Signs of Effective Meetings

There are several indicators teams can use to assess the effectiveness of their meetings. Some common signs of an effective meeting include:

- There is a detailed agenda that describes what will be covered, the goal of the meeting, who will discuss each item, and a time estimate for how long each item will take
- Responsibilities for facilitation, timekeeper, and record keeper are assigned
- A set of ground rules are established and posted
- There is clarity about the mode of decisionmaking that will be used
- There are periodic progress checks to ensure progress is being made during the meeting
- There are clear strategies to resolve conflict
- A record of the meeting is kept and specific action items are outlined

If any of the following signs are present, it may indicate that teams are convening ineffective meetings and should consider changes to help make their meetings more productive:

- Meeting goals are unclear
- Vague or nonexistent agenda
- No time limits on discussions
- No process for working on important issues
- No one is facilitating the discussion
- Participants haven’t done their homework
- Discussions are unfocused
- There is a lack of closure to discussions
- Participants argue – rather than debate – different points of view
- Not all team members participate
- The meeting ends without action plans or next steps being developed
- There is an absence of any check in about how the meeting went

Adapted from Bens, Ingrid (1999). Facilitation at a Glance! AQP/Participative Dynamics/GOAL/QPC.

© 2005 Center for Effective Public Policy