Module 4
How to Plan & Implement Effective Public Meetings

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What is a public meeting?

A public meeting is where members of the project community come together with FDOT representatives to share project information and ideas. Meetings can be formal or informal and can involve large or small community groups.

Why should we hold public meetings?

A public meeting can be an effective tool to:

- Provide information;
- Receive information;
- Create dialogue;
- Build consensus;
- Share ideas; and
- Consider project modifications.

How do I plan and implement a public meeting?

Successful public meetings take careful preparation and coordination. This module will help you succeed by addressing these topics:

- Selecting the most appropriate meeting format;
- Elements of effective meetings;
- Planning the meeting;
- Meeting checklists;
- Evaluating the meeting; and
- Meeting Do's and Don'ts.

What kind of meeting is best?

There are many different meeting types, including formal and informal formats. The type of meeting you choose should be tailored to the purpose and audience.

To determine the best format for your meeting - ask the following questions:

Why?

Why are we having the meeting?

Who?

With whom do you need to meet to accomplish your purpose? The target meeting participants will dictate the meeting format depending upon the meeting purpose.

2.2.1-3

What?

What format will be most appropriate for your purpose and participants? Use the matrix on the following page to identify the most appropriate meeting format based on the answers to "why?" and "who?".

Where?

Where is the appropriate location for your meeting based on the purpose, participants and format? The matrix on the following page provides a range of meeting locations suitable for each meeting format.

Meeting Format

Purpose	Participants	Format	Location
• introduce a project • provide a project update • resolve conflict • build consensus • improve community relations • identify project issues • evaluate project alternatives • develop alternative solutions	• individuals	**One-on-One Meeting** • general to specific agenda • space for exhibits • neutral location	• community centers • churches • project office
• introduce a project • provide a project update • improve community relations • identify project issues	• special interest groups • agency representatives • elected/appointed officials	**Small Group Meeting** • general agenda • space for exhibits • facilitator	• community centers • libraries • schools • churches
• introduce a project • provide a project update • improve community relations • identify project issues	• general public	**Open House / Transportation Fair** • no agenda • large open space • greeting / comment table	• shopping malls • county fairs • neighborhood events • school fairs • church socials
• resolve conflict • build consensus • evaluate project alternatives • develop alternative solutions	• special interest groups • agency representatives • elected/appointed officials	**Working Session** • specific agenda • seating around a table • space for exhibits • facilitator	• community centers • libraries • schools • churches
• brainstorm project ideas • develop alternative solutions	• special interest groups • agency representatives • elected/appointed officials	**Charrette** • specific agenda • layout table space • facilitator	• community centers • schools
• resolve conflict • build consensus • evaluate project alternatives • develop alternative solutions	• general public	**Open Meeting** • specific agenda • break-out areas • greeting / comment table • space for exhibits • facilitator	• community centers • libraries • schools • churches
• present preferred program/ plan/project alternative(s) • satisfy legal mandates for public involvement	• general public • special interest groups • agency representatives • elected/appointed officials • individuals	**Public Hearing** • formal agenda • formal seating • greeting / comment table • microphone • space for displays	• community centers • schools • city hall • commission chambers

Elements of Effective Meetings

Detailed Preparation
The more thorough the preparations, the greater the chance of success.

Enthusiastic Staff ✓1.4.1
Clearly defined roles and responsibilities will help maintain the enthusiasm level because people work better when they know what is expected of them.

Thorough Staff Briefings ✓4.5.3
Reduce the probability of spreading misinformation.

Careful Site Selection ✓4.5.1
The meeting facility should be comfortable for the meeting participants, and must be appropriate for the meeting purpose and format.

Appropriate Facility Layout ✓4.2.2
Meeting components (i.e., displays, seating, break-out rooms) should be arranged in a layout that is conducive to the selected meeting format.

Timely Rehearsals ✓4.5.2
Test your meeting layout and materials while you still have time to make changes, if necessary.

Can We Talk?

State Road ABC
Workshop

7:00 p.m.
January 7, 1998

Dali Conference Room
St. Anns Elementary School
1111 Main Street
St. Petersburg, Florida

For more information call 555-5555

Suitable Advertising and/or Meeting Notification ✓3.4.2
Information regarding the meeting purpose, date/time and place must be clearly conveyed to the intended participants in a timely manner.

