

Facilitation Guide

Consultation Part 2: **Consulting in Unity and Harmony**

An Assembly Development Module Workshop



“The evolution of local and national Bahá’í Assemblies at this time calls for a new state of mind on the part of their members as well as on the part of those who elect them, for the Bahá’í community is engaged in an immense historical process that is entering a critical stage. Bahá’u’lláh has given to the world institutions to operate in an Order designed to canalize the forces of a new civilization.

“. . . Spiritual Assemblies must rise to a new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities as channels of divine guidance, planners of the teaching work, developers of human resources, builders of communities, and loving shepherds of the multitudes. They can realize these prospects through increasing the ability of their members to take counsel together in accordance with the principles of the Faith and to consult with the friends under their jurisdiction, through fostering the spirit of service, through spontaneously collaborating with the Continental Counselors and their auxiliaries, and through cultivating their external relations. Particularly must the progress in the evolution of the institutions be manifest in the multiplication of localities in which the function of the Spiritual Assembly enhances the individual believer’s capacity to serve the Cause and fosters unified action. In sum, the maturity of the Spiritual Assembly must be measured not only by the regularity of its meetings and the efficiency of its functioning, but also by the continuity of the growth of Bahá’í membership, the effectiveness of the interaction between the Assembly and the members of its community, the quality of the spiritual and social life of the community, and the overall sense of vitality of a community in the process of dynamic, ever-advancing development.”

*The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message
to the Bahá’ís of the World, 1996*



Consulting in Unity and Harmony

OVERVIEW FOR FACILITATORS

Purpose

- ★ To provide insight on how to create and maintain healthy group dynamics in the Assembly

This module builds on the work done by individuals to prepare for consultation in Consultation Part One. Its primary focus is how to create and maintain healthy group dynamics in the Assembly. It includes a unity-building exercise and an evaluation of the Assembly's current consultative climate.

What you will find inside your Facilitation Guide:

- ★ **Frontispiece with key quotations.** A one-page sheet containing a quotation from a letter of the Universal House of Justice which provides the foundation of the module. (p. 2)
- ★ **Overview for Facilitators.** The page you are reading. (p. 3)
- ★ **The Assembly Development Process.** A one-page description of the process of Assembly development, the role of these modules within that process, and how to request an Assembly Development representative to facilitate the modules. (p. 4)
- ★ **Guidance for Facilitators.** A four-page collection of suggestions for preparation before the session, tips for facilitating during the session, ideas for closing the session, and guidance on what to do with the workshop report form and evaluation forms after the session. (pp. 5-8)
- ★ **Highlights of this module.** A two-page listing of the module objectives, an agenda outline with times of each segment of the module, and a listing of materials needed. (pp. 9-10)
- ★ **Facilitator's instructions for segments of this module.** A series of pages that provide the purpose and instructions for each section of the module. (pp. 11-37)
- ★ **Description of the Office of Assembly Development.** A two-page overview of the vision and mission of this office and the services it can provide. (unnumbered pages near the end of the Facilitation Guide)
- ★ **Evaluation Forms.** A two-page evaluation form for the facilitator to complete and return to the Office of Assembly Development and a two-page evaluation form for the Assembly to complete two months after the workshop. (unnumbered pages at the end of the Facilitation Guide)

Note: You will also want to obtain a copy of the Participant Handouts.

The Assembly Development Process

“...enabling Assemblies to rise to a ‘new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities’...”

The National Spiritual Assembly focuses its Assembly Development initiatives towards facilitating the development of “a new state of mind” on the part of Assembly members and the community, thereby enabling Assemblies to rise to the “new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities” envisioned by the Universal House of Justice.

The development process is designed to be furthered by presentation of a variety of module workshops, each module covering a distinct topic or function. Use of these workshops will help Assemblies to understand more clearly the spiritual nature of their institution, to improve their performance, and to attain an ever advancing level of maturity as the primary institutions of the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh. When used with the general community, the workshops will heighten appreciation for the station and responsibilities of local Assemblies and deepen the desire to support and assist these institutions in their growth process.

The National Spiritual Assembly highly recommends that each workshop be studied with a Bahá’í facilitator who resides outside the particular Bahá’í community, although these materials may be used by Assemblies on their own. A list of Bahá’ís who serve as facilitators, called Assembly Development Representatives, is available from the Office of Assembly Development of the Bahá’í National Center at (847) 733-3490 or by e-mail to OAD@usbnc.org.

Assemblies may choose to study these workshops as an institution, may invite other Assemblies in their area to study together, or may invite their community to join them in exploring the modules. Workshops may also be used at Bahá’í schools or Institutes. If they are used with both Assembly members and other community members, Assemblies are encouraged to set aside follow-up time at one of their future meetings to consider the impact and implications of what was learned on their collective functioning.

Workshops in this program range from two to five hours in length with the majority averaging about four hours. They are, however, adaptable to different timing needs. Workshops are divided into separate segments which can be selectively deleted if timing needs require this. Optional supplemental materials are also included for use if more time is available.

Guidance for Facilitators

Before the Session

Personal preparation

- ★ Take time to prepare yourself spiritually and materially to facilitate this workshop. Meditate on your role in facilitating the friends' thoughtful study and consultation.
- ★ Read through the workshop and its handouts in advance of the session and ponder the themes in them.
- ★ Pray for assistance. Feel confident that the Blessed Beauty will guide and confirm you as you endeavor to serve the Faith.

Preparation of the course and its materials

- ★ Become familiar with the workshop and its options and extensions. Feel free to duplicate the handouts on colored paper and interleaf them in the Facilitation Guide if this would make facilitation easier for you.
- ★ The amount of time suggested for each segment of the workshop is a minimum only. If the number of participants in a workshop is large and many small groups will be reporting back, you will need to allow more time than the minimum to complete some segments.
- ★ If some of the participants are not proficient in English, consider ways to meet their needs. For instance, those who understand spoken English but do not read it easily could be paired with those who can read quotations aloud. These adjustments may affect the amount of time necessary to complete an activity or exercise.
- ★ Material which appears in italics is provided to supplement and extend the session if more time is available. Determine in advance how many expansions to the module, if any, are appropriate. Some factors to consider are available time, general level of experience and deepening of the participants, and local interest in a particular topic.
- ★ Have materials (such as a few extra handouts, art supplies, extra pens and pencils, small gift item) ready for each participant. It is wise to have slightly more of everything than you anticipate needing in case a larger than expected group of friends attend.
- ★ If the workshop segments you will be using require cards for games or exercises, prepare these beforehand. If workshop

Guidance for Facilitators, continued

segments have demonstrations, practice these once or twice beforehand.

