



Minutes Made Easy:

Tips for recording meeting minutes

Between governing group meetings, there are always actions for governing group members to work on and meetings of working groups or committees to move things forward. Your board meetings provide the opportunity for trustees to discuss, generate ideas and make decisions together. There can be some trepidation around taking the minutes of a governing group meeting, what should be included in the minutes and what shouldn't?

I recently heard the description minutes tell the story of the meeting. Here are some tips for recording meeting minutes.

What is the purpose of your meeting minutes?

If you have a person in the role of secretary in your governing group, their role is oversee communication, which often includes taking minutes. In terms of sharing the load, taking meeting minutes can sit with another governing group member. The role involves the whole governing group too, in confirming or clarifying summaries and key points before they are recorded and formally passed.

Meeting minutes and legislation

The Incorporated Societies Act 2022 is the only legislation that mentions the requirement to take meeting minutes and there is no guidance on the type or form. Sport NZ suggests the requirements for governing group members of incorporated societies and charitable trusts can be viewed as largely consistent with the requirements of the Companies Act which states the board must ensure the minutes are kept of all proceedings at all meetings of the board. A company must maintain its records including:

- minutes of all meetings and resolutions within the last 7 years
- minutes of all meetings and resolutions of committees within the last 7 years.

What is the purpose of your meeting minutes?

It is important to keep meeting minutes to record key discussions, decisions, and actions and support and inform the governing groups work. They can

be referenced for future meetings. There are a number of practical and functional benefits, meeting minutes:

Inform those who were unable to attend the meeting

There will be times when board members can't attend a meeting. Minutes inform those absent of what was discussed, decisions made and actions to keep them in the loop.

Serve as a communication tool

Meeting minutes can be shared with other relevant stakeholders e.g. members of your incorporated society, donors, funders, sponsors, volunteers to keep them updated on progress, decisions, and actions. They can also build trust and credibility with stakeholders through transparency.

Encourage accountability for actions

Recording commitments to actions – what, who, by when – enables governing group members to keep track of what they have committed to actioning and when they need to do it by. It also encourages accountability, effective follow-up and progress tracking for the rest of the team.

Show your governing group is operating in a way that meets legal, contractual, and ethical requirements

Monitoring and accountability is a role of the governing group. Accurate meeting minutes are a record that your board's discussions, decisions, and actions meet legal and contractual requirements, that due diligence is completed, decision making processes are followed and the governing group has acted in honesty and good faith.



Top tips for effective meeting minutes

Create a great template

A great template provides a consistent format and ensures easy capture of information. Include your vision and mission at the top of the page to help people keep vision and mission at the heart of conversations. Include space for:

- Date
- Location
- Recording who is present – Have all the trustees names and operations lead included in the template with tick boxes so they can be ticked off as they arrive. Those absent are indicated by no tick.
- Others present
- Quorum of X (add the number for quorum here) members present? – Yes / No
- Time meeting opened
- Time meeting closed

Add two extra columns to your agenda

Your agenda already sets out agenda items and the purpose of the each agenda item. The purpose of the agenda item is also a good guide as to what to record in the minutes.

Adding two extra columns transforms your agenda into meeting minutes.

- The first column is headed meeting minutes. Now you have space to record the meeting minutes next to each item on your agenda.
- The second column is headed Actions. For recording who moved motions, seconded and whether motions were passed if appropriate for your governing group. And where you record What, Who and By When for tasks and activities to be actioned.

At the bottom of the template

- Date/venue of next meeting
- These minutes have been accepted as a true and accurate record by the board
- Chair's signature
- Date



Compile actions into a list – What / Who /By When

Add assigned action items to a separate list identifying what the action is, who is responsible and when it's to be completed. Before the next meeting you can add a status column for updates for each action item for the next meeting agenda. Compiling the action items in a list provides clarity for governing group members and makes it easy to ensure accountability and follow through on decisions made.

Review and approve minutes promptly

Establish your process for sharing minutes securely, confidentially and in a timely manner. As a governing group decide your process and timeframe for sharing the draft minutes with the Chair and governing group members for input, feedback, corrections, and approval. The quicker you can get them back to the team, the quicker action steps are confirmed and can be actioned by those responsible.

What do you need to think about in terms of sharing your minutes with other relevant stakeholders, specifically related to confidentiality and privacy? Ensure you have a process for working through those elements and then circulating to relevant stakeholders as soon as possible.

You will most likely recirculate the minutes again before the next meeting for reflection and as a reminder for those who have actions to implement.

Organise meeting minute archives

Establish a system for archiving and organising meeting minutes and related documents for easy reference. You want to enable governing group members to be able to easily access

past agenda, reports and support materials, and past meeting minutes.

Continuously improve your process

Intentionally look for opportunities to continuously improve your minute taking process. Regularly review the meeting minutes with your Chair and governing group members. What works well for them with the meeting minutes and the process of archiving? Where are there gaps or issues? Problem-solve gaps or issues to increase efficiency and effectiveness for the team.

Leverage technology tools

Embrace technology tools to streamline the process of taking and managing meeting minutes. There are tools that help transcribe meetings such as Otter.ai, and AI tools that help transcribe and summarise like Krisp.ai. There are also a number of software platforms customised for non-profit organisations that offer features such as template customisation, real-time collaboration, and centralised and secure storage of documents. These tools simplify the task of capturing and organising meeting information, making it easier to create and distribute minutes efficiently.



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What to record

The term "meeting minutes" comes from the Latin "minuta scriptura", meaning "small notes". Thus, taking meeting minutes essentially means condensing the meeting down to the most important points.

The best meeting minutes offer enough information to accurately convey discussion and decision-making but not so much information that it becomes complicated or difficult to understand. I love the idea that your minutes tell the story of the meeting.

Ensure the minutes provide context and clarity for readers to understand discussions and decisions made. Put yourself in the shoes of governing group members who were not at the meeting, what do they need to know to help them understand? Things to keep in mind:

- Use clear and concise language, avoid jargon or technical terms. Provide background information when necessary. Use bullet points to highlight key takeaways.
- The role of taking minutes is not a silent observer. Ask questions or confirm wording and get clarity to ensure you are clear about what the governing group would like included in the minutes.
- Meeting minutes should not be verbatim. The goal isn't to recount everything said exactly as it was said, that is a transcript. Instead give a clear overview of what the issue was, what points were raised, what the board decided and why they decided it.
- Interpretations or opinions should not be included in meeting minutes.
- Governing group members may go back and forth on key issues. Aim to concisely summarise and capture the essence of the discussion without writing exactly what was said, get the team to help you do this.
- Supporting documents should not be included in the meeting minutes. Instead, refer to them and attach them to the minutes so readers can review the document itself.
- A rule of thumb to hold loosely, aim to keep the reading time of minutes to less than 15 minutes, a good story of the meeting, not a novel.