Facilitation Guide

Becoming a More Efficient and Effective Assembly

An Assembly Development Module Workshop

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"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

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Becoming a More Efficient and Effective Assembly
OVERVIEW FOR FACILITATORS

Purpose

★ To discover practical ways to express the spiritual qualities of efficiency and effectiveness

★ To gain a more thorough understanding of the duties of Assembly Secretaries and Chairs

★ To develop an appreciation of the need for a diversity of process skills within the Assembly

This workshop is designed to help Assemblies perceive the relationship of efficiency and effectiveness to the demands implicit in entry by troops, gain a more thorough understanding of the duties of Assembly Secretaries and Chairs, and develop an appreciation of the need for a diversity of process skills within the Assembly. The focus is on finding practical ways to express the spiritual qualities of efficiency and effectiveness in the Assembly's functioning through development of specific skills, such as time management, agenda planning, and delegation.

When facilitated with a group of 5-9 participants from the same Assembly, this workshop will require approximately 2 hours for the core material plus additional time for each optional extension. A larger or more diverse group will require extra time for group discussion and reporting back.

What you will find inside your Facilitation Guide:

★ **Frontispiece with key quotations.** A one-page sheet containing quotations from a letter of the Universal House of Justice which provides the foundation of the workshops. (p. 2)

★ **Overview for Facilitators.** The page you are reading. (p. 3)

★ **The Assembly Development Process.** A description of the process of Assembly development, the role of these workshops within that process, and how to request an Assembly Development Representative to facilitate the workshop. (p. 5)

★ **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. 6-9)

★ **Highlights of this workshop.** A listing of the workshop objectives, an agenda outline with times of each segment of the workshop, and a listing of materials needed. (pp. 10-12)

★ **Facilitator's instructions for segments of this workshop.** A series of pages that provide the purpose and instructions for each section of the workshop. (pp. 13-53)

★ **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 at 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 form for the Assembly to complete two months after the workshop. (unnumbered pages at the end of the Facilitation Guide)

★ **Selection Sheet for Optional Extension Segments.** A double sided sheet that should be sent to Local Spiritual Assembly (ies) prior to the workshop so that the Assembly can select which optional segments it wishes to take.

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

The Assembly Development Process

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

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Before the Session

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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

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.

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

During the Session

★ 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 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, if dogs are your favorite pet, join group D.)

- 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.

Closing the Session

★ 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 Becoming a More Efficient and Effective Assembly

Objectives:

Participants will

★ explore aspects of "a new state of mind"

★ perceive the relationship of efficiency and effectiveness to the demands implicit in entry by troops

★ gain a more thorough understanding of the duties of Assembly Secretaries and Chairs

★ find practical ways to express the spiritual qualities of efficiency and effectiveness in the Assembly's functioning through development of specific skills

Agenda outline: (total time: 2 hours, plus optional extensions)

★ **Introduction** (20 minutes), pp. 13-14

An opportunity to introduce the Assembly development process, familiarize participants with the objectives of this module, and present an agenda outline of topics and activities.

★ **The call to "a new state of mind"** (10 minutes), pp. 15-16

A guided discussion to help participants grasp some of the implications of moving toward "a new state of mind."

★ **Efficiency and effectiveness as spiritual qualities** (25 minutes), pp. 17-19

A review of quotations highlighting efficiency and effectiveness as spiritual qualities which must be reflected in Bahá'í life and in Assembly functioning.

★ **Using differences to enhance Assembly functioning** (40 minutes), pp. 20-22

Activities to develop appreciation of the need for a diversity of process skills within a group and an assessment of how the Assembly's process needs are currently being met.

★ **Establishing a Bahá'í style of administration in the midst of a non-Bahá'í culture** (10 minutes), pp. 51-52

Activities to clarify the influence of the larger society on the style of administration of Bahá'í institutions, with a homework assignment of reflecting and deliberating on ways to combat this influence.

★ **Closing** (10 minutes), p. 53

Inspirational quotations to provide assurance of divine confirmation for all our efforts to help the Assembly grow in efficiency and effectiveness.

Note: This workshop has an unusually large number of optional extensions covering a wide range of topics. Some will be of little interest to one Assembly but of great interest to another Assembly, depending on levels of functioning. Facilitators should consult with the Assembly well in advance of the date of the workshop presentation to determine which of the optional extension topics the Assembly feels would be most beneficial to include. Please send the Assembly the descriptions found at the end of this Facilitator Guide to assist in its decision making.

Extension sessions for use if more time is available

★ *Functioning of the Chair (45 minutes), pp. 23-28*

An opportunity to gain a more thorough understanding of the duties and qualities of a good Chair, coupled with tips on how the job of chairing can be performed more effectively.

★ *Facilitating consultation (10 minutes), p. 29*

A review of practical steps the Chair and other Assembly members can take to help consultation flow smoothly and efficiently.

★ *Functioning of the Secretary (30 minutes), pp. 30-32*

A review of the many and varied responsibilities which fall to the secretary, followed by practice in splitting up secretarial functions among several people.

★ *Managing the Assembly's time (35 minutes), pp. 33-39*

An overview of practices that can be used before and during meetings to manage the Assembly's time more efficiently and ensure that the Assembly's decisions are carried out.

★ *Planning effective agendas (40 minutes), pp. 40-45*

Activities to become familiar with elements that make agendas effective planning tools and an opportunity to practice improving a generic agenda.

★ *Delegation within the Assembly and beyond (25 minutes), pp. 46-48*

Activities that explore why delegation is beneficial to both the Assembly and the community, when a task can be delegated, and how to delegate effectively.

★ *Avoiding officer burnout (25 minutes), pp. 49-50*

Small group discussion of a case study focused on discovering practical ways the Assembly can support its officers in the performance of their responsibilities.

If an Assembly is interested in material on the functioning of the Treasurer, please refer them to the Office of the Treasurer at the Bahá'í National Center.

Times given above are minimums based on a group of 5-9 participants from the same Assembly. A larger or more diverse group will require extra time for group discussion and reporting back. Material which appears in italics is provided to supplement

Highlights, continued

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 quotations may also aid participants who are slower readers.

Materials needed

★ Whiteboard, blackboard or flip chart, markers, and a variety of highlighters

★ Soft music for reflection and planning time

★ *Optional: Overhead projector*

★ *Optional: Colored self-sticking dots, 3 per participant*

★ *Optional: A clear jar or goldfish bowl; a few large rocks, several smaller rocks, pebbles, and sand*

★ *Optional: A beautiful card or calligraphy rendition of a passage of Shoghi Effendi to give as a gift to each participant*

Note: You will need to inform the sponsoring Assembly that Participant Handouts for each participant should be ordered directly from the Bahá'í Distribution Service prior to the workshop

Introduction and Objectives (20 minutes)

Purpose:

★ To introduce the Assembly development process

★ To familiarize participants with the objectives of this module

★ To present an agenda outline of topics and activities

Activities:

1. Brief devotions

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

2. Introduction (5-8 minutes)

★ Give a brief introduction to the resources of the Office of Assembly Development and the Assembly Development Module Workshops (see the description of the Office of Assembly Development which is attached toward the end of the Facilitation Guide). Highlight that the purpose of the workshops is to facilitate 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.

★ Note that a primary focus of this particular workshop is to help the Assembly find practical ways to express the spiritual qualities of efficiency and effectiveness in the its functioning.

★ Mention that in its 1996 Ridván message to the Bahá'ís of the World the Universal House of Justice stated, "As for the institutions, entry by troops will act upon them as much as they will act upon it."

★ Comment that as the process of entry by troops steadily advances, Assemblies will undoubtedly find that administering larger communities full of believers with diverse skills and needs requires more efficient ways of functioning. The number of issues brought to the Assembly, the complexity of these issues, and the weightiness of these issues will both allow and force Assemblies to grow further into their role of channels of God's grace to the towns under their jurisdiction. (You may choose to give, as an example, the difference between deciding whether to serve coleslaw or potato salad at a unity picnic and having to deal with issues such as domestic violence within the community.)

★ Mention that this process of maturation was foreshadowed by the House of Justice several decades ago in the 1971 and 1972 Ridván letters [these two quotations are included in "Consequences of Becoming Efficient and Effective," Participant Handouts, pp. 7-8]:

"The twin processes so clearly described by the beloved Guardian [the steady progress and consolidation of the Cause of God and the progressive disintegration of the old world order] . . . will undoubtedly impose upon us new tasks, the obligation of devising new approaches to teaching, of demonstrating more clearly to a disillusioned world the Bahá'í way of life and making more effective the administrative institutions of the Faith. The authority and influence of National and Local Spiritual Assemblies will have to be strengthened in order to deal with larger Bahá'í communities. . . ." (Ridván 1971)

"The divergence between the ways of the world and of the Cause of God becomes ever wider. And yet the two must come together. . . . Such a process will require a great development in the maturity and effectiveness of Local Spiritual Assemblies." (Ridván 1972)

★ Comment that Assembly efficiency can be increased through a more thorough understanding of the duties of the Assembly and its officers and through development of specific skills, such as time management, agenda planning, and delegation. This workshop will help to address these needs.