- ★ Select devotional readings, prayers, and music you will want to use and make sure you have the equipment to play any music you might have.

Preparation of the meeting room

- ★ If possible, ask to see the meeting room in advance. Arrive early to set up. Adapt the room set-up to meet your needs, if possible.
- ★ Create an inviting atmosphere of beauty, dignity, and warmth to welcome participants. Possibilities include photographs of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, holy places or great teachers, heroines and heroes; framed quotations, decorating the walls with objects of beauty, tablecloths, arrangements of fresh or dried flowers, lighting, candles, music from diverse cultural backgrounds, bowls of potpourri or drops of rose oil, seating arrangements, and refreshments.

During the Session

Creating and maintaining a spiritual environment

- ★ Warmly greet the participants. Be sure that the spirit of the Faith permeates the room. While conveying the content of the workshop is important, it is equally important that the style of interaction does not feel harsh, nervous, or rushed. Be a bringer of light to the hearts of the group.

Facilitating discussion

- ★ These workshops ask facilitators to raise several questions to the group for possible consultation. If one question fails to elicit much response, move on to another one.
- ★ Express appreciation for each participant’s contribution.
- ★ Be mindful of who has spoken and try to give everyone an opportunity to offer a first comment before giving time for individuals to offer second or third comments. Depending on the size of your group, you may want to go around the room, inviting each person to comment briefly in turn.
- ★ As groups are consulting on quotations and focus questions, go from group to group and listen in, without interrupting the

Guidance for Facilitators, continued

consultative process. You may want to note comments or questions that arise and bring them up when the groups reassemble.

Using time

- ★ When small groups are asked to consult or work on an art project in a certain amount of time, give each group a “5-minute warning” when their time is nearly finished. This could be done either by going from group to group as a reminder or by ringing a small bell.
- ★ Be flexible and sensitive to the needs and understanding of the participants. If a particular question or point engages the group in lengthy but topic-related discussion, it may be preferable to allow participants to continue to pursue an area that intrigues them rather than to cut off discussion and move on to another point or exercise. Participants often experience exploring less material but in greater depth as more satisfying than a hurried look at many aspects of a topic.
- ★ You may choose to make the decision yourself about whether to let a group spend more time on one area and skip later exercises or activities. You may also choose to involve the group as a whole in the decision: “Since this topic is generating a lot of interest, do we want to 1) spend more time here and not explore a later topic, 2) extend the time of our session and not skip any segments, or 3) move on from this topic, go through all the following segments, and end at our original agreed-upon time?”

Dividing participants into small groups

- ★ Put stickers on participants name cards or leave cards with stickers at their place and have them group themselves according to sticker design.
- ★ Divide into groups by the month/season in which one’s birthday falls.
- ★ In theater/auditorium seating, form groups around where participants are sitting.
- ★ Create funny groupings and ask people to choose the group that best describes them (Example: people who love apples are group A; if your favorite color is blue, join group B; if Casablanca is your favorite movie, join group C.)

Guidance for Facilitators, continued

Closing the Session

- If you have Assembly members from several communities attending a session, you may wish to have them work together as an Assembly or work in groups composed of different Assemblies, depending on the exercise.
 - If you have a combination of Assembly and community members attending, you may wish to mix the groups together for some exercises and separate Assembly members from community members for other exercises.
- ★ Provide verbal instructions on how to turn the evaluation forms in.
 - ★ You may want to give a gift to each participant of a card with a beautifully lettered quotation that pertains to the workshop.
 - ★ Encourage Assemblies that went through this workshop in a group larger than their own membership to have a follow-up period at an up-coming meeting to consult on what was learned and how it can be applied to their own functioning.
 - ★ Suggest choosing a date and picking a topic for the next Assembly development workshop.

Please note: Have the participant evaluation forms turned in to you and return them with your evaluation form. Be sure to use the machine readable forms. Give participants their Bahá'í Locality Code and explain how to fill in the forms.

After the Session

- ★ Complete the workshop report form and mail it with the participant evaluations to:

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States,
Office of Assembly Development
1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201
OAD@USBNC.ORG
fax. (847) 733-3486, phone (847) 733-3490

- ★ Send a follow up letter to the Assembly(ies) to thank them for participation and include a copy of their evaluation form to fill out two months after the workshop.

Thank you for serving the Cause by facilitating this Assembly development workshop!

Highlights of Consulting in Unity and Harmony *

Objectives:

Participants will

- ★ Identify attitudes and practices that maintain and enhance unity
- ★ Measure the current consultative climate of the Assembly
- ★ Identify elements which should and should not influence speech
- ★ Recognize when unity is waning and know how to respond appropriately
- ★ Appreciate the wisdom of whole-heartedly supporting the Assembly's decisions

Agenda outline: (Total time: 3 hours, 5 minutes)

- ★ **Introduction** (15 minutes), p. 11
An opportunity to review major points of part one of the consultation module, familiarize participants with the objectives of this module, and present an agenda outline of topics and activities.
- ★ **The importance of unity in the Assembly** (15 minutes), pp. 12-14
A guided discussion and introductory comments by the facilitator to help participants perceive the necessity of attaining and maintaining unity.
- ★ **Enhancing unity in the Assembly** (15 minutes), pp. 15-16
An activity to identify attitudes and practices that enhance unity, followed by an opportunity to identify and write down those qualities of fellow Assembly members which participants find most admirable.
- ★ **Consulting with frankness and love** (35 minutes), pp. 17-19
An activity to measure the current consultative climate of the Assembly, followed by an activity to explore elements which moderate speech. An optional artwork version of the second activity with can be done.
- ★ **Maintaining unity while handling differences** (35 minutes), pp. 21-22
Small group discussion leading participants to two objectives: to learn how to disagree without becoming disunified and to learn how to recognize when unity is waning and respond appropriately.
- ★ **Unity in supporting the Assembly's decisions** (20 minutes), pp. 23-24
Small group discussion to understand the necessity of whole-heartedly supporting the Assembly's decision and to appreciate the wisdom behind this principle.

