Starter Kit
1o: Creating Useful Meeting Records

Navigating the Roadmap
Activity 1: Build a genuine, collaborative policy team.

Introduction
Since policymakers are busy people, designating an individual to manage and facilitate the planning process is crucial to the team's success. Local coordinators may at times (or always) assume responsibility for facilitation and other team support responsibilities, or they may designate and/or work with others who will take on these roles.

The regular recording of meetings ensures that policy teams are as productive as possible and is the responsibility of the team staff support person (or designee). Meeting records capture essential information and remind team members what happened during a meeting, including the decisions made. Records will serve to update absent team members of the work conducted during a missed meeting, and ensure that all team members are clear about their individual assignments and the team's next steps.

Purpose
To provide local coordinators with information and resources about how to create useful meeting records

Participants
This document has been developed for local coordinators. Local coordinators may decide to share this information with others (e.g., a designated meeting recorder) as appropriate.

Instructions
The following are instructions for taking useful meeting minutes:[1]

1. Record the date and time of the meeting, its purpose, attendees, and the meeting lead or chair name.

2. Take notes however you feel comfortable (laptop, pen and paper, etc.).

[1] SMART Technologies, 2004.

3. In your notes, provide space for filling in information during the meeting; label one section "Decisions Made" and one "Action Items." Complete these sections as they come up during the meeting.

4. Begin the record by stating the goals of the meeting. This will help frame the record.

5. Do not take notes verbatim (there is no need for a transcript!); instead, provide an overview of the discussion items. Highlight the purpose of each discussion item and the salient points raised. Include decisions made and assignments (action items). For each action item that you list, record who is responsible for taking the next step and by when.

6. Ask clarifying questions as needed throughout the meeting.

7. After the meeting, type up (or clean up) your notes. Refer to the meeting record template in the Appendix. Make sure to
    a. attach, or include, a copy of the meeting goals and agenda;
    b. add page numbers to the document;
    c. write in the same tense throughout;
    d. remove individuals' names from discussion points;
    e. add names and dates to action items;
    f. note at the end of the record the next meeting date(s); and
    g. place reference documents in an appendix or attach them to the record.

8. Distribute the meeting notes as a draft document to the team. Ask team members to review the notes for accuracy and to provide any corrections to the record. Once the team approves the record, note it as a final document and circulate it again.

Tips

The following are tips for taking meeting minutes:

- Don't worry about keeping minutes in chronological order; sometimes discussions don't happen that way. After the meeting, you may have to reorganize some information to make the record easier to read.
- Use few adjectives and adverbs, and avoid personal observations; try to stay as objective and factual as possible.
- Break up discussions or agenda items within the meeting record for ease of review. Headings and subheadings can be a helpful way to organize a record, and the use of introductory sentences such as "Next, the team discussed its vision for its work" can help organize the flow. Underneath each heading or subheading, list bullet points that outline what was discussed and decided.

Example: Ramsey County, Minnesota, Record of EBDM Policy Team Meeting

Evidence-Based Decision Making Policy Team
Meeting Record

Agenda item: Policy Team Membership Update

Discussion: Carol will be meeting soon with the sheriff and the St. Paul police department chief. There is good indication that both are on board to join the policy team; the hope is that they attend the next policy team meeting. There was a discussion on bringing in a policy team member from the St. Paul city council and a suggestion that another city-elected official be drawn from the Ramsey County League of Local Governments.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
✓ Reach out to St. Paul city council and Ramsey County League of Local Governments	Chris Crutchfield	Feb. 5, 2011

Agenda item: Education/Building Skills Committee

Discussion: Patrick gave an update on the Education/Building Skills Committee meeting. The Committee has defined the audience, discussed the meeting mechanics, and developed a rough draft of the agenda for a March 9 event. Speakers are still being sought. The meeting should give people an understanding of evidence-based decision making and what it means for Ramsey County. Judge Gearin suggested that media be brought in. There will be a panel with the key players from each agency. Becki reminded the group that we are in Phase 2, the planning phase, of the Initiative. This event should be thought of as an awareness-building event instead of training/education.

