

## **Minutes of the Meeting**

The meeting minutes or MOM (minutes of the meeting) can be defined as the written record of everything that happened during the meeting. It is used to inform people who did not attend the meeting of what happened, or to track what was taken during the meeting so that you can reconsider it and use it to inform future decisions.

Minutes are final when they are approved by the members of the group to which they relate, generally in the next meeting, and signed by the chairperson. Even if there are emotional moments at the meeting, the transcripts are written in a non-emotional way, and they are cool, realistic, impersonal and unbiased. Moreover, these are the time requirements for most people to have the records brief and brief to the basics.

Some organizations only require that detailed discussions be recorded as well (i.e. who said what and what reactions were ... until the decision was reached).

### **Purpose of meeting minutes**

You should not be afraid of the term "minutes" because it is actually a bit misleading. After all, you don't want your committee or council or need a record of its meeting minutes by minute! But it is important to capture the essence of the meeting, including details such as:

- Decisions taken (suggestions made, votes, etc.)
- Planned next steps
- Identify and track work items

The record is a physical record of the meeting for the participants and a source of information for members who could not attend. In some cases, meeting minutes can act as a reference point, for example:

- When the outcome of the meeting affects other cooperative activities or projects within the organization

- The record can inform (or remind) individuals of their tasks and / or schedules

## **Agenda of a meeting**

At the very least, it's important to get a copy of the meeting agenda and use it as a guide or outline for taking notes and preparing the minutes – with the order and numbering of items on the minutes of meeting matching those of the agenda.

The agenda also provides information that will need to be included in the minutes, such as:

- the names of all the meeting attendees, including guests or speakers
- documents that are sent out with the agenda or handed out in the meeting – copies (digital or hard copy) of handouts should be stored with the meeting minutes for future reference and for sharing with those who were unable to attend the meeting (and others as determined by the meeting's Chair).

## **What should be included in meeting minutes**

1. The name of the organization/ unit
2. Day, date, time and place
3. Number in order (e.g. 33rd meeting of...)
4. Names of chairperson and secretary
5. Names of members present
6. Names of the absent
7. Attendees by special invitation, e.g. auditor, caterer, etc.
8. Record of the transactions (on the guidelines given above)
9. Signature of secretary and, after approval, that of the chairman.

## Tips for writing minutes

- **Create an outline** – as discussed earlier, having an outline (or template) based on the agenda makes it easy for you to simply jot down notes, decisions, etc. under each item as you go along. If you are taking notes by hand, consider including space below each item on your outline for your hand-written notes, then print these out and use this to capture minutes.
- **Check-off attendees as they enter the room** - if you know the meeting attendees, you can check them off as they arrive, if not have folks introduce themselves at the start of the meeting or circulate an attendance list they can check-off themselves.
- **Record decisions or notes on action items** in your outline as soon as they occur to be sure they are recorded accurately
- **Ask for clarification if necessary** – for example, if the group moves on without making a decision or an obvious conclusion, ask for clarification of the decision and/or next steps involved.
- **Don't try to capture it all** – you can't keep up if you try to write down the conversation verbatim, so be sure to simply (and clearly) write (or type) just the decisions, assignments, action steps, etc.
- **Record it** – literally, if you are concerned about being able to keep up with note taking, consider recording the meeting (e.g., on your smart phone, iPad, recording device, etc.) but be sure to let participants know they are being recording. While you don't want to use the recording to create a word-for-word transcript of the meeting, the recording can come in handy if you need clarification.