* This module is designed for participants who have already participated in the module: Consultation Part 1: The Requisites of Consultation.” This module is also designed to be used with Local Spiritual Assemblies. If you're presenting to mixed groups of Assembly and non-Assembly members, skip the activities involving attribute sheets and the consultation climate survey.

Highlights, continued

Session to use if more time is available

★ **Case study** (40 minutes), p. 25

An opportunity to consolidate what has been learned by practicing maintaining a dual focus on topic content and process during consultation.

★ **Closing** (10 minutes), p. 26

Distribution of attribute sheets and optional singing of unifying songs to quicken feelings of unity and being appreciated by fellow Assembly members.

★ ***Practice in balancing frankness and love*** (45 minutes), p. 20

A role play activity allows practice in deciding what needs to be said and choosing the kindest way to say it

Times given for segments are minimums. Module material which appears in italics is provided to supplement and extend the session if more time is available. If less time is available, you can skip whatever section seems to be less relevant to the needs of the group. You may also choose to direct participants to focus only on quotations in their handouts that are bolded, as these are the most vital. Focusing on bolded quotes may also aid participants who are slower readers.

Materials needed

- ★ Prayer book or devotion selections on paper
- ★ Whiteboard, blackboard, or flip chart and markers
- ★ A sheet of blank paper for each Assembly member (both those present and those absent) and extra paper
- ★ A variety of highlighters
- ★ Scissors
- ★ Scotch tape, double stick tape, or access to a copier
- ★ Soft music and equipment to play it on
- ★ *Optional:* A tuning fork or pitch pipe
- ★ *Optional:* Art supplies for each group: one sheet of newsprint, crayons or colored markers
- ★ *Optional:* Unifying songs for closing, such as “I think you’re wonderful” by Red Grammar
- ★ *Optional:* A beautiful copy of the passage “True consultation is spiritual conference in the attitude and atmosphere of love” (p. 32) to give as a gift to each participant.

Note: You will need to inform the sponsoring Assembly that Participant Handouts for each person should be ordered from the Bahá’í Distribution Service prior to the event.

Introduction (15 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To review major points of part one of the consultation module
- ★ To familiarize participants with the objectives of this module
- ★ To present an agenda outline of topics and activities
- ★ To determine what questions and issues participants have on this topic

Activities:

1. Brief devotions

- ★ Open with brief devotions that you have selected or ask for a volunteer.

2. Review of Consultation Part One (5 minutes)

- ★ Review that in “Consultation Part 1: Developing Spiritual Requisites” we established that “Assemblies must rise to a new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities” and that one way to do this is “through increasing the ability of their members to take counsel together in accordance with the principles of the Faith.” We also established that consultation is an art we have yet to master. We focused on attitudes and behaviors that individual members can develop in preparation for consultation.
- ★ Read this quote which addresses the aforementioned points: “In its own meetings it must endeavor to develop skill in the difficult but highly rewarding art of Bahá’í consultation, a process which will require great self-discipline on the part of all members and complete reliance on the power of Bahá’u’lláh.” (Universal House of Justice, 30 July 1972, in Messages from the Universal House of Justice, p. 224.)
- ★ Invite brief comments about participants’ progress towards attaining skill in the art of consultation through working on the personal goals they set at the end of Part One.

3. Overview objectives (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Comment that this module builds on the work done by individuals to prepare for consultation. A primary focus of this module is how to create and maintain healthy group dynamics of Bahá’í consulting bodies.
- ★ Read aloud the objectives of this module and have them posted. See page 9 for a list of the objectives. Make adjustments for any sections that are removed for timing considerations or optional extension sessions that are added.

4. Review agenda (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Go through the agenda for the session, writing an outline of topics to be covered on a whiteboard or previously prepared

Introduction, continued

flip chart. See pages 9-10 for an agenda. Make adjustments for any sections that are removed for timing considerations or optional extension sessions that are added.

5. Invite questions (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Invite participants to share questions they have about this topic.
- ★ Make a list of these and post them. At the end of class, check to make sure that all have been answered or that the questioner has been referred to information elsewhere.

The Importance of Unity in the Assembly

(15 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To perceive the necessity of attaining and maintaining unity

Activities:

1. Individual reading of quotations (5 minutes)

- ★ Have participants silently read the handout “The Importance of Unity in the Assembly” (Participant Handouts pp. 3-4) and underline or highlight key passages that answer these focus questions:
 - What effect does a lack of unity have on the Assembly itself?
 - What effect does a lack of unity have on the process of consultation?
 - What effect does a lack of unity in the Assembly have on the larger community?

2. Sharing answers (5 minutes)

- ★ Ask volunteers to share what they underlined and invite comments.

If the point is not made by participants, comment that one subtle and provocative implication of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement that “stubbornness and persistence in one’s views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden” is that a truth about each situation does exist in some unrecognized form, waiting to be found, but that it will remain hidden unless certain conditions exist within the consulting group.

3. Introductory comments (5 minutes)

- ★ Note that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lists the first condition which must exist for consultation to take place as “absolute unity” and being “wholly free” from estrangement. He also says that: “Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be non-existent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught.”
- ★ Comment that this is very strong language. It stimulates questions, such as “If we don’t have absolute love, harmony, and unity does that mean that we might as well go home? Do effort and progress count for anything? Are we expected to be perfect as opposed to the process of perfecting ourselves in the course of our service?”

The Importance of Unity in the Assembly, continued

The following metaphor by John Kolstoe in his book Consultation: A Universal Lamp of Guidance (pp. 20-21) may provide insight into these questions: When the ideal conditions of love and unity are present, consultation flows freely and the discussion moves up to a higher plane. The effect is like the use of a hydrofoil in boating. A hydrofoil lifts the boat above the normal drag and friction of the water, and the boat proceeds with much greater ease and efficiency than otherwise possible. When estrangement occurs, tension is produced, creating friction and drag. Even with limited unity, Assemblies function and decisions are reached; but when unity is lessened, activities become mechanical and decisions faulty, and joy and spirit are drained. But even if only two members have a vision of the station of consultation and a deep desire to serve Bahá'u'lláh, some degree of unity exists and can be built on.

