

# Ground Rules and Guidelines for Effective Meetings



Board of Commissioners Retreat  
January 6-8, 2026





# Mutual Learning Values

Mutual learning core values help shape the mindset you have as you approach your work with others.



## **TRANSPARENCY**

Share all relevant thoughts, feelings and strategies.

## **INFORMED CHOICE**

Act in ways that maximize your own and others' abilities to make decisions.

## **COMPASSION**

Understand others' concerns and connect and respond to others.

## **CURIOSITY**

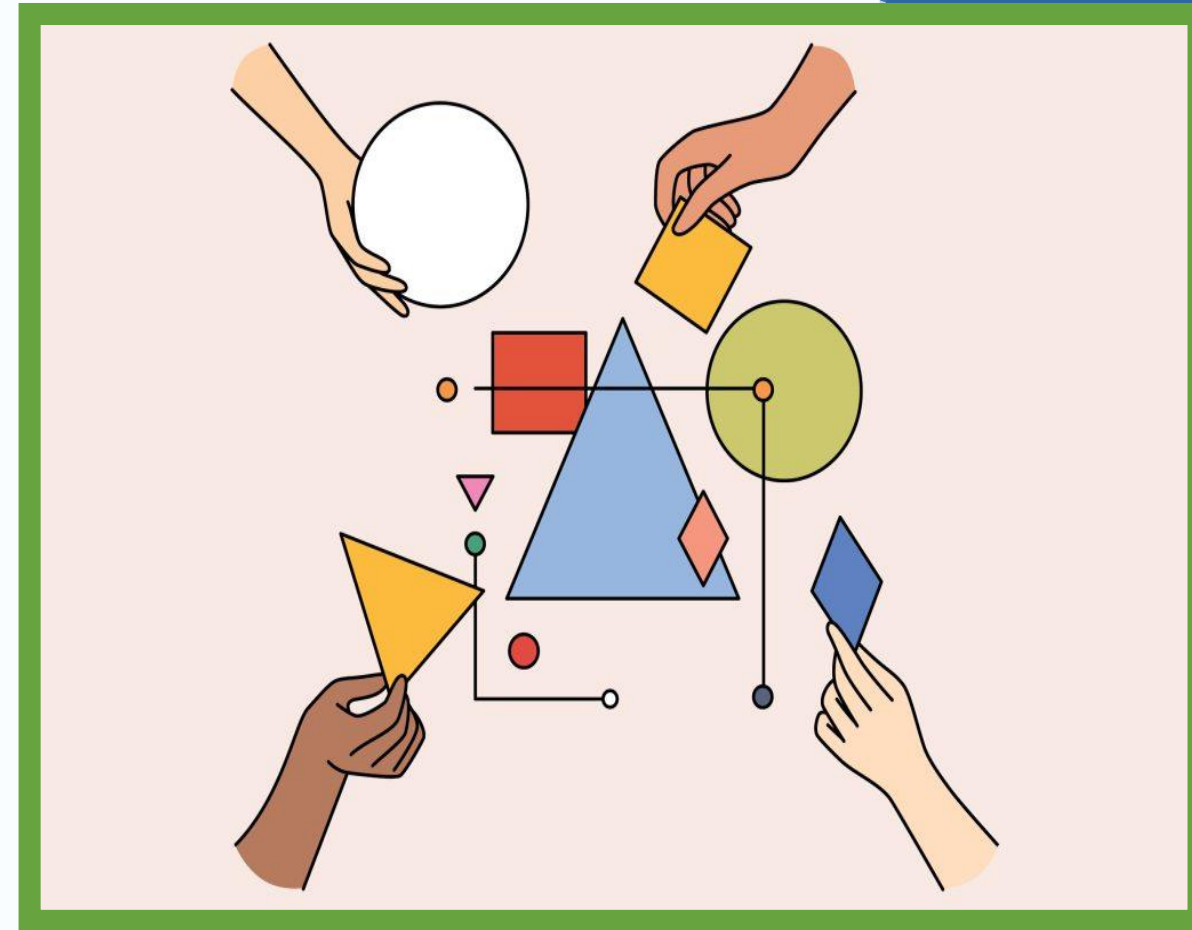
Genuine interest in others' views and see them out so you and others can learn.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Take responsibility for your own actions and their short and long-term consequences.

# Mutual Learning Assumptions

- ✓ I have information and so do other people.
- ✓ People may disagree with me and still have pure motives.
- ✓ I may be contributing to the problem.
- ✓ Each of us sees things others don't.
- ✓ Differences are opportunities for learning.





# Ground Rules for Effective Groups

- Share views and ask genuine questions
- Share all relevant information
- Use specific examples
- Agree on what important words mean
- Explain reasoning and intent
- Focus on interests, not positions
- Test assumptions and inferences
- Jointly design next steps
- Discuss undiscussable issues

From *Ground Rules for Effective Groups*, Roger M. Schwarz, UNC School of Government, 1995





# Guidelines for Productive Meetings

## Participate fully

It is alright to disagree. Everyone should have the opportunity to state their own views.

## Share all relevant information

Be specific. Agree on what is important words mean. Discuss 'undiscussable' issues.

## Work on the problem

Put other issues aside, including personalities, offices or other differences. Show respect for one another.

## Stay focused.

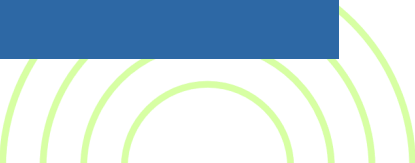
Discuss a topic long enough for everybody to be clear about it.

## Focus on interests, not positions

Explain why you favor a particular course of action. Balance advocacy and inquiry.

## Decide how the group will make decisions.

Use a decision-making rule that generates the level of commitment needed.





**ENJOY THE RETREAT!**