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Hello! And welcome to this e-learning session on Great Board Meetings, brought to you by Columbia Basin Trust, and presented by Vantage Point

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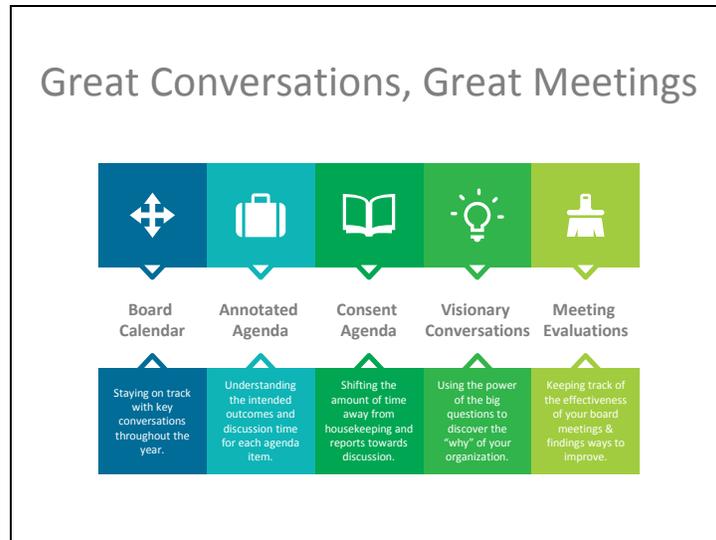
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My name is Mark Friesen and I'm the Consulting Manager at Vantage Point. Vantage Point is a not-for-profit organization that supports other not-for-profits by providing foundational, advanced and online learning opportunities. We work with more than 500 organizations and nearly 3000 not-for-profit leaders across BC.

Today, I'll be your e-learning facilitator, sharing some best practices and tools for GREAT board meetings

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When it comes to board governance, spend time thinking about your meetings!

Oftentimes we take our meeting structure for granted, and don't ask ourselves whether our culture and practices around meetings are useful, valuable or engaging for board members. So spend time looking at your board meeting practices, and exploring ways that they could be made more effective and engaging! That's really what this e-learning session is all about.

Board Meeting Structure: The Basics

- ✓ Meet on a **regular basis**
- ✓ **Start** on time. **Finish** on time.
- ✓ Circulate a **meeting package** - including an agenda with questions, reports and attachments - **in advance**
- ✓ Create ground rules for **meeting etiquette and behaviour**, such as eliminating cross-talk and side conversations
- ✓ Enforce **time limits** as outlined on the agenda
- ✓ Decide which **tools to maximize participation and discussion**:
Limiting speaking turns, using a speakers list, listing tangential issues on a parking lot

How can you ensure your meetings run more smoothly? It all begins with structure!

Here are some tips you may find helpful:

- First, meetings that are held infrequently or irregularly tend to have poorer turnout, lengthier conversations and less productive discussion than meetings that stick to a regular schedule, such as meeting on the first Monday of every month from 5:30 – 7:30 pm. It's a lot harder to create a habit of coming to board meetings if they're at a different time or day each month.
- Always start on time, and finish on time. This shows respect to the group and the time you have together. Latecomers will learn to adjust their behavior accordingly.
- Next, decide on how much advance notice is practical and sufficient for your board. It may vary from organization to organization but circulating a meeting package at least a few days – and ideally about a week – in advance will help board members properly prepare themselves. And, the more prepared board members are, the more likely the board will have meaningful discussions.
- Meeting etiquette will set expectations on acceptable behavior in meetings. Each board might have different expectations (for example, some do not want people to use their cell phones, while others are less concerned about that). So have a conversation with your board members on what they expect from each other when they're in board meetings.

- Your agenda is the most useful way of setting expectations on how long it may take to have a discussion or make a decision on a particular topic. Aim to stick to proposed time limits.
- If discussion at board meetings seems to go on and on without reaching a consensus and your meetings run overtime every month, you need to have a discussion as a board to identify ways to stay on track. There are techniques you could use in the meeting – such as limiting speaking turns, or using a speakers list, or writing any side issues on a piece of flipchart paper that you call your ‘parking lot’.

