

# Chair's Guide to Inclusive Meetings

For AFMC Committees and Networks

# Table of Contents

Introduction	<b>03</b>
Before a Meeting	<b>04</b>
During a Meeting	<b>05</b>
Post Meeting	<b>09</b>
Accessibility Tips	<b>10</b>

# Introduction

The success of any meeting depends on the active participation of all invited participants. This guide has been created to help meeting chairs facilitate meetings that are inclusive, regardless of who attends. It is based on a valued, inclusive approach to every individual in order to encourage full participation.

# Before a Meeting

## Communicate Expectations

Ensure attendees understand their role in promoting an inclusive and respectful environment. When developing the meeting agenda with the help of your AFMC support, consider the following tips:

- State the goal: What should participants think, do, or decide by the end of the meeting?
- Pose agenda items as questions: Questions help people prepare, make it easy to keep the discussion on track, and make it easier to determine when the discussion is complete.
- Estimate timing: Allot a certain amount of time per agenda item. Be explicit about scheduling breaks throughout the meeting time. Virtual meetings are demanding, and we need to be thoughtful. As a rule, you should plan for at least a 5–10-minute break every 90 minutes.
- Share the agenda ahead of time to allow participants to prepare for the meeting.
- Share a disclaimer such as: *Please do not hesitate to reach out to the AFMC team if you would appreciate accommodations during upcoming meetings. To aid in increasing accessibility, live transcription will be available for all participants via Microsoft Teams.*

# During a Meeting

## Delivering the land acknowledgement

The land acknowledgement should be delivered at the beginning of the meeting. Make sure you have taken the time to prepare a meaningful, contextualized and intentional land acknowledgement ahead of the meeting.

**In a virtual setting:** If you have a larger meeting (10+ participants), ask your participants to acknowledge the Indigenous land they are joining from in the chat. However, for smaller meetings, all attendees may present a land acknowledgement at the beginning of the meeting.

**In person:** The person leading the meeting should offer a land acknowledgment. However, all participants should be invited to share an acknowledgement.

Before making their individual presentations, meeting presenters may also give a land acknowledgement.

## Meeting Roles

**An AFMC staff member** will monitor the chat during virtual and hybrid meetings. They will provide basic technical support, such as muting participants if needed, turning cameras on or off upon request, spotlighting speakers, and assisting with screen sharing to help optimize the experience for participants. The staff member will also take minutes and distribute them to all Committee or Network members after the meeting.

**The Chair** is responsible for facilitating the meeting and announcing any ground rules, as well as confirming if there are conflicts of interest for participants in any section of the meeting. They will handle disruptions and disruptive participants. If there are issues with accessibility (any individual's particular needs or technical difficulties during a meeting), the Chair should pause or reschedule the meeting so that the issues are resolved. The Chair may read the chat aloud, so attendees with low vision or those who are connecting via telephone are included.

## Shared Guidelines

These stated rules will help foster a safe space for discussions, free of judgement as well as ensure we are productive in accomplishing our purpose. Meeting participants have a shared role in ensuring the guidelines are respected.

**The Chair(s) will be in charge of ensuring the shared guidelines are followed.**

Let attendees know that if they have a question they would prefer to not address themselves, they are welcome to reach out to you or your AFMC support staff via private message.

- 1 Listen respectfully without interrupting.
- 2 Speak from your own experience rather than generalizing (use I statements instead of they, we and you).
- 3 Ask if you don't know. This is a learning environment, you are not held accountable for what you don't know, but you are responsible for educating yourself.
- 4 Commit to learning not debating. Come ready to share information, not persuade.
- 5 Do not ask individuals to speak on behalf of their (perceived) social group.
- 6 Engage within your level of comfort (ask questions, provide input, etc.)

## Meeting Conclusion

Conclude the meeting with a thank you to attendees for their participation and collaboration. Feel free to extend an invitation to attendees to reach out to debrief after the meeting.

# Post Meeting

AFMC staff will check in with attendees about tasks they were assigned during the meeting.

Ask attendees on their thoughts about how the meeting went and if they have any suggestions for future meetings.

Take some time to reflect:

**What went well?**

**What could be better next time?**

**What could I practice or model at the next meeting?**

**What do I need to learn more about?**

# Accessibility Tips

To aid in increasing accessibility, live transcription is available for all participants via Microsoft Teams and a statement offering accommodations to participants will be included in meeting invitations. However, there are many additional steps that can be taken to increase the accessibility of meetings.

**Language access is a key aspect of inclusivity and accessibility. To ensure equitable participation for Francophone members and uphold AFMC's commitment to bilingualism, consider the following:**

### **Francophone Inclusion and Bilingualism**

- Provide interpretation options: For larger or national meetings, explore simultaneous or consecutive interpretation (either through AI or other tools of the AFMC). Indicate clearly in the invitation how to access this service and explain it again at the beginning of the meeting.
- Use plain language: Whether in English or French, use accessible, jargon-free language to support comprehension for all language levels.
- Ensure bilingual visual materials: As much as possible, visual supports (PowerPoint slides, handouts, etc.) should be bilingual or provided in both English and French. Use consistent formatting to distinguish between the two languages (e.g., side-by-side layout or color coding).
- Encourage participation in either official language: Actively invite people to express themselves in their preferred language and ensure interpretation or peer translation when possible.
- Read chat comments aloud: In virtual meetings, read key comments from the chat aloud in both languages, when possible, especially if they are crucial to the discussion or decision-making process.

## Blind and Low-Vision Access

- Ensure meeting materials, including PowerPoint presentations, use accessible fonts and avoid flashing or strobing animation. Choose legible colors and a colourblind-friendly palette (ex. blue and orange) with dark and light contrast. Consider utilizing an accessibility checker tool (such as the Microsoft Accessibility Checker).
- Ensure visual images are narrated during the meeting.
- Ensure speakers identify themselves when taking turns.
- If you are showing a video, search for an audio-described version on YouTube by searching for the name of the video with the words “audio described.”

## Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Access

- Be aware of background noise during the meeting and handle it by muting your microphone when not speaking.
- It is best to aim to have your face well-lit to support lip reading.
- Live transcription will be available via Microsoft Teams.

### Mental Health Access

- Be aware of the language used. Use people-first language if you are uncertain of someone's personal preference. For example: "He is living with bipolar disorder" instead of "He is bipolar."
- Utilize breaks and time for those who might need to rest between topics during meetings.
- Refer to a person's illness or facets of diversity only when pertinent to the content.
- Do not use mental-health terms to describe situations. For example, don't say "the agenda was crazy."

### Physical Access

- Plan for breaks depending on your meeting length. People dealing with pain or limited mobility may have additional needs to stretch during the meeting.
- When breaks are planned, make sure to allow enough time for participants with mobility disabilities to use the restroom.

## Cognitive Access

- Make sure to follow your agenda for a frame of reference.
- Consider providing meeting materials in different formats (PDF, Word, etc.) where necessary.
- Concurrently using text as well as audio content can be helpful.
- Use communication methods that support a variety of learning styles throughout the meeting.
- Periodically check in with participants to ensure they understand what you are saying and are able to follow along.
- To keep your audience from feeling overwhelmed when using a PowerPoint, the text on each slide should be short and to the point. Some experts suggest using the 5/5/5 rule: no more than five words per line of text, five lines of text per slide, or five text-heavy slides in a row.