

The
**CO-OPERATIVE
HOUSING
FEDERATION**
of Canada



**Excellent Meetings
for Everyone –
20 Tips for
Inclusive Meetings**



A CHF CANADA AGING IN PLACE COMMITTEE RESOURCE



In the next decade Canada's over-65 population will grow considerably, and along with it, the number of older members who make their homes in housing co-operatives. Helping members stay in their homes as long as possible has been the priority of CHF Canada's Aging in Place Committee since 2010.

Part and parcel with helping co-op members age in place is ensuring that they remain engaged in their co-op's governance. After all, democratic member control is one of our co-op principles—and having meetings that include ALL members is a step in the right direction.

We hope this resource will equip co-op members, directors, and managers with some basic tips about planning and chairing a productive, inclusive members' meeting that is a pleasure for all members to attend.

An effective meeting is one that every member can look forward to participating in.

How can we ensure that meetings are accessible for all co-op members—older members, hearing and vision impaired members, members who speak English as a second language, and those with mobility issues?

By considering the needs of ALL members when planning a co-op meeting you make certain that everyone feels welcome and can be involved. Which, in the end, leads to good member attendance, and a successful meeting as well!



Excellent Meetings for Everyone – 20 Tips for Inclusive Meetings

Our goal is to encourage as much member involvement in co-op meetings as possible.

An inclusive meeting is one where everyone is able to participate as a valued member of the co-op.

Preparing for a co-op meeting

- 1** The top tip for every co-op meeting? **Plan!** When meetings are well planned—the agenda set, clear materials prepared, and all of the details thought through well in advance—then you're on your way to having a good meeting!
- 2** Set the meeting at a time that works for the most members. And keep in mind that walking or taking transport in the dark may be hard for some, so schedule meetings during daylight hours when possible.
- 3** Give lots of advance notice for meetings so that members have plenty of time to arrange transportation or attendant services. And the agenda should include the time that the meeting will begin and end so that members know when they have to be picked up.
- 4** Make certain that the meeting notice and agenda are written in plain language, and use a large, easy-to-read font (like this one).
- 5** Let members know that large-print versions of the entire meeting package can be made available to them.
- 6** If the meeting is being held outside of the co-op, include directions and bus routes.
- 7** If many members speak English as a second language, have the notice and agenda translated. Consult with members to see if translation is needed for the meeting, or see if one of your members is willing to translate. And be sure to provide meeting materials to interpreters *before* the meeting.
- 8** Make meeting materials available in advance to members.
- 9** Rent a sound system and microphones for the meeting chair and speakers so everyone can hear the meeting clearly.

- 10** Allow time for members to be *social*—it doesn't have to be all work and no play. Light refreshments, door prizes and special member recognition all help to make meetings more enjoyable.



About the meeting room

- 11** Ensure your co-op meeting space and washrooms are fully accessible for all members. Are the washrooms on the same floor as the meeting space? Are they fully accessible? If not, consider renting a meeting room nearby so that all members can attend.
- 12** Set up the room so members with mobility aids can move freely. And take out a few chairs from the end of rows and in the front so that everyone can choose where they want to sit.

Tips for Chairing

13 Your chair should be comfortable and confident in their role, and familiar with meeting rules.

14 At the beginning of every meeting, review expectations about the meeting's ground rules. For example, no interrupting and no side conversations: it should be a rule of every meeting. It's rude and makes following the discussion a challenge for everyone!

15 Include regular breaks as part of the agenda, and avoid letting the meeting run over the set end time.

16 Presentation materials should use a large font size, with no fancy fonts. And check in with members—is the text clearly visible to them? If not, make adjustments!

17 Encourage members to speak clearly, at a speed that allows everyone to take part in the discussion, and gives interpreters time to translate.

18 Give everyone an opportunity to be involved in discussions. Let members respond at their own speed. They will feel better about sharing their point of view if they don't feel rushed.

19 During discussions, continue to remind everyone about the importance of speaking slowly and clearly.

20 Use plain language. Lots of jargon can be confusing, and it's hard to translate. Share messages using simple terms that everyone will understand.

The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) or the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) can help you find an interpreter. And you can contact your local immigrant social service organization to arrange for a translator to attend as well.

