



## CREATING THE AGENDA

Properly created, an agenda has great power to clarify and energize a meeting. In creating an agenda for the board meeting, the chairperson should:

- Solicit issues and ideas from Executive Committee and Committee Chairpersons, making certain that all items are appropriate concerns for the board level.
- Together with the Executive Director, assemble the agenda.
- Make certain that all action items have been thoroughly researched with summarized supporting data, committee findings, options and recommendations mailed prior to the meeting.
- Consider an "approval of agenda" item at the beginning that allows the board to agree to the tasks with corresponding times for discussion. With all in agreement, members agree to be "self-facilitators" by confining their discussion to relevant information. The time limit can be stretched but only if the entire group agrees. This form of consensus aids the board with a high level of work to accomplish.
- Consider the use of a **consent agenda**, which eliminates the need to vote separately on many of the routine items and resolutions not requiring explanation or board discussion. All items for the consent agenda, such as signatory authority for banking and investment accounts, minor procedural changes, reports, are grouped together. There will be one motion to approve all items on the consent agenda, but it will take only the request of any one board member - not a formal vote - to remove any item from the consent agenda before the vote. If removed from the consent agenda, the item will be taken up later in the regular agenda.
- Be realistic Make the agenda manageable. Don't add more items than the meeting can reasonably consider. Some items may need to be held over.
- In dealing with agenda items requiring action, allow sufficient time for discussion to allow for opposing points of view, clarification of ideas and expression of personal viewpoints.
- If an item needs mental energy and fresh ideas, put it near the beginning of the agenda.
- Don't dwell too long on trivial but urgent items. Put a time limit on such agenda items and stick to it.
- Minimize oral reports of old business by providing written reports. Focus on the future. Identify each item "For Discussion" "Information Only" or For Decision" as appropriate.
- If an issue is potentially divisive, consider its place in the agenda carefully. You may want to sandwich it between less controversial issues.
- Urgent items must come before those that can wait.
- For each agenda item, list the person who is responsible for introducing the subject. End the meeting with a unifying item.
- Be sure the agenda is mailed to members with any required supporting material in ample time prior to the meeting date It is helpful to send out the meeting packet in an organized fashion perhaps tabbed or indexed, so that documents can be found easily during the meeting.
- When necessary, plan a special, issue-centered meeting to focus entirely on one or two large, complicated issues.
- From time to time, add an agenda item which allows board members to express their views about how the Board does its work and how board meetings could be improved.