MACUA & WAMUA – ADVISORY OFFICE
IEJ Offices, 3rd Floor,
62 Juta Street,
Braamfontein, 2000
Telephone: +27(0) 10 007 2136
Website: www.macua.org.za

MEETING MINUTES Guide

We look at...

- What is the meeting, types and purpose to conduct a meeting?
- Meeting Agenda
- Meeting minutes: how to write good informal and formal minutes
- Templates: Agenda and meeting minutes

What is a meeting?

A meeting is an event in which a group of people come together to discuss things or make decisions.

Types

MACUA WAMUA have three major meetings under the Branch Development Guide, Operational Overview:

- Annual General Meeting "AGM" – occur after 18 months, new leaderships elections and annual reports from local, provincial and national structures.
- Branch Meeting – Quarterly meetings, with all branch members present in the meeting
- Branch Executive meetings "BEC" – recommended to occur twice a month, planning and implementation body of the branch.
    - The six general types of BEC meetings:
        - *Status Update Meetings.*
        - *Information Sharing Meetings.*
        - *Decision Making Meetings.*
        - *Problem Solving Meetings.*
        - *Innovation Meetings.*
        - *Team Building Meetings.*

Meeting Agenda

What is an agenda?

Created before a meeting begins, an agenda is a list of meeting activities and discussions that will be covered in your meeting. They are laid out in order, often as a list or set of bullet points. An effective meeting agenda might be a very basic list of topics, but it can also be a more complex document. Exactly how much detail to include depends on the type of meeting you are having, and how organized you want to be.

A quick one-topic huddle may require no agenda at all, whereas an All-Hands meeting should be carefully planned to maximize the team's time together. Agendas are notably different from meeting notes, which typically begin with the agenda, but are filled in with more information about what took place during the meeting—such as decisions and next steps.

How do you create a meeting agenda?

Great meetings happen because the meeting is necessary to accomplish an important goal. The purpose of the meeting must be well-defined before a leader can decide who needs to be in a meeting and how it will run. Meeting agendas accomplish exactly that, and much more, serving as a team preparation tool before the meeting, and a guide during it.

An effective meeting agenda clearly states meeting goals and discussion topics. It is written in a way that helps team members get on the same page, before, during, and after the meeting, providing all necessary information to set the team up for success.

For an effective meeting agenda, follow these steps:

1. Prepare your agenda before the meeting; at least 3 or 2 days in advance.
2. Clearly define the goal of the meeting so everyone knows why they are there.
3. Prioritize agenda items based on importance.
4. List discussion topics as questions that need to be answered.
5. Allow reasonable amounts of time for each topic.
6. Include necessary background info for decisions to be made.
7. Share the agenda with attendees so they can have input and show up prepared.
8. Put the agenda in the calendar invite

Meeting Agenda – Sample

Date:
Time:
Venue
Objective: Purpose of the meeting

Agenda

1. *Opening and welcome*
2. *Minutes from the presvious meeting*
3. *Item one*
4. *Item two*
5. *Item three*
6. *Action Plan*
7. *Closure*

MEETING MINUTES

Taking good meeting minutes at a meeting is an important and fulfilling role. Meeting minutes are more than a general accounting of the Branch Executive Committee "BEC" discussions; they serve as an official and legal record of the meeting of the BEC. Minutes are used in a variety of ways including tracking progress, detailing future plans, and serving as a reference point. Among other things, your meeting minutes should reflect a record of motions, votes, and abstentions.

To take effective minutes for a board meeting, you should include:

- Date of the meeting
- Time the meeting was called to order
- Names of the meeting participants and absentees
- Corrections and amendments to previous meeting minutes
- Additions to the current agenda
- Whether a quorum is present
- Motions taken or rejected
- Voting-that there was a motion and second, and the outcome of the vote
- Actions taken or agreed to be taken
- Next steps

- Items to be held over
- New business
- Open discussion or public participation
- Next meeting date and time
- Time of adjournment

How you detail the discussions during an executive meeting is as important as making sure to include all of the information in the bullets shown above. For each agenda item, write a short statement of each action taken by the BEC, along with a brief explanation of the rationale for their decision. If there are extensive arguments, write a succinct summary of the major arguments.

Record discussions objectively, avoiding inflammatory remarks and personal observations. A good way to do this is by avoiding adjectives and adverbs whenever possible. Check your language to be sure that it is clear, unambiguous, and complete.

As noted earlier, minutes are an official and legal record of the BEC meetings. In a legal arena, meeting minutes are presumed to be correct and can be used as legal evidence of the facts they report. Document branch discussions to accurately reflect the actions and intentions of the branch or BEC members. A BEC has a legal liability, so keep information basic and language simple to avoid any legal complications that place the organization at a disadvantage in any legal proceedings. Use names only when recording motions and seconds.

After the meeting, you will want to write the formal record when everything is still fresh in your mind, so prepare the record as soon after the meeting as you possibly can.

Writing the Official Record of BEC Meeting Minutes

Review the agenda to gain the full scope of the meeting. Add notes for clarification. Review actions, motions, votes, and decisions for clarity. Edit the record so that the minutes are succinct, clear, and easy to read. It's better to attach meeting handouts and documents that were referred to during the meeting to the final copy, rather than summarizing the contents in the minutes.

Signing, Filing, and Sharing Minutes

Once your meeting minutes are fully written, you are responsible for making them official by having the branch secretary sign them. You may also require the branch coordinator's signature.

As part of knowing how to take minutes for a meeting, you should always follow the branch system, detailed in the Branch Development Process on storing minutes. It's a good idea to have back-up copies either in print, a hard drive, or (best case) a via email.