Realistic Meeting Logistics
The overall meeting schedule must include adequate time for set-up and break-down of meeting components.

Convenient Scheduling
The meeting time/day should be convenient for the participants.

Reasonable Time Requirements ✓**3.4.1**
The meeting length should be appropriate to the meeting purpose, and agendas should be followed as closely as possible to avoid time over-runs.

Understandable Project Materials ✓**3.3.1-4**
Graphic materials such as display boards, maps, and overheads should avoid the use of technical terms and jargon, and must be easy to read from a reasonable distance.

Clear and Concise Presentations ✓**6.3.3-4**
Project information and meeting objectives should be presented in plain terms.
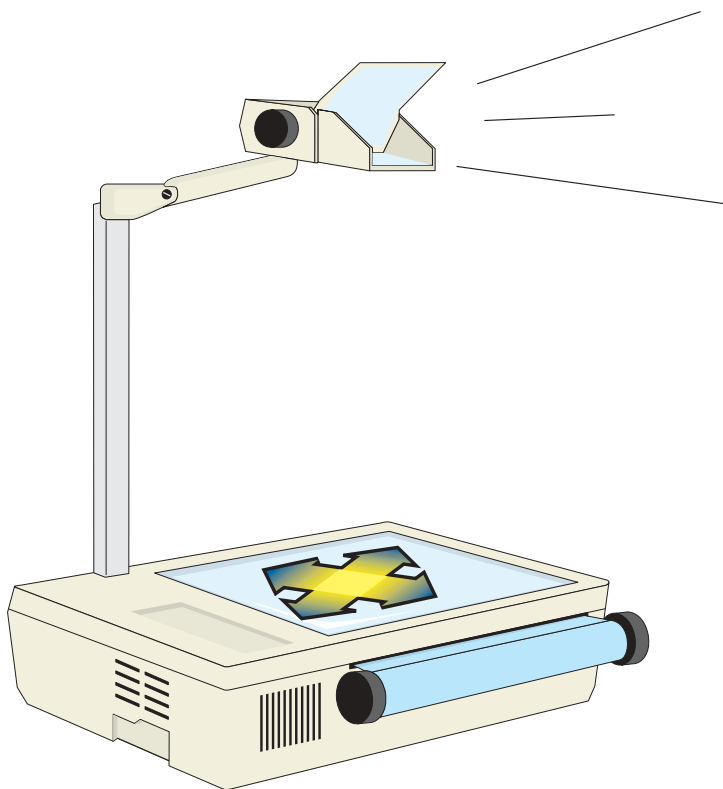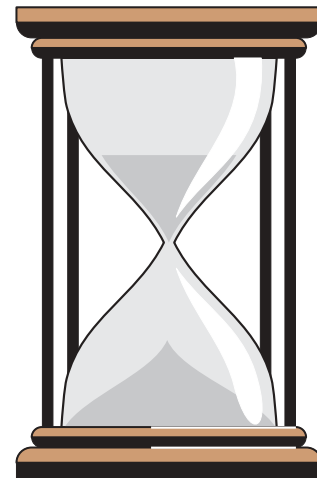
Official Record
Meetings can be recorded efficiently through the use of scribes or court reporters. This activity helps the public recognize the importance of their contributions.

Honest Evaluation
Meeting evaluation forms should be provided to all meeting participants. The review of this information during the meeting debriefing may reveal valuable insights on how to improve future meetings. ✓**3.6.4**

Planning the Meeting:
Countdown to Success

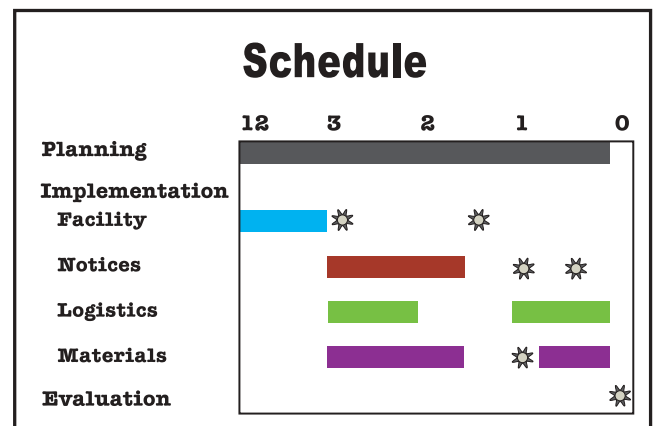The following schedule includes all the myriad of details involved in the planning and implementation of that most onerous public meeting - the Public Hearing. Many items can be eliminated from this list for meetings with simpler formats. In this case, simply adjust the timetable to reflect the reduced planning requirements.

