starting up a Landcare Group*) should say how much notice you must give members before the AGM. Before the meeting make sure you find out how to run an AGM as there are formal processes to be followed.

Proceedings usually include:

- The minutes of the past AGM – these are read and formally accepted.

- The president's report – this sets out what has been achieved and indicates the direction the group will take in the next 12 months
- The treasurer's report – copies of the financial report (which may need to be audited), should be available to all members before or at the AGM. Where a group is incorporated, a copy of the financial report and the record of its adoption at the AGM must be sent to the Office of Fair Trading
- The secretary and other committee members may also present reports at this meeting
- The date of the next AGM is usually set.

The AGM is also likely to include:

Motions: If group decisions are to be made at the meeting or reports are to be accepted, then a motion should be proposed. The motion should be a stated action from a member such as 'I move that the group's strategic plan be accepted'. The chair will then ask for a member to 'second' the motion.

This is to show that more than one person agrees to the action. This action and the members who moved and seconded the motion are recorded in the minutes.

Notices of the motions should be circulated following the guidelines set out in your constitution.

Election of the committee: The membership of the committee will be set out in the constitution or terms of reference adopted by your group when it formed. Election of the office bearers at the AGM should be discussed well before the meeting. Your constitution or group's rules should clarify how long a term these positions should be held and how they will be voted in. Unless specified, all positions are declared vacant at the AGM. An impartial person or observer chairs the election process.



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There are some different options to running the election at the AGM. Whatever process the committee decides, it is a good idea to have people agree to nominate for the position before the meeting, rather than asking them on the night. The committee will need to consider who might take on these roles once they retire (see Landcare Note 8.3: *Succession planning*).

General meetings

General meetings are open to all and provide a chance for discussion and reporting to the whole group. This type of meeting might have a special theme or a guest speaker, who may potentially attract new members.

A general meeting is a great way to involve everyone in reviewing the groups' goals and plan future activities because it has a less formal structure than committee meetings.

If the meeting is focused around a particular topic such as action planning, you may want to organise a skilled facilitator from within the group or a suitable outsider to help move things along to a positive outcome. (See Landcare Notes: 2.1 *Planning*, 2.2 *Strategic planning*).

Your group's constitution should provide an option for general meetings to be called if anyone is concerned about a particular issue.

Committee meetings

Committee meetings are the forum to discuss and decide on issues relating to the work of the group. These meetings usually cover the more day-to-day operations and decisions. Where a major decision needs to be taken, the committee should recommend a general meeting to gain the necessary support and agreement from the members.

A committee of eight or less people needs minimal formalities for a meeting but they do need to keep minutes, which must be available to all members of the group.

Your committee has certain roles as part of these regular meetings. For more detail on these roles and what may need to be done at these meetings see Landcare Notes: 1.2 *Committee function*; 1.3 *Committee roles*.

Sub-committee meetings

Your group may have several sub-committees tackling specific tasks. They usually report to the committee regularly. Any important decisions needed should be made as recommendations from the sub-committees to the full committee.

Sub-committees will tackle issues such as finances, preparing funding submissions, managing specific projects, event organisation, or writing the group's newsletter.

Site meetings

There will be times when it is important for a sub-committee, the group committee or the whole group to meet on site to inspect what is being done.

When a meeting is held on site, you will need to consider issues such as access, weather conditions and the ability of all to take part in the inspection and discussion. Advise people of the site conditions and suitable clothing before the meeting.

Planning and running meetings

There are a number of things that need to be organised before the meeting, at the meeting and between meetings. Refer to Landcare Notes: 1.2 *Committee function*; 1.3 *Committee roles* for detail on some of the tasks commonly undertaken by committee members.

Key tools

A checklist:

It will be useful to prepare a checklist for any meeting you have to ensure you have covered everything that needs doing before, during and after the meeting. You can share some of the tasks around between members more easily if all the tasks are clear and set out.

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The agenda:

One of the most important tools for your meetings will be the agenda. This is essentially a prepared list of topics that needs to be included in a meeting. Then everyone knows what's going on, all the formalities are covered and nothing important is forgotten. Ideally, the agenda should be distributed some time before the meeting so everyone is aware of what will be discussed and have time to chase any extra information if necessary.

Time limits:

It is good practice to have a start and finish time for your meetings and then try and stick to it. People will be more willing to attend if they know that it won't run late into the night. At the meeting you should start on time and not wait for late comers. The group will also need to work out what meeting times work best. This will be different according to the type of meeting you have and might need to be flexible as your membership changes.

Keeping it interesting:

Try to incorporate a guest or interesting topic particularly for your general meetings and AGM. Although you have to deal with some of the administrative aspects, members will appreciate the opportunity to learn new things and will have gained something from the meeting. Consider a wide range of topics so that the meetings will cater for the different interests of your members.

Preparing the agenda- some examples

Sample agenda- AGM

1. Opening comments
2. Apologies from any absent members
3. Confirmation of the minutes from the previous AGM
4. Matters arising from the minutes

5. Presentation of the annual reports (from the president, treasurer and secretary) and the formal adoption of those reports
6. Thanks to the committee for their reports
7. Election of office bearers and committee members and a vote of thanks to the retiring executive
8. Any special business
9. Guest speaker
10. Set date for next AGM and close meeting

If there is any special business – for example, an alteration of constitution – that notice of motion is made and completed.

Once all the formalities are completed the meeting is declared closed.

Sample agenda- committee or general meeting

1. Opening and welcome
2. Apologies from absent members
3. Confirmation of minutes from the previous meeting
4. Matters arising from general business (any action that has been taken)
5. Correspondence to or from the group
6. The treasurer's latest report and information on accounts for payment
7. The secretary's report and recommendations
8. Reports from other members/ subcommittees
9. Other business before handing over to a guest speaker (where relevant)
10. Set a meeting date for the next meeting and close

All groups are different so these agendas are presented as a guide only. For example, it may be better for the guest speaker to speak earlier so they can leave before you begin the formal



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part of the meeting. For more detailed information to help you with your meetings, and to ensure you organise and run your meetings well, see Landcare Note 1.5: *Effective meetings*.

Further references

Our Community website:
<http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/>

Victorian Landcare Gateway – Resources for Groups <http://www.landcarevic.net.au/>

Related Landcare Notes

This Landcare Note is one of a series. These notes provide an excellent guide for the ongoing operation of your group.

Landcare Note 1.1: *Starting up a Landcare group*

Landcare Note 1.2: *Committee function*

Landcare Note 1.3: *Committee roles*

Landcare Note 1.5: *Effective meetings*

Landcare Note 2.1: *Planning*

Landcare Note 2.2: *Strategic planning*

Landcare Note 8.3: *Succession planning*

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