So, those are some ideas that will get your started. In your reflections, I would encourage you to note: Where are we already doing things really well? Where might we grow? And what’s something new we may want to try?

Tools for an Engaging Agenda

1. Board calendar
2. Annotated agenda
3. Consent agenda
4. Asking questions on the agenda
5. Meeting evaluations

Now, in this next section we will take you through **five tools** that can support your work to aim for (and hit the mark on) what matters most.

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Board Calendar		
Month	Agenda Items	Committee/Task Force Activity
January	Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve People Policy changes Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board Slate Information: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Year End KPI Report• Coming year People Plan	Leadership Staff Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Performance Review Data Analyst provides report to ED Dev Task Force Board Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalize board slate and board evaluation process
February	Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Year End Financials & Auditors Report▪ Board Slate▪ ED Performance Review & salary Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Board Evaluation	Leadership Staff Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presents Performance Review Summary to ED; ED and Chair draft annual goals
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual General Meeting• Typically no regular board meeting	Board Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine board member orientation and board education calendar

I want to walk through our first tool: the board calendar. On screen, you see a sample.

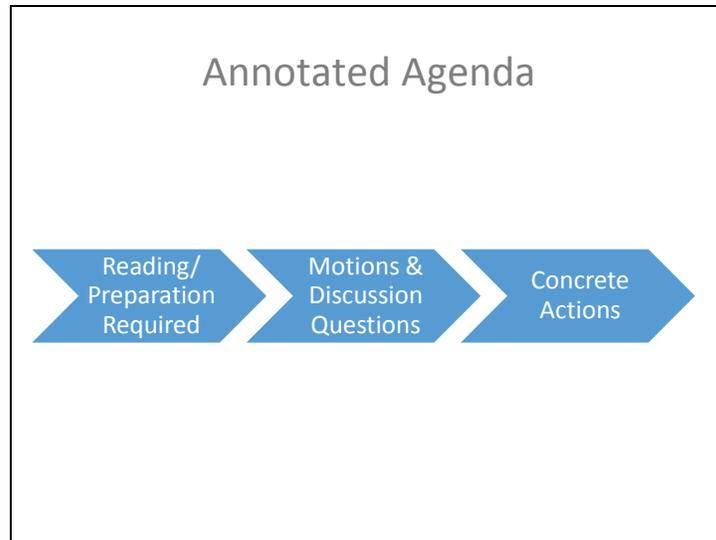
This is a way of organizing the focus and energy of your board throughout the year.

The purpose of this tool is to help a board structure look ahead in the calendar and structure their agenda items to allow key conversations to happen around the board table. A board calendar also links these critical conversations to key markers in their annual work cycle. For example, a conversation around year end financials happens at the meeting before AGM.

Here are some tips to get you started:

- Start simple and build in complexity over time
- This can be a great way to plug in the annual fiduciary or oversight items a board needs to do to make sure they're on track. This might be things like highlighting when your annual filings or reports to funders need to happen.
- You can also use it to link task forces or committees into the board's work and decision making
- And I want to emphasize this is a great tool for a working board!

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The next tool is an annotated agenda. With it, we start to look at what happens during a meeting.

The purpose of this tool is to highlight the required preparation to ensure a really engaging conversation.

For each agenda item, there is a note that explains the reading or preparation required, whether it is a decision, discussion or information item, and then captures the concrete actions and follow-ups for that item.

The preparation required to put together the annotated agenda is valuable because it forces the Chair or Leadership Staff to make good choices about what to spend time discussing, and to inform the board of what the intended outcome for each agenda items. This is a great way to make sure all three modes of governance are engaged!

This is a great way to categorize how you are spending your time together, and analyze the purpose of each item.

