



# A GUIDE TO TRANSFORMATIVE MEETINGS

## What Are Transformative Meetings?

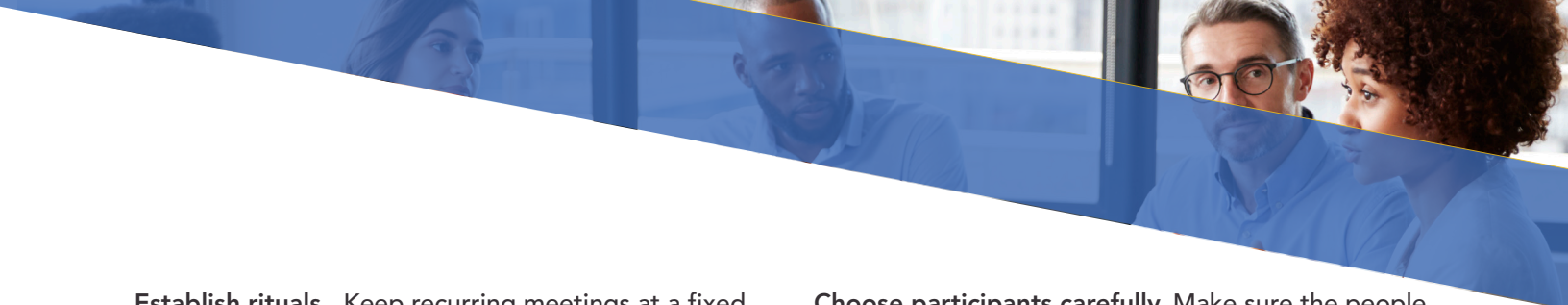
Transformative meetings are designed to help people feel valued and part of a larger goal; to build mutual trust and strengthen relationships; and to encourage openness and feedback. They increase creativity, risk-taking, ownership, efficiency, and effective teamwork.

- How does one lead transformative meetings?
- How can we make people feel seen and heard during meetings?
- How can we get more out of meetings and better achieve our goals?

## What to Consider Before a Meeting.

Articulate clear and specific goals—including both **work outcomes** and **belonging goals**. What would a successful meeting look like? What do we need to accomplish? What do we want people to feel, know, or do as a result? “Belonging” goals relate to people’s relationship to each other and the group.

*For example: “Everyone will make a meaningful new connection, have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion, be valued for their unique skills, or be able to step up and help lead.” Once defined, design the meeting by not just listing topics, but rather format for each agenda item to accomplish the meeting goals.*



**Establish rituals.** Keep recurring meetings at a fixed time, structure and length. Try not to move the meeting—regular meetings create a feeling of safety for group members. Furthermore, embed rituals into meetings.

*Examples of meeting rituals: birthday celebrations, opening and closing activities, and other group-led “traditions.”*

**Choose participants carefully.** Make sure the people who attend the meeting are the “necessary” people. The better you define who needs to be at the meeting, the more likely they will feel they belong and are needed there.

**Design the “setting.”** Decide on room set-up to support the goal of the meeting, determine the best time of day, and identify ground rules. All these effect the outcome of the meeting.

## During a Meeting

**Cultivate ownership** by inviting participants to play a role at the meeting based on their unique skills and traits, encouraging them to plan and/or lead different parts of the meeting.

**Find the balance** between the agenda and the immediate, unplanned issues that arise.

**Encourage interaction** by structuring opportunities for people to share with each other or play a role during meetings to build connections and ensure that participants feel heard and valued; include opportunities for building relationships and trust.

**Let others talk, practice active listening,** reflect on what’s said, make connections and build on comments.

**Don’t end on a logistical note.** End by bringing people back to reflecting and sharing. Keep the momentum going. Make sure that action items are clear and agreed upon. And of course, use humor and laugh often!

## After a Meeting

**Summarize and share outcomes.** Send a summary after meetings to ensure that everyone is on the same page and next steps are clear. Remember to include everyone, as well as those who had to leave early or could not attend.

### Making people feel valued during a meeting is also your goal!

#### Involve others:

- Invite people to lead different parts of the meetings
- Share ownership
- Fewer updates and presentations, much more sharing, reflecting, problem solving

#### Acknowledge that what people say matters:

- Make eye contact
- Listen attentively
- Acknowledge ideas (even if you don’t adopt them)
- Give credit to those who deserve it

#### Create a safe space for the group by being vulnerable yourself and leading by example.

#### Honor people’s presence even when they are absent:

- Put a chair out for them
- Share with others where they are (if it’s not confidential)
- Establish a practice of inviting participants to reach out to someone who was absent to let them know they were missed and bring them up to speed
- Acknowledge their presence when they return

#### Create strong shared experiences that build connections and trust.

Other opportunities for sharing such as breakout sessions; work in pairs or small groups.

