Building Sustainability for Nonprofit Organizations

Exceptional Board Practices
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Welcome

Building Nonprofit Organizations That Will Last

Increasingly, funders and supporters are requiring nonprofits to demonstrate the sustainability of their efforts. But what does that mean and how is it accomplished? Identifying the elements and processes that make an organization strong and charting a clear course for implementation are the first steps.

This workshop focuses on the principles of effective nonprofit governance, along with practical, easy-to-implement advice and tools for developing and building the strength of the board.

Exceptional Board Practices

Community Foundation of Jackson Hole
July, 2015
Learning Objectives

- Learn the critical elements of organizational sustainability
- Determine where your organization is on the road to sustainability by completing an organizational effectiveness assessment
- Identify practices high-functioning boards employ and explore areas your organization can strengthen
- Through interactive peer discussion, discover how other organizations are planning for their futures
- Find answers to your questions about exceptional board practices and gain practical information and tools you can put into immediate action
Purpose & Agenda:

Meeting Purpose
For Board members and staff of nonprofit organizations to understand and clarify their respective roles and responsibilities, create a foundation for focused leadership development, and learn how to create systems and cultures that increase the effectiveness of their board and staff, while building the sustainability of their organizations.

Agenda

Welcome and Getting Started:
- Objectives, Agenda, Ground Rules
- Introductions
- What makes an organization effective and sustainable?

Passionate, Engaged Board
- Effective Governance
  - Fiduciary responsibilities
  - Shared Governance Model
  - Board Effectiveness Assessment
  - Govern More and Manage Less
  - Board-Staff Partnerships
- Board Development
  - Recruiting, Orientation, Succession
- Effective Meetings

Strategic Approach to Change
- Strategic Thinking
- Planning Steps

Proactive Financial Management

Wrap up
- Next Steps
- Evaluation
The 5 Elements of Sustainability

“To make the greatest impact on society requires first and foremost a great organization, not just a great program.”
– Jim Collins, Good to Great and the Social Sectors

While there is no one formula for building a high-performance social sector organization, there are elements and processes that effective nonprofit organizations have in common. The following is a checklist of some of those fundamental components.

Clear and Compelling Vision
Brief, well-defined vision and/or mission statement
Statement of core values
Community assessment and feedback processes
Focused approach that is not redundant with other organizations’ programs
Defined measures of success

Passionate and Engaged Board of Directors
Strategic approach to board recruitment and succession
Board members are articulate advocates for the organization
Clearly defined and consistently practiced roles and responsibilities
Clear expectations and accountability for board members
Written policies and procedures

Motivated, Professional Staff
Clearly defined roles and expectations
Skills and experience commensurate with needs
Appropriate compensation
Respectful, supportive work environment
Regular, constructive feedback
Adequate resources available
Effective Communications and Marketing
Strategic marketing plan
Clear, jargon-free messaging with great stories to demonstrate mission success
Proactive communications to constituents and the community
Network of key influencers
Strong, content-rich website

Strategic Approach to Fund Development
Strategic funding plan
Demonstrated support and participation by the board
Balanced portfolio of funding sources
Constituent relationship management program in place
Endowments and reserve funds
Traits of Effective Boards

TRUST

Members of boards with an absence of trust...
- Conceal their weaknesses and mistakes from one another
- Hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback
- Hesitate to offer help outside their own areas of responsibility
- Jump to conclusions about the intentions and aptitudes of others without attempting to clarify them
- Fail to recognize and tap into one another’s skills and experiences
- Waste time and energy managing their behaviors for effect
- Hold grudges
- Dread meetings and find reasons to avoid spending time together

Members of trusting boards...
- Admit weaknesses and mistakes
- Ask for help
- Accept questions and input about their areas of responsibility
- Give one another the benefit of the doubt before arriving at a negative conclusion
- Take risks in offering feedback and assistance
- Appreciate and tap into one another’s skills and experiences
- Focus time and energy on important issues, not politics
- Offer and accept apologies without hesitation
- Look forward to meetings and other opportunities to work as a group

CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT

Boards that fear conflict...
- Have boring meetings
- Create environments where back-channel politics and personal attacks thrive
- Ignore controversial topics that are critical to board success
- Fail to tap into all the opinions and perspectives of board members
- Waste time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management

Boards that engage in conflict...
- Have lively, interesting meetings
- Extract and exploit the ideas of all board members
- Solve real problems quickly
- Minimize politics
- Put critical topics on the table for discussion
COMMITMENT

A board that fails to commit...
- Creates ambiguity among the board members about direction and priorities
- Watches windows of opportunity close due to excessive analysis and unnecessary delay
- Breeds lack of confidence and fear of failure
- Revisits discussions and decisions again and again
- Encourages second-guessing among board members

A board that commits...
- Creates clarity around direction and priorities
- Aligns the entire board around common objectives
- Develops an ability to learn from mistakes
- Takes advantage of opportunities before competitors do
- Moves forward without hesitation
- Changes direction without hesitation or guilt

ACCOUNTABILITY

A board that avoids accountability...
- Creates resentment among board members who have different standards of performance
- Encourages mediocrity
- Misses deadlines and key deliverables
- Places an undue burden on the board leader as the sole source of discipline

A board that holds one another accountable...
- Ensures that poor performers feel pressure to improve
- Identifies potential problems quickly by questioning one another’s approaches without hesitation
- Establishes respect among board members who are held to the same high standards
- Avoids excessive bureaucracy around performance management and corrective action
ATTENTION TO RESULTS

A board that is not focused on results...
- Stagnates/fails to grow
- Rarely defeats competitors
- Loses achievement-oriented employees
- Encourages board members to focus on their own careers and individual goals
- Is easily distracted

A board that focuses on collective results...
- Retains achievement-oriented members
- Minimizes individualistic behavior
- Enjoys success and suffers failure acutely
- Benefits from individuals who subjugate their own goals/interests for the good of the board
- Avoids distraction

1 Adapted from Patrick Lencioni, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team
Board Effectiveness Assessment

Use the scale below to indicate how each statement applies to your board.

3 = Usually  2 = Sometimes  1 = Rarely

It is important to evaluate the statements honestly and without over-thinking your answers.

