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A GUIDE TO CONDUCTING MUNICIPAL TOWNHALL MEETINGS





This guide was prepared with the support of USAID Jordan Cities Implementing Transparent, Innovative and Effective Solutions (USAID CITIES) in cooperation with International Republican Institute (IRI), the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MoMA) and the following partner municipalities:

- New Ramtha
- Sahel Horan
- Greater Irbid
- Shurahbil Ibn Hasana
- Greater Jerash
- Greater Ajloun
- Zaatari & Manshia
- Greater Mafraq
- Salhiah & Nayfeh
- Sarhan
- Sabha & Dafiana
- Prince Hussein Bin Abdullah
- New Umm El- Jimal
- Al Khalidiyah
- New Ruwaished
- New Balama
- New Deir Al Kahf
- Sahab
- Al-Hallabat
- Al Dhulail
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- Greater Madaba
- Greater Karak
- Southern Aghwar
- Greater Tafileh
- New Husainiyah
- Greater Ma'an
- Al Jafr
- Wadi Araba
- Houd Al Dissa

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About public meetings and events:

Conducting a town hall meeting requires planning and coordination within both the municipality and the community or within a specific targeted group. Its purpose is to provide not only an opportunity for municipal and local councils or municipal officials to discuss municipal services and development projects with a targeted group but also it is an opportunity for local communities to share suggestions and solutions that aid in improving municipal services' delivery, becoming better informed themselves of administrative and financial situations in the municipality in addition to fostering a sense of shared responsibility between municipalities and local communities. Such meetings encourage municipal-community decision-making and encourage collaboration. This template is a guidance tool for municipal staff and officials to prepare, plan for and conduct effective town hall meetings.

Sensitivity to gender and equal opportunity

Meetings should be held for all segments of the community and respond to certain cases. If some segments are difficult to reach, one possible solution may be a response in the form of a separate meeting.

Organizational steps for public activities and meetings can be divided into three stages:

- 1- Prior to the event
- 2- During the event
- 3- After event

Prior to the event

The person responsible for events meets with the those of relevance including the Mayor, the municipal council and relevant departments to agree on important details related to the event including:

a- Setting objectives

Objectives should be:

- Realistic: applicable considering available resources and capacities.
- Specific: written in a simple and direct fashion whereby objectives are directed to serve desired results.
- Measurable: objectives should be designed so the success of their implementation may be measured.
- Timeframe: a timeframe should be set for objective achievement.

Examples of objectives:

- Increase community awareness regarding the municipal budget, achievements, challenges faced for the year (or during the period....)
- Inform the community with updates on current projects or planned projects for the year.... (or during the period)

- Increase community commitment to public facilities' maintenance for the year.... (or during the period....)
- Informing the community of municipal service delivery and which departments are responsible for which services for the year (or during the period....)

What are the desirable or expected outcomes? For example:

- Seek community commitment to pay their property taxes.
- Receive community's commitment to keep public facilities clean.
- Respond to community specific concerns (floods, pot holes, etc.)

Refer to Annex A - Meeting Objectives and Expected Outcomes

Annex A: Meeting Objectives and Expected Outcomes

1) Objective 1:

2) Objective 2:

3) Objective 3:

Expected outcomes:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Sensitivity to gender and equal opportunity

Be sure to add specific and well-defined objectives and results addressing women, male and female youth, special needs persons and the elderly if the meeting partially or fully targets them.

Example:

1. Increase community awareness across community segments including women, youth, special needs persons and the elderly regarding municipal budgets, achievements and challenges.
2. Inform the women sector of updates that concern women in different fields.
3. Incentivize youth to conduct volunteer initiatives that aim to increase community awareness about the preservation of public facilities.
4. Inform special needs persons of municipal efforts to improve services targeting them.

b- Administrative coordination

- With the Governor or District Manager to obtain required approvals
- Private sector
- Other municipalities
- Influencers from non-governmental organizations
- Donors and sponsors
- Possible opposition, who may steer the meeting far from the intended main objective

Sensitivity to gender and equal opportunity

Strategic coordination with the private sector and community-based organizations should include coordination with influential and effective leaders in youth, women, pensioners and special needs sectors.

c- Action plan preparation for event management to include the team and its tasks

The team is formed and assigned tasks according to team member capacities and skills using the form in Annex B. The formed team consists of principal municipal staff, council members, volunteers and community communication committees whereby tasks and responsibilities are distributed to prepare for and execute the meeting. It should made sure **that a meeting facilitator be designated and supported that they may be responsible** for decision making during the meeting, address suggestions seriously and building on them in future meetings. Practice makes perfect.