3. Overview objectives (1 minute)

★ Read aloud the workshop objectives and have them posted.

★ See page 10 for a list of objectives. Make adjustments for any sections that are removed for timing considerations or optional extension sessions that are added.

4. Review agenda (1 minute)

★ Go through the agenda for the session, writing an outline of topics to be covered on a whiteboard or flip chart.

★ See pages 10-11 for an agenda. Make adjustments for any sections that are removed for timing considerations or optional extension sessions that are added.

5. Sharing questions (5 minutes)

★ Invite participants to share their questions about this topic.

★ Make a list of these and, 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 Call to "A New State of Mind" (10 minutes)

Purpose

★ To grasp some implications of moving toward "a new state of mind"

Activities:

1. Discussion of quotations (5 minutes)

★ Have a participant read aloud the first quotation on the handout "The Call to a New State of Mind" (see Participant Handouts, pp. 3-4).

★ Invite participants to share thoughts and feelings about "a new state of mind" and the process of moving toward it.

★ Offer the thought that one implication is the need for all of us – newly elected officers and veterans who have functioned in a particular capacity for decades – to listen to "old" quotations with "new" ears in order to find new insights in familiar passages.

★ Another implication is that this new state of mind is not a one-time paradigm shift – a condition of once we "get it," we will necessarily "have it" forever – as much as a continuing process of reorienting our minds from the way we currently do things to the descriptions of the functioning of the Administrative Order – the blend of efficiency and love – found in the Writings and the Ridván messages.

★ Comment that it is important for Assemblies to recognize that no one system or method of operation will work well indefinitely. The community will grow, the responsibilities of the institution will expand, the personal circumstances of individual Assembly members and officers will change. An efficient, effective Assembly is one that can accommodate these inevitable developments without any serious disruption of its harmony and energetic functioning.

★ *You may also choose to share another thought about new states of mind: It is normal to slide back into "old" states of mind – esp. under stress – for quite a while. States of mind are habits, or default settings, which take conscious, deliberate effort and time to change.*

Optional extension: Further discussion of quotations

★ *Have participants read aloud the remaining quotations on "The Call to a New State of Mind." The following questions can be asked in any order, and you have the option to ask them after the paragraph in question or after all quotations are read.*

Correlating handout:

★ "The Call to a New State of Mind" pp. 3-4

★ *Ask the group as a whole:*

- *How might "an expansion of thought" be stimulated? (par. 3)*

- *What might fall into the category of "the obscuring dust of acquired knowledge"? (par. 5)*

- *What are some of the assumptions and conceptions we have in general about institutions, their authority, and "what is natural and appropriate in relationships"? (par. 6)*

- *What assumptions and conceptions do we bring to our service as members of Assemblies? (par. 6)*

- *Where do these assumptions and conceptions come from? (par. 6)*

- *How do we remove "obscuring dust" and "clear the ground for new conceptions of social organization"? (par. 5 & par. 4)*

- *How comfortable is the process of "ever more rapid change"? (par. 8)*

- *Is resisting or hiding from this "onrushing" and "quickening wind" an option for us? for humanity as a whole? (par. 4)*

★ *Ask for thoughts on the process of "experiencing the rigorous effects" of an "onrushing" and "quickening wind" ventilating "the modes of thought of us all, renewing, clarifying, and amplifying our perspectives." (par. 4)*

★ *Ask for one word descriptions of the feelings that being part of such a process evokes. Acknowledge as a normal part of the change process all the feelings, whether they express excitement or reservations.*

2. Read passage, underline, and share (3-5 minutes)

★ Ask participants to read the passage from the Ridván 1996 message from the Universal House of Justice (Participant Handouts, p. 3) silently and underline or highlight what they feel are key words or phrases that have particular implications for the topic of this module.

★ Invite participants to share what they have underlined.

Efficiency and Effectiveness as Spiritual Qualities (25 minutes)

Purpose

★ To appreciate that efficiency and effectiveness are among the spiritual qualities which must be reflected in Bahá'í life and in Assembly functioning

Materials needed:
★ Highlighters
★ Whiteboard & markers

Correlating handouts:
★ "Efficiency and Effectiveness as Spiritual Qualities" pp. 5-6
★ "Consequences of Becoming Efficient and Effective" pp. 7-8

Setting up the activities

★ Read aloud the first quotation on the handout "Efficiency and Effectiveness as Spiritual Qualities" (Participant Handouts, p. 5).

"In a period of history dominated by the surging energy, the rebellious spirit and frenetic activity of adolescence, it is difficult to grasp the distinguishing elements of the mature society to which Bahá'u'lláh beckons all humanity. The models of the old world order blur vision of that which must be perceived; for these models were, in many instances, conceived in rebellion and retain the characteristics of the revolutions peculiar to an adolescent . . . period in the evolution of human society." *The Universal House of Justice, December 29, 1988.*

★ Comment that one of the ways that "the models of the old world order blur vision of that which must be perceived" is by implying that "efficiency" is the opposite of "spiritual" and that we have to chose to be one or the other. This is not the Bahá'í perspective at all.

★ Mention that the Multiple Author Refer (MARS) computer search program shows nearly 200 references to "efficiency, efficient, efficiently" and nearly 400 references to "effectiveness, effective, effectively." Looking through these numerous references shows that these are spiritual qualities greatly prized in the Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

★ Mention also Shoghi Effendi's description of Bahá'u'lláh as "the Organizer of the entire planet." (*God Passes By*, p. 93.)

★ Share dictionary definitions of "efficient" and "effective."

Efficient = performing or functioning in the best possible and least wasteful manner; competent; capable

Effective = adequate to accomplish a purpose; producing the intended or expected result

★ Comment that these definitions imply skillful use of energy to accomplish desired results with little waste of effort

Optional: Share the comment that the Bahá'í community at this stage in its functioning sometimes tends to work with, as one

believer has described, "oceans of devotion and mountains of inefficiency."

★ Point out that when these two qualities are mentioned in the Writings, they are often mentioned in conjunction with other spiritual qualities. An example of this is the call of the Universal House of Justice, in its Ridván 1996 letter, for "the raising up of a large number of believers who are trained to foster and facilitate the process of entry by troops with efficiency and love."

Activities:

1. Reading quotations (10 minutes)

★ Have participants read aloud the remaining quotations from Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice on the handout "Efficiency and Effectiveness as Spiritual Qualities" (Participants Handouts, pp. 5-6).

★ Ask participants to underline or highlight, as they listen, qualities mentioned in partnership with efficiency and effectiveness.

★ Ask participants to share combinations and pairings of qualities.

2. Reading quotations (10 minutes)

★ Ask participants to silently read through the quotations on the handout "Consequences of Becoming Efficient and Effective," (Participant Handouts, pp. 7-8) looking for answers to the focus questions:

  • What does becoming more efficient and effective allow?

  • What does failure to become more efficient and effective hinder?

★ Ask volunteers to share answers they found.

★ Point out that the Universal House of Justice noted that "It is at this local level of Bahá'í community life, the very foundation of the administrative structure of the Faith, that we so often find lack of adequate strength and efficiency." (This quotation is on the top of the handout on page 8.)

Efficiency and Effectiveness as Spiritual Qualities, continued

★ Comment that these quotations make clear that the Assembly and its members must develop the qualities of efficiency and effectiveness in addition to other spiritual qualities they strive to manifest individually and collectively. Efficiency and effectiveness must, however, be exercised in a balanced manner, rather than solely as an end in themselves. When developed and used in harmony with other qualities, they become the means that enable the Assembly to achieve its ends – propagating the Faith and establishing Bahá'u'lláh's New World Order.

Optional extension: Memorization of the Writings
(5-10 minutes)

★ *Write the following verse (Participant Handouts p. 5) on a board:*

"Systematization . . . implies an orderliness of approach in all that pertains to Bahá'í service. . . . It suggests the need to be clear-headed, methodical, efficient, constant, balanced and harmonious. Systematization is a necessary mode of functioning animated by the urgency to act."

