

Ten Agreements

Ten Agreements with Television Station for Electronic Town Meetings (ETMs)

A citizen-voice framework for televised constructive democracy

Context. Drawing on a decade of community organizing and co-developing “Bay Voice” electronic town meetings—viewed by more than 300,000 people in the Bay Area with scientific polling across six questions and strong ratings—we’ve learned what it takes to partner effectively with TV stations. We, the public, own the airwaves and share responsibility for the health of our democracy. The following agreements keep ETMs nonpartisan, respectful, and results-oriented.

One-Page Summary

1. **Primetime, One-Hour ETMs** — A single, uninterrupted 60-minute block in primetime to reach the broadest audience.
2. **Noncommercial** — No commercials or promo breaks during the ETM; this is civic business, not entertainment.
3. **Opening & Closing Affirmations** — Begin and end with brief, agreed civic affirmations that set expectations and honor outcomes.
4. **Issue Selection** — ETM organizers co-develop and retain final say on topics in collaboration with the community served.
5. **Issue Framing** — Opening framing media (video/graphics) is provided by ETM organizers to ground a fair, shared understanding.
6. **Expert Selection** — ETM organizers select a balanced, diverse expert panel to inform public inquiry (station reviews for standards).
7. **Question Design** — ETM organizers control the questions, wording, and number (including any scientific polling).

8. **Moderator Selection** — ETM organizers choose trained facilitators skilled in group process and civility tech tools.
9. **Respectful Dialogue** — Clear civility rules, nonpartisan tone, equal-time guardrails, and real-time moderation.
10. **Respect for Governance** — ETMs complement (not replace) public institutions and feed back results to officials and agencies.

Detailed Agreement Language

1) Primetime, One-Hour ETMs

Agreement. The station provides a single, uninterrupted **60-minute primetime** block to enable a complete community dialogue.

Why it matters. Half-hour shows force speed and conflict; an hour enables framing, voices, deliberation, and closing clarity.

Implementation. Air live (preferred) or live-to-tape; ensure full carriage across station platforms and VOD replay.

2) Noncommercial

Agreement. No commercials or promo breaks during the ETM. Sponsor acknowledgments, if any, occur **before and/or after** the program only.

Why it matters. Ads turn civic dialogue into entertainment and incentivize conflict.

Implementation. Station and organizers align on pre/post acknowledgments and legal IDs that do not interrupt the ETM.

3) Opening & Closing Affirmations

Agreement. ETMs **open and close** with brief, pre-approved affirmations that respect all participants and clarify purpose and next steps.

Why it matters. Tone at the start and closure at the end shape trust, expectations, and follow-through.

Implementation. 30–60 seconds each; read by the moderator or voiced over graphics supplied by organizers.

Sample Opening (≤45s):

“Welcome to this Electronic Town Meeting. As citizens who share these airwaves and this future, we are here to listen carefully, speak respectfully, and explore solutions that serve

the common good. We will let the chips fall where they may and we will not try to control outcomes—only the fairness of the process.”

Sample Closing (≤45s):

“Thank you for engaging with care. Tonight’s results and comments will be shared transparently with the public and relevant officials. Whether we reached closure or identified work still to do, we affirm our democratic process and our commitment to return as needed.”

4) Issue Selection

Agreement. ETM organizers **co-develop** issues with community stakeholders and **retain final editorial control** of topics.

Why it matters. If you lose control of the issues, you lose the integrity of the process.

Implementation. Maintain an advisory circle; publish topic criteria (relevance, urgency, solvability, equity impact).

5) Issue Framing (Introductory Media)

Agreement. ETM organizers provide **opening framing media** (e.g., 2–4 minutes) to establish shared facts and the decision landscape.

Why it matters. Framing determines whether viewers can see trade-offs and common ground.

Implementation. Station runs framing as provided (technical edits only); sources and methods are disclosed online.

6) Expert Selection

Agreement. ETM organizers select **diverse, credible experts** to surface evidence and options; station reviews for journalistic and legal standards.

Why it matters. Experts should inform inquiry, not dominate it.

Implementation. Publish expert bios and conflicts of interest; aim for ideological, demographic, and lived-experience diversity.

7) Question Design

Agreement. ETM organizers **control question wording, number, and order**, including any scientific polling items.

Why it matters. Wording accuracy prevents bias; a coherent sequence enables learning.

Implementation. Share the core questions publicly in advance; archive final wording and results for transparency.

8) Moderator Selection

Agreement. ETM organizers **select the moderator(s)**; station confirms for brand/standards.

Why it matters. Skilled facilitation is essential to civility and depth.

Implementation. Moderators are trained in group process and use **automated tools** to flag disrespectful language and keep focus on solutions.

9) Respectful Dialogue

Agreement. The ETM enforces a **civility policy**: respectful speech, no personal attacks, nonpartisan posture, shared-solution focus.

Why it matters. We're seeking **working consensus**, not click-bait conflict.

