

Board Recruitment
For Nonprofit Organizations
A Sample Handbook

2012

INTRODUCTION

A well-functioning Board of Directors is essential for nonprofit organizations not only to meet legal requirements, but also to successfully achieve their goals. It is the Board's responsibility to ensure that the organization has the leadership it needs to fulfill its mission and that leadership continuity and effectiveness is secured through a well-planned Board recruitment process that results in attracting highly skilled, committed and participative board members.

A decision to join a board is an important one. You want candidates to be well informed about the organization and to have given their commitment considerable thought before they agree to serve. The existing board needs to **be clear about** what is expected of new members, including what characteristics are needed on the board and the nature of the commitment.

Effective recruitment is a continuous process. Look at effective board recruitment as part of the continuous effort to inform, listen to and involve your community. This will enable your Board to develop and maintain an up-to-date list of potential board candidates, including the particular skills they can bring to the organization.

When setting out to recruit new members, begin by evaluating skills and community representation are currently needed by the board. Consider the nature of issues and goals currently faced by the organization and the direction set in your Strategic Plan. For example, if you're struggling with finances, seek a member with strong financial skills. If you are missing voices from an important sector of your community, search for representatives of that sector. That type of analysis can be facilitated by using the Board Recruitment Grid offered in this handbook. We encourage you to adapt it to fit the needs and characteristics of your agency.

The Board should also develop a Recruitment Packet that includes application and other forms to capture the candidate's interests and intentions with regard to Board membership; relevant organizational materials describing the organization's history and services; and a board member job description.

Shortly after electing new members to the Board, the organization should provide a comprehensive orientation to ensure that new members feel comfortable and well-informed in their roles, so that they can begin to serve the organization effectively as soon as possible.

This sample Board Recruitment Handbook is provided for your organization to adapt it to its needs

Other Resources Include:

- 1) **Strategic Board Recruitment** - www.lisc.org/docs/experts/2005/eo_12_14_2005.pdf
- 2) **Board Source** - www.boardsource.org
- 3) **Free Management Library**
http://www.managementhelp.org/search/management_help_search.html?zoom_query=recruitment
- 4) **Center for Civic Partnerships**
http://www.civicpartnerships.org/docs/tools_resources/nonprofit_board_dev.htm

BOARD RECRUITMENT PROCESS

STEPS IN PLANNING FOR BOARD RECRUITMENT

- 1. Appoint a Board Development or Governance Committee that will work year-round in identifying, recruiting and planning for the education of Board members.**

Responsibilities of the Board Development Committee:

To identify, research, cultivate, recruit, orient, involve and acknowledge committed and effective new board members, appropriate to the current and future needs of your nonprofit. Provide ongoing educational and development opportunities to all members of the Board.

The committee shall present to the board of directors nominations for Board candidates to be elected by the board, and for chairperson, vice chairperson(s), secretary, and treasurer. The committee shall also nominate board candidates for board approval to fill unexpected vacancies. The committee shall furnish to the board information relating to the background and qualifications of all such nominees at least four weeks prior to the board meeting at which an election is scheduled to take place.

The committee shall maintain a current profile of the board's membership composition to guide the selection process. It shall review the performance of incumbent directors who are eligible for reelection, and it shall develop and help administer a program of orientation with the chairperson of the board and the executive director for newly elected directors. It shall encourage periodic programs of in-service training and regular self-assessment retreats or sessions for the board.

- 2. Develop Board recruitment and orientation materials, and the contents of the Board Handbook.**
 - 3. Update Board profile worksheet (See Page 3).** Assess the current makeup of your Board and identify skills/ characteristics that are missing.
 - 4. Assemble a confidential, cumulative, ongoing list of prospective Board Members.**
(The list should cover the needs of your nonprofit for the next several years. Assemble as soon as possible, put in priority order to cultivate, and update every six months, or as necessary.)
 - 5. Identify, cultivate and recruit new Board Members.**
(Seek Board approval of candidates before approaching them about board service.)
 - 6. Present names, backgrounds and applications of candidates to board for review and vote or confirmation.**
 - 7. Orient new Board Members** at the beginning of each new board member's term of service.
 - 8. Evaluate each Board Member's training needs and develop a Board continuing education plan.**
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BOARD PROFILE WORKSHEET

This worksheet can be adapted by organizations to assess their current board composition and plan for the future. In considering board building, an organization is legally obligated to follow its bylaws, which may include specific criteria on board size, structure, and composition. Or the bylaws may need to be updated to incorporate and acknowledge changes in the environment and community that have made changes in the board structure necessary or desirable. Remember, an organization will look for different skills and strengths from its board members depending on its stage of development and other circumstances.

