**PARTNERSHIP BUILDING**

Developing community partnerships and developing great projects all rely on partners, teachers and students to understand decision making skills. There are so many opportunities for [experiential learning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experiential_learning) to happen out in the community surrounding the school. We just need to find ways to connect core curriculum beyond the classroom by attracting the right people and asking the right questions. SEMIS can facilitate this kind of conversation and help to identify the Essential Question your class or school is interested in pursuing, which might include a larger conversation with your administration.

### Stakeholders Meetings

One way to understand the issues in your community is through interviews with key people in your community - including non-profits, businesses and elders. A series of community walks are a great way to start identifying the people who might influence issues in your community. In the [Earth Force](https://www.earthforce.org/?q=EarthForceProcess) process, this is part of the inventory step, and might include a media search, identifying the boundaries of your community and then narrowing down to specific issues, and inviting key stakeholders to a meeting with students.

### Resource Maps

A community resource map can come in the form of a [hand-drawn map](http://se.deltasd.bc.ca/vision/) (use a [graphic facilitator](http://www.makemark.com/graphic_facilitation/services/)), Google Map, or [Mind Map](http://www.mindmeister.com/111884700/reinventing-school-challenge). As part of the process of generating input, work with students, parents and potential stakeholders to outline what resources are available in your community that could spur project development. There are a number of resources for developing this inventory at the Asset Based Community Development Institute: <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/toolkit/>.

### Curriculum Connections

Identify relevance between what students are learning and how it connects to the real world is key to making lasting impressions. Consider using [project-based learning](http://www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning), action civics curriculum or another methodology that engages students in generating questions and developing solutions. Here is a great book on the subject by Suzie Boss - [*Reinventing Project-Based Learning: Your Field Guide to Real-World Projects in the Digital Age*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B003NE61Y4/ref=kinw_myk_ro_title).

### Find a Design Challenge

Look at solutions from a design perspective. [*Design Thinking for Educators*](http://www.designthinkingforeducators.com/) is a methodology where participants collaborate to come up with ideas and learning experiences and then share them online for all to benefit from. Developing solutions with your partner organization happens through your grant application to SEMIS, and it will involve creative coaching and development of a project with student buy-in, community buy-in, as well as teacher and administrative buy-in. When those four group’s needs are met, then projects can really benefit both community and school transformation, while growing student involvement in real world problem solving. You might create some sort of agreement about what each partner will agree to complete in a project, which can help to identify roles and responsibilities and divide tasks.

## PLANNING MEETINGS

Meetings are more productive if they are planned beforehand. Responsibility for planning the meeting lies with the Chairperson along with the Secretary in smaller organizations. However all members will need to ensure they have read any papers prior to the meeting and have added relevant items to the agenda.

[The Secretary's role at meetings](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/article/secretarys-role-meetings)

[Checklist: What committee members need before a meeting](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/checklist-what-committee-members-need-meeting)

Plan your meetings effectively by....

* Setting dates well in advance to maximize the number of members available to attend (and sending a reminder notice);
* Clarifying the purpose or focus of the meeting;
* Ensuring that staff and financial reports are concise and comprehensible;
* Ensuring that minutes and agreed actions from the previous meetings are circulated. [Click here](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/recording-minutes-committee-meetings) to download suggested format for Minutes;
* Ensuring that all papers are circulated well in advance;
* Agreeing the meeting agenda in advance. [Click here](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/drafting-agendas-meetings) to download suggested format for Agenda;
* Identifying which agenda items require a decision and which are for information or discussion; and
* Purpose of meetings.

Planning your meetings is easier if the purpose of each meeting is clear.

Committee meetings are for:

* Monitoring and reviewing progress towards meeting the aims of the organization;
* Ensuring all activities are consistent with the organization's purpose and mission;
* Deciding on management and governance systems and processes;
* Deciding the most appropriate methods of fundraising and considering applications for funding;
* Delegating work;
* Discussing and making decisions on new proposals;
* Planning for the future and identifying new opportunities;

A well planned agenda should clearly communicate the purpose and objectives of the meeting.

## Effective chairing

Chairing is a key factor in the effectiveness of meetings.

The role of the Chair is to direct discussion of the Committee, ensuring that the objectives of the meeting can be met, and that the Committee effectively fulfils its responsibility in consideration of the items on the agenda. This involves ensuring that you are well briefed about each agenda item and that:-

* decisions are taken, recorded and carried out;
* the organization's policies are applied;
* there is full participation;
* the agenda is followed; and
* there are time limits for the meeting as a whole and for agenda items.

[Click here](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/drafting-agendas-meetings) to download suggested format for Agenda.

Productive meetings require the contribution of all members, working as a team and taking joint responsibility for ensuring that issues are given due consideration and decisions taken.

More on [chairing meetings](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/article/chairing-meetings)

## Decision making

Management committees are responsible for taking major strategic decisions and need to take decisions jointly with other members. In making any big decision, a number of steps are involved, including some or all of the following:

* Information - ensuring the committee has read or heard all relevant information;
* The goal - what is our aim and is it consistent with the aim and direction of the organisation. Agreement on the goal is a crucial stage in decision making;
* Choices - what choices are available to us and what are the constraints; and
* The plan - how do we achieve our goal - what are the steps and what resources do we need.

Decision making is much more effective if the committee establishes not only what is to be done but also how and when it will be done and by whom.

There are two common methods of making decisions:

1. By [consensus](http://consensusdecisionmaking.org/Articles/Basics%20of%20Consensus%20Decision%20Making.html); and

2. By taking a vote.

Some organizations have a strong commitment to consensual decision making and only take a vote in exceptional circumstances. Others routinely vote on issues.

Regardless of how decisions are taken, all committee members should be clear about exactly what has been decided and decisions should be clearly minuted.

[Click here](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/recording-minutes-committee-meetings) to download suggested format for Minutes.

Don't forget. Each member has a contribution to make to effective meetings. All members should:

* Prepare for meetings;
* Forward apologies if you are unable to attend;
* Use your agenda. [Click here](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/drafting-agendas-meetings) to download suggested format for Agenda;
* Listen to the speakers;
* Learn from other people;
* Speak up when you have something to say;
* Ask questions if you are unclear or unsure;
* Consider all the options and share your views; and
* Abide by decisions which are taken, whether you agree with them or not.

\*All resources from the DIY Committee Guide Website: http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/