Annex B- Roles and responsibilities

Task	Person Responsible	Contact Info	Deadline	Progress (complete, ongoing, suspended)

Remember to provide resources that accommodate special persons' needs such as a sign language interpreter.

Sensitivity to gender and equal opportunity

Be sure to:

- 1. Represent women, male and female youth and special needs persons sectors in the preparation team.*
- 2. Representation should be at the level of principal male and female municipal staff, male and female council members and male and female volunteers.*
- 3. Female team members should have actual responsibilities and tasks, they should be active members*

d- Expected attendees' type

- While public meetings and events should target all community members in general, in some cases, based on the target objectives, there may be a need to define a group such as youth, women, local enterprises, private sector, donors, government directorates, etc.
- Be sure to include all districts and not only the city center.
- Try to include municipal staff, local council members, directorates, governorate council members and other government officials whenever possible.
- Ensure the participation of community members who are farthest from the city center who in general do not receive services or do not get the opportunity to socialize directly with municipal leadership.

Sensitivity to gender and equal opportunity

- 1. Ensure that men and women of all ages, all economic strata and from all districts participate.*
- 2. Retain a data base for male and female representatives of these groups to use for future invitations to meetings.*

e- Confirm and check in with sponsorship

Coordination with sponsors is necessary to ensure the following:

- Sponsor compliance with logo placement terms and location.
- Sponsor representation in welcome speeches.

f- Event date, time, location and duration

How long should the meeting last and why? (to ensure enough time is allocated to discuss agenda items and audience participation). All issues should not be expected to be addressed in one meeting.

When should the meeting be held and why? (to ensure largest numbers of participants while taking into consideration commitments and impediments that may hinder different community members' participation).

Where to hold the event and why? The selected venue should be:

- Accessible to most community members.
- Safe, with a clear evacuation plan in case of emergencies.
- If event is public and not sponsored, avoid reserving front seats for VIPs since this may generate friction or sensitivities with community members. It should be remembered that the meeting is public, and that VIPs and high-ranking officials are part of the community.
- In the case of sponsored meetings, front row seats are reserved by volunteers for VIPs, officials and important people with volunteers directing these people to their respective seats.

Sensitivity to gender and equal opportunity

1. Meeting time should be appropriate to women, male and female youth, female employees, the elderly and special needs persons.
2. The meeting should be held at a venue accessible to all segments of society.
3. The meeting venue should be accessible to special needs persons and the elderly.
4. Back row seats should not be reserved for women and female youth.

g- Data collection:

Before the meeting agenda is prepared, the municipality should acquire adequate data to steer the meeting. This data includes both internal and external data. For example, for community related issues, local community's owed receivables to the municipality, municipal budget, etc. should be available. If these are not available, what is the required data and what is the plan to collect this data?

If necessary, municipalities may also design questionnaires to be distributed at the end of the meeting.

Annex C- Data collection plan

Collection method	Available	Unavailable/ Support needed	From
Municipality Facebook page participations			
Questionnaires and surveys about Facebook page			
Available surveys			
Annual administrative reports			
Annual financial reports			

Municipal Development Plans			
Notes			
Post event evaluation data preparation			
Other			

h- Meeting agenda:

- Scheduled meeting duration must be realistic and based on community's availability to ensure the meeting begins and ends on time.
- Subjects should be compatible with allocated time.
- Time should be made for questions and answers (however, if questions take a long time or if they are outside the general discussion try to, as much as possible, collect these questions and process them later).
- Cover municipal and community concerns (encourage participation and participation in future meetings).
- Allocated time depends on subject and the expected level of concern.
- Upon defining the above, each meeting should have a title to describe the main topic, for example, "Annual Municipal Budget Report", "Latest Updates on Project XXX", etc.
- The agenda could be printed and distributed to the audience or be placed on a flipchart in the hall or incorporated within the first page of the presentation. Whichever the option chosen, it is important that the audience know what to expect and when, which will help the municipality stay on point and reduce wasted time.

