

Creating a POP Agenda for Board Meetings

From the Blog of Suzanne Hawkes’

One of the simplest, snappiest and most useful planning tools I know is one we teach at Rockwood Leadership Institute.  It’s a sweet little acronym called **POP** – standing for **Purpose, Outcome and Process**.

Here’s a snapshot of POP. And really, it’s so straightforward, this is all you need:

• **P**urpose answers the question **why**.  
• **O**utcome speaks to **what** – the vision of what success will look and feel like when you “arrive.”  
• **P**rocess speaks to **how** – the specific steps involved in getting there.

**Straight from the Source**  
The POP model was devised by brilliant leadership consultant (and fellow Rockwood trainer) [Leslie Sholl Jaffe,](http://www.LeslieJaffe.com) and her partner Randall Alford.  As they describe it:

“POP is a useful tool for a multitude of the daily activities leaders find themselves faced with: meeting agendas, campaigns, difficult conversations, unplanned calls and conversations. . . . As you can gather from the list, POP is scalable.  It can be used for large, long-term projects, regular weekly staff meetings, a meeting you attend, or a call that comes in that has no agenda, coaching/mentoring sessions . . .”

**Case in point: Workshop Design**

Last week, I met with a small team of folks designing a workshop within a larger conference for immigrants and refugees. We started by stepping back and asking:

• What is the overall purpose of this workshop?  
• Why now?  
• Why here?  
• How can it advance our particular focus on supporting skilled immigrants and refugees in the job market?

Then we asked: **• If this workshop is wildly successful, what would the outcome be? What does success look like, in concrete terms?**

Only after we’d answered those questions did we address the process – the specific format, agenda design, room set-up, breakout size etc.

**Cart before the horse . . .**  
All too often, action-oriented social justice and not-for-profit leaders jump straight into planning the *process* of calls, meetings and entire projects – without *first* nailing down a clear sense of purpose and outcomes. In practice, it’s vastly more effective to “go slow to go fast.”  Even doing a quick POP for simple tasks, I’ve found, can save hours of time, and help ensure that your creative energies are aligned and vastly more effective from the start.

**Sample agenda for relocation work group**

**Attending:**

**Purpose**

Guide WF on priorities and process regarding relocation in FY16

**Outcome**

* Relocation priorities
* Assignments for members
* Regular meeting times set and general timeline

**AGENDA**

*EBR will moderate agenda items below.*

1. **Relocation Priorities**
2. **Assignments and roles**
3. **Timeline and future meetings**