

GUIDELINES AND ETIQUETTE FOR CONFERENCE CALL MEETINGS

The following are some basic guidelines and etiquette for conference calls to help to reduce confusion and eliminate frustration.

As a Committee Member or Guest Participant:

- Be prepared to discuss agenda items.
 - Review the agenda and associated documents in advance of the call.
- Participate in conference calls from a quiet location with a good signal.
 - Signal issues are less likely with land lines than with cell phones.
 - Avoid using a speakerphone, if at all possible.
 - If using a cell phone or speakerphone, mute it when you aren't speaking.
 - Remember to turn off 'mute' before speaking.
- Know how to enter the conference call.
 - Have the dial-in number and access code readily accessible, so you're not searching for it when the meeting is about to start.
 - If you are not calling from a phone you use regularly, make sure you know how to operate it.
- Enter the conference call a minute or two before the meeting is scheduled so it can begin on time.
 - Let the chairperson or meeting coordinator know if you're unable to participate or going to be late.
 - If you join a conference call while in progress, let other participants know that you have joined at the first possible chance without interrupting anyone.
- State your name before you speak so everyone knows who is talking.
 - Do not assume that all participants know your voice.
 - Identifying yourself will help to avoid misunderstandings.
- When addressing someone, use their name to ensure that you have their attention.
- Keep your sentences short and pause regularly between ideas to allow participants to ask questions.
 - Speak slowly and clearly.
 - Try not to talk over another speaker.
 - Know when to, and not to speak – talking over people is rude in any situation.
- Avoid using acronyms.
- Focus on the conference call, and not on completing other tasks, e.g., reading email.
- Never put a conference call on hold.
 - If you need to step away briefly and intend to come back, it is less disruptive to use mute instead putting the line on hold or leaving the conference call and dialing back in.
 - If you need to leave the call before it is finished, let participants know that you are leaving without interrupting anyone.

As the Chairperson:

- Know the agenda
 - Make sure you're clear on what needs to be discussed or agreed upon before the conference call begins.
- Do a quick roll call prior to starting the meeting.
 - This will help ensure that attendance is recorded accurately in the minutes.
- Start the meeting on time.
 - If someone joins late, do not re-iterate what they missed. Instead, encourage them to catch up with someone at the end of call to see what was missed.
- Introduce any newcomers (e.g., new committee member, guest participant) to the conference call.
- Five minutes before the end of the call, warn everyone that it is time to wrap up the discussion.
 - Do not let conference calls run over the allotted time, if at all possible.
- Keep record of next steps (action items) as the call progresses and send them to participants afterward as a reminder.