Annex D - Example of an agenda

Meeting Title		<i>Municipality Logo</i>
Municipality Name		
Location, Date and Time		
Activity	Time	Lecturer/Presenter
Registration	9:00 – 9:30	Volunteer group
Royal anthem	9:30 - 9:35	
Verses from the Holy Quran	9:35 – 9:40	
Opening speech	9:40 - 10:00	Mayor
Presentation of: - Administrative Report - Financial Report	10:00- 12:00	Executive Manager/ Administrative Manager Financial Manager
Questions and Answers	12:00 – 1:00	Head of media and Public Relations
Recess and closing	1:00 – 1:30	

- If there is a sponsor, a speech by them is arranged for after the Mayor's speech.

i- Preparation of an estimated budget:

The team in charge of organizing events or meetings decides which resources need to be available and what needs to be acquired? Equipment, location, light snacks? (to be self-sufficient and for sustainability reasons, the municipality should begin to hold meetings with resources already available or at least with those it can ensure through the private sector, local companies, and others). The budget includes: item, unit price, number, and total cost.

Annex E - Resources Table

The resources table is divided into two parts: unavailable resources and available resources as follows (the following tables are examples):

Unavailable resources	Should be acquired	From	Estimated cost JD
			Total

Available resources	Need to be booked	Require maintenance	Estimated cost JD
			Total

j- Invitees and their numbers

The following should be considered:

- Invitee list is prepared with names (people or entities) with updated contact information.
- Invitations should be sent a reasonable time before the event so that invitees may attend.
- Attendee logistical needs should be ensured.
- Follow up with invitees to ensure their attendance.

k- Preparation of technical, media and organizational materials:

Logo:

- Make sure the municipality has a high-resolution logo.
- Remember to include a sponsor or donor logo.
- Ensure that logo is visible to all in all meeting related tools including the agenda, banners, slogans, attendee sheets, logos etc.

Invitations and announcement:

- Determine how invitations will be sent:
- Street banners, printed cards, official letter, email, social media, phone calls.
- Invitation content: the content should be clear, expressive and incentivizing. It should also contain required logos and be designed in a format appropriate to invitation sending method.
- Be sure to use street banners as an invitation method when the meeting is a public one.

Please see example Invitation Form -Annex F-

After the municipality has approved the town hall meeting main topic of discussion, place and time, invitations are composed and distributed effectively through different communication tools including Facebook, website if available, street banners, printed invitations and municipal council members' personal initiatives to be sure that most, if not all, community members receive an invitation and the invitations should be:

- Sent personally from the Mayor
- Include municipality logo
- Titled and offering a specific topic for discussion
- Specifies accurately the place and time (beginning and end) of the meeting
- Mentions appreciatively official donor and sponsor efforts, if possible and according to previous agreement of all parties
- Distributed to the relevant team according to task schedule, in good time before the event.

Invitations should reach all community members and should not target only the people who are in constant communication with the municipality due to social or geographic or other reasons. Municipalities should use varied forms of advertisement to reach all community members and should proceed as follows:

- Request the help of religious figures to encourage and inform the community to attend.
- Partner with local authorities and directorates (some questions are queries may be related to work they manage in some form or other).
- Rely on volunteers to reach marginalized communities and far out areas, encouraging them to attend and participate.
- Repeatedly advertise the event on social media platforms.
- Live stream the meeting on municipal social media if the nature of the meeting requires it.

Sensitivity to gender and equal opportunity

Use of advertising means that ensure invitations reach and become known to male and female youth, women, the elderly and people with special needs.

Annex F- Invitation form

X Municipality is Honored to Invite Citizens to Attend the Town Hall Meeting

“Title of the Meeting Topic”

On (day) (date) from (xx) to (xx)

At (location)

Please confirm before (xx-xx-xxxx)

Through contacting Mr./ Ms. Xxxxxx at phone number # xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Technical and advertising preparations:

- Preparation of speaker speeches (Mayor’s speech, partner’s speech, event moderator)
- Advertisement material preparation: flyers, brochures, banners, Facebook posts, platform logo
- Newspapers and press preparations: press release, agenda, brochures, Facebook posts, designated area for photography and designated seats for reporters.
- Logistical/organizational forms’ preparation: registration sheets, evaluation forms, photograph and quotation permission forms, table name tags, badges – attached is a form for attendee registration-

The Presentation:

- If the topic is intensive, such as for budget updates, a PowerPoint presentation must be prepared.
- Topics should be related to participants and supported by data.
- The presentation should be precise focusing on specific goals and expected outputs.
- As much as possible, there should be readiness for counter arguments by attendees, or support of the presentation and readiness to accept comments without causing friction or escalation.
- The presenter of the program must be knowledgeable about the topic (he/ she may however, refer questions to others for an answer).
- Facts should be mentioned through data or photos.
- Both challenges and accomplishments should be mentioned.

