

Sample Family Meeting Agenda

Developed by [Sarah Jane Cavanaugh](#), Board Member, The Russell Family Foundation

Opening Reading | 5 minutes

A story that reflects one of the values of your foundation (serious or humorous). Focuses trustees and sets the tone for the meeting.

Executive Session | 15–30 minutes

What keeps the executive director up at night? Trustees are active listeners, building a trusting relationship with the executive director.

Plenary Session | 1–3 hours

Educational session on a topic determined by a board survey, trustees have compelling interest. Might also be a visit and story by a constituent who has benefited by a grant from your foundation.

Joke | 5 minutes

Insert humor whenever possible. This assignment can be given to a quiet trustee to encourage participation.

Grantmaking Session | 1–3 hours

Consent Agenda & Parking Lot | 15 minutes

Reports are mailed to trustees in advance, they approve all in one motion. Put issues to be discussed at future meetings on the Parking Lot.

Celebrate | 15–60 minutes

Allocate time to share stories, historical family pictures, build on family heritage and history. Treat this time as sacred.

Executive Session | 30 minutes

Pass a Sacred Object: give a quiet trustee the assignment of bringing a meaningful object to pass around the Board table. The Trustee explains why this object is sacred and why it relates to the family and/or the foundation.

Rules:

- 1) No interruption or rebuttal
- 2) May pass without speaking

(Note: This agenda does not allow for breaks or lunch which can be scheduled as necessary)