__ 1. Board members are passionate and unguarded in their discussion of issues.

__ 2. Board members call out one another’s unproductive behaviors when they occur.

__ 3. Board members know what their peers are working on and how they contribute to the good of the organization.

__ 4. Board members quickly and genuinely apologize to one another when they say or do something inappropriate or possibly damaging to the board.

__ 5. Board members willingly make sacrifices (such as budget, turf, staff resources) in their committees or areas of expertise for the good of the organization.

__ 6. Board members openly admit their weaknesses and mistakes.

__ 7. Board meetings are compelling, and not boring.

__ 8. Board members leave meetings confident that their peers are completely committed to the decisions that were agreed on, even if there was initial disagreement.

__ 9. Board members express disappointment at the failure to achieve board goals.

__ 10. During board meetings, the most important-and difficult-issues are put on the table to be resolved.
11. Board members are genuinely concerned about the prospect of letting down their peers.

12. Board members care about one another’s personal lives and are comfortable inquiring about them.

13. Board members end discussions with clear and specific resolutions and calls to action.

14. Board members challenge one another about their plans and approaches.

15. Board members are slow to seek credit for their own contributions, but quick to point out those of others.
**Board Effectiveness Assessment - Scoring**

Combine your scores for the preceding statements as indicated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function 1:</th>
<th>Function 2:</th>
<th>Function 3:</th>
<th>Function 4:</th>
<th>Function 5:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Constructive Conflict</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A score of 8 or 9 is a probable indication that the function is not a problem for your board.

A score of 6 or 7 indicates that the function could be a problem.

A score of 3 to 5 is probably an indication that there is dysfunction that needs to be addressed.

Regardless of your scores, it is important to keep in mind that every board needs constant work, because without it, even the best ones deviate toward dysfunction.
## Organizational Sustainability Assessment

Use the scale below to indicate how each statement applies to your organization.  
3 = yes, we have this  
2 = we’re working on it  
1 = no, we don’t have this

### I - Clear and Compelling Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brief, well-defined vision and/or mission statement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Statement of core values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Community assessment and feedback processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Focused approach that is not redundant with other organizations’ programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Defined measures of success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUBTOTAL**

### II - Passionate and Engaged Board of Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Passionate, engaged board members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Strategic approach to board recruitment and succession</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Board and staff are articulate advocates for the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Clearly defined and consistently practiced roles and responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Clear expectations and accountability for board and staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Written policies and procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Professional approach to staff and staff development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUBTOTAL**
### III - Strategic Approach to Fund Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Strategic fundraising plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Demonstrated support and participation by the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Balanced portfolio of funding sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Constituent relationship management program in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Endowments and reserve funds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUBTOTAL**

### IV - Effective Communications and Marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Strategic marketing plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Clear, jargon-free messaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Proactive communications to constituents and the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Network of key influencers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Strong, content-rich website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Great stories to demonstrate mission success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUBTOTAL**

### V - Motivated, Professional Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Clearly defined roles and expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Skills and experience commensurate with needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Appropriate compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Respectful, supportive work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Regular, constructive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Adequate resources available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUBTOTAL**
Record your Sub-Totals here:

**I: Clear and Compelling Vision**  

**II: Passionate, Engaged Board of Directors**  

**III: Strategic Approach to Fund Development**  

**IV: Effective Communications and Marketing**  

**V: Motivated, Professional Staff**

For any Section Score that is between 5 – 7, roll-up your sleeves and keep listening.  
For any Section Score that is between 8 – 11, there is still room for improvement.  
For any Section Score that is between 12 – 15, congratulations! You are well on your way to sustainability.

**Notes/Observations from completed Assessment:**

- What “ah-ha!” did you have, from completing this assessment?

- Which of the five elements are ‘best practices’ in your organization?

- Which elements do you need to explore further?
Effective Governance

- Governance by Fiat
- Shared Governance
- Governance by Default
- Leadership as Governance

Board Engagement

Staff Engagement
Governance in Your Organization

Take a few moments to think about generative thinking in your organization.

- Who decides what the organization will pay attention to?
- Who tends to frame the problems?
- Who decides what a given problem or opportunity means for the organization?
- Who has the most influence over what gets on to the organization’s agenda or list of priorities?

With this in mind, select the quadrant that best decides the generative thinking scenario in your organization:

Quadrant: _____________________________
If you placed your organization in the “shared governance” quadrant:

- What three things (structures, processes, elements of your organization’s culture, etc.) most enabled your organization to get there?

- What are your biggest challenges, worries, or frustrations about shared governance?

If you placed your organization in one of the other (suboptimal) quadrants:

- What are the biggest costs of being in this quadrant?

- What challenges do you face in moving to shared governance?

- What could you build on to move to shared governance?
Characteristics of Effective Board-Staff Partnerships²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common expectations</th>
<th>Where We Are Going</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative planning</td>
<td>Why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open and honest communication</td>
<td>How We Will Get There</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Evaluation</td>
<td>...will result in a clear and common understanding of...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How We Will Know We Have Arrived</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors Conducive to an Effective Board-Staff Partnership

Organizational health depends on an effective and flexible partnership between the board and the Executive Director (ED). It...

- Requires clarity and agreement about roles and responsibilities
- Requires regular and open communication between the board chair and the ED, as well as an agreement about how to work together
- Requires a willingness on everyone’s part to clarify their own and each other’s assumptions
- Benefits from regular and systematic feedback and assessment
- May need to be redefined as the organization develops in size and complexity
The Board

*Authorized by the government and the organization’s supporters,* the board governs the life of the organization.

- Establish mission and direction, ensures the necessary resources, and develops guiding principles
- Retains ultimate responsibility and power
- Is accountable to the public trust and to the organization’s constituencies

The Executive Director

*Authorized by the board,* the ED manages the daily affairs of the organization.

- Supports the board with strategic information, ideas, and connections
- Manages the affairs of the organization by ensuring appropriate planning, coordination, and implementation of the program established by the board to support the mission
- Retains immediate operational responsibility and power
Guiding Governance

Purpose: For board members to consider the following questions, in order to discover what it means to be a governing board, and a board member.

Mission

1. How long has it been since our board reviewed and refreshed the mission of the organization and balanced it against day-to-day realities?
2. Who else should we include in discussions of mission and vision?
3. How do individual board members prepare themselves for their work on mission and vision?
4. How do we as board members maintain our connection and commitment to the mission?
5. Can everyone on our board clearly state our organization’s mission?
6. What are the core values of the organization?
7. How are these values expressed in how we function?
8. Do the outcomes of each of our programs contribute to the achievement of our mission? If not, what needs to be done?

