



How to Hold Your First Meeting

Synopsis

This guide offers recommendations for how to hold your first meeting with interested volunteers. It includes:

- a. A few initial steps we recommend as you're building your group,
- b. How to prepare for your first meeting, and
- c. A sample agenda/template for how to run the meeting itself.

First things first, we want you to know you're not alone! You can email us at **courage@indivisible.org** if you require further assistance. Our team includes skilled organizers and trainers who are here to help you as you start having meetings and organizing membership!

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First Steps

Before planning your first meeting, consider the following first steps:

- 1. Think about your group's objectives and what progressive values you are fighting for.** Take some time to evaluate your shared vision of the world. What values do you all hold and do they reflect [Indivisible's vision for democracy](#)? How will others see those values reflected in your activism? Consider how your group will make an impact, add to the work of others in your community, and fill the gaps in that work so you can successfully advance your collective goals.
- 2. Start putting together a team.** You don't need to develop a full steering committee or leadership team immediately. However, try to identify a few folks who can help you get things started.
- 3. Begin planning for recruitment.** Who will come to your meeting, and how will you get them there? Consider the low-hanging fruit (your immediate friends, family, and acquaintances who share your pillar identity and who might be interested) as well as broader networks.

➤ **Pro Tip: Working Toward an Inclusive Group Culture**

We're all stronger when we're part of a diverse group of voices and perspectives. At the same time, if you or the people you are working with are predominantly people of privilege (such as white or higher income folks), you need to avoid tokenizing in your recruitment efforts and ensure that you're building an inclusive group culture where folks of marginalized identities won't be harmed. Please see our resources on [Building Inclusive Groups](#) for more guidance, and reach out to the Indivisible staff team if you're unsure how to navigate this work.

KICKOFF MEETING

Prior to the Meeting

Create a timeline for inviting people to your meeting. This will help you organize your outreach, check RSVP's along the way, and adjust your outreach in the lead-up to your meeting.

Spread the word! Invite people to come, ask them to commit to joining the meeting, and follow up with them beforehand to confirm. Think about how to invite a diverse group beyond just your immediate network.

Create an agenda. You can use our sample below as a place to start! Post or share the agenda at the start of the meeting so that everyone knows where you're headed and what to expect.

Include a concrete idea for an action to start with. Having a clear action will help folks get and stay engaged with your group, and feel the power you're building together right away.

Plan a way to track attendees. It's important to know who joins your meeting so you can follow up. You can use traditional paper sign-in sheets for in-person. For virtual meetings, you can circulate a Google Form, or use the registration information from Zoom sign-ups if you use Zoom.

Meeting Facilitation Tips

- **Prepare!** *Apart from creating an agenda, think about what you're going to say and how you want attendees to participate. Try to move efficiently through your agenda, and start and end on time.*
- **Use the “parking lot.”** *People may bring up lots of things—including good ideas—that are not related to what's on the agenda. If something off topic is raised, ask if you can put it in the “parking lot” and come back to it at another time.*
- **Aim for balance.** *If some attendees don't have much to say, you can ask questions to check in on where they're at. If someone has been talking a lot, consider asking them to hold tight so the group can hear from everyone. Be mindful of power dynamics that might make it more difficult for some people to speak up.*
- **Think through likely questions ahead of time.** *Prepare to offer answers while keeping your meeting on track.*

Sample Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions.

Welcome everyone and outline the goals for the meeting, including:

- Get to know each other;
- Commit to the values that will guide your work in the coming months and years; and
- Plan and commit to your first action.

Remind everyone of the ultimate goal: to build a truly inclusive democracy.

Have each person in attendance briefly introduce themselves and explain what motivated them to get involved. Model the type of introduction you are looking for by going first. The amount of time you have for this will vary depending on the size of your group. If your group is large, you may want to ask everyone to either keep their introductions to one sentence, or break out for a few minutes to talk to their neighbors.

2. Decide on a group name.

If you already have a name, skip this step! Otherwise, propose a name and open the floor for additional suggestions. A good place to start is with a name that includes the pillar that your group identifies with. If multiple names are proposed, take a vote. Try to keep this section of the meeting as short as possible—you want to get to the action.

3. Agree on your objectives and values.

This is your chance to share what your group stands for. **Lay out your group's objectives and guiding values** and get people's feedback. Indivisible is focused on building a democracy of, by, and for the people, and our groups are a political home for people with shared, progressive

values to find each other and work on issues important to their communities. It's important people understand and agree to these as you move forward.

4. Volunteer for roles.

This part of the meeting will vary a lot depending on how big your group is and who is in the room. The goal is to figure out how you will divide roles and responsibilities among your group based on day-to-day activities or upcoming events for the group.

Pro Tip: Ask Your Members About Their Interests & Delegate

The “Volunteer for Roles” section is also a good time to talk about the different ways that group members can contribute to advocacy efforts: attending/recording events, asking questions, making calls, hosting meetings, engaging on social media, writing op-eds for local papers, etc. Ask each person in attendance how they would like to contribute. Have your note-taker record these discussions.

5. Adopt a means of communication.

You need a way of reaching everyone in your group in order to coordinate actions. This can be a Facebook private group, a Google group, a Slack workspace, an email list, a phone tree—whatever people are most comfortable with.

6. Commit to action.

Set a time and date for a specific action that your group will take. It's a good idea to come to the meeting with something in mind so that you can actively recruit people to attend. Attendees may have additional ideas, and that's great! Depending on the size of your group, you can decide on one or you can organize multiple actions.

Select someone who will be the lead coordinator for the action. For the first action, this may be you! But in the future, you may want to designate a group member as the lead on each action. This person will ensure that everything runs smoothly the day of your event. You may also want a media spokesperson for each action.

Sign up group members to attend the next action(s). Ask a clear yes or no question: will you attend our visit to Congressman Bob's office at 3pm on Tuesday, September 10th? Write down everyone's name who volunteers. If many people don't, ask the group why and try to solve the problem. Your group will only have an impact through action.

Make sure you **get everyone's contact information** so that you can follow up with a reminder the day before the action.

7. After the Meeting

Send a message thanking everyone for attending. Remind them about the upcoming action.

Ask group members to recruit additional people to join your group. If each member found one more person to join you would immediately double the size of your group!

Acknowledgement

This toolkit is adapted from a resource originally written by Julia Fox: an early member of the Indivisible family who has since passed. It is thanks to her and her love for community organizing that we had the good foundation to build this toolkit on.