★ *Have participants recite in unison. Remove 2-3 key words after each recitation, until the verse is memorized. Symbols may be placed above the words to aid in memorization.*

Using Differences to Enhance Assembly Functioning (40 minutes)

Purpose

★ To appreciate the need for a diversity of process skills within a group

★ To assess how the Assembly's process needs are currently being met

Materials needed:

★ Flip chart or whiteboard & markers

★ *Optional: overhead projector*

Correlating handouts:

★ "Using Differences to Enhance Assembly Functioning" p. 9

★ "Task and Maintenance Functions in Decision-Making Groups" pp. 10-11

Setting up the activities

★ Comment that one of the great strengths of an Assembly is the diversity of skills and capacities its members bring with them.

Activities:

1. Reading quotations (5 minutes)

★ Ask participants to read aloud quotations from the handout "Using Differences to Enhance Assembly Functioning" (Participant Handouts, p. 9).

★ Comment that the last quotation, from a letter of the Universal House of Justice clarifying the meaning of the term "people of capacity," expands our understanding of this concept to encompass a wider range of skills and attributes. The common denominator of people of capacity seems to be the ability "to respond actively to the needs of their environment and make a difference to it."

★ Point out that the House of Justice notes that in some cases capacity "has already been amply demonstrated; in others it is still latent but can be developed."

2. Becoming familiar with group process functions (3 minutes)

★ Mention that social science researchers have discovered that the process by which decision-making groups accomplish their work includes many roles or functions. Some of these relate to helping the group perform its tasks. Others relate to maintaining relationships among its members. All of these functions must be performed for the group to work with optimal efficiency and effectiveness.

★ Read aloud the list of functions from the table on the handout "Task and Maintenance Functions in Decision-Making Groups" (Participant Handouts, p. 11). After reading each function, ask volunteers to give a sample statement or comment to illustrate what the function sounds like.

3. Group discussion (5-15 minutes)

★ Go through the list again, as a group, function by function, and briefly discuss what effect it would have on the Assembly's functioning if this particular role were not being performed.

What would the group feel like? How would its effectiveness be diminished?

★ *If time does not allow going through the entire list, ask the same questions about a few functions, such as encourager, summarizer, evaluator of the emotional climate, coordinator, and tension reliever.*

4. Evaluation of process functions in the Assembly
(20 minutes)

★ Ask each participant to write his or her name next to the functions they feel they typically perform in Assembly consultation. Ask each to check the roles they rarely perform.

★ Ask each person to then write the names of fellow Assembly members next to the role(s) they feel these members often perform. Note that several people may play the same role.

★ *Optional extension: As a group, go through the list and identify which functions the Chairman performs alone and which are the shared responsibility of the Chair and the other members of the Assembly. [Note to facilitators: none of these functions is the sole responsibility of the Chair.]*

★ Ask participants to share the names they wrote next to each function. Assemble these on a flip chart or board as a master list showing how task and maintenance functions are performed in the Assembly. [Note to facilitators: If more than one Assembly is participating in the workshop, make the appropriate number of master lists.]

★ If there seem to be any gaps or weaknesses in functions, comment that one option is to ask members to ponder prayerfully whether they could, as an element of the "heroic deeds of service to the Cause, which will astonish and inspire" called for by the Universal House of Justice (Ridván 1996, 7.14), stretch their comfort zones and increase their capacities to fill one or more of the missing functions.

★ Comment that the challenge is to move our thinking from "What contribution would I like to make? What is easy and natural for me to do?" to "What functions does a healthy group need to have performed? How can I help supply my Assembly with what it needs to function in the most mature and effective manner?"

★ *Optional: Display p. 47, a cartoon with these questions, on an overhead projector. Leave this up as John Kolstoe's thoughts are read aloud. If no overhead projector is available, the facilitator could simply hold this page up.*

★ Ask a volunteer to read aloud "Thoughts of John Kolstoe on Doing What is Needed," (Participant Handouts, p. 10). Explain that Mr. Kolstoe, the author of the book *Consultation: A Universal Lamp of Guidance*, has been a teacher and administrator of the Faith for many years and brings both knowledge of the Writings and "in the trenches" experience to bear on many topics.

Note: If Optional Extension Number 2 (below) is not done in class, suggest the Assembly do this as a homework assignment.

Two optional extensions:

1. Have small groups create an advertising poster encouraging volunteers to take on difficult to fill task or maintenance functions. Allow time for groups to share their posters.

2. Depending on available time and the number of Assembly members present, the following could be done as an extension session now or as a follow up session at one of the Assembly's regular meetings. If not done at this time, call participants' attention to the questions on their handout (p.10):

Questions for Assembly consultation:

- *Are there functions which are not being performed by any member of the Assembly?*

- *If so, how can the role(s) be deliberately cultivated and incorporated into the Assembly's functioning?*

- *How can the Assembly, in its role as "developer of human resources," ensure that all functions are performed, even if some of them are not a natural gift of its members?*

Note to facilitators:

★ Go through whichever optional extensions the Assembly has requested at this point, followed by "Establishing a Bahá'í Style of Administration in the Midst of a Non-Bahá'í Culture" (pp. 43-44 of this Guide) and the closing activity. A break may be taken whenever needed.

Purpose

★ To gain a more thorough understanding of the duties of the Chair of the Assembly

★ To share tips on how the job of chairing can be performed more effectively

Setting up the activities

★ Comment that the House of Justice has written that the efficient, effective functioning of a Local Spiritual Assembly depends largely on its officers properly carrying out their responsibilities:

> "In the courses for Local Assembly members special attention should be paid to . . . the functions and duties of the Assembly's officers . . . upon the proper discharge of whose responsibilities the efficient functioning of the Assembly largely depends. . . ." (From a letter dated April 17, 1981, to all National Spiritual Assemblies, in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, p. 485.) (Participant Handouts, p. 12, first quotation)

★ Comment that just as Bahá'í consultation differs from the decision making practices of other groups, the duties of a Bahá'í Chair differ from those who chair other meetings.

Activities:

1. Studying the duties of the Chair (10 minutes)

★ Refer participants to the handout "Functioning of the Chair" (Participant Handouts, pp. 12-13).

★ Mention that a familiar passage by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on requisites of Assembly functioning, corrected in 1997 at the request of the Universal House of Justice, contains illuminating guidance on the role of the Chair. Ask a participant to read aloud this first quotation under the heading "Duties of the Chair."

★ Summarize that these newly inserted sentences contain the steps of electing a Chair, laying down process guidelines for meetings and discussions, and empowering the Chair to "protect and enforce" these "rules and regulations" so as to ensure there is no "conversing on superfluous and extraneous matters." Share the thought that these steps have now been elevated in our thinking to be as important as establishing love and harmony among the members of the Assembly. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's linking of these two conditions in one paragraph is another illustration of the close and complementary nature of the spiritual qualities of love and efficiency.

★ Ask a participant to read aloud the next two quotations, a list of duties of the Chair as summarized in *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities* and a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi.

★ Summarize that systems such as "Robert's Rules of Order" have no authority in Bahá'í consultation. The Chair does not cast a deciding vote in the case of a tie. The Chair, does, however, have the right to participate fully in the discussion, as well as chair the meeting, as the letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi clarifies.

★ Comment that the Bahá'í Chair does not have a higher position or greater authority than other members of the Assembly, nor is the Chair presumed to be the prime source of knowledge. He or she does have the leadership responsibilities of encouraging the participation of all members, guiding the flow of consultation, and upholding the guidelines the Assembly has established for itself.

★ Refer participants to the handout "Thoughts on the Job of Chair, from John Kolstoe" (Participant Handouts, pp. 14-15). Ask a volunteer to read these comments aloud.

2. Identifying qualities of a good Chair (3-5 minutes)

★ Ask participants to list qualities that make a good chair. Put these on a flip chart. Offer these qualities, if they are not mentioned:

- ability to be firm, tempered with tact and politeness
- knowledgeable about consultation
- impartial
- capacity to be quick thinking during the meeting
- patient
- not quick to anger

★ Point out that an ideal Chair possessing all these qualities may not be available from among the pool of Assembly members, but all Chairs can work on acquiring in greater measure any qualities that they feel they lack.

★ Share the comforting quotation "If we turn our gaze to the high qualifications of the members of Bahá'í Assembly . . . we are filled with feelings of unworthiness and dismay, and would

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Materials needed:
★ Flip chart or whiteboard
★ markers

Correlating handouts:
★ "Functioning of the Chair" pp. 12-13
★ "Thoughts on the Job of Chair, from John Kolstoe" pp. 14-15
★ "Helping the Assembly Move Through its Agenda" p. 16
★ "Encouraging the Participation of all Members" p. 17
★ "Helping the Assembly Find Closure" p. 18
★ "Dealing with Anger, Conflict, and Hurt Feelings" p. 19

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feel truly disheartened but for the comforting thought that if we rise to play nobly our part every deficiency in our lives will be more than compensated by the all-conquering spirit of His grace and power." Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 88.