Oversight

1. Is our organization committed to planning as an essential part of effective leadership and management?
2. Do we use our plans to evaluate progress and outcomes?
3. Does our organization have an up-to-date code of ethics and conflict of interest policy?
4. How do we distinguish between board responsibilities and those of the Executive Director or staff? What are the areas in which our responsibilities overlap?

5. What indicators and processes do we use to find out whether our board is doing its job?

6. Do we regularly evaluate the Executive Director’s performance? Our own performance as a board and as individual board members? What evaluation processes do we use?

7. Do board members have a clear written statement of their duties and responsibilities? Does the Executive Director have a clear job description?

8. Is the board aware of the Executive Director’s salary and how it’s determined? If not, why not?

9. Does the board regularly review the organization’s Form 990, the public document?

Resources

1. How do we educate board members about the organization’s fundraising strategy?

2. Does every board member make an annual contribution to the organization?

3. To what extent do board members actively ask others to provide financial support?

4. Are there obvious areas of strength and weakness in our board’s fundraising performance?

5. Do we have adequate financial expertise among board members?

6. Does the board receive regular, complete financial reports? Are the reports clear and easy to understand?

7. What questions do we bring to our review of financial documents?
8. What internal controls are in place to guard against potential fraud and abuse?

9. Are our investment policies consistent with our values, financial situation, and long-term goals?

Outreach

1. Do your community stakeholders know and understand our mission?

2. How does the board support our outreach activities? How can this be expanded?

3. To what extent is our organization well known to business, government, education, and media leaders? Do we actively pursue and develop those relationships?

4. How could more effective outreach enhance our fundraising capabilities?

5. How do the board, its members, and the staff work together in the area of community outreach? How can we strengthen this partnership?
How Your Board Can Govern More and Manage Less

- Develop a strategic plan and adhere to it.
- Link the current agenda to the strategic agenda.
- Monitor the success of the organization’s initiatives.
- Develop clear expectations and a plan of action for the board of Directors.
- Encourage the chief executive to think strategically.
- Prepare materials and structure meetings to direct the board’s attention to matters of policy and strategy.
- Develop and use a consent agenda.
- Determine priorities and organize the agenda accordingly.
- Assess the performance of the board on a regular basis.
- Focus on policy objectives, organizational strategy, and the relationship between budgets and priorities.
- Assess the chief executive.
Sample Board Effectiveness Assessment

How Does Your Board Measure Up

Rate your board using the following scale:

0 – No, this doesn't exist on our board
1 – We're working on it
2 – Yes, we're in great shape on this item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection &amp; Composition</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The board is composed of persons vitally interested in the work of the organization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The board is representative of its constituency with regard to race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a balance of new and experienced board members to guarantee both continuity and new thinking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board members have the combination of skills (e.g., fundraising, management, legal, fiscal, etc.) necessary to do their work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The number of consecutive terms a board member can serve is limited. (No life terms!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The organization has a pool of potential board members identified for the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The organization develops future board members through the use of volunteers on committees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New board members are recruited and selected using a thorough review process.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Subtotal (out of a subtotal maximum of 16 points)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation &amp; Training</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• There is a statement of agreement outlining the responsibilities of board members that all board members sign.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The board understands its legal liability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization provides an orientation for new board members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization supplies a board manual to all board members that includes, but is not limited to, descriptions of current programs, a list of board members, budget and funding information, bylaws, and personnel policies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization makes training opportunities available for board members to increase skills related to their board responsibilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subtotal (out of a subtotal maximum of 10 points)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Board Structure &amp; Organization</strong></th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The board has a simple, concise set of bylaws that describes the duties of board members and officers, and the procedures by which the board conducts its business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The board has a mechanism (such as an executive committee) for handling matters that must be addressed between meetings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The board elects a chair (or co-chairs) to provide leadership and coordinate the on-going work of the board and its committees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee assignments are reviewed and evaluated periodically.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board and staff members are clear about their respective responsibilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The board has active committees (e.g., fund-raising personnel, nominating, long-range planning) with specific responsibilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working relations between the board chair and the executive director are strong and productive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations between the staff and board are characterized by mutual respect and good rapport.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subtotal (out of a Subtotal maximum of 16 points)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Board at Work</strong></th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are regularly scheduled board meetings at least 4 times a year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings begin and end on time per an agreed-upon schedule.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is adequate preparation and distribution of material, including agendas, study documents, etc., in advance of board meetings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board meetings are characterized by open discussion, general participation, and active thinking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board members deal primarily with policy formulation; program, financial, and long-range planning; financial review; and evaluating the work of the organization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Minutes of the board and committee meetings are written and circulated to the members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Committees are active and complete assigned tasks in a timely manner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The board is aware of matters of community, state, and nationwide concern within the organization's field of interest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The individual board members accept and carry out assignments within the area of their talents and expertise.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board members follow through on their commitments in a timely manner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board members make a generous financial contribution (self-defined) to the organization on an annual basis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All board members are involved in some aspect of fundraising for the organization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The board conducts an annual review of its own organization and work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New leadership is emerging consistently from the board and its committees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subtotal (out of a subtotal maximum of 28 points)**

**TOTAL SCORE (out of a maximum of 70 points)**
Evaluating the ED

Guidelines

- Do it....and do it annually.
- Do it in a constructive way.
- Make it a regular exercise for the ED, for the board, and for the organization.
- Include the ED in all aspects of the process and content of the performance evaluation.

Content

- Examine your organization’s goals and how the ED’s performance supports and ensures their implementation
- Establish measurable objectives with the ED related to your organization’s goals and to leadership and management qualities.
- Assess the quality of the ED’s relationship with the board, staff, funders, government agencies, the community, stakeholders, and consumers.

