

Ensuring an Effective Self-Managed Project Team¹

This handout is designed as a guide for self-managed groups - that is, groups required to work together on a project without a pre-designated or assumed leader. It was originally developed for groups of students developing presentations for assessment, but applies equally to working groups in community services settings. Whilst it is written for a short term group undertaking a single, straightforward task, the basic stages and steps could be extended, and applied to a longer, more substantial process.

Key Principles

- Effective planning of your project is the best possible protection against unnecessary conflict in your team.
- Remember the *big picture*; look at how you share workload across projects, and across time, rather than simply focusing on the project of the moment.

Possible Stages & Steps

Meeting 1:

1. Discuss and decide on topic or clarify task.
2. Choose your group facilitator.
3. Plan the process – meetings, timeline, and schedule.
4. Identify the information you need.

Between Meetings 1 & 2:

5. Everyone does initial basic/overview information search (designed to ensure that all group members have general familiarity with the topic, regardless of the tasks they specialise in later).

Meeting 2:

6. Delegate tasks on a clearly stated basis (eg. on members' abilities/strengths, access to necessary resources, time availability/workload on other team projects, to train members in new skills or personal circumstances). Label these roles, for ease of discussion - eg. *researchers, writers, checkers*.

Between Meetings 2 & 3:

7. *Researchers* do the detailed research (eg. interviews, surveys, reading).

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Meeting 3:

8. Compile and order findings.
9. Analyse data.
10. Check findings against requirements.
11. Identify gaps.
12. Develop reporting format - this could be a verbal or written presentation.

Between Meetings 3 & 4:

13. *Researchers* gather data to fill gaps.
14. *Writers* pull together old and new material.
15. *Writers* develop first draft of text.

Meeting 4:

16. Group reviews and critiques compilation.

Between Meetings 4 & 5:

17. *Writers* finalise text.
18. *Artist* develops visual aids and/or layout.

Meeting 5:

19. Group reviews final outcome.
20. If a verbal presentation is required - rehearse! rehearse! rehearse!

Meeting 6:

21. If a verbal presentation is required - full dress rehearsal with audience.
22. *Checker* ensures that all items are present and correct prior to submission/presentation.

Meeting 7 (afterwards):

23. Debrief strengths and weaknesses of the process (including deciding how to do things differently next time).
24. Reward yourselves!