- It is important to be sure that the presentation is clear to all including those in the back seats, with this being easily verifiable through use of large fonts even if this leads to a greater number of slides in the presentation. If possible, it is preferable to distribute printed material to participants.

l- Speakers:

- Specify speakers and confirm with them.
- Coordinate content with speakers
- Select event moderator and write the content and conduct a rehearsal
- Designate seating for speakers.

m- Volunteers:

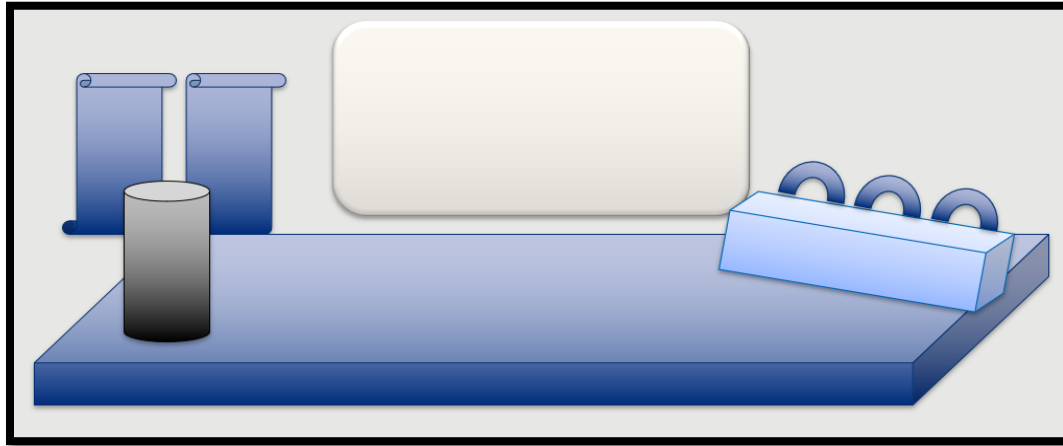
Male and female volunteer participation is important not only because they are an important resource, but because their participation strengthens their role in the community and gives them a sense of responsibility. Throughout the meeting, it is important to mention their cooperation and participation to the audience. They can be distinguished by shoulder badges/ stripes or ID badges. Volunteers can help with the following tasks:

- Invitation distribution
- Management of attendee registration station
- Welcome attendees and show them to their seats
- Verify audio equipment is working
- Verify projector is working
- Take notes and write down attendee quotes throughout the meeting
- Take photographs
- Live stream on Facebook

n- Venue organization:

- Venue layout and type of seating should be appropriate to both the attendees and the topic of discussion (for example, round tables, groups, theatre, etc.).
- Venue should be clean, and maintenance performed if needed such as painting, replacing light fixtures or other.
- Seats should be arranged
- The raised platform should be prepared, podium etc. (please see figure 1)
- Audio equipment (electric wire leads in case there is video filming)
- Lighting
- Projectors
- Banner distribution
- Waste-paper baskets distributed
- Accurate and visible placement of warning signs like No Smoking signs while pungently worded signs should be avoided
- Confirm ramps are available to facilitate special needs persons' access and mobility

Figure 1

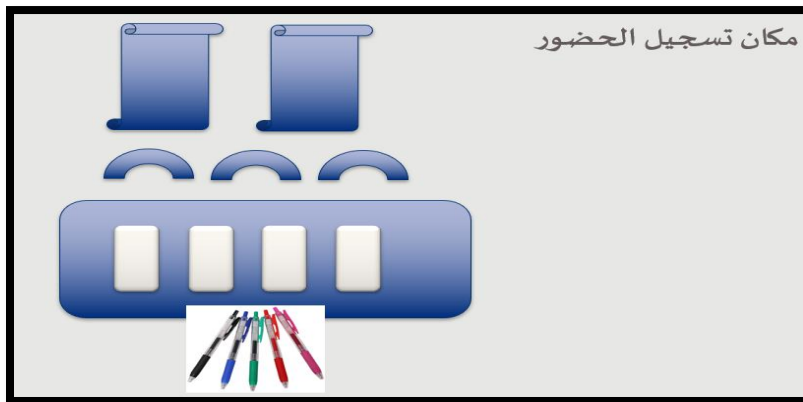


o- Registration station:

The following should be provided (please see figure 2)

- A table allowing for two persons at least to be seated
- Attendee registration forms
- Chairs for two people at least
- Pens
- Municipality, partners' and sponsors' banners

Figure 2



The day of the event and during the event:

A few hours before the event begins the following should be verified:

- All related persons should be at the venue two hours ahead of the event.