Issues that Shape the Evaluation Process

- Who has the primary responsibility: the Executive Committee? Board Chair? Full board?
- How will agreement be reached with the full board on the criteria for the evaluation?
- What is the timeframe for the evaluation?
- Will staff, community, and/or clients be involved?
- What opportunity will the ED have to respond to the evaluation?
- How will the final evaluation be shared with the full board?
Key Questions for Assessing the ED’s Performance

1. What are the major objectives of your organization:
   - short term (1-2 years)
   - long term (5-10 years)

2. How well are these objectives being realized?

3. Does the ED have the necessary knowledge and skills?

4. Does the ED have the necessary personal qualities and characteristics?

5. Does the ED recruit, supervise, and retain staff?

6. What are the ED’s major strengths?

7. What are the ED’s major weaknesses?

8. What external factors, if any, have interfered with the ED’s ability to achieve organizational goals?

9. What specific decisions and actions will be desirable or necessary to:
   - Strengthen the ED’s performance?
   - Clarify the respective roles of the ED and the board?
   - Enhance the effectiveness of the organization?
Resource Materials

Tools to Help Build Passionate and Engaged Boards

✓ What Does it Take?
✓ Guidelines for Recruiting Board Members
✓ Sample Board Member Application
✓ Sample Board Member Agreement
✓ Sample Board Member Job Description
✓ Board Profile Assessment
✓ Checklist for Successful Board Orientation
✓ Board/Staff Responsibility Worksheet
✓ Board Meeting Effectiveness
What does it take?

**Tending to Process**
- Advance warning
- Orient judiciously
- Board buddies
- Matchmaking
- Meetings of the minds
- Front lines

**4 Ways to Focus on Purpose**
1. Choose the right board members
2. Do value-added work
3. Make it stimulating
4. Expect change

**5 Tips for Engaging the Board**
1. Break out of the boardroom
2. Play games
3. Be a “learning board”
4. Clarify expectations
5. Do reality checks
GUIDELINES FOR RECRUITING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

by Carter McNamara

It's very important to keep the perspective that your board deserves highly skilled and participative board members. Don't erode your goals and believe that you are lucky to get anyone at all.

When you set out to recruit new members, the most important consideration is to know what kinds of skills are currently needed by the board. Consider the nature of issues and goals currently faced by the organization. For example, if you're struggling with finances, then seek a member with strong financial skills. It's highly useful to use a Sample Board Recruitment Grid.

1. Maintain an up-to-date list of potential board candidates, including the particular skills they can bring to the organization. This is often done by the Nominating Committee or the Board Development Committee.

2. Develop a Sample Board Application Form for prospective new board members. The form should solicit information about the potential new member, including biographical information, why they want to join this board, what they hope to bring to the board, what they would like to get from their board membership and any questions they might have.

3. Per any scheduling in the By-laws and/or after strategic planning, reference major strategic goals for the organization and the chief executive to identify what skills would be highly useful to the board, e.g., if new people will be hired the board may desire people with human resource skills, etc.

4. Reference the list of potential candidates to recruit for board membership and ask to meet with them.

5. Prospective board members should meet with the board chair and the chief executive, hear an overview of the organization and receive relevant organizational materials describing the organization's products or services, receive a board member job description and a board member application form. The prospective new member should hear about how the organization orients new members. Provide names of several board members whom the prospective new member might contact with any questions.

6. Identify if there are any potential conflicts of interest with the candidate, e.g., is he or she on the board of a competing organization, a vendor of the organization, etc.
7. Invite the prospective new member to a board meeting. Notify current board members that a potential new member will be attending. Consider name tags to help the potential new member be acquainted with board members. Introduce the member right away in the meeting and, at the end of the meeting, ask the potential new member if they have any questions. Thank them for coming.

8. Shortly after the meeting, call the prospective new member to hear if they want to apply for joining the board or not. If so, solicit their completed board member application and provide all applications to the board for their review and election.

9. Notify new members (those who have been elected) and invite them to subsequent board meetings and the board orientation.
Orienting New Members and Engaging Experienced Ones

"We are about to add several new members to our board. Could you suggest some effective ways to orient them to their role as board members and build greater participation by all board members?"

An excellent way to begin this process is to hold an orientation session for all new board members prior to their first board meeting. At this session, they will learn more about the organization's mission, programs, and finances, meet key staff and board members, and understand the expectations for participation and engagement. The end result should be that new board members understand the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, how they can contribute and work effectively for the organization, and what is expected of them as board members, which will enable them to participate in the board's work as quickly as possible and make them feel welcome. Many organizations also encourage current board members to attend these sessions in order to renew their commitment to the group. Some organizations also have found it beneficial to pair an incoming board member with an experienced board member, who would be asked to stay in touch with the new board member during his or her first year of service on the board, in order to answer questions and provide other assistance.

There are many ways to help both new and seasoned members get and stay engaged and focused on their responsibilities. A committee responsible for the ongoing education of board members, with input from the executive director and board chair, can organize activities throughout the year that meet the needs of the board and its individual members. These might include holding special sessions for the board on topics such as fund raising and planning, sending board members to workshops offered by nonprofit management assistance providers, and bringing in outside speakers to discuss trends in the organization's mission area.

A strong, effective board of directors is one of an organization's most valuable assets. Devoting time and other resources to making the board more effective and keeping its members motivated is a wise investment that will yield long-lasting benefits.

Nancy Axelrod is president of the National Center for Nonprofit Boards (NCNB), in Washington, D.C.
Board Leadership
Leaders have a lot to do with the quality of a team. A board without experienced leadership is often a group without direction. Every board needs to plan for officer succession: how to identify leadership qualities, elect the best candidates for the positions, train the officers for their roles, and ensure timely rotation. Serving as an officer is an added responsibility but it also provides an opportunity for a board member to show special commitment and improve his leadership skills.

Role of officers
An officer is a board member with extra duties. Most state laws require certain officers within each board. These roles are defined in the bylaws. The following positions are common in boards.

The most demanding task lies on the shoulders of the chair. She is the chief volunteer officer and role model for the board. Her responsibility is to develop the board as a cohesive and effective team. The vice chair fills in when the chair is not able to carry out the duties. A chair-elect is a chair-in-waiting. This position provides for automatic succession when the term of the chair is up. The treasurer keeps the board on top of the finances. The secretary keeps the minutes and the board records. This position is more and more often filled by a staff person. On some boards the positions of secretary and treasurer are sometimes held by one person if the bylaws allow it.

