



COSTHA Tips for Running a Meeting

This guide is intended to assist in running efficient and focused meetings. COSTHA meetings are governed by Roberts Rules of Order.

Introducing Antitrust

An [abbreviated Antitrust Statement](#) is included on the meeting agenda. The full COSTHA [Antitrust Policy](#) is available on the website. Members are encouraged to review the full policy and to refer to it should they have any questions regarding antitrust compliance.

The statement should be **referenced at the start of every meeting** to reinforce compliance expectations.

Example of how to introduce Antitrust:

- “Please reference the antitrust statement at the bottom of the agenda.”
- “As a reminder, we operate under COSTHA’s antitrust statement – at the bottom of your agenda. If you feel like conversation is drifting towards discussion about pricing, collusion, or boycotting please say something, notify COSTHA admin or let myself/another leader know.”
- “At the bottom of the agenda is the COSTHA antitrust statement. While we want to encourage productive dialogue – please refrain from discussing specific company details such as pricing, bids, or other business-related topics.”
- “I would like to provide a reminder of the COSTHA antitrust policy which can be found on the COSTHA website. If you feel at any point we are encroaching on the policy, please let a board or staff member know, and we will terminate the conversation.”

It is the responsibility of all members, but especially group leaders, to not let conversation violate antitrust guidelines. If you feel like a conversation is violating antitrust it is always best to end the conversation and move to another topic.

Keeping the Meeting on Track

During the meeting, check the time regularly to stay aligned with the agenda. If you’re running short, guide the conversation forward to keep the meeting on track. As your meeting progresses it is natural for the order to slip away. Here are a couple of tips to keep the focus on the agenda:

- **Work Plans:** Develop a simple work plan for each objective to give volunteers clear guidance on expectations and deliverables.
- **No Traction / Place on Hold:** If we are unable to secure volunteers or gather needed information, we may need to formally place objectives on hold.
- **Parking Lot:** Introduce a “Parking Lot” for new ideas—capture them for future discussion and ask for volunteers to champion them.

Council on Safe Transportation of Hazardous Articles

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- **Visual Aids:** Display agendas, objectives and work plans during meetings to keep everyone aligned

Managing Discussion

Productive discussion strengthens decisions by incorporating diverse perspectives. Encourage participation, but recognize when discussion becomes unproductive—off topic, repetitive, or circular. The leader’s role is to guide conversation without shutting it down.

Tips for maintaining focus and momentum:

- **Capture off-topic items.** Park useful ideas for future consideration so valuable input isn’t lost, without derailing the current discussion.
- **Redirect to the agenda.** Bring the group back to the topic at hand when conversation drifts.
 - Remember: under Robert’s Rules, members should have the opportunity to speak once before anyone speaks twice.
- **Prevent monopolization.** Be mindful that no single voice dominates; actively invite alternative perspectives.
- **Monitor tone and energy.** Adjust your approach based on group engagement.
 - If a topic is clearly unpopular or draining energy, address what’s required and move on.
 - If discussion becomes combative, intervene. Recenter the group on the purpose, summarize key points, and invite others to contribute.

Summarize with intent.

Clarity is a leadership skill. Clearly state what was decided, what remains open, and the path forward. When next steps are explicit, participants leave aligned and confident.

- This helps prevent the “meeting after the meeting.” Attendees should leave knowing what was accomplished and what happens next—without needing follow-up conversations to interpret the outcome.

Leading a Vote

Votes turn discussion into decisions. Use them when the group is ready to act, not as a substitute for discussion or to force closure prematurely.

When to call for a vote:

- Discussion has run its course, and no new perspectives are emerging.
- The decision requires formal approval, alignment, or documentation.

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How to facilitate the process:

- **State the motion clearly and confirm a second.**
A motion is a formal proposal for action and should be stated clearly so it is understood by the group. *Ex. "I move that we approve the proposal as presented."*
 - A second indicates that the motion warrants consideration; without a second, the motion does not proceed.
- **Guide focused discussion.**
Allow members to speak to the motion, recognizing speakers one at a time.
 - Intervene if discussion becomes repetitive or moves away from the motion itself.
- **Call the vote with clarity.**
Once discussion concludes, clearly restate the motion and call for the vote.
Example: "Is anyone opposed?"
- **Announce the result.**
Clearly state whether the motion carries or fails.

Before closing the meeting, briefly recap decisions, ownership, and next steps; if the agenda is not complete, request a motion to adjourn.

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