Annotated Agenda		
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING		
NAME OF ORGANIZATION		
Address		
Date/Time		
Decision Items		
5:30	Adjust Meeting Agenda	Chair
	Approve Minutes of June meeting	Chair
5:35	Sustainability Fund Contribution	Treasurer
Information Item		
5:45	Registered Charity Information Return	ED
5:47	ED Report	ED
5:50	Q2 Financial Update	Treasurer
5:55	Q2 Key Performance Indicators	ED
Discussion Items		
6:00	Committee Planning	ALL
7:20	In Camera Discussion (if required)	ALL
7:30	Round Table	ALL

Here is an example of a consent agenda.

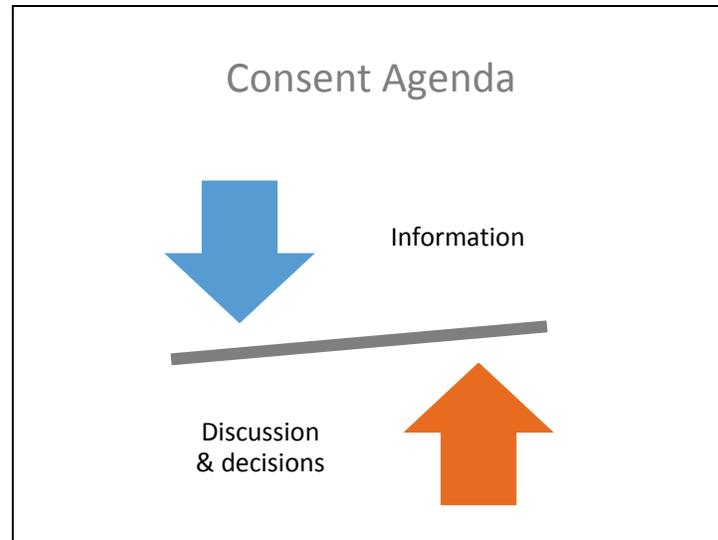
For each agenda item, there is a note that explains the reading or preparation required, whether it is a decision, discussion or information item, and then captures the concrete actions and follow-ups for that item. It's clear on who is responsible for bringing that item forward for discussion, and who is responsible for any follow-up action and work associated with it.

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Annotated Agenda			
Type	Item	Background	Attachments
Decision	Adjust meeting agenda	n/a	Agenda Aug 2016
Decision	Approve minutes of June meeting	Board will approve July meeting minutes at Sept meeting.	Board Minutes June 2016
Information	Registered Charity Information Return Filed (T3010)	Per Imagine Canada's Standards process, we are introducing an annual board meeting item for board to receive confirmation that this important Charities filing has been submitted.	Registered Charity Info Return Summary July 2016
Information	ED Report	n/a	ED Report Aug 2016
Information	Q2 Financial Update	We are tracking well to the re-forecasted budget (approved May 2016), currently ahead of budget over \$7k YTD.	July Results and Forecast Summary 2016
Discussion	Committee Planning	Process per Chair's slides on the Committee Re-structuring Process	Committee Restructuring Exercise Various Draft TORs

This is another way of organizing an annotated agenda.

It follows the same pattern of identifying the type of agenda item: discussion, decision or information. And it links each item to any relevant background information or documents in the board meeting materials.



The third tool is a consent agenda.

The purpose of this tool is to ensure there is enough time to focus on what matters. It is a way to shift the balance to minimize how much time is spent on updates and reports, housekeeping items or information, and maximize the time spent on the really important discussion and decision items.

If an agenda is a list of things we need to do, the consent agenda is all those things that we want to say “yes” to without any debate or discussion. The (sometimes) mundane and non-controversial board action items are organized apart from the rest of the agenda and approved as a group.

When you use a consent agenda, you’re requiring your board members to have read all the pertinent information in their meeting package before they arrived, and to have asked any questions resulting from that package ahead of time.

This frees up significant time for the board to engage in conversation and decision-making around important issues. If your board meetings are full of reports, presentations, committee updates and low on discussions, questions and challenging issues, then it’s time to start using a consent agenda.

