

THEMED MEETING CALENDAR

TOPICS

The Value of an Annual Calendar of Meetings

Strategies to Coordinate Multiple Types of Meetings

Options for Developing Calendars

This section describes the value of and strategies for developing and using a dynamic annual calendar of meetings of various types for the governing body and its subgroups. Each governing body has many types of meetings, and each type represents themes that you can anticipate and carefully manage.

One of the most valuable governing body resources to manage is the time of the members. Think of the members' time as an investment that should yield important returns, such as: (1) ideas about how to improve the quality of your services; (2) ways to encourage smarter utilization of your services by your diverse beneficiaries; (3) insights about how to mobilize more resources for your organization's mission and plans; (4) actions to earn trust from your politicians and community leaders; and (5) actions to strengthen the overall financial vitality of your organization. You can guide the use of these time investments by using calendars for your many meeting types.

THE CHALLENGE

The governing body of your teaching hospital in Hanoi has certain types of decisions it needs to make at certain times of the year. You and the chairperson want to plan the timing of meetings to address certain themes of decision-making during specific months or quarters in order to better prepare board members and staff for these key decision points with information and stakeholder inputs. What are the key decision-making processes for your governing body, and

what are the most logical times of the year when these should occur? How would you best develop and follow a calendar of themed meetings when your health challenges are so complex and variable?

THE VALUE OF AN ANNUAL CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

You are all busy community leaders. To use your time and talents wisely, it will be helpful for you and your managers to develop and follow a continuously updated calendar of meetings. This calendar could tell you at a glance not only the dates, times, and locations of the meetings and events, but also the themes for many of the meetings and how you can best prepare for each type of activity.

The chairperson of a family planning association realized that, because their annual financial year begins on January 1 and runs through December 31, she would need to receive an approved budget by the end of October in order to secure funding from a local philanthropic foundation. This same budget, however, was due to the Ministry of Health by September 15 to qualify the organization for a grant from the ministry by January of the next year. These dates demand that the finance committee of the board meet between June and August to develop an appropriate budget, one that is driven by the organization's plans and programs. Most stakeholders can similarly benefit from such advance planning and communication alerts.

TABLE 26.1. Sample calendar and themes for board meetings

Month	Descriptive theme for meeting
September	Draft "Governance Enhancement Plan" reviewed and refined based on self-assessment about board work and performance
October	Final Governance Enhancement Plan considered by board
November	Review, comment, and approve budget for coming year
December	Some form of board education on important topic
January	Routine meetings until end of fiscal year. Every month, board receives board book with report on plans and progress on performance metrics and budget
February	Meeting 1: Medical staff development and engagement focus
March	Board packet, but no meeting
April	Meeting 2: Maximizing stakeholder engagement
May	Board packet, but no meeting

Month	Descriptive theme for meeting
June	Meeting 3: Explore ways to recruit health workers and enhance their skills
July	Special meeting to celebrate employee and health workers' awards
August	Meeting 4: Discuss alternative sources of funding
September	Board packet, but no meeting
October	Meeting 5: Board self-assessment and governance enhancement planning
November	Meeting 6: Review, comment, and approve budget for coming year
December	Some form of board education on important topic

The benefits of a published themed calendar include:

- Trustees and staff can plan their personal travel to avoid missing meetings.
- Subcommittees can shape their annual work plans around key decision deadlines, and you can ask for staff support and key information items well in advance of when they are needed for effective decision-making.
- Staff can know when they will need to produce certain reports, rather than having to respond to a last-minute request from the governing body.
- External stakeholders who may need to be invited to key events are given ample time to organize their calendars.
- Politicians, donors, and media can better plan for their support of key activities and decision-making requirements.

Have a conversation at your next governing body meeting to see what other benefits they can derive from a new approach to calendar planning and distribution.

STRATEGIES TO COORDINATE MULTIPLE TYPES OF MEETINGS

Many health services organizations work to balance the activities of the governing body among these 10 key activities.

1. routine meetings of the governing body
2. routine meetings of the committees and task forces of the governing body
3. special fundraising events to support vulnerable populations, such as women and children
4. deadlines for reports to funding organizations
5. events that celebrate accomplishments by health workers
6. civic and community festivals that need your visible attendance
7. school programs that could benefit from your collaboration
8. orientation and continuing education programming for governing body members and clinicians
9. dedication ceremonies for new programs, equipment, or facilities
10. political events among groups you need support from for the coming year

If you are fortunate enough to have an organizational website, it is easy to develop and maintain digital calendars. See these examples from:

- [a county health department](#)¹
- [the Department of Health in Australia](#)²
- [the Global Fund](#)³

Mapping these meetings not only helps staff plan for materials to be developed and distributed in advance to members, but it also helps identify scheduling conflicts for board members or staff. It further helps to ensure that the people who will participate in a meeting in eight weeks can complete their discussions or secure the insights needed for the decision-making at that future meeting in a logical sequence.

1. Harford County Health Department, “Health Department Calendar of Events” (Bel Air, MD: Harford County Health Dept., 2015). Available at: <http://harfordcountyhealth.com/about/calendar-of-events/>

2. Australian government, Department of Health (DOH), “Calendar of Events” (Canberra: DOH, 2015). Available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/calendar>

3. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, “Events Calendar” (Geneva: Global Fund, 2015). Available at: <http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/events/>

OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPING CALENDARS

The first challenge in developing a master “governance decision-making” calendar is to be sure you invite several people who can help identify all the major meetings in which key stakeholders need to be involved, then map the meetings on a blank calendar. The second challenge is to keep the calendar accurate and up-to-date. The third challenge is to motivate people inside and outside your organization to use the calendar to wisely plan and manage the time of staff and governing body members. Table 26.2 provides actions that can help you manage these challenges.

TABLE 26.2 Recommendations for developing calendars

Challenges	Actions
Invite stakeholders to define calendar events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask key manager and clinical staff to identify key health-related events in the coming year. ■ Ask governing body members to map for the coming year all planned subgroup and committee meetings. ■ Review key social and community events with local community groups, civil society organizations, and political parties.
Keep calendar accurate and updated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assign a staff member to ask governing body members and managers for updates to the dates, venues, and themes of calendar meetings and events. ■ Make sure that the chairperson and CEO review and refine the calendar at each of their meetings. ■ Share updated versions of the calendar periodically with members.
Actively use the calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have the chairperson and managing director ask people at each governing body and subgroup meeting to look at the calendar and invite any edits.

Start small and earn interest in and use of the calendar by your many stakeholders. At the very least, you can develop and publish a paper calendar for the coming 6 to 12 months that you can hand out to all members near the end of the month before the period being planned.