3. Tips for helping the Assembly move through its agenda (3 minutes)

★ Refer participants to their handout "Helping the Assembly Move Through its Agenda" (Participant Handouts, p. 16). Briefly talk through these, mentioning that a separate optional extension on agenda planning is available.

4. Tips for encouraging the participation of all members (5 minutes)

★ Refer participants to their handout "Encouraging the Participation of All Members" (Participant Handouts, p. 17).

★ Read through the following points, one by one. After each, ask volunteers for an example of a sentence or two the Chair might use. If no participants volunteer comments, share the suggestions that follow each point.

- **Solicit comments from quieter members of the Assembly.**

  Make an opening for less assertive members to share their thoughts without putting them on the spot. Be aware of cultural differences about assertiveness.

  Example: "Jerome, we have heard many thoughts on this. Do you have comments or concerns to add to the consultation at this time?" or "Several of us have addressed this topic. What is the thinking of those who have not yet commented?"

- **Note the order of requests to speak from members.**

  This helps avoid any apparent discourtesy or injustice. You may want to let those who have not previously spoken share their thoughts before acknowledging those who have already expressed themselves.

  Example: "Jamal, I know you have another thought to share, but I'd like to let Nancy speak first since she hasn't spoken yet."

- **Intervene to stop interruptions.**

  Make sure that each member is allowed to share his or her comments in an open, listening environment. If an interruption occurs, immediately break in to invite the original speaker to continue his or her thought. Be aware that women and minorities are disproportionately interrupted.

  Example: "I think Alicia is still in the process of sharing her thoughts with us."

- **Prevent domination of the Assembly by one or more members.**

  The Assembly has elected you to protect and preserve a consultative atmosphere. Feel the authority given to you for this purpose and exercise it lovingly but firmly. While the Chair has a special responsibility to facilitate the flow of consultation, it is the duty of every Assembly member to see that the consultative process is upheld. Each member should support you in the exercise of your authority, and each should feel free to comment, "I would like to hear from those who have not yet spoken."

  Example: "Becky, you have expressed your view on this matter several times. Are there other points of view?"

5. Tips for helping the Assembly find closure (3-5 minutes)

★ Ask participants:

- What physical signs would indicate to the Chair that people are not in agreement?

  [Sample responses: grim faces, frowning, folded arms, silence, anger, voices pitched higher and louder]

- What physical signs would indicate to the Chair that people agree?

  [Sample responses: calm but excited atmosphere, enthusiasm]

★ Comment that disagreement is often easier to spot than agreement. Ideas sometimes seem to roll along without resolution.

★ Refer participants to their handout "Helping the Assembly Find Closure" (Participant Handouts, p. 18). Read through these tips briefly.

★ Mention that closure does not necessarily mean making a decision about the topic at hand. The Assembly could reach consensus that the topic should be postponed and no decision made at this meeting.

6. Ensuring implementation of Assembly decisions (1 minute)

★ Comment that at the end of the meeting, the Chair may want to repeat, or ask the Secretary to read back, decisions that have been made, identifying who is responsible for what and by when. Including this information in the minutes will make it easier for the Assembly to follow up on progress toward implementation.

★ Mention that a separate optional extension on time management, including how to use an implementation list, is available.

7. Chairing without dominating (3-5 minutes)

★ Comment that an effective Chair must find a balance between being passive and being controlling. He or she must be involved without dominating. This requires personal monitoring. The Chair may want to occasionally ask the Assembly for general feedback on his or her chairing style.

★ Acknowledge that, inevitably, some Assembly members will prefer a Chair with a firmer hand and others will prefer a looser style, but all members should feel that the consultative atmosphere allows them to express themselves and fully consider the matters before them. All members should feel free to say "I think we are moving along too quickly. I would welcome a chance to consider other possible options before we make a decision."

★ Mention that Assemblies sometimes elect strong personalities to serve as Chair. This may result in some Assembly members feeling that the Chair is dominating the meetings. Such a perception can certainly be addressed, either privately with the Chair or with the whole institution. The Assembly also has the opportunity to choose a different Chair each year.

★ If the current Chair consistently performs duties in an unsatisfactory manner, the Assembly may relieve him or her of the office and arrange for another Assembly member to carry out the duties of chairing. More guidance on this situation is available in *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, p. 3.10.

8. Chairing through conflict (10 minutes)

★ Comment that moments of conflict are critical times in the life of any group. How they are handled affirms or undermines the values and stated beliefs of the group. They present the Assembly and its members with a challenge: "We know what the Writings say about consultation; here's how we're actually going to operate."

★ Feelings of hurt and anger that are not addressed openly do not go away. They will often re-emerge in future discussions. In addition, simply moving on to the next agenda item as if nothing out of the ordinary is happening is to say, by default, "We can't talk about what is important to us here. The Assembly is not a place to share our real thoughts. Certain subjects are off-limits." Allowing such unspoken ground rules to get established ensures that the Assembly's functioning will fall far short of the standard of consultation to which we are called.

★ Share the thought that the Chair can help the Assembly grow through these challenging situations in several ways.

★ Refer participants to their handout "Dealing with Anger, Conflict, and Hurt Feelings" (Participant Handouts, p. 19). Briefly talk through these. End by mentioning that a whole Assembly development workshop on conflict is being developed.

Optional Extension Session Two: *Facilitating Consultation* (10 minutes)

Purpose

★ To review practical steps the Chair and other Assembly members can take to help consultation flow smoothly

Setting up the activities

★ Comment that finely developed consultation skills are necessary for effective Assembly meetings. Clearly, an Assembly will be most efficient when all of its members learn and practice these skills, but at a minimum the Chair should facilitate consultation by using and modeling them.

★ Mention that a full two-part workshop on consultation is available as part of the Assembly Development Module Workshop series.

Activities:

1. Reading through handout on facilitation (5 minutes)

★ Read through the points on "Facilitating Consultation" (Participant Handouts, p. 20).

2. Group discussion (5 minutes)

★ Ask if participants have other facilitation tips to add to this list.

Optional:

★ *Ask: "When these points are in operation, what outcomes can be expected?"*

★ *Write participants' responses on a flip chart.*

★ *Give each participant three colored self-sticking dots. Allow participants, in turn, to place their dots next to the three outcomes they value most highly. After all participants have "voted" for their choices, the group will have a graphic representation of the outcomes it collectively values most highly, as well as tips on how to achieve those outcomes.*

Materials needed:

★ *Optional: Flip chart and markers*

★ *Optional: colored self-sticking dots*

Correlating handout:

★ "Facilitating Consultation" p. 20

Purpose

★ To appreciate the many and varied responsibilities which fall to the Secretary

★ To explore possible ways to split up secretarial functions among several people

Materials needed:

★ Flip chart

★ markers

Correlating handouts:

★ "Functioning of the Secretary" p. 21

★ "Thoughts on the Job of Secretary, from John Kolstoe" pp. 22-23

★ "Splitting up Secretarial Functions" p. 24

★ "Tips for Secretaries" p. 25

Setting up the activities

★ Comment that the House of Justice has written that the efficient, effective functioning of a Local Spiritual Assembly depends largely on its officers properly carrying out their responsibilities:

★ "In the courses for Local Assembly members special attention should be paid to . . . the functions and duties of the Assembly's officers, especially those of the secretary, upon the proper discharge of whose responsibilities the efficient functioning of the Assembly largely depends. . . ." (From a letter dated April 17, 1981 to all National Spiritual Assemblies, in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, p. 485.) (Participant Handouts, p. 21, first quotation)

Activities:

1. Studying the duties of the Secretary (10 minutes)

★ Refer participants to "Functioning of the Secretary" (Participant Handouts, p. 21) and ask a participant to read aloud the list of duties of the Secretary as summarized in *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*.

★ Refer participants to the handout "Thoughts on the Job of Secretary, from John Kolstoe" (Participant Handouts, p. 22-23). Share Kolstoe's thought that little is said in the Writings about the functions of Assembly officers and his three observations about why this might be so.

★ Read aloud two paragraphs of Kolstoe's comments, the one beginning "The secretary, like all other members. . ." and the one beginning "Day in and day out . . ." Encourage participants to review the other comments later.

2. Pairs activity (10 minutes)

★ Refer back to the comment of the House of Justice that the efficient, effective functioning of a Local Spiritual Assembly depends largely on its officers, especially the Secretary, properly carrying out their responsibilities.

★ Comment that the job of the Secretary is an enormous one, but the Assembly can divide up the secretarial functions among as many of its members as it feels is necessary, depending on the size of the community and the amount of work involved.

★ Mention that Assembly Secretaries experience "burnout" more than any other officer. Suggest that this is an avoidable form of stress, as a wise Assembly will periodically evaluate its Secretariat to ensure that the work load does not become overly burdensome to any member. It is neither efficient nor effective for Secretaries to suffer in silence.

