

Tips for Writing Agendas and Preparing to Lead Meetings

It can be hard as an adult advisor or ally to know just how to help. But, there are in fact important roles for adults. Investing in youth empowerment may require that youth be taught skills in order to lead effectively. Just as children learn to read, by first learning to recognize single letters at a time, then sounding out words, and finally reading whole sentences, youth development often requires adults to help scaffold the learning of leadership skills for youth, in other words, help youth develop skills one step at a time.

Learning to write agendas and plan meetings are some of those skills, and these tasks take preparation time prior to meetings. Adults can work with members who will be facilitating meetings to prepare for and overcome some common challenges. For additional tips, please see FYA's other resources in the Adult Allies and Youth Development Series.

Below are some common challenges, goals for preparation, and guiding questions to help facilitators prepare for a meeting and develop an agenda.

Goals for preparation:

- Agendas are written during a pre-planning meeting (which could be over the phone) versus just before or during a chapter meeting
- Facilitator knows 3 things: 1) goal of meeting, 2) what agenda items are needed to accomplish that goal, and 3) how those agenda items will be addressed (activities, facilitated conversations, etc.)
- Have working meetings, with only specific tasks that can't be done during meetings done outside of meeting times
- Adults or lead members work with other members between meetings to accomplish any necessary tasks
- Have facilitated activities to lead conversations
- Chair/president/facilitator facilitates conversations, and doesn't dictate or provide a monologue

Common Challenges:

- Facilitator doesn't understand why having a good agenda matters
- There's an agenda, but the facilitator has no idea how to accomplish the agenda items
- Meetings are mostly report backs and announcements rather than a working meeting
- Tasks assigned to do between meetings don't get done and members get upset, *and* work doesn't happen in meetings, so the local issue, fundraising, etc. never moves forward
- Chairs/presidents/facilitators think it's their job to control the meeting or talk at other members for the whole meeting

6 Questions to Write Effective Agendas and Prepare to Lead Productive Meetings

There are six basic questions that can help facilitators prepare for a meeting. After thinking through these questions and writing down the plan, make sure the facilitator has a chance to practice giving the directions, thinking through possible challenges they may encounter, and how to solve those problems. Facilitators can't be prepared for every scenario, but they can go into the meeting feeling confident about their goal and how to accomplish it. Also, adults should be sure to talk with each facilitator about how s/he would like to be supported during the meeting.

Questions to prepare for a meeting:

1. What happened at the last meeting?
2. Based on that, what is the goal for this meeting?
 - a. If just starting with working meetings, might want to start with just 1 goal – 1 concrete thing that should be done by the end of the meeting
3. What agenda items do we need to accomplish the goal?
4. Are there other people who can help lead some of the agenda items? If so, get them involved in the next two steps
5. How will we lead each agenda item?
 - a. What works best for each agenda item? Individual or group work? Big group or small group discussions? Conversations or an activity?
 - b. Do we know of any activities that might be good to help us accomplish each agenda item?
 - c. Can we make up an activity or ask someone for activities they may know?
6. How will we know if we've been successful in accomplishing each agenda item and the goal of our meeting?