Implementation. On-air equal-time guardrails; pre-clear speaking turns; real-time moderation of calls/texts/social inputs.

10) Respect for Governance

Agreement. ETMs **support**—not substitute for—official processes. Findings are shared with relevant agencies and electeds.

Why it matters. Civic voice should **energize and inform** governance, not undermine it.

Implementation. Publish outcomes, briefs, and commitments; schedule follow-up ETMs when issues require continued work.

Roles & Responsibilities

ETM Organizers provide: topics, framing media, experts, questions, moderators, civic rules, polling (if used), public archives.

TV Station provides: primetime carriage, live production, signal distribution, accessibility (captions), compliance review, VOD replay.

Negotiation Checklist

- Confirm **primetime, uninterrupted 60 minutes**
- Confirm **no commercials** (only pre/post acknowledgments)
- Approve **opening/closing affirmations**
- Lock **topics & framing media** ownership by organizers

- Approve **experts** for standards/legal only
- Confirm **question control** by organizers
- Approve **moderator(s)** proposed by organizers
- Adopt **civility policy** and real-time moderation protocol
- Agree on **public posting** of results/materials
- Set **replay/VOD** and accessibility commitments

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Minneapolis Electronic Town Meeting (ETM)

TV Station Legal Name] _____

Organizer Name] (“Organizer”) _____

Effective Dates: [Start Date] – [End Date] _____

Program Title: [ETM Topic/Series Name] _____

1) Purpose

To collaboratively produce and broadcast a **nonpartisan, citizen-voice Electronic Town Meeting** that enables respectful, solutions-focused dialogue and informs public decision-making. The parties affirm that broadcasting serves the public interest and that ETMs complement (not replace) official governance.

2) Program Slot & Format (Agreement #1)

Length/Timing: **Uninterrupted 60 minutes in primetime** on [Day/Time], live or live-to-tape with same-day replay/VOD.

Carriage: Full distribution across Station platforms (OTA, cable/sat, web/app) where available.

3) Noncommercial Standard (#2)

No commercials or promo breaks during the ETM. Any sponsor/legal IDs appear **pre- and/or post-program** only. No overlays or lower-third ads within program.

4) Civic Framing: Opening & Closing (#3)

Opening & closing affirmations (≤45s each) provided by Organizer and pre-approved by Station to set expectations and next steps.

5) Editorial & Process Integrity

Issue Selection (#4): Organizer co-develops with community and **retains final editorial control** of topics.

Framing Media (#5): Organizer supplies a 2–4 min fact-based opener; Station may make **technical edits only** to meet standards.

Expert Selection (#6): Organizer selects a **balanced, diverse** panel; Station reviews for journalistic/legal compliance.

Question Design (#7): Organizer controls **wording, sequence, and number** (including up to **six scientific poll questions**).

Moderator (#8): Organizer proposes moderator(s) trained in facilitation and civility tech; Station approves for standards/brand.

6) Respectful Dialogue & Nonpartisanship (#9)

Enforced **civility policy**: respectful speech, no personal attacks, equal-time guardrails, nonpartisan posture, solution focus.

Live moderation of audience inputs; automated filters enabled. Violations may result in mute/removal.

7) Respect for Governance (#10)

ETM **feeds outcomes** (poll results, themes, options) to relevant agencies/electeds. Organizer issues a public brief within **5 business days**.

8) Accessibility, Inclusion, and Transparency

Captioning (live/ASR acceptable); transcript and materials posted within **24 hours**.

Commitment to **diverse representation** among experts and voices.

Publish **sources/methods** for framing and polling on Organizer site; Station links from show page.

9) Promotion & Measurement

Promotion: At least **three on-air promos** (15–30s) in the week prior; digital/social posts by Station; community outreach by Organizer.

Metrics: Reach, participation rate, civility incidents, diversity of voices, and policy follow-up reviewed in a **debrief within 10 business days**.

10) Rights, Data, and Costs

IP/Rights: Organizer owns ETM content it creates (topics, scripts, framing media, questions). Station owns the **program recording**. Each grants the other a **non-exclusive license** to use ETM content/recording for civic, educational, and news purposes with attribution.

Data/Privacy: Polling and participation data are **de-identified**; no sale or unrelated reuse.

Costs/Resources: Station provides studio, crew, carriage, VOD, captioning; Organizer provides content development, experts, moderator, polling, archives. Each bears its own costs unless addended.

11) Compliance, Termination, and Status

Program subject to applicable laws and Station policies.

Termination: Either party may terminate for material breach with **[X] days' written notice** (or immediately for legal/standards risk).

MOU Status: This MOU is **[nonbinding/binding—select one]** except as to **Data/Privacy and IP/Rights**, which are binding unless superseded by a later Production Agreement.

12) Points of Contact

Station: [Name, Title, Email, Phone]

Organizer: [Name, Title, Email, Phone]

Authorized Signatures

Station: _____ Name/Title: _____ Date: _____

Organizer: _____ Name/Title: _____ Date: _____