

# Great Meetings

## PLANNING FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

### *Before the Meeting*

1. Understand the purpose of the meeting; know what decisions have to be made
2. Ensure most critical decisions appear early in the agenda
3. Ensure agenda & background information are provided sufficiently in advance
4. Consult with leadership staff regarding verbal presentations to be provided at the meeting
5. Consider whether there are directors who routinely come unprepared/miss meetings – take appropriate action. Have a contingency plan

### *At the Meeting*

1. Use a consent agenda for routine/non-controversial items
2. Follow rules of order – encourage adequate discussion and participation
3. Establish reasonable amount of time for each agenda item – stay to allotted time but don't curtail valuable discussion
4. Be alert to cues: quiet participants, wandering conversation, circular discussion
5. If debate becomes confrontational, clarify underlying concerns and bring discussion back to reasonable level – end on a positive note
6. Summarize discussion, call for vote; ensure action items are clearly identified with responsible party

### *After the Meeting*

1. Review any issues arising from the meeting, what could be done better
2. Review action items & items for next meeting on annual agenda
3. Debrief with leadership staff and other directors if useful
4. Ensure discussion, decisions, and actions taken are properly recorded in minutes of the meeting
5. Consider any required action required to assist new members, deal with absent directors or poor performance

## ENGAGE IN THE RIGHT CONVERSATIONS Activity

	Doing Well	Could Improve	Want to Try	NOTES
<b>MEETINGS MANAGED EFFECIVELY</b>				
The board meets on a regular basis				
Board meetings start and end on time				
The Chair engages all board members in conversations.				
The Chair feels comfortable leading meetings				
The Chair keeps the discussion on track according to the agenda				
Board members come to meetings prepared to provide their best contributions				
The vision and mission of the organization is front and center in board meetings and decision-making				
There are many meaningful discussions at board meetings				
Decision-making follows 80/20 rule: spend 80% of the time on 20% of the most important topics that support the mission and keep the board focused on priorities				
The board engages in discussion from time to time about what items they would like to see on the agenda				
The board reaches clear consensus on important decisions				
When clear consensus is not reached, the board will re-discuss the issue in order to find a way forward together				
The amount of time spent on updates and information sharing is kept to a minimum				
After a decision is made, the board discusses next steps and who is responsible for following through on action items				

## USE THE RIGHT MEETING TOOLS Activity

	Doing Well	Could Improve	Want to Try	NOTES
<b>BOARD CALENDAR</b>				
Board calendar outlines when to discuss the organization's key goals, events and strategic directions.				
Board calendar used to delegate work to specific committees, volunteers or staff members				
Board calendar used to track key deadlines such as when to file paperwork or apply for grants				
<b>AGENDAS</b>				
Board Chair and leadership staff work together to create the board meeting agenda				
Meeting agenda begins with the most important tasks first				

Consent agenda is used to remove routine housekeeping items (ex. approval of minutes) and increase time spent discussing important matters and making decisions				
Meeting packages – i.e. agendas, background documents, minutes and reports – sent to all board members at least 4 days ahead of the meeting date				
Questions added to meeting agendas to spark discussion				
Specific time limits for each agenda item included in agenda and followed during meeting				
Board meetings do not use categories of 'Old Business' and 'New Business'				
<b>MEETING EVALUATIONS</b>				
Meeting evaluation forms are completed anonymously at the end of each meeting				
Feedback is reviewed by the Chair or Secretary				
Action is taken to make changes based on feedback received				

## LEADING PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS

	<b>Process</b>	<b>Product</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Great</b>	Discussion is animated but focused. The chair periodically summarizes consensus points, checks for support, and then moves on to the next topic. Robert's Rules of Order are practiced for voting issues.	Consideration of relevant information and research is comprehensive. Decisions for board action are summarized and approved by motion.	All board members participate in a dialogue to consider all points of view. Appropriate people are invited to present ideas to the board.
<b>Good</b>	A dynamic pace allows for discussion while achieving agenda results in a timely manner. Efforts are made to seek common agreement or use Robert's Rules of Order for voting. Processes are fair to all.	Relevant information and research is considered. A decision for board action is approved by motion.	All board members have an opportunity to express their point of view. Resource people have an opportunity to present ideas to the board.
<b>Developing skills</b>	Chair makes visible efforts to follow an agenda and stay within time limits. Some discussions wander into unrelated topics. Votes are taken.	A decision for board action is approved by motion.	2-3 people dominate discussion - others are invited to contribute.
<b>Beginner</b>	Chair encourages others to support his/her ideas. Discussion moves forward periodically.	Many issues and opinions are discussed – decisions for board action are not explicit.	Talk is dominated by 1 – 2 people.