★ Refer participants to "Splitting up Secretarial Functions" (Participant Handouts, p. 24). Ask participants, working with a partner, to imagine that they are serving on a large Assembly and to distribute the secretarial functions of a large community among five different Secretaries.

★ **Note**: Some participants may not realize that an Assembly may ask an individual liaison or task force to meet with individuals about personal matters rather than have the entire Assembly present at the meeting. Provide reassurance, as needed, that this is an appropriate instance of delegation. The Assembly as a whole will review all cases and decide whether to act on the recommendations presented to it.

★ When pairs have finished their work, comment that there is no one "right" or "wrong" way for an Assembly to distribute the workload of the Secretariat; but it is good to practice flexible thinking about how what <u>must</u> be done, <u>can</u> be done without unduly burdening any Assembly member or officer.

Optional extension:

★ *Ask participants to share with the whole group what functions they gave to each of the five Secretaries. Discuss the rationale behind different placement of functions. Ask how an Assembly administering a community of 15 might distribute these functions compared to an Assembly administering a community of 200.*

★ *If you feel it would be helpful to the participants, feel free to share one possible division of these functions:*

General Secretary
- *receives in-coming correspondence*
- *creates the agenda, with the chair*
- *serves as spokesperson for the Assembly*

Recording Secretary
- *records the minutes*
- *keeps the Assembly files*

- *maintains membership statistics*
- *makes/updates the Assembly's implementation list*

External Affairs Secretary
- *handles or coordinates public information functions*
- *represents the Faith to outside organizations*

Personal Affairs Secretary
- *coordinates liaisons or task forces on personal matters and years of patience*

Committee Secretary
- *drafts mandates for committees and writes letters of appointment*
- *keeps in touch with various committees – their needs, plans, progress*

3. Observations on splitting up secretarial functions
(3 minutes)

★ Comment that some of these secretarial functions can involve use of non-Assembly members, such as public information representatives, believers representing the Faith on interfaith councils or human rights commissions, and believers with computer skills who maintain membership directories or serve as webmasters. Note that the ability to maintain the Assembly's confidentiality must be a consideration for certain tasks.

★ The Assembly may choose to formally structure the functions of Secretary once a year prior to officer elections or may choose to delegate some functions informally, experimenting with a variety of ways of handling its business.

★ Secretaries should always feel free to ask the Assembly for additional assistance as their tasks increase. An informal "Secretariat" of Assembly members can help the corresponding Secretary write and review drafts of letters.

4. Tips for Secretaries (3 minutes)

★ Refer participants to their handout "Tips for Secretaries" (Participant Handouts, p. 25). Read through these briefly, and point out that more material is available in *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*.

Optional Extension Session Four: *Managing the Assembly's Time* (35 minutes)

Purpose

★ To become familiar with practices that can be used before and during meetings to manage the Assembly's time more efficiently

Prepare in advance

★ If you will be doing the optional extension with a jar or goldfish bowl and rocks, practice in advance to see what quantities of rocks, pebbles, and sand are needed to fill your container. Bring each set of materials in a separate bag or container for ease of adding each in turn.

Setting up the activities

★ Comment that time is always at a premium, so managing the Assembly's time wisely will increase efficiency, allowing the Assembly to work smarter rather than longer.

Activities:

1. Sharing tips on time management (30 minutes)

★ Refer participants to the handout "Managing the Assembly's Time," (Participant Handouts, pp. 26-27).

★ Read through the bulleted points of tips on time management prior to the Assembly meeting and tips on time management during the meeting, adding these comments:

Comments to make for "Prior to the meeting" tips

"Schedule regular meeting times, as much as possible"

★ Regular meeting times allow Assembly members to arrange their lives and schedules to attend.

★ Point out the two quotations on behalf of Shoghi Effendi regarding meeting regularity and frequency, and ask a volunteer to read these aloud.

"Establish, and keep, concrete starting and ending times of meetings"

★ Don't let meetings, especially night meetings, extend until members are exhausted. If a matter requires an unexpected amount of time, it may be better to schedule another meeting at a later date than to make a poor decision when members' "hidden agendas" are to make <u>any</u> decision that allows the meeting to end and everyone to go home.

★ Remember: there is no relationship between the length of a meeting and its productivity.

Managing the Assembly's Time, continued

"Build in social time for Assembly members separate from the meeting time"

★ Some Assemblies have a coffee and tea period prior to the start of the meeting.

"Create an agenda and share it with all members prior to Assembly meeting"

★ Mention that a separate module segment on agenda planning is available.

"Help members prepare in advance for the meeting"

★ Mention that the Universal House of Justice calls on Bahá'ís to practice "the methods of consultation, with its commitment to informed discussion. . . ." (on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated October 24, 1990, in *The American Bahá'í*, November 4, 1993).

★ The words "informed discussion" raise two questions: "<u>What</u> do we need to know to participate in a discussion characterized as 'informed'?" and "<u>Who</u> needs to know this?" The implication would seem to be that <u>every</u> member engaged in consulting needs to be informed, rather than just the Secretary or Chair; however, much of the time needed to become informed can take place outside of the Assembly meeting.

★ Individual preparation in advance greatly enhances effective use of the Assembly's time. One form of preparation is to include with the agenda a copy of any necessary "homework" reading to be done in advance, such as letters from the senior institutions, background material needed prior to consultation on a topic, copies of policies or mandates that will be reviewed, etc.

★ Another form of preparation is mailing out copies of the minutes in advance. If the Assembly prefers not to have minutes distributed at large, it could schedule a preparation period of 15-30 minutes prior to the beginning of the Assembly meeting for members to read minutes and review any "homework" items.

★ Members who have missed one or more meetings may want to contact the Secretary in advance to be filled in on what they have missed so that they can enter into the consultation on an

Materials needed:
★ *Optional: a jar or goldfish bowl*
★ *Optional: enough large and medium size rocks, pebbles, and sand, each in separate containers, to fill the jar or bowl*

Correlating handouts:
★ "Managing the Assembly's Time" pp. 26-27
★ "Implementation List" p. 28
★ "Sample Assembly Process Assessment" p. 29
★ "Assembly Meeting Dynamics" p. 30

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equal basis with other members. The responsibility to make contact rests with the absent member, not the Secretary.

★ All of these procedures are ways the Assembly can fulfill its responsibility to practice "the methods of consultation, with its commitment to informed discussion. . . ." and to use Assembly meeting time efficiently.

"Use issue summaries"

★ Instead of bringing items to the Assembly "cold," have Assembly members with background knowledge – the Secretary, Assembly liaisons for personal status cases, etc. – provide a brief overview of pertinent information before the start of consultation. A summary could be given verbally or distributed in advance with the agenda as "homework" reading.

Comments to make for "During the meeting" tips

"Bring one agenda item to closure before starting consideration of another one"

★ 'Abdu'l-Bahá shares a general principle about focused thinking when He says, "One cannot obtain the full force of the sunlight when it is cast on a flat mirror, but once the sun shineth upon a concave mirror, or on a lens that is convex, all its heat will be concentrated on a single point, and that one point will burn the hottest. Thus is it necessary to focus one's thinking on a single point so that it will become an effective force." (*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 111.)

★ Agendas focus the Assembly's thinking on one topic at a time, helping it "become an effective force," but they are only tools. The best agenda is useless if Assembly members do not follow it, consulting about multiple topics simultaneously. All members must be vigilant and exercise self-discipline in this regard.

"Determine if and when the Assembly wishes to address a subject brought to its attention"

★ A balance must be maintained between work initiated by the Assembly and work taken up in response to incoming correspondence. The Assembly may receive several requests for action by or during a particular time. The institution has the

right to say "no" to some of these – to select how and what to implement – if the Assembly feels the requests conflict with local plans, programs, and needs.

- • **For example**: the Assembly receives a letter from the summer school committee requesting consultation on scholarships and asking for a reply by a certain date. If the Assembly's agenda is very full with what it feels are more pressing concerns, it may choose to postpone consultation on that topic until a later date.

- • **Another example:** the Assembly receives notice that a travel teacher would like to come through the area in the next week. The request asks that the Assembly arrange for hospitality and plan a teaching evening at which the believer would be happy to speak. The Assembly is free to advise the believer that it is unable to make these arrangements on such short notice and suggest that the believer contact the Assembly well in advance of any future trips through the area so that a successful teaching event can be planned.

★ Requests from senior institutions, such as the National Spiritual Assembly or the Regional Bahá'í Council, must be handled in a different way. These institutions depend on the active support of Assemblies in carrying out their plans, so every reasonable effort should be made to comply with their requests for action in a timely manner. Senior institutions understand that Assemblies can only do what their resources, human and material, allow; but they trust that each Assembly will do its best to respond to requests.

