

Resource: SURE-Fire Meetings are...	
<b>Safe</b>	<p>There are many ways in which people's safety can be compromised at meetings. One of the most common ways is that their input is invited, but then gets ignored or contradicted publicly. Another way is that they are put on the spot. Here are three ideas for keeping people <i>safe enough</i> to join in meetings willingly and productively:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clarify how people's input will be used and always acknowledge their contributions;</li> <li>2. Talk with individuals about the aspects of the draft agenda that pertain more to them and forewarn them if they will be asked to present or comment at any point;</li> <li>3. Check with people privately before sharing something about them or their work in the large group.</li> </ol>
<b>Useful</b>	<p>Have you ever been that poor soul sitting in a meeting wondering why you were there? Don't do that unto others. Review the meeting agenda and the "invitee" list with someone else. Check that everyone invited would actually find the meeting meaningful. Ask, "How would they use this information? What do they bring to this discussion? How does it affect them?" If you don't see a connection, you might ask the invitee what they think and give them an option to be there or not (for all or part of the meeting).</p> <p>Consider "Add-On Meetings" (held just before or after the larger meeting) with a subset of people for whom some additional content is relevant. This allows the others to use that time in other ways and to focus more on what does indeed matter to them. Eventually, you can create a new meeting culture where people check their own need to be present and voice it.</p>
<b>Respectful</b>	<p>Most meetings could improve dramatically if people were given more active ways to contribute to the meeting design, and process.</p> <p>When asking for input on an agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do it far enough in advance for people to feel like their input will get used;</li> <li>• Approach individuals or small groups (rather than just sending to mega email lists);</li> <li>• Ask individuals what they may want to suggest for the meeting not only in terms of agenda items but also in terms of process.</li> </ul> <p>When leading a meeting: start on time, end on time; provide enough time for each agenda item and time in which any one person (or subset of people) can talk about something that is important to them.</p> <p>When plans and "next steps" are on the table, make sure that people don't get over-burdened with work born of someone else's bright idea unless that is clearly in the realm of their responsibility and they had some voice in how to proceed.</p>
<b>Engaging</b>	<p>Meeting leaders often bemoan people's lack of participation or input. One cause of this (among many!) is that people have not been involved in the issues of the meeting beforehand and are coming into it feeling like "outsiders" or under-valued. Consider these options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give people a short piece of pre-meeting reading (personally sent and accessibly written) so that they are more prepared to give the kind of input that will be sought during the meeting;</li> <li>• Use more partner and/or small group interactions in your meetings so more people can discuss a given topic;</li> <li>• Try some of the other "<a href="#">alternatives to open, full group discussion</a>".</li> </ul>