Before a Consent Agenda

Uplift Youth Development Agency
Board Meeting Agenda
9:30 am | January 2, 2016

- I. Call to Order (Chair)
- II. Approval of Minutes (Leadership Staff)
- III. Executive Director's Report
 - Launch of new tutoring program
 - Update on city contracting
 - Staff changes
 - Evaluation of North Side Youth Initiative
 - Gala Planning
- IV. Finance Committee Report (Finance Committee Chair)
- V. Presentation: Youth Outreach Director (Staff Member)
- VI. South Side Programs and Facility (Executive Director)

Now let's look at a sample of before and after using a consent agenda:

This is a typical board meeting agenda. You'll notice that there are no times on this agenda – therefore there's no indication of what items are most important or how to focus the board's energy towards what's most important.

Minutes and reports should be included in advance or in the consent agenda. That means less time on updates and more on engaging!

After a Consent Agenda

Uplift Youth Development Agency
Board Meeting Agenda
January 2, 2017

9:30 – 9:40 Consent Agenda (Chair)

- Minutes of the December 1, 2016 Meeting
- President's Report
- Planning and Development Task Force Update

9:40 – 10:25 South Side Task Force (Chair/Task Force Chair)

- Presentation by Task Force Chair.

10:25 – 11:00 Finance Committee Report (Finance Committee Chair)

- Review Q3 financials

11:00 Adjournment

After, you can see that many housekeeping items are put into the consent agenda. And, later in the agenda several agenda items that were simply information or presentation items are now reframed so their purpose is clear.

Notice that the consent agenda is only 10 minutes of this one and a half hour meeting. That's because it assumes that since these housekeeping items were sent out in advance, that the board has read them and consents to their approval.

By contrast, look at how much time is given to the presentation: 45 minutes, or half of the entire meeting. It's a strong signal of how important it is for the board to reflect on.

Meeting Assessment Tool					
1	2	3	4	5	NA
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Answer
STATEMENT					RATING
1. INFORMATION					
I received the package at least 4 days prior to the meeting.					
I received sufficient information to prepare me to participate and enable me to make informed decisions.					
The written information summarized the issues and agreed actions clearly.					
Comments:					

Our fourth tool is designed to benchmark where you are right now and track improvement of your increasingly great board meetings – it’s a meeting assessment.

At the close of each board meeting, each board member *anonymously* completes the form, and returns it to the Chair or Board Secretary. This tool is meant to inspire continual improvement of board meetings.

The Chair, or perhaps the members of the Board Development Committee, will review the evaluations, and then prioritize actions based on the feedback.

Adding Questions to Spark Discussion

Uplift Youth Development Agency
Board Meeting Agenda
January 2, 2017

9:30 – 9:40 Consent Agenda (Chair)

- Minutes of the December 1, 2016 Meeting
- President's Report
- Planning and Development Task Force Update

9:40 – 10:25 Framing the Work of the South Side Task Force (Chair/Task Force Chair)

- **What will the Board need to know or learn in order to decide on the future of the South Side property and programs?**
- **Hypothetical: If we did not have the property but instead were considering buy it at its present value to start a program, what factors would we consider in making the decision?**

10:25 – 11:00 Finance Committee Report (Finance Committee Chair)

- Review Q3 financials

11:00 Adjournment

The final tool is one that a lot of boards can find helpful if they're struggling with having productive conversations around the board table: it's putting questions directly on your agenda.

This can help to engage board members in thinking about these topics even before they arrive in the board room, by encouraging them to read more deeply into their meeting packages, and get clear on what the purpose and outcomes of the discussion will be.

So in this example, you can see a lot of the agenda items that were just for information or presentation are reframed. Now, the board knows why those items made it on to the agenda and what they need to start talking about together. This will help the board make sure that they're connecting the information they're getting from the presentation, for example, to their roles as leaders.

Bringing this into your boardroom may seem tricky, so there are two tactics we recommend:

The first is sending this agenda out in advance. This will give your board adequate time to reflect on these questions ahead of your meeting. Board members will be able to share their perspectives during the meeting.

The second is making sure you give your board a lot of room to explore these questions. You'll notice that there is 45 minutes – or about half of the meeting -- dedicated to this discussion topic.

