

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.

CURIOSITY

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

INFORMED CHOICE

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

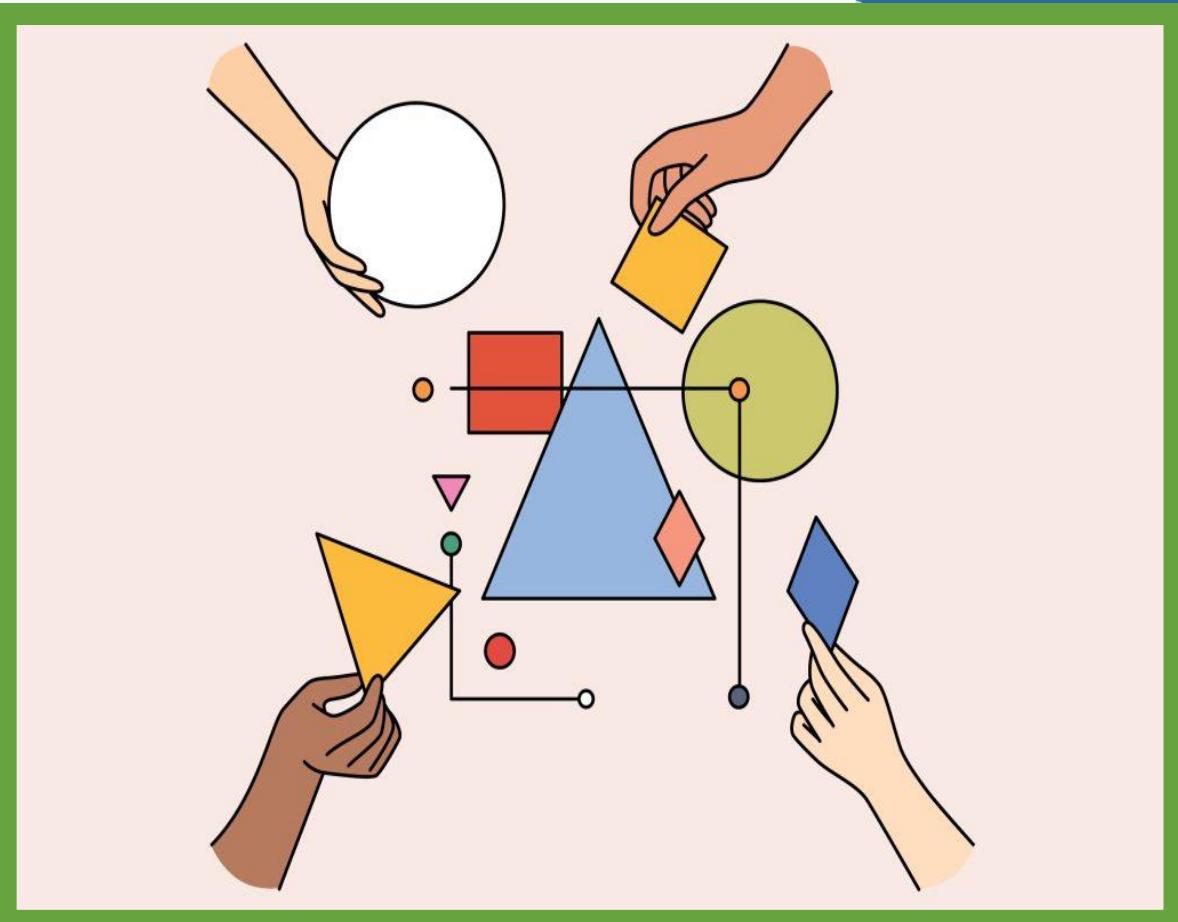
ACCOUNTABILITY

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!