Preliminary Planning:
up to 12 months prior to
tentative meeting date

- Determine meeting date, purpose, participants, and format; ✔4.2.1
- Identify general facility requirements and begin site selection process; ✔4.5.1
- Establish the Meeting Team and assign roles/responsibilities; and ✔4.5.2
- Review relevant legal requirements for public notice if the meeting is an official public hearing.

Schedule

	12	3	2	1	0
Planning					
Implementation					
Facility		☼	☼		
Notices			☼	☼	
Logistics					
Materials			☼		
Evaluation					☼

General Planning:
2.5 months prior to scheduled meeting date

- Select and reserve meeting facility;
- Identify appropriate meeting materials and begin development; ✔4.5.2 ✔3.2.1-2
- Begin preparation of presentation script and displays; ✔6.3.3-4
- Identify facility security/insurance requirements and initiate arrangements as necessary;
- Develop advertising strategy and begin preparation of meeting notices and advertisements; ✔4.5.1
- Begin preparation of mailing list for notification of meeting participants; and
- Select outside vendors (e.g., court reporters/interpreters) and initiate arrangements.

Preliminary Details:
2 months prior to scheduled meeting date

- Begin arrangements for payment of security, room fees and/or outside vendors;
- Confirm security and insurance arrangements;
- Confirm outside vendors;
- Finalize legal notices;
- Determine newspaper advertising deadlines; and
- Notify the mailroom of upcoming postage requirements, if necessary.

General Details:
1.5 months prior to scheduled meeting date

- Finalize meeting notices and meeting advertisements (i.e., invitational letters, newsletters, flyers, newspaper ads, press releases) and begin production as necessary;
- Schedule preliminary rehearsal;
- Confirm facility reservation;
- Complete preparation of mailing list and labels; and
- Finalize draft meeting materials and presentation.

Final Details:
1 month prior to scheduled meeting date

- Mail meeting notices;
- Hold preliminary review of meeting materials and presentation, then begin final revision of these materials;
- Begin developing meeting room layout; and
- Submit advertisements and press releases for publication.

Preliminary Countdown:
2 weeks prior to scheduled meeting date

- Resubmit newspaper advertisement for second publication, if required;
- Confirm security and/or outside vendors as appropriate;
- Schedule rehearsal and staff briefing; ✓4.5.3
- Compile list of supplies and begin assembly; ✓4.5.3
- Identify and arrange transportation if necessary (e.g., equipment van);
- Finalize meeting materials and begin production; and
- Finalize meeting room layout.

Final Countdown:
1 week prior to scheduled meeting date

- Hold final rehearsal and staff briefing;
- Finalize meeting displays and presentation;
- Complete production of meeting materials; and
- Complete assembly of supplies.

Hold final rehearsal.

Finalize presentation.

Complete production of materials.

Complete assembly of supplies.
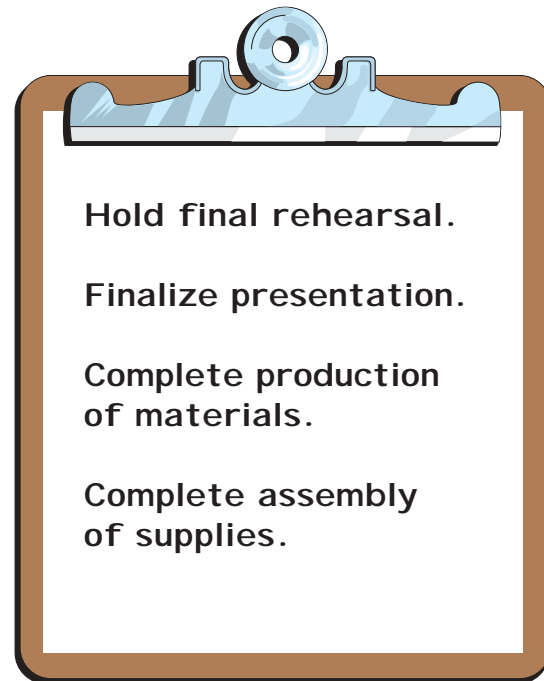
ASAP after the public meeting

