*Inquiry Based Agendas*

* **Ban Report Outs**: During board meetings replace verbal “report-outs” with questions on the agenda to provoke discussion. To help this shift from information transmittal and oversight to inquiry and discussion, design agendas with questions posed by topic area. If there are no relevant questions, then the information is included in the board packet but is not reviewed in the meeting. This reinforces preparation and makes time for more meaningful discussion.

**WATCH OUT!**

**Consent Agendas**

Although consent agendas are a good efficiency mechanism, be careful that important items that really do warrant discussion are not pushed through without proper vetting. To ensure that items are indeed appropriate for the consent agenda, provide sufficient background materials in the board packet that is distributed ahead of time. Allow members to request that an item be pulled out of the consent packet if they feel a discussion is necessary.

* **Themed Board Meetings**: Identify the 1-3 most important questions that your board must answer this year and use those “hot topics” to create themes for each board meeting. This will help draft meaningful questions for the agenda and signal to the group the importance of the discussion.
* **Consent Agendas:** To ensure more time for robust discussion, adopt a consent agenda format to handle uncontested, routine business that does not require discussion. Typical items in a consent agenda: acceptance of minutes, final approval of items already vetted, and acceptance of routine reports. Such items are grouped into one agenda item and the entire set is approved in one motion.

*Board Retreats*

Retreats can accomplish many important objectives. They can create a relaxed atmosphere that fosters relationship building, helps equalize feelings of status, allows the time for people to think through possibilities, and brings out the best in the groups’ imagination. Creative thinkers often need more spaciousness to explore and engage in generative discussions.

Retreats or special meetings can help boards refocus on the priorities of the organization or dig into a special project. Working in a different meeting environment can provide the relaxing and fun atmosphere that encourages group interaction and builds trust.

**Don’t underestimate the power of socializing, relationship building and fun!**

**EXAMPLE Board of Directors Meeting Agenda\***

Date: XX Time: XX

Location: XX Dial-in Number: xxx-xxx-xxxx

**Meeting Objectives:**

At the end of this meeting the board will have:

* Deepened our understanding of our current financial health.
* Engaged in a generative conversation about the relationship between artistic expression and our violence prevention programming.
* Clarity about the newly adopted fund development plan and each member will understand her/his role in the plan’s implementation.
* Taken voted on the consent agenda.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Topics & Discussion Framing\*\*** | **Anticipated**  **Action** | **Discussion Leads** |
| **5 mins** | **Welcome & Agenda Review**   * Ice-breaker: Share an experience you had since our last meeting that connected your passion to our work here. | n/a | Chair |
|  |  |  |  |
| **1 hour** | **Hot Topic--Artistic expression and violence prevention programming. Discussion questions:**   * What is the relationship between arts and keeping kids safe? * Is an arts program aligned with who we are? * How will this impact our other programs? * Why arts? Why not sports, science or nature? Are there other kinds of programs that would be better? * Documents to review prior to meeting: See the enclosed article. | Form task force  Bring more information to the board for further discussion. | Program Director & Student |
|  |  |  |  |
| **15 mins** | **Finance Committee Discussion:**   * What does the board most need to understand about this proposed budget modification and our financial position? * What is our level of comfort with the amount of risk on this budget? * Documents to review prior to meeting: Financial statements and NPQ article on financial sustainability | * Vote on budget modification | Treasurer and CFO |
|  |  |  |  |
| **15 mins** | **Fund Development Committee Discussion :**   * What does the board most need to understand about this proposed fund development plan and our expectations? * What do we need to be set up for success? * Documents to review prior to meeting: Fund development plan and individual commitments chart | * Affirm individual work plans and identify support needs | Fund Dev Chair |
|  |  |  |  |
| **15 mins** | **Governance Items:**   * Consent agenda (minutes, final evaluation plan document, officer slate for elections) * Does the board recruitment document reflect our current understanding of priorities and needs? * Documents to review prior to meeting: Recruitment priority document | * Vote on budget modification * Revise recruitment priorities for governance committee to continue its work | Vice chair |
|  |  |  |  |
| **10 minutes** | **Adjourn**   * Affirm action items/follow-up * Confirm next meeting date/time * Alert board to upcoming calendar items |  | Chair |

*\* Agendas to be customized per organizational work plan and as needed to reflect organizational needs.*

*\*\* Discussion Items: Committee reports should not be read in the meeting. Information should be included in the board packet and reviewed in advance. Discussion leads are to ensure that these items include guiding questions, framing context, reference materials if needed, and any action required by the board.*