Optional extension (2 minutes)

- ★ *Go through the opening prayer of the Spiritual Assembly section in Bahá'í Prayers (pp. 137-138), highlighting references to unity and commenting on their implications:*

“We have gathered in this Spiritual Assembly, united in our views and thoughts . . .”

– implies we have at least some degree of unity as a starting point

“Make us . . . manifestations of Thy Divine Unity. . .”

– implies that we can increase the degree of unity

“Make our souls dependent upon the Verses of Thy Divine Unity. . . that we may unite. . .”

– states the desired outcome and how to achieve it

“. . . and become merged together as the rays of Thine effulgent Light; that our thoughts, our views, our feelings may become as one reality, manifesting the spirit of union throughout the world.”

– implies that as white light is a combination of all the colors of the spectrum, so our different thoughts, views, and feelings can attain a dazzling brilliance when all are joined in unity

The Importance of Unity in the Assembly,

continued

- ★ Refer back to the quotation “Bahá’u’lláh has given the promise that in every Assembly where unity and harmony prevail, there His glorious spirit will not only be present, but will animate, sustain and guide all the friends in all their deliberations.”
- ★ Suggest that “prevail” is an interesting word in this context. The dictionary defines it as “to appear or occur as the most important or conspicuous feature or element; to become dominant.” This implies that unity and harmony are the dominant or most conspicuous elements but not necessarily the only elements; one prevails over opposing forces.
- ★ Comment that this word leaves open the door to having Bahá’u’lláh’s spirit present to animate, sustain, and guide even when the “least trace of estrangement” may still be present. We can also have the “united will” spoken of by the Guardian – a unified desire to see the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh progress – while we are still learning to like or appreciate each other as individuals.
- ★ Share the thought that learning to function in unity while valuing a diversity of personalities and perceptions is an on-going part of the maturation process of every Assembly. The end-point, not the starting point, is the condition mentioned in the Assembly’s opening prayer in which “our thoughts, our views, our feelings may become as one reality, manifesting the spirit of union throughout the world.”
- ★ The starting point, though, must be a respect for each Assembly member as a believer who sincerely loves Bahá’u’lláh and who has been called to membership on the Assembly by God Himself, through the spiritual process of Bahá’í elections. We must begin with a willingness to see each other with the eye of God and see in each other a reflection of at least some of the qualities and attributes of God.

Enhancing Unity in the Assembly (15 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To identify attitudes and practices that enhance unity

Activities:

1. Reading and discussion of quotations (5 minutes)

- ★ Have participants read aloud the first four quotations on the handout “How Assembly Members Should See Themselves and Each Other.” (Participant Handouts, pp. 5-6)
- ★ Comment that **one way** of generating and enhancing unity is seeing ourselves in the presence of God.
- ★ **Ask:** How does turning our faces to “the Kingdom on High” affect how we see ourselves and others?
- ★ Comment that turning to “the Kingdom on High” goes beyond reciting the opening prayer. It must be a continuous awareness that we are in the presence of God and that we are servants of His good-pleasure.
- ★ Mention that some Bahá’í communities have an empty chair at Assembly meetings to help them remember that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is sheltering them under His wings. What they say and how they chose to say it are influenced (perhaps moderated) by the feeling that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is present and listening attentively to each person.
- ★ Suggest that a **second way** of generating and enhancing unity is getting to know each other better.
- ★ Comment that often individuals are elected to an Assembly and immediately thrust into the content of the Assembly’s business, without knowing their fellow Assembly members as individuals. Work always occurs in a context, and working with strangers is less effective and less satisfying than working with people one knows well. Wise Assemblies provide opportunities for their members to get to know each other on a human and spiritual basis in addition to being fellow administrators.
- ★ Mention that a **third way** of generating and enhancing unity is seeing others as valuable.
- ★ Suggest that getting to know each other better does not automatically lead to liking and appreciating each other. Sometimes the more we get to know an individual, the more we find him or her having different tastes, preferences, styles, and spiritual struggles. Increased familiarity can lead to

Enhancing Unity in the Assembly, continued

decreased feelings of oneness. The last two quotations on the handout suggest choices we can make to resolve this situation.

2. Reading and discussion of remaining quotations (5 minutes)

- ★ Have participants read aloud the last two quotations.
- ★ Invite comments.
- ★ Comment that while ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s story of Jesus and the white teeth uses an extreme example, these two passages suggest ways we can choose to see others.
- ★ Suggest that we don’t have control over our emotions – who we like, who we find irritating – but we do have choices: we can work on respecting each other, focusing on each other’s positive qualities and contributions to the Assembly’s functioning, and praying for greater unity. These choices set in motion more positive and harmonious spiritual dynamics.

3. Filling out attribute sheets (5 minutes)

Note: If you are working with mixed groups of Assembly and non-Assembly members, skip this activity. Instead, explain the directions below and encourage Assemblies to do this activity as a homework assignment at their next meeting. Assembly members could self-address an envelope, fill out the attribute sheets and cut them up, and then put their slips in each other’s envelopes.

- ★ Mention that sometimes even when we work closely with people, we don’t know how they view us, and often we don’t share our appreciation of their qualities with them.
- ★ To share their feelings about fellow Assembly members, and to learn later how they are seen, have participants fill out the “Attributes Sheet” (Participant Handouts, p. 7) by completing, for each Assembly member, the sentence “The qualities and capacities I most admire and value in you are...”
- ★ Play soft music as participants fill out their sheets. Tell participants that they are free to add comments to their sheets until the last exercise in the session, when the facilitator will need to collect these and distribute them (see instructions contained in “Note to Facilitator” on page 29 in the Facilitation Guide).

Consulting with Frankness and Love

(35 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To measure the current consultative climate of the Assembly
- ★ To become aware of elements moderating speech

Activities:

1. Discussion of a safe environment (5 minutes)

- ★ **Ask:** What are those elements you personally need to have present in an atmosphere to feel safe to discuss your true concerns and share your thoughts and feelings openly?
 - ★ List responses on board.
 - ★ Point out that these elements also describe the consultative environment set forth in the Writings.
 - ★ If “trust” is mentioned, point out that trust can be understood in several ways. We can trust in the character or capacities of an individual. We can also trust in the process of consultation given by the Manifestation as distinct from trust in any particular individual.
 - ★ If “trust” and “respect” are both mentioned, comment that respect is something that each person deserves automatically, even before they open their mouth. Trust, however, is built up gradually, as a response to behavior. Personal trust is earned.