- • **For example**, the local Assembly receives a letter from the National Spiritual Assembly's Office of External Affairs calling on it to distribute a statement to public officials during a particular time frame. The Assembly, however, has already scheduled a major event at that time. In this case the Assembly should marshal available resources to carry out both activities as successfully as possible.

"Use an implementation list to follow up on the current status of Assembly decisions"

★ Implementation lists ensure that responsibility is assigned for each Assembly decision and that a target date for completion is set.

★ Refer participants to the handout "Implementation List" (Participant Handouts, p. 28). Briefly mention the items that compose the list: the date of the Assembly meeting, the essence of the Assembly decision, to whom implementation of the decision was assigned, and the target date for completion.

★ Ask participants to look through the sample list.

★ Using such a list, the Assembly can get a status update on each item and quickly ascertain if decisions are being carried out in a timely fashion or if difficulties have arisen which will require putting the situation on an Assembly agenda for consultation.

★ Some Assemblies make a point of reviewing their implementation list at the beginning of their meetings, getting a quick progress report.

★ Using an implementation list ensures that things don't "fall between the cracks." Adopting usage as a routine practice avoids placing Assembly members in the position of seeming to mistrust fellow believers by taking it on themselves to ask whether particular assignments have been completed.

"Take breaks"

★ Take breaks as needed during meetings scheduled to last longer than about 2 hours. Taking time to stand, stretch, replenish coffee or tea, and converse socially for 5-10 minutes can bring renewed energy to the Assembly.

"Set aside time for process checks"

★ The principle of bringing oneself to account applies to groups as well as individuals. After the Assembly has taken the time to set goals for its own improvement and maturation, it must also take time to ascertain and celebrate progress. Brief process checks at each meeting, or at regular intervals, can supplement more in-depth assessments.

★ Process checks can cover any area the Assembly has selected for improvement, such as: "Did we listen to each other carefully?" "Did everyone have the opportunity to speak to each issue?" "Did we remember to assign responsibility and set a deadline for implementing each decision we made?"

★ Refer participants to the handout "Sample Assembly Process Assessment" (Participant handouts, p. 29). Suggest that they

consult at a future Assembly meeting about whether a simple assessment tool could be helpful for brief process checks.

Optional:

★ *Place a clear jar or goldfish bowl in view of participants. Loosely fill the jar with a few large rocks. Ask: "Is the jar full?"*

★ *Add smaller rocks to the jar, letting them fill in around the larger rocks. Ask: "Is the jar full?"*

★ *Add pebbles to the jar, letting them fill in around other material. Ask: "Is the jar full?"*

★ *Add sand to the jar, letting it fill in around other material and settle to a smooth layer on top. Ask: "Is the jar full?"*

★ *Invite participants to share the lesson(s) they have observed about filling a jar.*

★ *Comment that the jar can only be filled so compactly if the large rocks are put in place first. One possible lesson for Assemblies considering how best to manage their time is to distinguish between the important and the most important and to fill their jar with the big rocks – handle the most important issues – first, fitting other issues in around these.*

Note to facilitators:
This activity is also included in the segment "Planning Effective Agendas." If you will be doing both segments, decide in advance where, if at all, you would like to include this optional activity.

2. Reflecting on a metaphor for Assembly meeting dynamics (5 minutes)

★ One Bahá'í who is a time management professional has compared the dynamics of an Assembly meeting to a fitness workout. Since the energy of a group, like that of an individual, waxes and wanes, Assemblies need a "warm up" period, time for a "work out," and a "cool down" period.

★ Refer participants to "Assembly Meeting Dynamics" (Participant Handouts, p. 30) so they can follow along as you mention what might be included in each phase of the meeting and why this approach might be useful.

- The "warm up" period might consist of opening prayers, a short deepening, and a review of the agenda.

- The "work out" period might begin with receiving updates and reports and reviewing the status of current efforts, then move into decision making, the most demanding work.

- The "cool down" period might taper down with summarizing decisions and plans for implementation, evaluating the Assembly's process, and closing prayers.

- Assemblies are sometimes tempted, as closing time draws near, to increase their pace, working feverishly to cover one or two last agenda items. Members then race out the door, exhausted but filled with adrenaline, while the recording Secretary tries desperately to distinguish between comments, suggestions, and actual Assembly decisions, capturing it all for the minutes.

- When the Assembly's work is aligned to correspond to this three stage rhythm, the Assembly will be more productive, function at a greater level of effectiveness, and experience increased feelings of satisfaction at the end of meetings.

Optional Extension Session Five: **Planning Effective Agendas** *(40 minutes)*

Purpose

★ To become familiar with elements that make agendas effective planning tools

★ To practice improving a generic agenda

Prepare in advance

★ If you will be doing the optional extension for this optional segment with a jar or goldfish bowl and rocks, practice in advance to see what quantities of rocks, pebbles, and sand are needed to fill your container. Bring each set of materials in a separate bag or container for ease of adding each in turn.

Setting up the activities

★ Comment that agendas focus the Assembly's consultation on one topic at a time. Effective agendas help the Assembly manage its time wisely by letting the Assembly know what to expect: what topics will be addressed, how urgent each one is, and approximately how much time each topic may require.

★ The Universal House of Justice has provided general guidance on agenda preparation, and the experiences of both Bahá'í and secular groups have contributed various tips on how to make agendas more effective.

Activities:

1. Reading guidance from the Universal House of Justice (1 minute)

★ Refer participants to the quotation at the top of the handout "Creating Effective Agendas" (Participant Handouts, p. 31). Ask a volunteer to read the guidance from the House of Justice to Secretaries of National Assemblies.

2. Sharing tips on creating effective agendas (10 minutes)

★ Refer participants to the bottom portion of the handout "Creating Effective Agendas" (Participant Handouts, p. 31).

★ Read through the bulleted tips, adding these comments:

"Use a correspondence log"

★ Rather than have a lengthy recitation at the opening of the Assembly meeting by the Secretary, include a list of outgoing and incoming correspondence in the agenda. You may also want to separate incoming correspondence into the two categories of "announcements" and "action needed."

"Indicate clearly the purpose of agenda items"

★ Is an item simply an announcement or does the item need Assembly action? All "action needed" items should appear on the agenda either as an item being covered at this meeting or as an item to be discussed at a future meeting.

"Prioritize items by timeliness"

★ Make a clear distinction between what needs to be done at this meeting (the current agenda) vs. what the Assembly needs or wants to keep track of for future meetings (a deferred agenda).

"Prioritize items by importance"

★ Organize the Assembly meeting in a way that important issues get addressed first, while members are fresh, fully attentive, and capable of making their best decisions. It can be tempting to try to whittle away a long agenda by first handling items that look like they will be quick. Too often this results in longer, more complex issues being tackled late in the meeting, when energy can be lower.

★ In setting priorities, the Assembly will want its agenda to reflect Bahá'u'lláh's guidance to them that "teaching the Cause of God must be accorded precedence, inasmuch as it is a matter of paramount importance. . . ." (*Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities* 7.12; also in *The Local Spiritual Assembly*, p. 11)

Optional:

★ *Place a clear jar or goldfish bowl in view of participants. Loosely fill the jar with a few large rocks. Ask: "Is the jar full?"*

★ *Add smaller rocks to the jar, letting them fill in around the larger rocks. Ask: "Is the jar full?"*

★ *Add pebbles to the jar, letting them fill in around other material. Ask: "Is the jar full?"*

★ *Add sand to the jar, letting it fill in around other material and settle to a smooth layer on top. Ask: "Is the jar full?"*

★ *Invite participants to share the lesson(s) they have observed about filling a jar.*

★ *Comment that the jar can only be filled so compactly if the large rocks are put in place first. One possible lesson for*

Materials needed:

★ *Optional: a jar or goldfish bowl*

★ *Optional: enough large and medium size rocks, pebbles, and sand, each in separate containers, to fill the jar or bowl*

★ *Optional: overhead projector*

Correlating handouts:

★ "Creating Effective Agendas" pp. 31

★ "How Can this Agenda be Improved?" pp. 32

★ "Now You're Cooking!" pp. 33

Assemblies learning to prioritize and plan effective agendas is to distinguish between the important and the most important and to fill their jar with the big rocks – handle the most important issues – first, fitting other issues in around these.

Note to facilitators:
This activity is also included in the segment "Managing the Assembly's Time." If you will be doing both segments, decide in advance where, if at all, you would like to include this optional activity.

"Indicate estimated times for agenda items"

★ Help the Assembly budget time by distinguishing between items likely to require lengthy consultation and shorter items.

