

This is an excerpt from a draft version of a Core Teams Guide with the Calgary Alliance for the Common Good.

It explores house meetings.

Below is the quoted text (June 10th, 2021):

House Meetings

A house meeting is a “relational conversation” between 5 – 12 people who sit down together, generally for one and a half hours, to share their stories, concerns, and dreams. A house meeting campaign is a large series of these meetings that seek to build and strengthen a vibrant, caring community and organization with the capacity to act on the needs and values of its members.

Setting Up a House Meeting

1. Identify people to lead house meetings.
2. Conduct training on setting up and running house meetings. At the end of the training, ask people to commit to how many house meetings they will hold and by when.
3. Schedule house meetings in people’s homes or public meeting space: Often, two people will co-host two meetings. One person (the host) will host the meeting, invite approximately 10 people, remind those people to come, and provide refreshments. They will tell people they invite that they are asking them to come for a limited time to share their stories and concerns with other members of the organization/community to see if there is a common sense of purpose they can act on, and, if need be, assure them that no one will be required to sign up for anything and that no one will be asked for money. The second person (the facilitator) will plan and conduct the meeting and report on it afterward. Then, the two people hold a second meeting, reversing the roles.
4. Sign people up for house meetings: In some house meetings, the host will invite all the participants. For others, the dates, times, and places can be publicized to the community or people can be signed up at community/organizational events.
5. Schedule house meetings in the organization. Ask existing committees or groups to conduct a house meeting as part of a previously scheduled meeting or gathering. Schedule an event after events, services, or during religious school where everyone who stays afterward will break into small groups for an hour.
6. Collect reports from the meetings about who was there, what was discussed, what were the primary concerns and visions for the community and the congregation, and whether anyone there appeared interested in taking on leadership. Each meeting should have a pre-assigned note-taker.

In General, the Role of the Host is

- Organize the location for the house meeting
- Invite participants and follow up with anyone who committed and did not attend
- Provide snacks or refreshments if appropriate
- During the meeting act as the note taker

Record

- Interests, issues, and themes that surface
- Stories and who has them
- Note areas where there is passion/anger/great love
- Note areas where there is common interest
- Who attended
- Potential Leaders – who has a deep passion, vision, relationship etc.? In what areas might they lead?

In General, the role of the facilitator is to

- Welcome everyone and explain the ground rules
- Explain the purpose of the meeting and agenda
- Introduce the questions being discussed
- Ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak and sticks to time limits
- Record the key points that come out of the discussion (if there is no host)
- Participate in the conversation

Prepare and use your own story

Both the host and facilitator are also participants who share their own stories. Sometimes groups are slow to start. Be ready with your own story (it's fine to make a judgment about how much you are prepared to share) to start things off if people are hesitant. Even if the discussion is lively, it's a good idea to contribute your own story so that people don't feel that they are being 'interviewed'.