- Hold a debriefing meeting with all staff involved; ✓4.6.1
- Compile and analyze meeting evaluations; and
- Record, resolve, and respond to comments. ✓5.3.1-6

Meeting Checklists

Be prepared! The following checklists will help you remember the details:

Site Selection Checklist

- ☐ Sufficient room capacity
- ☐ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements
- ☐ Circulation space for wheelchairs/walkers
- ☐ Multi-modal accessibility (on bus route)
- ☐ Adequate, safe and convenient parking
- ☐ Refreshments/clean-up equipment to be provided by others
- ☐ Neutral atmosphere (non-governmental)
- ☐ Easy to find and provide directions
- ☐ Floor plan suitable for meeting format
- ☐ Public recognition as a meeting place
- ☐ Tables/chairs (fixed or movable, quantity)
- ☐ Proximity to project study area
- ☐ Audio-visual capabilities
- ☐ Power sources
- ☐ Break-out rooms (if necessary)
- ☐ Lighting
- ☐ Certificate of Insurance and/or Hold Harmless Agreement requirements
- ☐ Cost of site rental
- ☐ State purchase order acceptability

Meeting Notice Checklist ✔ 3.4.1-4

- ☐ Invitational letters
- ☐ In-house memoranda
- ☐ Newsletters
- ☐ Flyers
- ☐ Location maps
- ☐ Legal ad (Florida Administrative Weekly) or newspaper of general circulation
- ☐ Press releases
- ☐ Newspaper display ads
- ☐ Property owner letters

Meeting Materials Checklist ✔3.4.1-4

- ☐ Directional signs
- ☐ Sign-in sheets
- ☐ Agendas ✔3.6.1
- ☐ Evaluation forms ✔3.6.4
- ☐ Comment cards
- ☐ Maps/posters/displays
- ☐ Informational brochures/handouts
- ☐ Information mandated in federal Civil Rights laws (Titles VI and VIII)

Team Checklist ✔1.4.1

- ☐ Staff are assigned to appropriate roles based on personality and project knowledge
- ☐ Greeters
- ☐ Presenters
- ☐ Scribes
- ☐ Logistics coordinators
- ☐ Roving facilitators
- ☐ Court reporters (if appropriate)

Rehearsal/Briefing Checklist

- ☐ Team roles and responsibilities
- ☐ Purpose of the meeting
- ☐ Goals and objectives of the project
- ☐ Public's role in the process
- ☐ Process for continued public input
- ☐ Mission statement
- ☐ Where we are now in the process
- ☐ What happens next in the process
- ☐ Meeting agenda
- ☐ Meeting layout and logistics (set-up/breakdown)
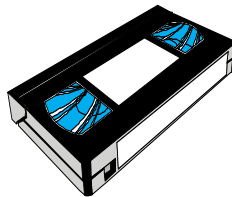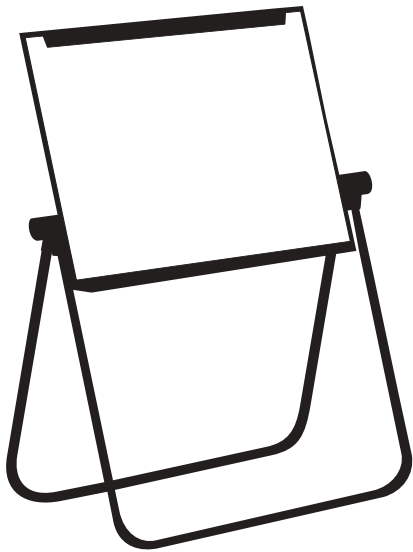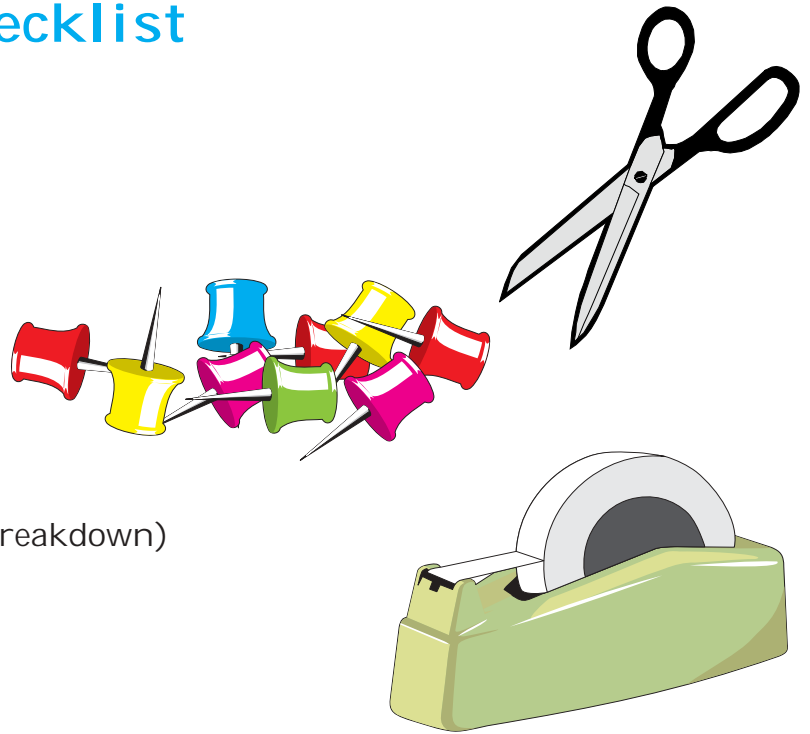
Supplies Checklist