2. Evaluating the consultative climate (10 minutes)

Note: If less than a quorum of a given Assembly is present, the Assembly Climate Survey can be used as a follow-up homework assignment for the Assembly.

- ★ Ask participants to help their Assembly measure the current “ability of their members to take counsel together in accordance with the principles of the Faith” by giving a frank and honest evaluation of the Assembly’s consultative atmosphere. Refer participants to the “Assembly Climate Survey” in the handout (Participant Handouts, p. 8).
- ★ Have participants begin by filling in the name of their Assembly at the top of the sheet.
- ★ Play soft music as participants fill in the survey.
- ★ As you collect the surveys, tell participants that you will score the surveys and mail them back to the Assembly after the workshop along with a page of suggestions on how the

Consulting with Frankness and Love,

continued

Assembly can use the data. Mastercopies of the scoring sheet and the Survey Results page are on pages 32 and 33.

- ★ Suggest that in addition to the institution itself considering the focus questions that will be on this page, individuals can also ask themselves, “What can I do to increase the ability of my Assembly to grow and develop in this area?”
- ★ Ask if there are any questions about this form or the Assembly’s follow-up.

3. Discussion of the concept of the keynote (3 minutes)

- ★ Ask a participant to read aloud the first quotation on their handout “Consulting with frankness and love.” (Participant Handouts, p. 9).
- ★ Comment that this is a very familiar passage. Ask participants what is meant by “keynote.” Most answers will probably circle around the concept of “the main idea or point.”
- ★ Mention that the dictionary also gives a second meaning to “keynote,” which is a note or tone on which a system is founded.
- ★ Suggest that this meaning of keynote opens the door to another understanding of this passage. A keynote is true, pure tone, like that produced by a tuning fork or pitch pipe.
- ★ *Optional: If you have access to a tuning fork, strike it so participants can listen to its tone, the “keynote” to which every instrument in an orchestra tunes. A pitch pipe could also be used.*
- ★ Comment that if we consider “the spirit of frank and loving consultation” as a keynote, our challenge is to find and maintain the balance between frankness and love. If we have frankness without love, our “tone” gets sharp and hurtful. If we have love without frankness, our “tone” gets flat and becomes surface unity only.

4. Individual reading of quotations (5 minutes)

- ★ Have participants read individually the remaining quotations on the handout “Consulting with Frankness and Love” (Participant

Consulting with Frankness and Love,

continued

Handouts, pp. 9-11). and underline (or highlight) key words and phrases which answer the focus questions.

★ Focus questions:

- What elements should influence speech? What elements should not?
- What elements should influence listening?
- What will give birth to “an etiquette of expression worthy of the approaching maturity of the human race”?

1.
5. Discussion of answers (10 minutes)

- 1.
- ★ Make two lists on the board and include participants’ lists of key words and phrases from the first two questions above.
 - ★ Ask the group as a whole for their answers to the last question and write on board or flip chart.
 - ★ Refer back to the quotation on the handout about a kindly tongue (Participant Handouts, p. 10, first full paragraph on the page).
 - ★ Ask: How does a “kindly tongue” clothe words with meaning? What happens to words that are not clothed with meaning?

Optional version of this activity (30 minutes)

(Replacing numbers 4 and 5)

- ★ *If time allows, do the previous activity as a group exercise with artwork, instead of as silent reading and discussion, as described in the following:*

4. Reading of quotations and creating artwork (25 minutes)

- 1.
- ★ *Divide participants into groups of 4-5. Ask each group to read the remaining quotations on the handout “Consulting with frankness and love” and produce a poster or piece of artwork that answers the focus questions.*

5. Groups share artwork (5 minutes)

- 1.
- ★ *Allow 2-3 minutes for each group to share and explain its artwork.*

Optional Extension Session One: *Practice in Balancing Frankness and Love* (45 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To gain practice deciding what needs to be said and the kindest way to say it

Activities:

1. Practicing “looking for white teeth” (10 minutes)

- ★ Comment that sometimes it is easier to understand the theory behind balancing frankness with love and unity than it is to actually do it.
- ★ Suggest that there are often many facts of a situation, not all of which are loving or necessary to raise. Refer back to the maxim participants just read in their handout (Participant Handouts, p. 10) that “Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it.”
- ★ Suggest that we have choices and decisions to make about which truths to share at any moment.
- ★ Give two sample responses to the question “How do you like my dress?”
 - “It’s too small and makes you look fat.”
 - “It’s a beautiful color on you.”
- ★ Ask each participant to turn to his or her neighbor and come up with 1-2 other examples of situations where there are two or more options for responses. Invite volunteers to share their examples.

2. Practicing expressing difficult truths (35 minutes)

- ★ Comment that sometimes an important but difficult-to-hear point must be raised or a sincerely felt disagreement must be surfaced. This may occur during the Assembly’s own consultation or be part of the guidance the Assembly needs to give as part of a personal consultation.
- ★ Ask group as a whole: When an unpleasant but necessary truth must be expressed, what are factors that would make it easier for the hearer to listen receptively?
- ★ If it is not surfaced, suggest that mentioning points of agreement or the merits of a proposal before raising concerns or different points of view helps to acknowledge the value of other person’s contribution.

Practice in Balancing Frankness and Love, *continued*

- ★ Suggest examples of situations in which a difficult point must be raised:
 - A Bahá'í hosting Feast includes passages from the Guardian and the House of Justice in the devotional portion of the Feast.
 - A new believer excitedly suggests that your community of ten buy a Bahá'í center and outlines all the ways this would help the Faith be more visible in the community and attract new believers.
- ^{1.}
- ★ Ask for volunteers to role play different ways each of the situations could be handled with frankness and love.

Maintaining Unity while Handling Differences (35 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To learn how to disagree without becoming disunified
- ★ To recognize when unity is waning and respond appropriately

Activities:

1. Introduction – The clash of differing opinions (3 minutes)

- ★ Point out that when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states Assembly members “must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise,” He then immediately says how this can be done: “This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should any one oppose him, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions.” (Participant Handouts, p. 9)

Note that the context for the “shining spark” coming forth out of a clash is that “no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise.”