- Tasks and responsibilities should be revised and confirmed
- Rehearsals for the following should be performed:
 - Sound system (audio) Royal Anthem
 - Projectors
 - Volunteer roles
 - Event moderator
 - Quran reader
- Participant data documentation:

It is important the attendees register for the following reasons:

- Identify which members of the community attended (are they the targeted segments?) Was there adequate representation for all areas?
 - Initiate a community database for future meetings and events.
- Registration forms should include information pertaining to: full name, gender, contact information, area, sector they represent, age group, and other. (it is always possible to add more categories as needed) which will help the municipality build a local community database.
- The municipality should assign someone to assist community members in registration. This will ensure that all attendees enter their data and receive assistance in registering when needed.

Annex G Registration form Xx

Form XX Attendee Registration Sheet Town Hall Meeting Municipality name:	Municipality Logo
Date and time:	Location:

Name	Male Female	National ity	Entity	Residency District	Age Group		Telephone number	Signat ure
	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>				10-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 30-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	18-29 <input type="checkbox"/> 50- over <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>				10-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 30-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	18-29 <input type="checkbox"/> 50- over <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>				10-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 30-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	18-29 <input type="checkbox"/> 50- over <input type="checkbox"/>		

	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>				10-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 30-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	18-29 <input type="checkbox"/> 50- over <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>				10-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 30-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	18-29 <input type="checkbox"/> 50- over <input type="checkbox"/>		

Things to consider during the event:

- Seating should begin at the front seats and seats shouldn't be left vacant.
- The agenda should be shared with participants (either it is distributed or hung on a flip chart).
- Inform event moderator when dignitaries or VIPs arrive, and all should be seated.
- Audio technician should be requested to activate equipment to play the Royal Anthem the moment dignitaries arrive at their seats or the event begins.
- Confirm readiness of photographer.
- Confirm readiness of person responsible for livestreaming (if the meeting requires this).
- Confirm lighting person readiness and the performance of any required changes.
- Follow up with speakers to ensure they commit to the program's schedule.
- Check that those responsible for microphone distribution amongst the audience, are available during the Q&A session.
- Distribution of the evaluation forms amongst attendees and ensure their collection of correctly filled out forms before attendees leave the venue.
- Assign a person the task of ensuring accurate attendee registration, however, it is the attendees' choice whether to register their names or provide additional information.
- Ensure the venue is large enough for all attendees and extend apologies to attendees in the event that the number of attendees is larger than expected.
- Empower the event moderator's role (this is considered a good practice to support meeting moderator's leadership which assists decision making in some circumstances).
- Start on time according to the agenda or slightly after that but not too long, making sure to inform attendees of delay however small in respect for them and their time.
- Begin the event by mentioning some important general rules. This is an opportunity to raise participant awareness about some major issues like the following:
 - No smoking. This issue has become highly sensitive in some communities and subsequently it can be requested from the attendees to reduce smoking since there may be children or those who are ill amongst the attendees.
 - Keep the venue clean. Remind attendees there are waste-paper baskets available and that they can use these to keep the venue clean.

- Parking protocol. Remind participants to park in an orderly fashion to keep exits free for all.
- Commitment to the agenda while also registering notes about any other urgent issues to address. It is preferable to begin and end on time whenever possible.
- Throughout the Q&A session, all should be given the opportunity to participate and focusing on those in the front seats should be avoided.
- Try to engage all participants, specifically women and youth who least speak up.
- Be sure to take accurate notes.
- If the municipality has decided on a date for a future meeting, the attendees should be informed of it and the intended topics of discussion, before the event ends, so they may attend.

Voting (if applicable), during the event, can be done as follows:

If a town hall meeting's goal is to vote on a certain decision or the integration of attendees in decision making, voting may be done in one of the following ways:

- Direct voting by the attendee ticking the desired option followed by vote collection.
- Voting using a ballot box where attendees can put their choice in the box and subsequently votes are counted.
- Different colored cards are raised representing decision approval or disapproval.
- Electronic voting through the use of smart phones using a link specific to the voting.

