

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE HANDS-ON BOARD

A Workshop for Small Nonprofit Organizations and Community Groups

PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP

- ✓ Help your group identify the qualities that board members need to be successful in hands-on situations;
- ✓ Learn practical methods for recruiting and integrating such new members onto the board;
- ✓ Plan your work to ensure that all board members can play a role in the organization's success and are accountable for that work.

WHAT IS A NONPROFIT BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

- A nonprofit organization is formed to serve a public benefit, not for the accumulation of profits for owners or investors
- The Board is a formally established group of community volunteers elected or appointed to represent the public in defining the organization's mission, ensuring its accountability and providing overall leadership and strategic direction to the organization.

WHY DO NONPROFITS HAVE A BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

Legal reasons

- State and federal laws require that nonprofit organizations have a board to assume the responsibility for the organization's well-being.

Ethical reasons

- The Board represents the voice and interests of the community. It assures the public that the organization is in good hands.
- The Board assumes responsibility for the work of the organization and ensures that the organization not only does things right, but does the right thing.

Practical reasons

- Board members bring skills, talents and relationships that help the organization do its work.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HANDS-ON BOARD?

- **Most of the Time:** The board of a nonprofit or group with no staff
- **Sometimes:** The board of a small nonprofit with one or few staff members where board members take on "volunteer" tasks what are usually considered staff functions
- If the organization has an Executive Director, he/she is responsible for the management and operations of the organization.
- Board responsibilities and authority should be clearly differentiated from those of the Executive Director.
- Board Chair and Executive Director must communicate on the delegation of volunteer (staff) tasks to board members.

WHAT ARE THE BASIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD?

- **Define, protect and advance the Mission**
- **Protect the resources and integrity of the organization**
- **Select and support the Executive Director**
- **Make sure that the organization has the resources to carry out its mission**
- **Be ambassadors on behalf of the organization**
- **Governance: Make sure that the board is strong and does its job well.**

ROLES OF BOARD AND STAFF

General Rule

Board = Mission, Resources, Policies, Governance

Staff = Management, Operations

All Volunteer Organization = All of the above

Expanded Hands-On Responsibilities

For example:

- Assess community needs and engage community
- Create annual plans and evaluate if they're working
- Design programs and deliver services
- Collect program evaluation data; prepare reports
- Train, recruit and manage volunteers
- Prepare and approve budgets
- Manage operations: finances, facilities, insurance, contracts, audits, etc.
- Organize and implement fundraising plans (grant proposals, individual donor cultivation, fund raising events, etc.)
- Communicate what you do to the community
- Build partnerships with other organizations
- Manage the Board: Plan agenda for Board and committee meetings; take minutes, track board assignments.

HOW TO BUILD AND MANAGE A HANDS-ON BOARD?

Types of Board Members

The following profiles are provided to help you think about some of the characteristics to consider in selecting your board candidates. Remember that each individual will be different and will bring his/her own preferences, skills and experiences.

"Activist"

- Usually attracted to and most effective in a new organization or one that is very grassroots
- Willingly devotes high energy and many volunteer hours
- Personally very invested in the mission
- Independent; may have little tolerance for rules, policies, and process
- Excited about and committed to community engagement.
- Likes a charismatic and dynamic leader.

“Doer/Sustainer”

- Most effective on a “hands-on” board
- Willing to do volunteer tasks as well as governance
- Committed and dependable
- Likes to have a significant role on the board and in the organization
- Likes rules but not too much process
- Likes a supportive leader.

“Professional”

- Usually attracted to, and most effective in, a mature organization where they have a governance role
- May be very results-oriented and be interested in how the organization monitors performance
- Clear understanding of governance, policy and finances
- Will expect the organization to have good business practices and financial management
- Not likely to want to do administrative, day to day tasks or be hands-on
- Does not like surprises
- Likes a very professional strong leader.

FOR A HANDS-ON BOARD

“Activist”

- Very committed to the Mission
- Comfortable with new, small or grassroots organizations
- Willingly devote high energy and many volunteer hours
- Excited about and committed to community engagement

“Doer/Sustainer”

- Very committed to the Mission
- Willing to do volunteer tasks as well as governance
- Committed and dependable
- Likes to have a significant role on the board and in the organization

“Professional”

- Very committed to the Mission
- Clear understanding of governance, policy and finances
- Results oriented and interested in how the organization monitors performance
- Expects the organization to have good business practices and financial management.

HOW ARE BOARD MEMBERS SELECTED AND RECRUITED?

- The board has clear vision for the organization and assesses its leadership and operating needs.
- The board identifies the skills, characteristics and community representation needed among its members for the board to work effectively and be inclusive.
- The Board Recruitment Committee analyzes which characteristics are represented on the board and which are missing, and creates a list of characteristics, skills and voices that are priorities for recruiting of new members.
- Board members recommend candidates who meet the recruitment priorities.
- Candidates are invited to apply and, if they agree, Recruitment Committee members evaluate them, and interview them to determine if they are willing and able to serve.
- Candidates are nominated to the board and the board votes to elect them.

Board Profile Worksheet

- A tool used by an organization to assess its current board composition and plan for the future.
- An organization will look for different skills and strengths from its board members depending on its stage of development, issues facing the organization, long-term strategic direction and other circumstances.