- ★ Read the following commentary from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (the second quotation in the Participant Handouts, p. 12 , “Maintaining Unity while Handling Differences”).

“It is important to note that truth emerges after the ‘clash’ of carefully articulated views (which may well be expressed with enthusiasm and vigour), not from the clash of feelings. A clash of feelings is likely to obscure the truth, while a difference of opinion facilitates the discovery of truth.” (Issues Concerning Community Functioning, section 2, p. 6)

- ★ Mention that social scientists have studied the effects of, and difference between, task-oriented conflict and personality-oriented conflict. They have concluded that healthy group functioning and good decision making require the diversity of ideas and approaches implied in the “clash of differing opinions,” whereas the clash of differing egos and personalities impedes both processes.
- ★ Refer back to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement that “The members who are consulting, however, should behave in the utmost love, harmony and sincerity towards each other.” (Participant Handouts, p. 9, fifth quote)

Maintaining Unity while Handling Differences, continued

- ★ Draw the conclusion that we can express sincere and honest differences as long as we do so with the spirit (intention) and form (mode, manner, means, etc.) of love and harmony.

2. Small groups read quotations (15 minutes)

- ★ Comment that Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi all give practical advice for maintaining a spiritually unified condition when we are bringing diverse and strongly felt views together.
- ★ Have participants break into small groups and read through the handout “Maintaining Unity while Handling Differences.” (Participant Handouts, pp. 12-13). Using their own experiences and these quotations, they should answer the focus questions:
 - What are indicators that consultation is on the verge of breaking down?
 - What are some options an Assembly has if this takes place?
 - What can individual Assembly members do?

3. Small groups report back (10 minutes)

- ★ Have the small groups report the results of their consultations.
- ★ If these options are not mentioned by the group, suggest the following:
 - Set aside time to deepen together on consultation and consult about the Assembly's consultative process itself, separate from any particular topic of consultation
 - Invite an Auxiliary Board member or assistant to consult with the Assembly about its challenges with consultation
 - Seek clarification from the Office of Community Administration and Development on points that are in dispute
 - Have each member write down his or her thoughts on a subject and then share these one at a time with no one commenting on anyone's thoughts until all are finished
 - Individuals can continually check the purity of their motives and other spiritual requisites of consultation,

Maintaining Unity while Handling Differences, continued

asking themselves, “Am I losing one of these requisites? If so, how can I regain an appropriate perspective?”

Optional extension: (5-10 minutes)

- ★ *Invite comments about why “the whole system would become discredited” if Assembly members either resigned or stopped coming to meetings because of disharmony (from Participant Handouts, p. 13, last quote).*

4. Group discussion (5 minutes)

- ★ Ask the group as a whole:
 - Who is responsible for seeing that “no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise”?
 - Who is responsible for noticing that “a stage has been reached when enmity and threats are about to occur”?
- ★ Be sure that the point is made that since a lack of unity threatens the consultative process, the functioning of the Assembly, and the ability of the Assembly to meet its responsibilities to the larger community, it is the responsibility of every Assembly member to monitor the consultative climate and, if necessary, ask the Assembly to reestablish an appropriate atmosphere before continuing a discussion.
- ★ *Optional: A short break could be taken at this point – if taken, you can remind participants that they can use the time to fill out the attribute sheets; if not taken, we suggest that you have participants stand and stretch.*

Unity in Supporting the Assembly's Decisions (20 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To understand the necessity of whole-heartedly supporting the Assembly's decision
- ★ To appreciate the wisdom behind this principle

Activities:

1. Reading of quotations (3 minutes)

- ★ Have participants read the handout "Supporting the Assembly's Decisions" (Participant Handouts, pp. 14-15) and underline (or highlight) all words or phrases that describe the appropriate response of Assembly members to the Assembly's decisions.

2. Discussion of quotations (5 minutes)

- ★ Ask volunteers to share passages they underlined as you write these on the board.
- ★ **Ask:** What is implied in "whole-hearted" implementation of a decision?
- ★ Comment that true consultation results in unity. One important result is unified action. An equally important result is an attitude of unity and agreement, a feeling that this is "our" decision.
- ★ Comment that any lingering reservation held by an Assembly member about the wisdom of a decision made after full and frank consultation must be inundated by a determination to make the decision work. Such a reservation must never be manifested by word, deed, or expression.

3. Considering the dynamics of support (10 minutes)

- ★ **Ask:** Why is whole-hearted obedience to the majority view the "only . . . principle on which to conduct the work of an assembly" and "the only means that can ensure the protection and advancement of the Cause"?
- ★ Draw on the board a diagram divided into four quadrants with the top labeled "good decisions" and "bad decisions" and the sides labeled "support" and "lack of support." Ask participants to determine which set(s) of conditions (quadrants I, II, III, IV) will lead to success or failure.

Unity in Supporting the Assembly's Decisions, continued

	<u>Good decisions</u>	<u>Bad decisions</u>
Support	I	II
Lack of Support	III	IV

- ★ **Ask:** What difference, if any, does it make if the lack of support is active opposition or a passive withholding of resources?
- ★ Summarize by saying that decisions lacking support fail, but we can't tell from the fact of failure whether the original decision was sound or not, so we learn nothing to help us make a better decision which can "ensure the protection and advancement of the Cause."
- ★ Refer to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's promise "as it is in unity the truth will be revealed and the wrong made right." (Participant Handouts, pp. 14-15, sixth quote)

Comment that this extraordinary promise – to right any wrongs, if we obey the majority decision – becomes a measure of our trust in God to do so. If we really think He can and will right any wrongs, what could justify disobedience?

- ★ Share the thoughts of John Kolstoe (*Consultation*, p. 64): "It is easy to say: 'If they did the right thing I would support them.' The method for the New Day functions in the reverse condition: 'I pledge my support so that they will ultimately do the right thing.' Mature faith is the understanding that in the long run upholding all decisions is best. Indeed, it is when a person most strongly disagrees with a decision, sacrifices his opinion and supports the Assembly that the system of Bahá'u'lláh shines at its resplendent best."