Applying Multiple Meeting Tools

Uplift Youth Development Agency
Board Meeting Agenda
January 2, 2017

9:30 – 9:40 Consent Agenda (Chair)

- Minutes of the December 1, 2016 Meeting
- President's Report
- Planning and Development Task Force Update

9:40 – 10:25 Framing the Work of the South Side Task Force (Chair/Task Force Chair)

- What are the three critical questions the Task Force should explore?
- What will the Board need to know or learn in order to decide on the future of the South Side property and programs?
- Hypothetical: If we did not have the property but instead were considering buy it at its present value to start a program, what factors would we consider in making the decision?

10:25 – 10:55 Finance Committee Report (Finance Committee Chair)

- Review Q3 financials

10:55 – 11:00 Board Meeting Evaluation

11:00 Adjournment

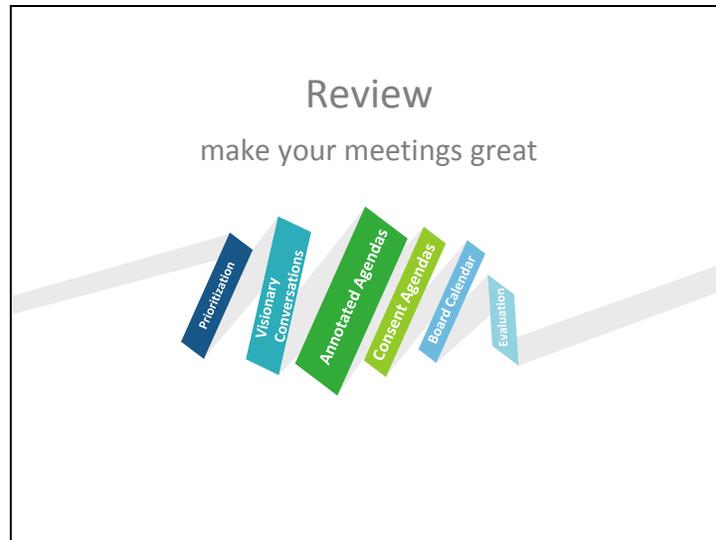
Now let's look at a sample of a typical agenda, after implementing these tools.

I want to acknowledge that changing your agenda can be a multi-step or ongoing process, and you should start at the place that feels the easiest or most logical to you. For some organizations, it may be using board meeting evaluations. For others, it may be adding questions to the agenda. In others, it may be using an annotated agenda. Engage your board, especially your Chair and/or Leadership Staff person, in having a conversation about where to start, and how to increase the board's comfort with changes and practice making changes together.

What have we heard board members say they implemented and what changes resulted from that? We frequently hear that:

- There is clarity on timing – thanks to an annotated agenda.
- The Consent agenda was used so there is only 10 minutes of a typical 90 minute meeting spent on housekeeping items.
- All three modes of governance are engaged. Importantly, visionary and strategic conversations are reflected in the questions posed on the agenda.
- And, at the close of the meeting, there is an evaluation, which provides an opportunity for feedback for the next meeting.

What tool will you bring back to your board?



Meetings are where the board governs!

And making them great will have a positive ripple effect – starting with your work as a board member and moving through the whole organization.

Imagine a meeting where...

- There is clarity on timing – you can do that, with an annotated agenda.
- You're not worried about missing something important because you're following a board calendar that charts all of the important conversations you need to have.
- The consent agenda was used so there is only 10 minutes of this 90 minute meeting spent on housekeeping items.
- You have great conversations, sparked by the questions asked on the agenda
- At the close of the meeting, there is a meeting evaluation, which provides an opportunity for feedback for the next meeting.

It can be done! Start with whichever tool, or combination of tools, might work best for you and your organization now. The important thing is to start anywhere, involve your other board members, and learn from each other as you move forward.

Join Us Again
info@thevantagepoint.ca



The slide features a central text area with the heading "Join Us Again" and the email address "info@thevantagepoint.ca". A blue line with a dashed end connects the email address to the Vantage Point logo, which consists of a cluster of blue dots followed by the text "vantage point". To the right of the logo is a light blue square containing a white paper airplane icon. The bottom of the slide is decorated with a horizontal bar composed of five colored segments: light blue, dark blue, teal, green, and lime green.