Managing On-line Meetings and Workshops

Making the experience of on-line meetings a good one:

Unhelpful Behaviours and Approaches	Supporting Partners in Doing Better
Arriving late / leaving early (Giving the impression that other things are more important than the meeting)	Require people to be on line 5 minutes before the start of the meeting (Ask them to send someone else if they can't be on time and <u>always start on time</u>)
Multi-tasking during the meeting (Resulting in a low level of attention being given to the meeting itself)	Ask participants to keep on their cameras and to be truly 'present' (If someone clearly isn't paying attention – call it out, don't just let it go)
Meeting is poorly structured / facilitated (Those involved become frustrated and less enthusiastic about future meetings)	Structure the meeting carefully and imaginatively (see below) (Send out meeting agendas and timings in advance and facilitate more systematically)
Meetings are too long and people drift off (As above)	Use time optimally for really important priorities (Also invite personal contributions from partners and locate these in their context)
The strongest personalities dominates (Reinforces the sense of power imbalance – some are 'more important' than others)	Co-create some meeting 'ground rules' that partners commit to (Ensure the meeting themselves are genuine 'levellers' and change power dynamics)
Some feel unheard and un-respected (As above)	As above (Set a high standard for active listening and holding space)
Meeting takes place at anti-social times (Time zone differences mean some are always meeting when they are tired)	Hold meetings at different times so everyone shares the discomfort fairly (Consider smaller sub-meetings in each time zone and then collate outputs)
Coming to the meeting unprepared (They believe that they will get away with not being fully informed or ready)	Ask everyone to comment on the agenda / pre-meeting materials (Make it impossible for people to 'wing it'
The wrong technology is selected (The technology inhibits rather than enhances long-distance communication)	Try out a number of different options and see what works best for all (Perhaps use a live recording facility – eg Google Docs – both efficient <u>and</u> transparent)

Outputs / outcomes poorly recorded (There is a risk that important material gets lost or that what is recorded is biased)	Discuss with partners how they want records to be kept and disseminated (Make sure that the record is kept by someone other than the meeting facilitator)
Other unhelpful behaviours and approaches:	**Other ways of supporting partners in doing better:**

On-line Meetings / Workshops

On-line meetings are usually some form of a business meeting – dealing with the management of the partnership and the development and delivery of projects. They are often quite technical and functional in their design and focus and this is necessary and important so that the partnership operates efficiently in terms getting things done and decisions agreed. However, this can easily lead to the on-line connection reverting to 'business as usual' and the sense of 'partnering by committee' rather than providing an opportunity to deepen the connection between partners and to grow new ideas and imaginative ways of working collaboratively.

Using the best of webinar technology and experience, it should be possible to make all on-line connections (whether they are timetabled meetings or more open / exploratory workshops) truly engaging and inspiring. These may also prove to be significantly more effective and productive.

Planning:

Issue:	Possible actions / considerations:	Notes:
Clarity	• Is a meeting really necessary? Why? What if it did not take place? • What is the proposed focus / purpose and do all partners agree with this? • What other topics could be usefully covered? • What are the hoped-for outcomes and outputs?	
Timing	• Is this the best moment in the life of the partnership for this event? • How long will it need to achieve its goals / purpose? • What time of day will it happen? For whom will this be a challenge? • Are there other ways of meeting (perhaps those in the same time zones)?	

Design	• Research the options for available for different types of intervention / engagement in the meeting / workshop • Build a design that includes different types of activity during the meeting – to encourage focus, creativity, ideas generation, problem solving when appropriate • Consider what type of meeting structure / 'agenda' will optimise engagement and productivity • Explore how different partners may respond to 'out of the box' approaches – don't be put off by the on-line factor… be experimental! • Consider how far should the design approach stay within cultural or sector-specific norms and how far should it seek to push the boundaries to enable the partnership to achieve more transformational outcomes • Have a 'plan B' in reserve should some element of the design not work as planned	
Logistics	• Set the date well in advance and communicate it to all • Select the best on-line option and check that all partners have access to it and are comfortable with it (some pre-meeting coaching may be needed) • Send out the plan for the meeting (perhaps avoiding the word 'agenda') and any relevant documents well in advance making it clear what preparation is needed from partners • Remind people that the meeting will start on time and that they should join early and come fully prepared • Remind people of any 'ground rules' they have agreed for how the meeting will work and how they will participate	

Facilitating:

Issue:	Possible actions / considerations:	Notes:
Who?	• Facilitating meetings (especially on line) is an art and a science • It takes practice and a level of confidence to do it well • The facilitator (chair) has power and it may be best that the role is shared • Building the capacity of other partners to facilitate well and / or sharing the role between partners will help also build collaborative leadership	
How?	• Establishing some 'ground rules' – preferably co-created by the partners • Holding space for inputs and ideas (in a discussion or brainstorm) • Being directional where needed (when decisions must be reached)	

	• Ensuring appropriate and accessible records are kept (and by whom) • Modelling the important skills of active listening and precise speaking • Keeping to time and keeping others to time	

Following up:

Issue:	Possible actions / considerations:	Notes:
What? Who? By when?	• What follow up is needed? • Might different follow up actions be needed from / by different partners? • Is it clear what follow up is expected? • Is it clear who will do what and who will check things are on course? • What is the timing of different follow up actions?	
Checking up?	• How will follow up actions be reported? • Who will check up if follow up is happening / has happened as agreed? • Is it agreed what will done if follow up has not happened? • Is there a fall back position in place to ensure momentum is not lost?	

Reviewing:

Issue:	Possible actions / considerations:	Notes:
Feedback	• End every meeting asking partners to share views on how it went • Actively seek 1-2-1 feedback on your performance / engagement • Be willing to give others feedback on their performance / engagement • Share feedback where it is useful in strengthening the partnership	
Reflecting	• Encourage partners to reflect on the meetings outcomes and outputs • Ask them to share their reflections (by email or at the next meeting) • Be willing to share your reflections • Support partners in becoming more reflective practitioners	
Learning	• Partnering is often described as a 'journey' and needing to find its way • Make this explicit and discuss it as a liberating idea with partners • Help partners to transform their experiences into valuable lessons • Develop mechanisms for recording / sharing what has been learnt	
Revising	• Make sure that any reviewing process is turned into tangible action • Run the meeting / workshop differently next time • Re-visit the partnering agreement and adapt in the light of experience • Consider what further capacities need to be developed to partner well	

Doing Different:

There are a number of other tools available to encourage and inspire you to approach on-line working more imaginatively (see **Doing Different**) but you and your partners will also have many ideas drawn from your different experiences and disciplines. How about holding an on-line brainstorm to explore ideas? Aim for the 'madder the better' as this will liberate thinking and may lead to some real breakthrough approaches that could transform your partnership in terms of its productivity and effectiveness.