Optional extension: Evaluating the Assembly's decisions (10 minutes)

- ★ **Ask:**
 - *What is the difference between criticism of a decision and evaluation of a decision?*
 - *When is evaluation appropriate?*

Unity in Supporting the Assembly's Decisions, continued

- ★ *Suggest that Assemblies may want to build in a period of evaluation when making the initial decision and decide how and by whom this evaluation will be implemented.*

4. Ask participants to turn in their “Attribute Sheet”

(Participant's Handouts page 7 from the activities in “Enhancing Unity in the Assembly,” Facilitation Guide pp. 16-17. See instructions contained in “Note to Facilitator” on page 29 in the Facilitation Guide)

Case study (40 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To consolidate what has been learned
- ★ To practice maintaining a dual focus on topic content and process during consultation

Activities:

1. Group consultation (15 minutes)

- ★ Inform the participants that, having now mastered thoroughly the art and skills of consultation ☺, they have been asked to serve as advisors to the Office of Assembly Development, which just received a plea for help from an Assembly experiencing severe difficulties in functioning.
- ★ Divide participants into groups. Preferably these will be actual Assembly groupings, but they could also be mixed groups of 7-10 people.
- ★ Ask groups to read the case study on Participant Handouts. p.16 and fill in page 17 as guided by the boxes on the side of that page. A copy of the case study is enclosed in this Facilitator's Guide along with a list of relevant principles and suggested guidance to give to the Assembly (pp. 34-37). Encourage the group to focus on the process as they seek solutions. Tell them that these are all the facts available and they should accept them.

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: As groups work, cut up and reassemble participants' attribute sheets. Make one sheet for each Assembly member. Either tape the comments to a separate sheet of paper or place the comments on a copier machine and run a copy. If all nine members of the Assembly are not present, the facilitator should assemble the comments for absent members and send their sheets back in care of other Assembly members.

2. Groups report back (3-5 minutes per group)

- ★ Ask a spokesperson from each group to briefly report the group's suggested guidance.
- ★ Share the guidance on pp. 35-37 of the Facilitator's Guide as appropriate.

3. Groups evaluate their consultative process (10 minutes)

- ★ Ask groups to reassemble and consult now about their process of consultation as they discussed the case study. Ask them to

Case study, continued

be mindful of the group dynamics and spiritual atmosphere they created.

4. Groups report back (5-10 minutes)

- ★ Invite volunteers to share aspects of their group's evaluation.
- ★ If groups seem a bit discouraged that they slipped quickly from paying attention to process to focusing largely on content, reassure them that this is common.
- ★ Suggest that Assemblies will improve on maintaining a dual focus if they schedule "process checks" into their meetings on a regular basis.

Closing (10 minutes)

Purpose

- ★ To quicken feelings of unity and being appreciated by fellow Assembly members

Activities:

1. Check to see if all questions addressed (3-5 minutes)

- ★ Check to see that all questions raised at the beginning have been answered or that the questioner has been referred elsewhere.

2. Remind Assemblies of the climate survey

- ★ Remind Assemblies that you will be sending their climate questionnaire to them as soon as you have scored it [see the following pages for your scoring instructions and a cover sheet “Assembly Climate Survey Results” to send to the Assembly with the results]. Check to make sure you have appropriate addresses.

3. Distribute attribute sheets

- ★ Distribute to each Assembly member the sheet of comments made out by others about him/her. Allow time for participants to read these.
- ★ Invite comments about how reading these made people feel.
- ★ Share the comment of John Milton that “Good, the more communicated, more abundant grows.” Encourage Assembly members to express feelings of appreciation to each other (and all the other significant people in their lives!) on an ongoing basis.

Optional:

- ★ *Play or sing together unifying songs, such as “I think you’re wonderful” by Red Grammar.*

4. Closing Prayer

- ★ Have a participant read the short unity prayer (Bahá’í Prayers, p. 204).

Optional:

- ★ *Give each participant a beautiful card or calligraphy version of the passage “True consultation is spiritual conference in the attitude and atmosphere of love” which follows.*

Scoring the Assembly Climate Survey

Procedure for scoring the Assembly Climate Survey

1. If more than one Assembly is participating, separate the surveys by Assembly.
2. For each of the 16 items, figure both the average score and the range of scores.
 - To figure the average score for an item, add together all the answers to the first item given by members of one Assembly and divide by the number of Assembly members responding.
 - To figure the range of scores, list the highest and lowest score for an item.

Example: 9 members answered the first item as follows: 2, 3, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 6
The average score for this is 3.88 (35 divided by 9). The range of scores is 2-6.

3. Enter the range and average below.

Most members act this way towards me: always = 7, most of the time = 6, often = 5, sometimes = 4, seldom = 3, rarely = 2, never = 1

<u>Range</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Items</u>
_____	_____	1. Are sincere and frank with me.
_____	_____	2. Understand what I am trying to say.
_____	_____	3. Interrupt or ignore my comments.
_____	_____	4. Accept me for what I am.
_____	_____	5. Feel free to let me know when I irritate them.
_____	_____	6. Misunderstand things I say or do.
_____	_____	7. Are interested in me.
_____	_____	8. Provide an atmosphere where I can be myself.
_____	_____	9. Keep things to themselves to not hurt my feelings.
_____	_____	10. See what kind of person I really am.
_____	_____	11. Include me in what's going on.
_____	_____	12. Act "judgmental" with me.
_____	_____	13. Are completely frank with me.
_____	_____	14. Recognize when something is bothering me.
_____	_____	15. Respect me as a person.
_____	_____	16. Ridicule me or disapprove if I show any peculiarities.

NOTE: A high score is desirable on all items EXCEPT numbers 3, 6, 9, 12, and 16.

A range of more than 3 points on an item indicates widely differing perceptions, which Assemblies may want to explore in greater depth and detail.

Assembly Climate Survey Results

“The proper functioning of these institutions depends largely on the efforts of their members to familiarize themselves with their duties and to adhere scrupulously to principle in their personal behavior and in the conduct of their official responsibilities. Of relevant importance, too, are their resolve to remove all traces of estrangement and sectarian tendencies from their midst. . . . By their constantly aiming at improving their performance, the communities they guide will reflect a pattern of life that will be a credit to the Faith and will, as a welcome consequence, rekindle hope among the increasingly disillusioned members of society.”

Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá'ís of the World., 1993

The collective data from the climate survey conducted among members attending the Consultation Part 2 Assembly Development module are in the attached form. These results should provide your Assembly with useful information. In addition to highlighting significant strengths and challenges, the data can also show areas of consensus and areas with wider ranges of thought and feeling.

If the range of scores is small on a question, this indicates that Assembly members are in agreement in their evaluation. If the range of scores is wide on some questions (more than 3 points), your Assembly may want to explore the differing perceptions which underlie the scores. After the aforementioned steps the Assembly as a body may want to address the following questions:

Focus questions:

★ In terms of climate:

- what are our areas of greatest strength?
- what are our areas of greatest challenge?
- where would we like to be a year from now?
- what steps will we take to move forward in this direction?
- What should be our next step in the ongoing progress of our change and maturation?

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the module facilitator,

_____ at () _____

Case Study

Focus questions

- ★ What are some of the principles that apply to this situation?
- ★ What counsel would you give to this Assembly?

Having now mastered the art and skills of consultation ☺, you have been asked to serve as advisors to the Office of Community Administration and Development, which just received the following letter. For the purpose of this exercise please assume that these are all the facts available.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Our Assembly is experiencing severe difficulties in functioning. One of our members, John, has such a strong and aggressive personality that he stifles consultation. He often finds fault with the ideas of others and treats other members of the Assembly like they don't know what they are doing. If anybody disagrees with a point he has made, he becomes upset. Our Chairperson tries to be fair by giving everybody an opportunity to speak, but sometimes John is so intimidating that people are afraid to say what is on their minds lest they set him off. It is not unusual for one or more members to be reduced to tears by John's statements. As a result, some of us feel so emotionally drained and distraught after coming to Assembly meetings that we are thinking of resigning our membership on the Assembly. We can't believe that this is how a Local Spiritual Assembly is supposed to function.

We have tried our best to deal with the problem. For example, we have tried to meet without John present, but he either insists on being present at each meeting or, if he hasn't been present, insists upon a review of the decisions taken in his absence, saying that he has a right, as a member of the Assembly, to comment on what was decided. Sometimes he will even convey erroneous information about what the Assembly has decided to the community, and when another Assembly member tries to correct the information, he will make it seem like he has been wronged and the other Assembly member doesn't know what they are talking about.

Complicating the situation is the fact that John does not behave this way when interacting with other members of the community. He has been a Bahá'í for twenty years and was a pioneer for five years in another country, where he served on a National Spiritual Assembly, so everyone else in the community thinks he is a wonderful, dedicated Bahá'í and member of the Assembly.

Please, please help us resolve this dilemma. Many of us just don't feel that we have the expertise or energy to deal with it, and it is keeping us from serving our beloved Faith.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
Four concerned members of the Assembly

Case Study Response Key

Principles involved

★ **No Assembly member should dominate consultation.**

“They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one’s views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Consultation: A Compilation, p. 6, #10.)

“He who expresses an opinion should not voice it as correct and right but set it forth as a contribution to the consensus of opinion; for the light of reality becomes apparent when two opinions coincide.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in Consultation: A Compilation, p. 10, #22.)

“. . . it is not only the right but the sacred obligation of every member to express freely and openly his views, without being afraid of displeasing or alienating any of his fellow-members.” (letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in Consultation: A Compilation, p. 16, #33.)

★ **Fault-finding is prohibited.**

“The honored members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another. . . .” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in Consultation: A Compilation, p. 6, #10.)

“The members of an Assembly must learn to express their views frankly, calmly, without passion or rancour. They must also learn to listen to the opinions of their fellow members without taking offence or belittling the views of another.” (Universal House of Justice, in Lights of Guidance, p. 180, #590.)

★ **Courtesy in consultation is important.**

“They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. . . .” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in Consultation: A Compilation, p. 6, # 10.)

“The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in Consultation: A Compilation, p. 5, #9.)

Case Study Response Key, continued

**Principles
involved,
continued**

★ **Do not resign from the Assembly because of personality clashes.**

“With reference to your questions whether it would be permissible for a believer to resign from the Local Assembly. . . . Personal differences and disagreements among Assembly members surely afford no sufficient ground for such resignation, and certainly cannot justify absence from Assembly meetings.” (on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in The Local Spiritual Assembly, p. 21.)

“The remedy to Assembly inharmony cannot be in the resignation or abstinence of any of its members. It must learn, in spite of disturbing elements, to continue to function as a whole, otherwise the whole system would become discredited through the introduction of exceptions to the rule.” (letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in Consultation: A Compilation, p. 17, #36.)

★ **The Assembly cannot meet without notifying all members of the meeting.**

“The first principle to bear in mind is that every member of an Assembly has an absolute and incontrovertible right to be present at every meeting of that body and to be fully informed of every matter coming before it.” (The Universal House of Justice, in Lights of Guidance, pp. 179-80, #590.)

★ **Assembly members must convey the Assembly’s view to the community without changing that view.**

“But once the opinion of the majority has been ascertained, all the members should automatically and unreservedly obey it, and faithfully carry it out.” (letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in Consultation: A Compilation, pp. 16, #34.)

“It is again not permitted that any one of the honored members object to or censure, whether in or out of the meeting, any decision arrived at previously, though that decision be not right, for such criticism would prevent any decision from being enforced.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in Consultation: A Compilation, p. 6, # 10.)

“The proper functioning of these institutions depends largely on the efforts of their members to familiarize themselves with

Case Study Response Key, continued

their duties and to adhere scrupulously to principle in their personal behavior and in the conduct of their official responsibilities.” (The Universal House of Justice, Ridván message to the Bahá’ís of the world, 1993.)

Suggested Guidance

Suggested guidance in light of these principles:

- ★ The Assembly should share its concerns with an Auxiliary Board member and seek his or her assistance.
- ★ The Assembly should remind John of the principles of consultation and warn him that if he continues his disruptive behavior, the matter will have to be brought to the attention of the National Spiritual Assembly with the recommendation that he be removed from the local Assembly.
- ★ The Assembly should act as an institution – a Spiritual Assembly – rather than as individuals reacting to an individual.

True
Consultation is
spiritual
conference in
the attitude and
atmosphere of
love

'Abdu'l-Bahá