- ☐ Refreshments (optional)
- ☐ Sign-in table
- ☐ Name tags for staff and participants
- ☐ Pens/pencils/markers
- ☐ Tape (duct/masking)
- ☐ Easels
- ☐ Pushpins
- ☐ Binder/paper clips
- ☐ Blank audio tapes
- ☐ Tape recorder(s)
- ☐ PA system/speakers
- ☐ VCR
- ☐ Projector (slide, overhead or other)
- ☐ Extension cords
- ☐ Computer equipment
- ☐ Adjustable height and/or portable microphones
- ☐ Tablecloths and table skirts

Meeting Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- Provide enough meeting locations to suit the size of the study area.
- Hold meetings in neutral locations.
- Provide ample meeting notification.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Document all comments and decisions.
- Ensure that enough background information has been provided.
- Initiate an evaluation process for meetings.
- Assign a moderator to facilitate discussions.
- Provide light refreshments which are funded through a non-FDOT source.
- Establish community contacts.
- Plan, prepare and evaluate.
- Provide name tags for the public and staff.
- Have meeting dress rehearsals.
- Maintain contact with community between meeting dates.
- Encourage creative thinking, interest and participation in the project.

Don't:

- Hold meetings on Wednesday evenings, Sundays, around major holidays, long weekends or the summer months.
- Allow meetings to be too long.
- Allow meetings to be too short.
- Contact the community solely through mail-outs and newspaper advertising.
- Assign outgoing roles to introverted staff.
- Let local issues override the goals of the meeting - assign a facilitator.
- Wait until the last minute to meet production deadlines.

Was Your Meeting Effective?

A meeting is effective if the *purpose* of the meeting was *achieved*.

Use these methods to evaluate your meetings:

1. Survey/Evaluation Forms:
   Acquire participant feedback - use the sample meeting evaluation form
   to develop an evaluation form to suit your particular meeting. ✔**3.6.4**

2. Project Team:
   Debrief team members on meeting successes and shortcomings. Ask the questions:
   - Did we achieve the meeting's purpose?
   - Did the meeting format allow the public the opportunity to participate?
   - Was the set-up and breakdown accomplished efficiently?
   - Were the methods used to advertise the meeting effective?
   - How can we do better next time?

3. Assess the participation level through:
   - Returned surveys;
   - Comment cards;
   - Number of attendees;
   - Community groups represented; and
   - Adequacy of comment received.

Meeting Evaluation Form

WAS THE PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING EXPLAINED? (To provide a forum for community input)

YES
NO
NEED MORE INFORMATION

We want to know what you think of this meeting
Please circle one choice, on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)

MEETING OBJECTIVES:
DID WE CLEARLY :
1. Explain the Jones Corridor Study Process?
2. Explain the relationship between hurricane evacuation and the Study?
3. Provide sufficient information to allow for your input?
4. Explain ways to participate in the community team?

Poor   Excellent
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

THE PROGRAM:
THE PRESENTATION WAS:
- helpful
- informative
- easy to understand

HANDOUTS WERE:
- easy ·   Poor

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