Tips for Identifying Candidates

- Build strong collaborative relationships with organizations, people and leaders with a wide range of life experiences
- As Board members, constantly deepen your knowledge of the communities served and build relationships with leaders of those communities
- Develop an effective process to identify and consult with people in the community who can help you find and build relationships with diverse board candidates (e.g., brainstorming lunches, etc.)
- Recruitment is not a once a year event, it is constant: meaningful cultivation of board candidates is based on building relationships and it requires time
- Organize your process: build a pipeline; create recruitment packets; let others know you are recruiting.

HOW ARE BOARD MEMBERS ENGAGED AND RETAINED?

Inclusive Board Culture:

- Board practices create an inclusive environment for board members with a wide diversity of experiences, regardless of their background and personal circumstances; members feel valued, valuable and authentically engaged.

Honesty and Transparency:

- During and after recruitment, clear expectations, challenges faced by the organization and level of work required of all members are communicated openly to candidate.

Sustain Commitment to Mission:

- Orientation and education enable members to become productive and deeply committed leaders of the organization and advocates for the community you serve
- Skills and interests are assessed and tasks assigned accordingly

Meaningful Relationships among Members:

- Camaraderie and respect
- Teamwork
- Opportunities to interact socially
- Peer mentorship
- Accountability
- Recognition & Celebration

INTRODUCING NEW MEMBERS

- Orientation
- Board Handbook (See Table of Contents)
 - ✓ A board manual or handbook will provide important information and on-going guidance to enable each board member to fulfill essential governance duties.

- ✓ A board manual is an invaluable resource for new board members to familiarize and orient themselves with the information they will need to perform their duties and exercise their responsibilities.
- ✓ A board manual continues to be a resource, reference, and working tool throughout a board member's term on the board.
- Assessment of Learning Needs
- Developing Board Education Plan

New Member Orientation Agenda

- 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
- 2. YOUR ORGANIZATION**
Mission, community served
Overview of past and present
- 3. PROGRAMS / SITE VISITS**
- 4. FINANCIAL INFORMATION**
- 5. FUNDRAISING/ DEVELOPMENT**
Annual Fund
Board of Directors' Fund
Special Events
Other _____
- 6. BOARD GOVERNANCE**
Board Responsibilities
Board Meetings
Committee Structure
- 7. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

Questions for New Members

- What excites you about serving on a board?
- What do you personally bring to board service?
- How would you like to contribute?
- How do you think you could best share your experiences as a community member with the board?
- What questions do you have?

Training Needs Assessment

- What other information and support would you like as you begin to serve as board members?
- What else would you like to learn? Other training?

Supporting Learning

- How do you like to learn (reading, talking with others, in group training, one-to-one?)

ORGANIZING TEAM WORK

Board Structure for A Hands On Board

Traditional Leadership “team” on the Board.

- President
- Vice President (s)
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Others, as decided by the Board

(If no staff, management is shared – Example: President may act as Executive Director; Treasurer as Director of Finances, etc. or these duties are delegated and/or divided among other board members)

Shared Leadership

- Style of leading in which responsibilities are distributed within a team and people within that team lead each other
- Leadership emanates from members of team, and not simply from the appointed leader
- Team members share responsibility for group outcomes and also hold each other accountable for setting the team's goals and maintaining its direction
- Essential for successful leadership transitions and long-term sustainability.

Key Aspects of Shared Leadership:

- **Shared purpose:** Team members have a similar understanding of the organization’s mission and collective goals.
- **Social support:** Team members contribute to each other's well-being by offering encouragement and assistance.
- **Voicce:** Degree to which team members believe they can contribute to and influence how the team carries out its activities.

Taken together, these group dynamics can foster a sense of trust and willingness to collaborate in support of team leadership.

Strong Committees/Work Teams are Essential

- Created to enable the board to manage its activities in an organized, effective and efficient manner
- Committee members are usually board members but they may also include people who are not on the board, such as community volunteers and even prospective board members.

Committees: Role and Composition

- A Committee’s role is primarily to study issues, develop plans and make recommendations for Board approval. If “hands-on”, implement or coordinate implementation of recommendations.
- Committees are not authorized to make decisions that may commit the organization’s resources without Board approval.
- **Size:** Number of members depends on the needs of the board and on the number of people required to complete the work that the committee is responsible for.

Types of Committees

- Some committees are defined as “standing”, a permanent committee that meets regularly; while others are “ad hoc”, appointed with a specific charge and for a limited time.

- The organization may have defined certain standing committees in the Bylaws.
- Each board decides which committees it needs and for what functions. For example:
 - ✓ Fund Raising & Marketing
 - ✓ Board Development
 - ✓ Finance & Operations
 - ✓ Programs / Outreach / Community Relations

MANAGING ACCOUNTABILITY

- Realistic Work Plans
- Delegation / Clear Assignments
- Monitoring Plan Implementation: A Few Tips
 - ✓ Summarize assignments after each meeting
 - ✓ List summary of assignments at the beginning of minutes
 - ✓ Send minutes shortly after meeting
 - ✓ Chairs follow up between meetings, as appropriate
 - ✓ Report back at the beginning of each meeting
 - ✓ Evaluate the work of the Board