The secretary also has the responsibility for sharing minutes. Make sure the coordinator has approved the minutes before sharing in print or online.

Helpful Tips for Taking Meeting Minutes

- Use a template
- Check off attendees as they arrive
- Do introductions or circulate an attendance list

- Record motions, actions, and decisions as they occur
- Ask for clarification as necessary
- Write clear, brief notes-not full sentences or verbatim wording
- Maintain the same verb tense

Common Mistakes in Taking Meeting Minutes

- Failure to document a quorum
- Ambiguous description of board actions
- Including information that could harm the board in a legal sense
- Lengthy delays in providing minutes after a meeting
- Delays in approving minutes from past meetings-missing mistakes
- Failing to file and manage documents
- Failing to get documents signed so they serve as an official and legal record.

Always be mindful that the purpose of taking meeting minutes is to reflect the true intentions of the branch or the branch executive committee and that they are an official and legal record. Given the breadth of detail and complexity of process associated with proper documentation of meeting minutes, in learning how to take minutes for a meeting many branches find that using a tool, such as a template, this works easier and more efficient, and ultimately elevates branch performance. As serious as the job is, the task of taking and preparing minutes is a rewarding and edifying experience.

Informal and Formal Minutes

What's the difference?

Formal minutes

Certain organizations such as nonprofits, public companies, local governments, and schools are required by law to create formal meeting minutes. For example, in MACUA WAMUA, each organ of the movement, national, provincial, and local bodies must make meeting minutes available to their members. Similarly, the branches are required to create meeting minutes for branch members in the Annual General Meetings.

Or, if you've applied for a assistance to the MACUA WAMUA Advisory Office, one of the required documents is the official minutes from a Branch Executive Meeting authorizing the proposal.

Since these types of meeting minutes are required for compliance or legal reasons, they should follow a clear and professional format.

Informal minutes

Often meeting minutes are flexible and somewhat informal. They still need to be clear, professional, and consistent. But you're not going to get sued if you don't include all the right information. Think of informal meeting minutes as a meeting summary. The templates and forms you use are ultimately up to you. Just because they're less formal doesn't mean informal minutes are less useful

BCE Meeting Template

Objective: What is the purpose of this team meeting? Include any objectives and discussion topics.

Agenda: Does this meeting have a pre-planned agenda or structure? Include it here for easy reference.

Discussion Points: Summarize all relevant discussion points here.

Main Takeaways: What were the main insights from this team meeting? Include key decisions made, progress reports, and any opportunities, issues, or concerns that should be shared with colleagues.

Other Important Notes: Is there any other valuable information worth sharing? It does not have to be directly related to the meeting topic.

Share: List all key stakeholders not present and other departments that this information should be shared with.

Take Action: Clarify next steps, who's completing them, and when they should be done by. Note this information here to share and assign.

Follow-Up: How will we keep in touch and stay up to date about progress? Should we schedule another meeting?

How to Write Meeting Minutes - The Basics

- **Take minutes in real time, or make notes after each topic.**
  - Start with the meeting agenda as an outline. Fill in agenda items with more detail while the information is still fresh in your mind—in real-time.
- **Be concise.**
  - Your creative writing skills must take a back seat (for now).
  - Write the minutes as if you are a journalist. Document what is happening at the meeting.
  - This is a written record, but just the broad strokes. You don't need a verbatim accounting of everything that is said.
- **Fill in your meeting minutes documents so that they can be understood by someone who was unable to attend.**
  - As you might imagine, there's a balancing act when writing minutes. You must keep minutes concise but also provide enough context for future reference.
  - Remember, it's often customary to review meeting notes at the beginning of the next meeting. For example, a board meeting typically starts with the approval of the previous meeting's minutes.
  - The amount of context you include as a meeting note-taker is a judgment call.
- **Just note the facts.**
  - Avoid personal observations when writing meeting minutes. If you want to take separate notes of your own, you are welcome to do so. But the meeting minutes should be a factual record of what was discussed.
- **Use a meeting minutes template for the right format.**
  - If you're writing formal meeting minutes, follow a certain format.
  - But with informal meeting minutes, you have more flexibility. Think of what your organization needs, and what's been done in the past. Then improve on that process.

DON'TS:

What not to include
At challenging aspect of taking meeting minutes is restraint—choosing not just what to put in the minutes but what to leave out.

- Don't try to record everything verbatim. Minutes aren't a transcription; they're a summary.

- Don't include personal thoughts or observations. If you have thoughts and ideas during the meeting, record them separately from the official minutes.

- Don't repeat information that is already there. Especially if the agenda clearly states a discussion topic (e.g., "2021 Budget Discussion) you do not need to write a redundant note in the minutes, such as "Budget was discussed for 2021."

- Don't handwrite your notes. Because minutes are a record of what happened in the meeting, it's to use a digital format since. Ultimately these meeting notes must be saved and shared.

Tips: Tricks to take notes faster
A lot can happen during a conversation, and it can be hard for the note-taker to keep up.

- ✓ Use initials instead of people's full names. If there's one note-taking tip that will save you loads of time, it's to abbreviate the names of meeting participants.

- ✓ Use acronyms where you can without sacrificing clarity. As with names, acronyms can be a big help. For instance, we have a series of content we call “Behind the Team.” Whenever we discuss it, instead of writing out all the words, we simply write BTT.
- ✓ Use sentence fragments as long as it still makes sense. No need for perfect grammar. Instead of full sentences, write notes in your minutes like, “Decision to move forward,” or “Revisit strategy in 6 weeks.”