



Town Hall Meeting Format

What is a Town Hall Meeting?

There are several formats in which to conduct a public meeting. A public meeting can be used to communicate information when the level of interest or concern is high and/or there is a large amount of information to be shared. A “town hall” meeting is simply one public meeting format. A town hall meeting, like all public meetings, is open to the general public and can serve small or large groups. It is a more formal format than an open house public meeting and less formal than a public hearing.

Pros

- All attendees receive the same information at the same time
- All participants can hear all questions and comments
- Format can be a good way to share visual aids like graphs and images

Cons

- Information provided can be limited by format and time constraints
- Answers provided likely will not meet the information needs of all attendees
- Format limits participation of audience members who do not want to speak in public, due to a fear of public speaking or a reticence to disagree with a more vocal majority
- Format can be used by some participants to steer a meeting away from the intended meeting topic





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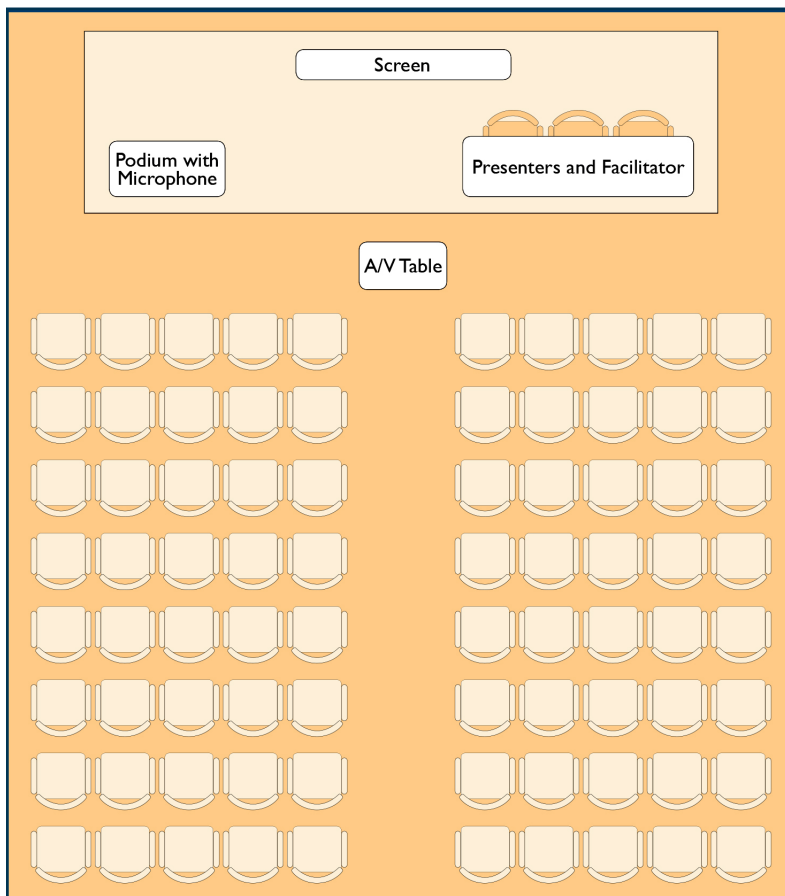
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How is the Room Prepared?

Participants are usually seated in rows facing the facilitator and presenter(s), who are at the front of the room. Typically, the meeting starts with a brief presentation followed by a question/comment and response session, led by the facilitator, in which one person can speak at a time. Town hall meetings are usually scheduled for a specific amount of time and follow an agenda. The majority of the time is spent on the question/comment and response session, and questions and comments may be recorded on a flip chart at the front of the room. There is not usually a court reporter present at town hall meetings.



The project team should be prepared with the presentation, agenda, speaking points and a flip chart. In addition, developing a set of key messages and practicing responses to frequently asked or anticipated questions will prepare the team for the question/comment and response session. Responses should be clear and consistent.



Tools Checklist

- Appropriate meeting space with enough chairs for attendees and presenters
- Audio-visual capabilities (i.e., projector, laptop, cords, screen and microphones)
- Presentation
- Flip chart, easel and markers
- Agenda and other handouts

For more information:

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