Electing officers
The traditional voting mechanism relies on the governance committee to prepare a slate of candidates. If the committee reflects the composition of the board and is fair and open-minded, it has a chance to create a sensible slate. When this is the case, board members can consider its recommendations well-founded and sound. Through open discussion the board makes the final choice from the slate. If the governance committee has not earned the trust of the rest of the board members or the role of the committee is unclear, officer election can turn into unnecessary confrontation and into choosing winners and losers.

Another method for electing officers is for the governance committee to facilitate the process. It collects nominations from board members, communicates back and forth with candidates, and finally recommends one candidate who emerges as the best choice for each position. Finally, the board confirms the nominations.
In membership organizations the corporate members — besides electing the board — may also elect the officers. As it is much easier for board members to assess the qualifications of candidates and the needs of the board than for the entire membership to bear this responsibility, it makes sense to strengthen the role of the governance committee in the eyes of the members. Explain the role of the committee and show that the members can trust its recommendations.

**Lack of candidates**
What should a board do when there are no willing or capable candidates? Here are some ways to deal with that difficult situation.

**Long-term solutions:**
- Ask the preliminary question: Why don’t we have candidates for all the officer positions? Only by defining the underlying reason are you able to find a long-term solution.
- Assess your recruitment criteria. Bring in new board members with leadership experience. Let candidates know they are encouraged to take on officer responsibilities.
- Evaluate your training and leadership development opportunities. Help willing candidates learn and obtain the tools they need to take on added duties. Serving as committee chairs is an excellent occasion to learn.

**Immediate solutions:**
- Analyze the job descriptions and expectations. If one is too heavy and demanding, divide the responsibilities. Too much to do may act as a deterrent for potential candidates. If really necessary, create a co-officer or assistant officer position.
- If you have a chair-elect position, discuss its benefits. Is long term commitment too demanding for some candidates? How could this person share the duties?
- Consider shortening the overall term lengths to make the commitment more acceptable.
- As a last resort, see if the present officer would accept to extend his term by a year in order to provide training time for his successor. This choice should not serve as an option to delay necessary leadership change. It might also necessitate an amendment in the bylaws.

**Term limits**
Officer term limits should be tied to regular performance evaluation. Before a candidate can be re-elected, he or she must go through peer approval. Term limits also permit other board members to have a chance to exercise their leadership skills. It is easier to avoid stagnation, undue concentration of power, and continuous inadequate leadership if the positions come with a set term. For instance, a two-year term allows an officer to have an impact by accomplishing a specific agenda. Ultimately the board has always an option to re-elect an exceptionally effective leader for a consecutive term — providing bylaws allow for an additional term.
Removal of officers

The bylaws should spell out the process for board officer removal. Removal is necessary when a major disagreement cannot be solved by other methods. Reasons for removal could include not fulfilling board requirements or inappropriate behavior. Each board needs to determine the gravity of the charges on a case-by-case basis. Each board must determine whether the officer-in-question will be removed from the position or be asked to leave the board.

References

Tool: Guidelines for Recruiting Board Members

By Carter McNamara

The following guidelines should be modified as necessary to conform to the particular culture and purpose of the organization.

It's very important to keep the perspective that your board deserves highly skilled and participative board members. Don't erode your goals and believe that you are lucky to get anyone at all.

When you set out to recruit new members, the most important consideration is to know what kinds of skills are currently needed by the board. Consider the nature of issues and goals currently faced by the organization. For example, if you're struggling with finances, then seek a member with strong financial skills. It's highly useful to use a Sample Board Recruitment Grid.

1. Maintain an up-to-date list of potential board candidates, including the particular skills they can bring to the organization. This is often done by the Nominating Committee or the Board Development Committee.

2. Develop a Sample Board Application Form for prospective new board members. The form should solicit information about the potential new member, including biographical information, why they want to join this board, what they hope to bring to the board, what they would like to get from their board membership and any questions they might have.

3. According to any scheduling in the By-laws and/or after strategic planning, reference major strategic goals for the organization and the chief executive to identify what skills would be highly useful to the board, e.g., if new people will be hired the board may desire people with human resource skills, etc.

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5. Prospective board members should meet with the board chair and the chief executive, hear an overview of the organization and receive relevant organizational materials describing the organization's products or services, receive a board member job description and a board member application form. The prospective new member should hear about how the organization orients new members. Provide names of several board members whom the prospective new member might contact with any questions.

7. Identify if there are any potential conflicts of interest with the candidate, e.g., is he or she on the board of a competing organization, a vendor of the organization, etc.
8. Invite the prospective new member to a board meeting. Notify current board members that a potential new member will be attending. Consider name tags to help the potential new member be acquainted with board members. Introduce the member right away in the meeting and, at the end of the meeting, ask the potential new member if they have any questions. Thank them for coming.

9. Shortly after the meeting, call the prospective new member to hear if they want to apply for joining the board or not. If so, solicit their completed board member application and provide all applications to the board for their review and election.

10. Notify new members (those who have been elected) and invite them to subsequent board meetings and the board orientation.
Tool: Sample Board Member Application

Name: 
Address: 
Daytime Phone: 
Evening Phone: 
Current Employer: 
Email Address: 
_____________________________________________________________________

Describe the personal and/or professional skills you will bring to the Board of Directors:

Why do you want to serve on the board of this organization?

Are you now or have you been on any other boards? Yes No. If yes, please explain:

Areas of Interest:

☐ Programs
☐ Education
☐ Public Relations
☐ Finance
☐ Fund Raising/Events
☐ Board Recruitment
☐ Marketing

Signature: Date:
BOARD MEMBER AGREEMENT

I, ____________, understand that as a member of the Board of Directors of {organization’s name}, I have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that the organization does the best work possible in pursuit of its goals. I believe in the purpose and the mission of the organization, and I will act responsibly and prudently as its steward.

As part of my responsibilities as a board member:

1. I will interpret the organization’s work and values to the community, represent the organization, and act as a spokesperson.

2. I will attend all board meetings, committee meetings as appropriate and special events. If special circumstances prevent me from participating, I will notify the Board President in advance.

3. I will make a personal financial contribution at a level that is meaningful to me.

4. I will actively participate in one or more fundraising activities.

5. I will act in the best interests of the organization, and excuse myself from discussions and votes where I have a conflict of interest.

6. I will stay informed about what’s going on in the organization. I will ask questions and request information. I will participate in and take responsibility for making decisions on issues, policies and other board matters.