The editorial board from both newspapers should be invited to the March 9 event. Community media should be considered as well. The Coalition to Preserve Minnesota's Justice System does media/public outreach. They would be interested in this. Members include justices and chiefs of police, and they have monthly meetings.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
✓ Supply Connie or Chris with numbers of attendees from each agency.	Policy team members	1/25/11
✓ Draft letter for Judge Gearin to send out to other chief judges.	Chris Crutchfield	1/25/11
✓ Prepare a "Save the Date" message and mail it to Ramsey County criminal justice organizations.	Chris Crutchfield	1/21/11

✓ Prepare a press strategy: includes preparing press releases, identifying a contact person for the press, determining who will be contacted (both newspapers, community media, Coalition to Preserve Minnesota's Justice System), etc.	Chris Crutchfield	2/5/11
✓ Prepare an Awareness Survey to distribute to event participants.	Becki Ney and Education/Building Skills Committee	2/20/11

Agenda item: System Map Review

Discussion:

The system map was reviewed. It was suggested that a large map with numbers and time frames be on display at the March 9 event. The team needs to look at how "evidence-based" we are at each decision point and what should be done to make the process better. Once the maps are somewhat finalized, the original mapping group members should be brought back together to go over them. The Data Committee will be given the task of filling the data needs determined by going over the map. Areas that are starting to look like priority decision points are Court Case Processing, Pleas, Diversion, and Warrants. Outside technical assistance could be brought in to help with the Court Case Processing decision point.

The group also discussed diversion. Is diversion linked only to Project Remand? Are there programs attached to this? These questions should also be asked of the suburbs and employers. What is our potential in this area? We should look at diversion criteria, arresting criteria, and charging criteria.

Other areas to look into include the number of people charged with livability crimes, trespassing crimes, and disorderly conduct.

The chart below reflects issues and information needs that were brought up at this meeting.

System Map Review: Issues/Information Needs (Adult Offenders Only)	
Police	Guidelines on who or who not to arrest; how are these decisions made (type of offense, behavior, etc.)?
	Guidelines for establishing probable cause
	Guidelines for issuing citations
Pretrial (Project Remand)	Return to court rate for each category and demographic
	Appearance rates of detainees v. non-detainees (first appearance in court)
	Diversion (no plea of guilty for Project Remand diversion) • Is it risk based? • How many people are diverted? • What are the criteria for diversion?
Warrants	When are warrants issued and for what reason? What are the number of • felonies; • misdemeanors; • no shows; • no reappearance; and • revocations of conditional release?
	How long have warrants been outstanding?

	Average number of warrants per person
	Number of warrants v. number of people issued warrants
Charging	Need the payables list
	What are the criteria for payables?
First Appearance	Number of guilty v. not guilty
	% of offenders who plea at each point
	What do early resolution cases look like compared to ones that go further?
Court	Number of pleas at each stage
	Number of dismissed at each stage
	Number of continuances and reasons; who requested continuance?
	Length of time from start to resolution
Correctional Facility	How many people are at RCCF on livability crimes?

The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: February 14, 2011, Noon–4:30, Room 41, Courthouse

Additional Resources/Readings

CEPP. (2006). The role of facilitators and staff in supporting collaborative teams. Retrieved from http://www.collaborativejustice.org/docs/The%20Role%20of%20Facilitators%20and%20Staff%20in%20Supporting%20Collaborative%20Teams.pdf

McGarry, P. (1993). Essential ingredients for success. In National Institute of Corrections, *The intermediate sanctions handbook: Experiences and tools for policymakers* (pp. 21–26). Retrieved from http://nicic.gov/library/000213

SMART Technologies. (2004). How to record useful meeting minutes. Retrieved from http://www.effectivemeetings.com/meetingbasics/minutes.asp

Woodward, B. (1993). Establishing and maintaining the policy team. In National Institute of Corrections, *The intermediate sanctions handbook: Experiences and tools for policymakers* (pp. 27–34). Retrieved from http://nicic.gov/library/000213

Appendix

MEETING RECORD TEMPLATE

Group Name
Meeting Record
Date
Time

Team Chair:

Team Members Present:

Team Members Absent:

Meeting Goals:

Meeting Summary:

Decisions Made:
-
-
-

Action Items:

Task Description	Who is Responsible?	Due Date

Next Meeting (date, time, location):

Attachments (agenda, reports referenced, etc.):