



Leadership Lab: Supporting Council Member Leaders

November 2024

Boosting Engagement During Council Meetings

Council members are a powerful and influential group of leaders committed to your mission.

It is important to respect their time, expertise, life experiences and points of view.

Points of View on Council Meetings

Ask a Council Member:

- No one asked my opinion about anything.
- It felt like decisions were already made, so what was the point?
- No one would have noticed if I wasn't there.
- The Chair does not know how to run a meeting.
- Sometimes I wonder why I am on this Council.

Ask a Council staff member:

- I spend a lot of time on reports that do not get read.
- Members did not ask a single question.
- The Chair does not know parliamentary procedure.
- Sometimes I wonder why they are on the Council.

Reflection Moment: How engaged are your members? Low, moderate, or high?

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What is ONE thing that makes a Council meeting worthwhile?

Bring the work into the room. This is called a “goosebump moment” or a “mission moment”.

This is one part of the meeting that stays with people. It becomes a story they can tell and leads a member to talk about the Council’s work at dinner with friends, family, and coworkers!

Ideas to support a goosebump moment or mission moment.

Idea #1. The visit from a participant.

This is a great option if your Council meets quarterly or less (4 meetings per year or fewer).

Many Councils invite grantees to make a presentation to the Council during a meeting. This idea puts the focus on the person who participated in the project/activity, and they can speak to the impact the Council’s investment in the project or activity had on their life.

This is the “goose bumpiest” of all!

Idea #2. Cameo Appearance.

This is a great option if your Council meets MORE than quarterly.

This idea supports a storytelling framework. Council staff that are inspiring storytellers provide a story or two about Council projects and activities and their impact on people.

Idea #3. Cover Sheet

Include a cover sheet for the meeting materials that includes a photo or illustration of a key piece of work the Council is doing.

This can be a short story or example that shows the positive impact the Council work in making.

This can remind Council members why they are there and the difference the Council is helping to create.

Enhancing Focus

It is a good idea to keep the Council vision and purpose in front of Council members. This will help keep everyone focused on why they are there and what the Council is working towards.

Consider including your Council’s vision and mission statement at the top of your meeting agenda.

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Include a “goosebump” or “mission” moment on the agenda or a coversheet to the materials.

Rules of Engagement (also known as Meeting Norms and Expectations)

These are the standards a Council sets around meetings that all members should follow during meetings.

They help establish guidelines for how everyone in the meeting should act and respond to others.

Common meeting norms often address things like communication, expectations, and participation.

Meeting norms are beneficial because they help everyone understand how to respond to each other, participate in discussions, and engage in active listening. Often, having norms will encourage engagement and participation among members.

The most general meeting norms include:

- Be on time.
- Come prepared.
- Participate – share your perspectives and ideas.
- Limit distractions (cell phone or laptops for unrelated work).
- Foster inclusivity – ensure all voices are heard (or given the opportunity to be heard).
- Do not interrupt or talk “over” others.

Future Leadership Labs

We have planned 3 more leadership labs for Council Member Leaders.

February 5, 2026; April 10, 2025; and August 12, 2025.

Please send topic ideas to Amy (adeaville@nacdd.org) or Sheryl (smatney@nacdd.org).

Reading Level 7.1

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