7. I will work in good faith with staff and other board members as partners towards achievement of our goals.

8. If I don’t fulfill these commitments to the organization, I will expect the board president to call me and discuss my responsibilities with me.

9. In turn, the organization will be responsible to me in several ways:

10. I will be sent, without request, quarterly financial reports and an update of organizational activities that allow me to meet the “prudent person” section of the law.

11. Opportunities will be offered to me to discuss with the executive director and the board president the organization’s programs, goals, activities, and status; additionally, I can request such opportunities.
12. The organization will help me perform my duties by keeping me informed about issues in the industry and field in which we are working, and by offering me opportunities for professional development as a board member.

13. Board members and staff will respond in a straightforward fashion to questions I have that I feel are necessary to carry out my fiscal, legal and moral responsibilities to this organization. Board members and staff will work in good faith with me towards achievement of our goals.

14. The organization will provide the Board of Directors with Directors & Officers liability insurance.

15. If the organization does not fulfill its commitments to me, I can call on the board president and executive director to discuss these responsibilities.

Signed:

Date:

Member, Board of Directors

Date:

President, Board of Directors
Tool: Sample Board Member Job Description

Fundamental Responsibilities

- Be informed about organization’s mission, services, policies, programs and fiduciary responsibilities
- Inform others about the organization’s mission, programs, activities, and events
- Actively provide creative perspective and solutions for the organization’s most pressing issues
- Attend all monthly board meetings, annual board retreat, assigned committee meetings, and functions
- Review agenda and supporting materials prior to all meetings; review and comment on minutes and reports
- Participate actively in board and committee work
- Volunteer for and willingly accept assignments and complete them thoroughly and on time
- Make a personal financial contribution to the organization (current policy call for a minimum $500)
- Suggest possible candidates for nomination to the board
- Follow conflict of interest and confidentiality policies
- Participate actively in fund raising for the organization

Personal Characteristics

- Ability to: listen, analyze, think clearly and creatively, and work well with people individually and in a group.
- Willing to: prepare for and attend board and committee meetings, ask questions, take responsibility and follow through on a given assignment, contribute personal and financial resources in a generous way according to circumstances, open doors in the community, evaluate oneself.
- Develop certain skills if you do not already possess them, such as to: cultivate and solicit funds, cultivate and recruit board members and other volunteers, read and understand financial statements, learn more about the substantive program area of the organization.
- Possess: honesty, sensitivity to and tolerance of differing views, a friendly, responsive, and patient approach, community-building skills, personal integrity, a developed sense of values, concern for your nonprofit’s development, a sense of humor.
How Can We Recruit the Right Board Members?

1. Think about how you would like to be recruited. The seriousness with which a board member is recruited and selected is directly proportional to the seriousness with which the board member fulfills her/his role.

2. Define the board member’s job:
   - In writing
   - Define the role of individual members as well as the role of the Board as a governing group
   - Discuss expectations (governance, implementation, volunteer). Include amount of time expected, donation expectations, committee involvement, how board member performance is evaluated

3. Use the organization’s mission and values as a primary criterion for selecting new Board members.

4. Agree on profile of the future board.
   - Minimum, maximums, percentages of whatever characteristics are important to your organization.
   - People want to serve in meaningful ways; ensure potential Board members are not identified based solely due to membership to any particular demographic

5. Develop qualifications for serving. Complete profiles below as a starting point.
   - Identify gaps in desired experience and qualifications

6. Adopt a plan to identify and nurture prospects
   - Develop an action plan to start a list of people who might fit the board.
   - The identification process should be ongoing and involve all current board members

7. Be rigorous about the nomination process.
   - Consider demographic balance.
   - Look into the future: will prospective members fill changes in skills as current members leave? Who can be groomed for future leadership roles, for example?
   - Explain qualifications you feel the prospective member has.
   - Offer copies of bylaws and board policy manuals.
   - Conduct reference checks.
   - Take the time now to thoroughly explain board service in order to minimize surprises, frustration, and to signal you have high expectations.

8. Take board election and new member orientation seriously.
   - First impressions will influence a new board member’s decision to stay or go.
   - Well-planned and executed orientation shortens the learning curve, ensures active involvement, and can reduce turnover.
Table 1: Board Member Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Characteristics</th>
<th>Current Board Members</th>
<th>Prospective Board Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL MEMBERS SHOULD HAVE THESE CHARACTERISTICS:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated shared values; interests are aligned with organization</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated interest before nomination</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor of record in last year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some experience in our area of service</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Board service supported by family</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to attend meetings; give 8-10 days per year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known as a good group decision maker</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
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Table 2: Board Member Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Characteristics</th>
<th>Current Board Members</th>
<th>Prospective Board Members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EACH MEMBER SHOULD HAVE ONE OR MORE OF THESE CHARACTERISTICS:</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10</td>
<td>A  B  C  D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognized community leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior experience on nonprofit boards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of nonprofit law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of nonprofit fundraising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialized knowledge of one mission/program area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helps balance board in terms of gender</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Helps balance board in terms of age</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Helps balance board in terms of ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desired Characteristics</td>
<td>Current Board Members</td>
<td>Prospective Board Members</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10</td>
<td>A  B  C  D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good mediator of group disagreements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of land use and facilities management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience in interacting with local government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has network of donor prospects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership in another organization important to us</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
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<td>Area of Expertise/Professional Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
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<td>Architect</td>
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<td>Community Leader</td>
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<td>Educator</td>
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<td>Area of Expertise/Professional Skills</td>
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<td>Strategic Planning</td>
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<td>Special Program Focus</td>
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<td>Board Experience</td>
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<td>President</td>
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<td>Vice Chair</td>
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<td>Planning</td>
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### Table 3: Demographics

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<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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Tool: Checklist for Successful Board Orientation

- **Plan the orientation!**

- **Schedule** the orientation for the most convenient time and location for all board members. Set the date well in advance to accommodate busy schedules.

- **Keep it simple.** Don’t use orientation time to teach board members how to read a financial statement. Provide an overview of important information.

- **Pace the presentation** to fit the time allotted. Create a timed agenda and stick to it.

- **Allow time for Board members to get to know each other.** Facilitate a structured introduction. Example: Board members form pairs, conduct brief interviews of each other. Each pair then takes a turn introducing his/her partner to the whole group.