Things to avoid during the event:

- Photographing the meeting before ensuring permissions for photographs and publishing are secured.
- Allowing a person or group to dominate the meeting.
- Engaging in negative reactions, however, it is better to acknowledge them while continuing to focus on the topic of discussion.
- Inaccurate responses to questions, alternatively, they should be written down and responded to later.
- Continued discussion. It is your role to listen to participants and manage their frustrations not increase them. If possible, assign a facilitator who has the skills required to reduce tensions and ensure an interactive and harmonious session.

Sensitivity to gender and equal opportunity

Procedures should be taken to encourage women and young ladies to express their opinions, direct questions and not to overlook their efforts to speak and ask questions.

After the event:

Immediately after the event ends, the team should consider the following:

- Attendee registration forms should be collected, and data entered.
- Collection of all photos in an archive and selection of the best.
- Post a news bulletin on Facebook
- Send a news excerpt with general photographs to all participants and the press.
- Follow all mention of the event in newspapers and other communication means
- Certificates of appreciation and participation should be distributed to all volunteers.
- Lessons learned should be discussed with those concerned (based on observations and evaluation forms)
- An internal meeting is held as soon as possible (to make sure that all information is fresh in all minds)
- If evaluations are available, overall results are presented in a report discussed during the meeting.
- A comparison between expected results and goals is made (feedback annex is reviewed after the meeting)
- Constructive criticism is accepted and readiness to receive both positive and negative reactions.
- Ensure reactions are documented for future review.
- Next meeting date is specified, and a planning process begins based on meeting feedback regarding the past event's content and logistics.
- Ensure a process is in place to provide feedback on events (decisions made, feedback notes.
Annex H Feedback after meeting

Achievements

What?	Why?	Notes (if available)

Challenges

What?	Why?	Notes (if available)

Notes for sharing with the community through various means of communication:

Annex for convening emergency meetings

The municipality may have to hold an emergency meeting for an emergency the municipality is facing, for example, a local, international, or donor entity may ask a town hall meeting be held as soon as possible to include people of specialty or a group from the local community to discuss a grant an entity wishes to offer the municipality as soon as possible, or possibly a decision maker of government officials wish to hold a meeting,...etc. In cases like these it is possible to focus on primary steps for town hall meetings' preparations to achieve the desired goal in the shortest time as follows:

One: Preparations:

1. Goal setting:

Meeting goals are specified whereby they are achievable, realistic and appropriate to the preparation time and outputs that are achievable in a simple way.

2. Preparation team:

Rely on the team already trained task them with holding and management of the town hall meeting, whether they are from public relations, community communication or media departments or others, while restricting expansion in their numbers and tasks due to the short period of time available.

3. Required resources:

The municipality relies on what resources it has available or those that may be ensured through partners within the limited time available.

4. Meeting agenda:

As is detailed in the guide, the agenda may be shown to the attendees on a slide or placed on a white board and hung in the hall (agenda annex is available in the guide).

5. Presentation:

If there is pre-prepared presentation by the party supporting the meeting, be satisfied with it.

In the case that no presentation is available, general points on the meeting discussion topic may be prepared, printed and distributed to attendees.

6. Registration sheets:

Registration sheets are printed and prepared beforehand, and their importance should not be overlooked.

7. Invitations:

The municipality uses the fastest means of advertising suitable to the targeted group such as distributing flyers at Friday prayers or Facebook, or schools and others.

Based on the target group, it may be easier for the municipality to send invitations to several people based on the number of seats available in the town hall. In the event that the hall is small, or the municipality has no presentation to present, it is preferable that the municipality has available information, phone numbers and What's App groups for CBOs, influencers, dignitaries, etc.

The following must also be considered wherever possible:

- It shouldn't be forgotten that administrative coordination is very important and should be the governor or a representative of the governor officially and in writing.
- Roll up banners and printed material should be used if available at the municipality and the use of roll up banners of the entity that requested the meeting be held.
- Any meeting should be photographed for documentation and publicity.
- A meeting facilitator should be assigned to manage the session during the meeting, coordinate between participants and the entity that is holding the meeting.
- It is preferable that the facilitator be a volunteer active in municipal work, or an able person from the municipality staff preferably someone who has had previous training in this.
- It is possible to livestream the meeting on the municipality Facebook page if the meeting goal relates to all local community members and does not conflict with the viewpoint of the entity that is holding the meeting.

Two: For best results, please follow steps mentioned in the guide for the day of the event, during the event and after the event.

Due to their necessity, it is preferable that mentioned steps be followed whereby the team has time to implement them, there is enough time to evaluate the meeting and extract lessons learned.