

Planning (1)

How to decide on a group purpose

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Once a group has decided to form, it should create a statement of purpose. This could happen at the next meeting.

Even when the purpose seems obvious a group will always benefit from talking it over in a structured way, to ensure it's a genuinely *shared* purpose.

A shared purpose should be inspiring and motivating. So, it should not be just about running a particular activity, like a play group, even if running a play group is what you actually want to do. Rather it should answer the question: What future do we want to create?

A process to follow

To get best value, someone should act as facilitator of this discussion.

A simple facilitated process would be:

1) Ask the members to privately write down their answers to the following questions in silence, for one or two minutes.

What have we got in common?

Example: we're all parents, all live in Blacktown, all have toddlers, we're all aged between 18 and 28.

What motivated me to join this group?

Example: looking for like-minded parents to talk to, want answers to lots of questions about raising a child, want some time off.

What do I want to change?

Example: I want more support. I want to spend less time at home with the baby. I want to know how to do the right things to have a healthy child.

2) Go around the group, asking each person to share their answers, with a scribe recording them on a sheet of flip chart paper in marker pen (so all can easily read them).

3) Ask the group to identify the answers they have in common. Identify points of consensus.

4) Combine these into a purpose statement of no more than 4 points.

5) Check that everyone agrees with the statement. Ask for a positive sign of assent and commitment from the group (like all raising their hands).

6) Celebrate your achievement.

This whole process takes 30-40 minutes.

Example of a simple purpose statement:

The purpose of this group is to support us, as parents, to create happy, strong, healthy families.