- **Pay attention to the room’s seating arrangement.** Informal circles encourage interaction and allow everyone to see each other.

- **Ask seasoned or emeritus board members to share stories** from the organization’s past.

- **Include an official “swearing in” ceremony** at which time new board members pledge their service and formally acknowledge their responsibilities as board members.

- **Explain** board meeting procedures, including the informal norms such as dress, timing, etc.

- **Pair new members with a seasoned board member** to serve as a mentor, to help integrate the new member, answer questions, etc.

- **Maintain a sense of humor.** Humor can build camaraderie.

- **Learn from experience.** Ask seasoned board members, “what do you wish you had known when you first became a board member that would have made a difference in the way you did your job?”
### Tool: Board/Staff Responsibility Worksheet

Check the appropriate box, assigning **PRIMARy** responsibility for each item.

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Board Responsibility</th>
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Managing Effective Board Meetings

Board meetings are at the heart of nonprofit governance. Without them, board members may never see each other at all, and little, if any, board work could be accomplished. A recent NCNB survey of more than 200 board members revealed that boards meet a median of seven times per year. Most survey respondents said they spend an average of five hours or more per month, or 60 hours per year, on board or committee business.

Imagine if corporate executives invested only 60 hours a year — a work week and a half — into running a company. That company would probably never make it off the ground. Yet boards of nonprofits all over the world successfully govern organizations in about 60 hours a year. Therefore, it is critical that the time spent in meetings is significant to both the board and the organization.

For some boards, getting members to show up at meetings can be a challenge, and making the time spent in meetings valuable to the board can be even harder. Too many board members complain that their meetings are unorganized, ineffective, or overwhelming. Some board members may be bombarded with too many agenda items at one meeting, while other board members waste time listening to updates and rarely get the opportunity to make important decisions.

In order to have effective meetings and a productive board, the board chair, in conjunction with the chief executive, must ensure that each meeting gives board members the opportunity to make important decisions without overwhelming them with a mountain of work.

Board meetings should be an opportunity for the board to get an accurate and complete report on what’s going on within the organization. "Stop the dog and pony show," one board member said of board meetings. "Everyone sits there and gets to hear about how great everything is in the organization. Then we have a break and everyone goes out to the hallway and complains about what's really going on."

Even on the most organized board, meetings often are not enjoyable for members. For boards that meet only a few times a year, each board meeting becomes essential to the welfare of the organization and can easily become all work and no play. Some board members complain that they do not feel they know their fellow members. No matter how many items there may be on the agenda, the board must have some downtime to unwind and get to know each other better. The members of the board all have at least one thing in common — an interest in the mission of the organization. Meetings should provide the opportunity for members to get to know one another better so they will be able to work better together.

Most of the tips in this booklet are addressed to chief executives and board chairs because they are the ones who tend to have the most impact on the outcome of a board meeting. The chief executive is usually the one who schedules and prepares for board meetings. The chief executive may be responsible for ensuring the meeting is in a suitable location and at a good time and for providing board members with the necessary advance reading.

The board chair has many responsibilities, but bringing order and purpose to the boardroom is among the most important of the chair’s responsibilities. The board chair is the facilitator of most board meetings and is responsible for keeping the meeting on track. The board chair is also responsible for maintaining a positive working relationship among the members of the board. Sometimes it’s hard to fight chaos on a board that has a lot of ideas but not a lot of time to get things done. This booklet is designed to help board chairs streamline board meeting procedures and foster more relevant, helpful contributions from board members.
The board chair may facilitate the meeting, but the participation (or lack thereof) of the rest of the board has a great impact on the meeting’s effectiveness. Every board member influences the meeting, so the chair needs to seek support from the rest of the board when making any changes to the meeting format. For a meeting to be truly productive, the entire board must agree on board meeting rules and procedures such as showing up, putting aside personal agendas, and working for the greater good of the organization. Many organizations may have provisions in their bylaws that state how meetings should be run. If your board decides to drastically change its meeting structure, you may want to consider putting some procedure changes in writing. These procedures should not conflict with the organization’s bylaws.

The following are ways that boards and board chairs can improve meeting procedures before, during, and after each meeting. All these recommendations may not work for all boards, but, at the very least, the ideas in this booklet should get board members thinking about how their meetings can be improved by involving all board members in meetings, remaining focused on the mission, and providing opportunities for board members to learn from others. Even a few minor improvements can make board meetings a more effective and enjoyable time for the entire board.

BEFORE MEETINGS

1. Establish Rules of Conduct
   - Ensure that everyone agrees on how to work together by setting basic ground rules
   - Stress the importance of respect at and away from the board table
   - Agree on how to disagree

2. Draft Recommendations
   - Save time during board meetings by preparing draft board recommendations in advance, when appropriate

3. Require Some Advance Reading
   - Make board training a priority at every meeting
   - Provide the appropriate materials
   - Give board members a broad overview of the organization at least once
     - Vision, Mission, and History
     - Roster of the Board members with bios, job descriptions, board responsibilities
     - Committee lists, chairs, job descriptions, advisors
     - Legal documents and policies, bylaws, conflict of interest, travel expenses, insurance
     - Financial statements and budget
     - Strategic framework and current plan
     - Programs and services
     - Upcoming and annual events
   - Give the board supplemental information before every board meeting
   - Keep the amount of reading short and sweet
DURING MEETINGS

4. Stay on Topic
   • Clearly define the outcomes you wish to achieve during the meeting to prevent lengthy, unfocused discussions
   • Make sure everyone understands each task before the board
   • Don’t let the board get sidetracked by personal issues

5. Use Consent Agendas
   • To save time, combine routine items into one item for the board’s approval
   • Ease your board into consent agendas until everyone is comfortable with the idea

6. Focus on Decisionmaking
   • Change the format of meetings from show-and-tell to give-and-take
   • Give the board important work to do
   • Clarify how the board makes decisions

7. Involve All Board Members
   • Make sure everyone has the opportunity to speak

8. Make Sure the Facilitator (Board Chair) Remains Neutral
   • Don’t be afraid to let someone else take over from the board chair

9. Hold Meetings at a Suitable Site
   • Try holding meetings on site to help board members connect with the organization’s mission
   • Verify the meeting site throughout the year
   • Seek a quiet place