"Keep track of items that will need follow up at a later date"

★ Some items may have specific timeframes, such as the end of a year of waiting or a proposal from the holy days committee on plans for an event one month in advance. Other items may be of a general nature that the Assembly wants to review periodically, such as satisfaction with the atmosphere of the Feast or the degree of participation in some aspect of community life.

★ Some Assemblies set an automatic reminder to meet with new believers 3-6 months after enrollment to see how they are integrating into Bahá'í life and address any questions or concerns they have. Other Assemblies routinely ask new Assembly members for their observations on the Assembly's functioning after a few months of service.

★ Using a twelve or fifteen month planning calendar may help the Assembly keep track of items for follow up.

"Set aside time for process checks"

★ The principle of bringing oneself to account applies to groups as well as individuals. After the Assembly has taken the time to agree on the standards of maturity to which it aspires, it must also take time to determine if those standards are being achieved and to celebrate progress. Brief process checks at each meeting, or at regular intervals, can supplement more in-depth assessments.

★ Process checks can cover any area the Assembly has selected for improvement, such as: "Did we research the Writings or *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities* for relevant principles to guide our consultation?" "Did we listen to each other carefully?" "Did everyone have the opportunity to speak to each issue?" "Did we remember to assign responsibility and set a deadline for implementing each decision we made?"

3. Small group work (10 minutes)

★ Divide participants into groups of 3-5.

★ Refer participants to the handout "How Can this Agenda be Improved?" (Participant Handouts, p. 32).

★ *Optional: Place a copy of this handout on an overhead projector for easy viewing.*

★ Ask each group to come up with 3-5 ways the agenda could be improved, using the principles and tips just covered. Ask them to mark up their agenda, showing these improvements.

4. Groups report back (10 minutes)

★ Ask each group to share its ideas and recommendations.

★ *Optional: Have each group display their improved agenda on an overhead projector.*

5. Examining a sample good agenda (10 minutes)

★ Comment that there are many forms a good agenda can take. Agendas can be efficient and also be creative or humorous at the same time.

★ Refer participants to "Now You're Cooking!" (Participant Handouts, p. 33), commenting that one Assembly created an agenda which follows a food theme.

★ Read through the categories of this agenda, sharing these comments and explanations:

What's Cooking? [brief reports from committees/task forces; review of facilitation list]

The main feature of this agenda item is brevity. This is to be a quick check to make sure that committees and task forces are functioning actively with any brief announcements. If a committee has an issue or question that will take some time for

discussion, it may request that the issue be put on the agenda, under "Burning Items" or "Crockpot Items," depending on its degree of urgency. This is also a time to quickly check on the status of items on the Assembly's the facilitation list.

Burning Items [must be acted or noted at this meeting]

The main feature of this agenda item is timeliness. These items are the ones that must be dealt with at the current meeting. This would include both quick announcements or questions as well as items requiring more lengthy discussion.

The Main Course [top priority item to be discussed this meeting]

The main feature of this item is that it is a selected priority. The main course directs attention to a subject the Assembly has previously identified as a top priority.

Crockpot Items [items requiring more than 5 minutes consultation]

The main feature of this agenda item is that it requires lengthy discussion. These are items that the Assembly may get to if there is time after "Burning Items" and the "Main Course." The fact that they are here means they can wait, if necessary. These items will often be the pool out of which "main courses" are selected for future meetings.

Microwave Items [items requiring less than 5 minutes]

The main feature of this agenda item is that it can be dealt with very quickly. If an item turns out to require more discussion than anticipated, it can be moved to a future crockpot. Microwave items can be discussed either near the close of the meeting or to "fill in cracks" that come up during a meeting. Like "Crockpot" items, these are topics that can wait until the next meeting if there isn't time to address them.

Menu planning [select main course for next Assembly meeting and next Feast]

This is the time for the Assembly to choose the "main course" for the next meeting, if one has not already surfaced during the consultation. The Assembly may also want to choose a "main course" topic for consultation at the next Feast and inform the community in advance.

Dessert [choose time of next meeting, if necessary]

Taste Test [group process assessment end of meeting]

> This item encourages and reminds the Assembly to take a few minutes to evaluate it's own process of consultation during the meeting. This may include both consultative behaviors – Do we listen to each other with respect? Do we draw out quieter members? – and meeting procedures – Do we start and end on time? Does everyone come prepared? Do we digress from the topic or discuss multiple topics simultaneously?

Back-Burner [items that will be coming up later]

> These items have specific timeframes or actions that the Assembly is waiting on in relation to them. They need to be checked occasionally to see if they need reminders, further action, or deletion.

Preserves [items on hold until the Assembly wants to review them]

> These are items that the Assembly has identified as things that need to be remembered and brought up for discussion every so often. These need to be checked occasionally to see if they should be deleted because they have either become a normal part of the Assembly's operations or have become obsolete.

Purpose

★ To understand why delegation is beneficial to both the Assembly and the community

★ To recognize when a task can be delegated

★ To review practical suggestions on how to delegate effectively

Correlating handouts:

★ "Delegation Within the Assembly and Beyond" p. 34

★ "Learning When to Delegate pp. 35-36

★ "Suggestions on How to Delegate" pp. 37

Setting up the activities

★ Comment that everyone has a role to play in carrying forward the work of the Faith. Delegation makes the best use of the talents and capacities of the community, one of the signs of a "best" Assembly.

Activities:

1. Reading quotations from the Writings (3 minutes)

★ Refer participants to the handout "Delegation within the Assembly and Beyond" (Participant Handouts, p. 34). Ask volunteers to read aloud the three quotations.

★ Comment that delegation increases the level of participation in the community, encourages development of human resources, and helps tap "power and vitality as yet unknown to us." In addition, it prevents Assembly member – especially officer – burnout.

2. Reviewing guidance on delegation (10 minutes)

★ Refer participants to "Learning When to Delegate" (Participant Handouts, pp. 35-36). Ask volunteers to read aloud the commentary on delegation of authority found in *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities* and the two quotations of the House of Justice.

★ Suggest that Assemblies may want to pose three questions to themselves whenever they consider how to assign tasks:

1. Is there a compelling reason why the <u>Assembly</u> should research this matter, make this decision, and/or carry it out instead of asking individuals or a committee or task force to handle the matter?

2. Is there a compelling reason why the <u>whole</u> Assembly needs to be present or needs to handle this matter?

3. Is there a compelling reason why a <u>particular</u> Assembly member or officer needs to handle this matter?

★ The first question removes the matter from Assembly consultation and can involve non-Assembly members in the work. Fact finding, decision making, and implementation may all be delegated outside the Assembly. The National Spiritual Assembly routinely uses non-members in all these capacities.

Naturally, sensitive matters should only be delegated to those believers who are able to respect confidentiality.

★ The second question delegates responsibility to a portion of the Assembly – one or more members. For instance, a few Assembly members might meet with a believer(s) bringing a personal problem to the institution and report the essence of the matter to the Assembly for consultation.

★ The third question allows the Assembly to spread the work load more evenly among the members rather than overburden one of its officers. The ongoing responsibilities of the office must be covered, but the actual work can be done by several individuals, sometimes including non-Assembly members. For example, the Treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly does not personally open all the contributions, deposit the funds, issue receipts to the friends, and keep the books. The Treasurer is assisted in these tasks by several trustworthy individuals, none of whom serve on the National Spiritual Assembly. The Treasurer retains final responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the handling of funds, but elements of the job are broken up and delegated. Obviously, only those individuals who can maintain confidentiality should be used in this capacity.

★ One common form of delegation is separating the regular, on-going secretarial functions and assigning portions to different Assembly members.

★ Another form of delegation is asking one or more Assembly members to track certain initiatives or keep an eye on progress in various areas. Examples might include keeping a list of policy decisions or monitoring full participation of both women and men in community activities.

3. Reviewing suggestions on how to delegate (10 minutes)

★ Refer participants to the handout "Suggestions on How to Delegate" (Participant Handouts, p. 37). Comment that these suggestions are adapted from Morris Taylor's book *Helping Joe Strong* (copyright © 1997, published by Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL), an excellent resource of practical suggestions for helping Assemblies become more efficient and effective.

★ Ask volunteers to read aloud the five suggestions.

★ Go back through these suggestions, one by one, asking participants as a group what consequences might result from neglecting to heed the suggestion.

Purpose

★ To discover practical ways the Assembly can support its officers in the performance of their responsibilities

Setting up the activity (2-3 minutes)

★ Efficient, effective Assembly functioning requires more than practical techniques and time-saving tips, as valuable as these are. Attention must also be paid to the personal spiritual development of members and officers.

