



Planning for nonprofits and philanthropy

# Running a Good Board Meeting

# What makes one worth attending?



- **Organized agendas.** Well-organized, timed agendas give everyone confidence that the meeting will be ordered and productive. Routine votes can be grouped to save time for substantive items
- **Leadership.** Effective leaders start on time, call on presenters and commenters, summarize debate, and end discussion when it's clear all major points have been made
- **Learning.** At good meetings, something new is learned by everyone present. The measure? Attendees are inspired to share their new knowledge with others (later at the dinner table, at a cocktail party, at the office).
- **Participation.** So there's reason to feel real value in being present, each attendee has an opportunity and is encouraged to speak. To add weight, a meaningful vote is taken or consensus is clearly reached on actionable items.



**Good board meetings start with good agendas. The content, order and pace of a meeting should be carefully choreographed in advance by its chair and staff organizer.**

- **Go lean.** Just a small number of major items should be up for discussion and debate. Quality not quantity
- **Relegate to reports.** If a topic does not need discussion or debate, provide information in a written report so time is spent only on those items requiring conversation.
- **Assign presenters.** Make sure there's someone well prepared to speak knowledgeably on each major agenda item.
- **Add flavor.** For meetings of a governing board or advisory group, consider inviting presentations by key staff or outside experts to ensure there's relevant and memorable – or thought-provoking – content
- **Keep time.** Begin and end on time, and assign an estimated number of minutes to each agenda item to help limit run-on discussion
- **List next steps.** The chair should keep a running list of agreed-upon actions and follow-ups, and restate them in closing with an assignment (“by whom”) and a deadline (“by when”).

**Good board meetings benefit from preparation and follow up. So do good meeting participants. Here are tips for preparing a good board meeting, and for the morning after:**

- **Before.** Distribute agendas and reports about a week in advance. Attendees are expected to arrive prepared, having reviewed the materials and developed questions.
- **Before.** Provide talking points to guide each presenter. A bulleted list of major points or a full narrative script (whichever is preferred) should be provided to presenters at least a day in advance. The support is generally appreciated.
- **Before.** Check the tech. Make sure presentation technology (e.g. laptop and projector) is fully operational so time and momentum don't get lost connecting, loading, rebooting.
- **After.** Follow through. Next day, thank attendees for their participation and distribute any promised items (e.g. copies of admired presentations, articles referenced) along with assigned next steps in a brief follow-up email.
- **After.** Prepare minutes right away. If they're as concise as they ought to be, meeting minutes don't take long to write. A rule of thumb for each agenda item: summarize the issue in one or two sentences; cite only those participants who offered an idea or point of view that turned the debate or influenced a decision; record the vote or consensus clearly.



# About Us

## Plan A

## Advisors

**Plan A** was founded in 2013 by Evan Kingsley and Adam Gaynor as a new kind of **consulting** practice to design and facilitate **highly individualized** approaches to the unique needs of clients, their audiences, leadership, and financial and organizational platforms.

Together they have more than **40 years of experience** in nonprofits, social enterprises, philanthropy and organizational development across the **widest range** of organizations, institutions and philanthropies.

Plan A works with the **board and executive leadership** of agencies, institutions, organizations and funders to design the most **effective and efficient paths** to setting and meeting **realizable goals**, driven by a **strong and compelling vision**.

Plan A projects include **strategic and business planning, governance, mergers and fundraising**.



Ready to set an introductory meeting? Please get in touch. We welcome your inquiry and take great pride and pleasure in guiding you and your organization to the right solution for your needs.

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