10. Consider the Seating Arrangements
    • Choose an appropriate room setup
    • Watch where you sit

11. Keep Finances Understandable
    • Know how much is too much information
    • Make sure the financial reports the board receives are timely and accurate
    • Teach the board to look for expenses or income that is significantly over or under budget

12. Focus on the Mission
    • Provide context to board meetings by reminding the board of the organization’s mission

13. Make the Most of the Minutes
    • Include the basics
    • Don’t provide too much detail
    • Record information that could be helpful during a legal review
    • Circulate the minutes a few days after the meeting
14. Let Board members Learn from Others
   • Stress that interactive learning is as important for long-time members as it is for new board members
15. Have a Good Time
   • Never underestimate the power of humor

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**Basic Boardroom Etiquette**

Although the board chair shoulders most of the responsibility for facilitating a meeting, the rest of the board is also responsible for determining the outcome of the meeting. Acceptable boardroom etiquette is a must for any meeting to be effective. Encourage your board members to follow these guidelines:

- Arrive on time and stay until the end.
- Come prepared. Read material ahead of time, not while others are speaking.
- Don't use judgmental statements.
- Talk about issues, not about people.
- Listen to others and speak one at a time.
- Refrain from criticizing absent members.
- Be careful not to monopolize the conversation.
- Ask questions if you do not understand something. Keep confidential information confidential.
- Talk about board issues in the boardroom; don't save issues for gossip in the parking lot after the meeting.
- Recognize when you have a conflict of interest and disclose it to the group.
- Use "I" statements when speaking about opinions or feelings.

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**AFTER MEETINGS**

16. Encourage Reflection
   • Critique the meeting
   • Conduct a board self-assessment every three years
   • Conduct a board member self-evaluation
17. Encourage good attendance
   • Develop a meeting structure
   • Start and end on time
   • Set meeting dates far in advance
   • Follow up with no-shows
   • Ask board members for feedback on meeting dates

18. Encourage Relationship Building
   • Schedule breaks
   • Acknowledge milestones such as birthdays, anniversaries, promotions, or retirements

19. Get Help When You Need It
   • Seek a consultant or mediator when necessary

20. Encourage Open Communication
   • Discuss the matters that keep the chief executive awake at night
   • Hold team-building sessions without the chief executive regularly

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**Motivation and Boards**

Board meetings should be an opportunity to motivate board members and keep them excited about service. Here are some tips for how and how not to motivate board members during meetings.

**DO:**

- **Reinforce the mission.** Connect the work of the board directly to the organization’s mission; give board members the sense that their involvement in the organization will benefit the community.

- **Give the board meaningful tasks.** Ask the board to write policies; invite the board to spearhead a capital campaign; give board members opportunities to contribute to the organization.

- **Show board members results.** Invite a constituent to share a positive experience with the organization; tell board members how the organization spent the funds they helped raise.

**DON’T:**

- **Accentuate the negative.** Avoid using the board only as a resource to solve the organization’s problems; discuss the good as well as the bad.

- Create tension. Make sure the board does not feel alienated from or hostile toward the staff, constituents, or each other; emphasize the need for board members to work together.

- **Focus only on fund-raising.** Don’t make board members feel that raising money is the only way they can contribute to the organization; show appreciation for the funds the board raises.
Tool: Board Meeting Effectiveness

At the conclusion of each Board or committee meeting, each participant rates the following items on an index card or ready-to-use form.

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2. The materials provided today were

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3. Today’s discussion concerned primarily

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4. What was the most valuable contribution we made to our organization today?

5. What might we do differently to improve our meeting today?

6. In light of today’s meeting, what are the most important topics we should address at our next meeting?
Recommended Reading List

- *Boards That Make a Difference*, by John Carver, Josey-Bass 2nd Ed.
- *Self-Assessment Tool for Non-Profit Organizations*, by Peter Drucker, The Peter Drucker Foundation for Non-Profit Management
- *Welcome to the Board*, by Fisher Howe, Josey-Bass
- *The Nonprofit Answer Book II: Beyond the Basics*, by R. Andringa, (available through Boardsource.org)
- *Called to Serve: Creating and Nurturing the Effective Volunteer Board*, by Max De Pree
- *Governing Boards* by Cyril O. Houle
- *Beyond Profit* by Fred Setterberg and Kary Schulman
- *The Knowing-Doing Gap* by Jeffery Pfeffer and Robert Sutton
- *Governance as Leadership* by Richard Chiat, William Ryan, Barbara Taylor
- *Fundraising for Non-Profits* by P. Burke Keegan, Harper-Collins (www.harpercollins.com)
Capture your notes here
About NewLevel Group...

Who we are

NewLevel Group supports the work of social impact organizations and their leaders in advancing missions that benefit society, our environment, and the economy. Our team is made up of seasoned professionals who look at challenges from various perspectives honed from decades of experience in the business and nonprofit sectors. We plan as well as implement, never losing sight of our goal to deliver your desired results.

What we do

First and foremost, we listen. We listen to you, your board, your clients, and your colleagues to fully understand the challenges you face. Then, we form a team that will partner with you to identify your goals, outline strategies to achieve them, and, if needed, work with you to implement the tactics.

How we do it

Our approach to helping organizations improve their results reflects our shared values of collaboration, commitment, and community. We are different from other consulting and management firms in several significant ways:

- We work collaboratively; not just treating symptoms, but finding solutions for the underlying causes.
- We implement; we don't just create pretty plans, but roll up our sleeves to get the job done.
- We're focused on results; a good process is important, but the outcome is what really matters.

Management and Consulting for Social Impact Organizations

- Nonprofit and Foundation Management
- Governance & Board Development
- Strategic Planning
- Marketing Planning & Implementation
- Communications Programs
- Meeting Facilitation
- Staff Training
- Organizational Effectiveness

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Tel 707.255.5555  Fax 707.255.5547
www.newlevelgroup.com
Footnotes

1 William Ryan, Richard Chiat, Barbara Taylor, Governance as Leadership
2 Adapted from Boardsource 2006
3 Adapted from Boardsource 2006
4 Adapted from National Center for Nonprofit Boards Publication; Boardsource.org
5 Adapted from Presenting: Board Orientation
6 National Center for Nonprofit Boards