



Cougar Clues

clue\klü\- Something that guides through an intricate procedure or maze of difficulties; a piece of evidence that leads one toward the solution.

UMM – Office of Student Activities – 589-6080

Setting the Agenda

Everyone should know what to expect before coming to a meeting.

As a leader you need to be explicit about what will happen, how the meeting is going to be run, who is going to play what roles, and what issues will be discussed. Does this mean that an agenda has only one format? No! An agenda varies just as meetings do. An agenda might be simple- “brainstorming session.” Or it might be complex- “all member weekend retreat.” The point is people need to know what to expect and they need to understand the process.

It takes planning.

When you are busy and rushed, writing up an agenda for a future meeting can seem like a waste of time. Create a framework to use for each agenda. This can save you time and help you think of all of the items you need to consider prior to a meeting.

Suggested Framework:

1. Name of the Group
2. Meeting Title
3. Meeting called by...
4. Date, Time (starting and ending times), and Place
5. Meeting Type
6. Agenda Items or Discussion Topics (planned in advance by the group at a previous meeting, e.g., soliciting race sponsors, how to recruit new members, budget review, etc.)
7. Background Materials (could be an attachment, a draft proposal for review prior to the meeting, an assignment to bring a food item, etc.)
8. Chairperson, Facilitator, Recorder and Group Members responsible for various agenda items
9. Observers and Resource Persons
10. Meeting Method (e.g., Robert’s Rules of Order, interactive, formal, informal, etc.)
11. Special Notes

Tips:

- **Starting and ending times are important** so that people can plan the meeting into their schedule.
- For each agenda item, list the **person who is responsible for introducing the subject** or making a presentation. The chair of the meeting should check in with this person prior to the meeting. In a sense, each agenda item is like a mini-meeting.

- **Decide what type of meeting you want.** To do this, you also need to take into account the nature of the agenda items and the culture of the group. You need to think in terms of both process and content. Communicate whether you want the group to listen, become involved in discussion, and/or make a decision.
- **Estimate the time needed** for each agenda item. After doing this a few times, it will become more comfortable. Sometimes at the actual meeting, you may need to decide with the group to adjust the agenda and the time frames as issues arise. However, staying on an overall schedule is important.
- **Suggestion:** Make your list of agenda items and time estimates before establishing a strict order. Often you'll find that the items proposed extend beyond the time frame for the meeting. Adjust accordingly. Try to **set an agenda that is realistic**. Groups feel better when they set out to accomplish 4 tasks and complete 6. You want to help your group feel like it's making progress.
- Regarding the order: **Some folks like to put the hard issues first.** Others like to save them until the end. You'll have to gauge this on a case by case basis. A recommendation is to order them in terms of urgency. This way if you don't get through all of the items, you will have covered the most time sensitive.
- **Enlist participation from a variety of members.**
- Touch base or plan the next meeting. Have an assigned recorder distribute minutes prior to the next meeting.
- If it's an exploratory meeting or a first meeting, have suggested agenda items. Let the group be empowered in setting the agenda.
- Meetings can often get consumed with the week-to-week details of planning events and running the committee. **Create opportunities for socializing, celebrating, discussing values and mission, and planning for long-term issues.** Consider having different kinds of meetings throughout the year- retreats, workshops, coffee hour, video night, sub-committee meetings, one-on-one meetings, etc. **Don't forget that people are involved for different reasons and have different needs—affiliation, leadership, a sense of community, commitment to the mission, career development, etc.**
- Learn new things and **enjoy the experience!**