An agenda is an important tool for the leader who wants to make effective use of meeting time. Agendas can also be used to assist in long-range planning and/or to help in record-keeping. Important points to remember in building agendas are:

1. Be sure all organization members have an opportunity to have input into the agenda. This opportunity can be announced via a regular newsletter, posting on a much used bulletin board, etc. All announcements should clearly state a deadline for submitting items for the agenda.

2. Agendas should be distributed to members at least two days before the meeting. This early distribution gives members who might have a special interest in a topic to attend the meeting, to prepare to speak on a topic, etc.

3. Arrange the agenda in an order that fits your organization’s needs and your leadership style. For example: You may want to group announcements, committee reports, action items, and long-range decision items. Or, you may want to alternate between items for discussion and items for report so that members don't get restless with a series of similar items.

4. During the meeting, record those items or concerns that need to go in future agendas. After the meeting, make sure those items make it to a subsequent agenda. If there will be a delay of more than two meetings before items can be added to the agenda, contact those persons interested in the item to explain the delay. Without this follow-up members may become frustrated with being “tabled”.

5. Agendas should build in time for discussion. If your agendas always seem too crowded to allow for discussion, you should consider alternative means of handling some of the items.

6. Agendas are important meeting guides. But they also need to be flexible. If a discussion goes longer than anticipated, or an important issue comes up the night before meeting time, feel free to add to or table items on the agenda. Agendas are meant to offer direction -not dictate action.

An effective leader uses a meeting agenda to make meetings work. Careful attention to building and following through with agendas can lead to more efficient meetings and to increased involvement of your organization's membership.