★ In its 1983 Ridván letter the Universal House of Justice commented, "At present we must complete the objectives of the Seven Year Plan, paying great attention to those inner spiritual developments which will be manifested in greater unity among the friends and in National and Local Spiritual Assemblies functioning 'harmoniously, vigorously and efficiently' as the Guardian desired."

★ Assembly officers sometimes become so burdened with administrative work that they have little time or energy for their own spiritual development. Perhaps the Assembly is limited in its choice of who to select for a particular function. Perhaps unexpected situations complicate the life of an officer. Perhaps an officer is reelected to the same job for years on end before alternative candidates are available.

★ Regardless of the circumstances, a wise Assembly will consider how it can help an officer find a balance between attending to administrative duties and personal spiritual refreshment.

Activities:

1. Small group consultation on case study (10 minutes)
★ Divide participants into groups of 4-5. Refer participants to the case study "Avoiding Officer Burnout" (Participant Handouts, p. 38).

★ Present the case at hand: The Assembly has just elected as its Secretary a mother with small children who lives in the only home available for Bahá'í meetings.

★ Ask each group to consult on the situation and come up with several courses of action the Assembly could take to give its Secretary the support and practical help she may need to properly discharge her responsibilities and keep her sanity.

2. Groups report back (10 minutes)
★ Ask a spokesperson from each group to briefly report the group's ideas.

Correlating handout:

★ "Avoiding Officer Burnout" p. 38

★ If these ideas are not reported back, mention them:

- The Assembly might arrange for practical help such as regular babysitting so that the Secretary has time to do her Assembly work.

- The Assembly could appoint a clerical assistant, if the work load requires it. If no competent volunteer help is available, the Assembly might decide to hire a paid assistant. This assistant need not be a member of the Assembly but should enjoy its confidence.

- The Assembly could offer to arrange for this mother's family responsibilities to be looked after for a day or a weekend so that she could have some time to herself to replenish her spiritual resources.

Establishing a Bahá'í Style of Administration in the Midst of a Non-Bahá'í Culture (10 minutes)

Purpose:

★ To appreciate the influence of the larger society on the style of administration of Bahá'í institutions

★ To reflect and deliberate on ways to combat the influence of the larger society

Setting up the activities

★ Comment that establishing an administrative order that reflects spiritual principles in practical applications is particularly challenging in the context of a society and culture at its spiritual ebb. The assumptions and practices of the surrounding society inevitably affect both those who serve on institutions and those who live under their sheltering authority.

★ Explain that the following activities are designed to allow the Assembly to reflect, collectively and individually, on ways to combat the influences of society on the style of administration of the Faith.

★ If time does not permit use of the two extension activities of group consultation and individual reflection during the workshop, strongly encourage the Assembly to go through these at a later time as a follow up to this module and briefly talk participants through these activities, as described below.

Activities:

1. Individual reading of quotations (5 minutes)

★ Refer participants to the handout "Establishing a Bahá'í Style of Administration in the Midst of a Non-Bahá'í Culture" (Participant Handouts, p. 39). Ask them to silently read through the quotations and underline or highlight passages that answer the first two focus questions:

- What characteristics does the Universal House of Justice describe as tendencies and "entrenched habits of American life?"

- What effects do these have on the functioning of Assemblies?

★ Suggest that participants may want to use two colors of highlighters to differentiate between characteristics and effects.

2. Sharing of answers (5 minutes)

★ Have participants share the passages they selected.

Please note: Depending on available time and the number of Assembly members present, the following two activities could be done as an extension session now or as a follow up session at one of the Assembly's regular meetings. If done as a follow up

session, the facilitator should briefly talk participants through these activities now and call participants' attention to the handouts they will be using later.

Group consultation *(20 minutes)*

★ *Consult, as an Assembly, on the remaining two focus questions on the handout "Establishing a Bahá'í style of Administration in the Midst of a Non-Bahá'í Culture" (Participant Handouts, p. 39):*

- *What steps can the Assembly take as an institution to arrest their influence?*

- *What dynamics can be changed or set in motion in the community by these efforts?*

★ *Suggest that the Assembly may want to consider this subject periodically to assess progress.*

Individual reflection and planning *(10 minutes)*

★ *Refer participants to the handout "My Contribution to a Bahá'í Style of Administration" (Participant Handouts, p. 40). Ask them to silently read through the quotation and answer the focus questions:*

- *Which of the "destructive, negative forces" mentioned here or in the previous handout do I see reflected in my own life?*

- *What steps will I take to rid myself of these?*

- *How will I deliberately cultivate positive qualities and behaviors to take their place?*

★ *Play soft music as participants work.*

Materials needed:

★ Highlighters in two colors

★ *Optional: Tape or CD player and soft music*

Correlating handouts:

★ "Establishing a Bahá'í Style of Administration in the Midst of a Non-Bahá'í Culture" p. 39

★ "My Contribution to a Bahá'í Style of Administration" p. 40

Closing (10 minutes)

Purpose

★ To provide assurance of divine confirmation for all our efforts to help the Assembly grow in efficiency and effectiveness

Activities:

1. Review of initial questions (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. Closing quotations (3 minutes)

★ Choose three participants to each read aloud one of the closing quotations (Participant Handouts, p. 41).

Optional:

★ *Give each participant a beautiful card or calligraphy version of a passage by Shoghi Effendi as a gift (example suitable for photocopying onto attractive paper follows).*

Correlating handout:

★ "Closing Quotations" p. 41

May the Almighty guide your steps, aid and sustain you always, and enable you to contribute effectively to the progress of our beloved Faith and the consolidation of its nascent institutions.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

Selection Sheet for Optional Extension Segments
"Becoming a More Efficient and Effective Assembly"

This workshop is designed to help Assemblies perceive the relationship of efficiency and effectiveness to the demands implicit in entry by troops, gain a more thorough understanding of the duties of Assembly Secretaries and Chairs, and develop an appreciation of the need for a diversity of process skills within the Assembly. The focus is on finding practical ways to express the spiritual qualities of efficiency and effectiveness in the Assembly's functioning through development of specific skills, such as time management, agenda planning, and delegation.

When facilitated with a group of 5-9 participants from the same Assembly, this workshop will require approximately 2 hours for the core material plus additional time for each optional extension. A larger or more diverse group will require extra time for group discussion and reporting back.

Please review the following descriptions of the module segments and select those optional extensions you would like to take. Please note that the optional segments are indicated in italics while the required core segments are not in italics.

Segments of the module

☑ **Introduction** (20 minutes)

An opportunity to introduce the Assembly Development Program, familiarize participants with the objectives of this module, and present an agenda outline of topics and activities.

☑ **The call to "a new state of mind"** (10 minutes)

A guided discussion to help participants grasp some of the implications of moving toward "a new state of mind."

☑ **Efficiency and effectiveness as spiritual qualities** (25 minutes)

A review of quotations highlighting efficiency and effectiveness as spiritual qualities which must be reflected in Bahá'í life and in Assembly functioning.

☑ **Using differences to enhance Assembly functioning** (40 minutes)

Activities to develop appreciation of the need for a diversity of process skills within a group and an assessment of how the Assembly's process needs are currently being met.

❑ *Functioning of the Chair (45 minutes)*

An opportunity to gain a more thorough understanding of the duties and qualities of a good Chair, coupled with tips on how the job of chairing can be performed more effectively.

❑ *Facilitating consultation* (10 minutes), p. 25

A review of practical steps the Chair and other Assembly members can take to help consultation flow smoothly and efficiently.

❑ *Functioning of the Secretary* (30 minutes)

A review of the many and varied responsibilities which fall to the secretary, followed by practice in splitting up secretarial functions among several people.

❑ *Managing the Assembly's time* (35 minutes)

An overview of practices that can be used before and during meetings to manage the Assembly's time more efficiently and ensure that the Assembly's decisions are carried out.

❑ *Planning effective agendas* (40 minutes)

Activities to become familiar with elements that make agendas effective planning tools and an opportunity to practice improving a generic agenda.

❑ *Delegation within the Assembly and beyond* (25 minutes)

Activities that explore why delegation is beneficial to both the Assembly and the community, when a task can be delegated, and how to delegate effectively.

❑ *Avoiding officer burnout* (25 minutes)

Small group discussion of a case study focused on discovering practical ways the Assembly can support its officers in the performance of their responsibilities.

☑ **Establishing a Bahá'í style of administration in the midst of a non-Bahá'í culture** (10 minutes)

Activities to clarify the influence of the larger society on the style of administration of Bahá'í institutions, with a homework assignment of reflecting and deliberating on ways to combat this influence.

☑ **Closing** (10 minutes)

Inspirational quotations to provide assurance of divine confirmation for all our efforts to help the Assembly grow in efficiency and effectiveness.

After making your selections, please communicate them to your facilitator in advance so that he or she can adequately prepare.