	Current Members										Prospective					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	A	B	C	D	E	F
Age																
Under 18																
19 - 34																
35 – 50																
51 – 65																
Over 65																
Gender																
Male																
Female																
Race/Ethnicity/Disability																
African American/Black																
Asian/Pacific Islander																
Caucasian																
Hispanic/Latino																
Native American/Indian																
Other																
Disability																
Resources																
Money to give																
Access to money																
Access to other resources (foundations, corporate support)																
Community Connections																
Religious organizations																
Corporate																
Education																
Media																
Political																
Philanthropy																
Small business																
Social services																
Other																

BOARD MEMBER REFERRAL FORM

Prospective Board Member Information Sheet

As board and staff members meet people in the community who might make a good fit for your board, fill out an information sheet on each person and save the sheets in a file that is updated and maintained by the Governance Committee. By using this sheet, you will have a file of prospective board members that you can choose from when your board needs a new member.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone: Day _____ Evening _____

E-mail: _____

Source of referral/information: _____

Special Skills

- Fund-Raising Marketing/Public Relations
- Personnel/Human Resources Technology
- Finances Legal
- Business Other: _____

Professional Background

- For-profit business Nonprofit organization
- Government Other: _____

Other: _____

Other affiliations: _____

Other board service: _____

Known levels of giving or volunteering: _____

Other pertinent information: _____

SAMPLE LETTER TO INVITE A CANDIDATE TO CONSIDER JOINING THE BOARD

DATE

Dear [name]:

In April of 2011, new Board Directors will be appointed to the Board of Directors of _____.

You have been recommended as a possible candidate for board service. We are hopeful that you will give serious consideration to your nomination for a board position.

The next several years promise to be exciting ones for the _____. The organization will continue to have a positive impact on the communities we serve. The Board of Directors will play a central role in this important work. Because of your experience and involvement in our community, we feel you are well qualified to be nominated for a board position. As you consider this opportunity, we ask you review the board director position description included in this mailing. As you will see, we are expecting the board to be an active one.

A primary responsibility of board directors is to participate in the development of policy and major decision-making at board meetings held monthly. Other key responsibilities are to be active on an ongoing basis in at least one committee of the board, and to ensure that the organization has the resources that it needs to fulfill its mission.

Since its founding, the _____ has become recognized as an effective provider of _____ services, one that has significant positive impact. We invite you to become a part of this growing tradition.

A member of our organization will contact you by phone to schedule a meeting, at your convenience, to discuss your interest in serving and supporting the work of _____.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 555-5555 or our Director at 555-5555.

Sincerely,

President
Board of Directors

CHECKLIST OF MATERIAL FOR POTENTIAL BOARD MEMBERS (RECRUITMENT PACKET)

Materials about Your Nonprofit:

Include what is current, attractive, well-written, and informative. Some suggestions include:

1. Information about your institution, program, and staff

- Information portfolio about your organization
 - Fact sheet
 - Brochure
 - Annual highlights (if not in some other information)
 - Annual report
 - Newsletter
 - Program of events or activities
 - Selected newspaper or magazine articles
 - Names and functions of chief staff people with whom board members might interact
 - Organizational chart
 - Other
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2. Information about your governing board:

- List of current board members names, titles and affiliations, and, if you wish, brief biographical data
- Responsibilities of board members
- Board organizational chart and committees
- Other

AGENDA FOR AN INDIVIDUAL MEETING WITH A BOARD CANDIDATE

If you have not participated in such a visit before, it may be helpful to rehearse a possible scenario. You may also wish to mentally divide the meeting into several parts or to role-play this meeting beforehand with an experienced board member.

Please note that it is important to speak *briefly* in this meeting. To persuade a candidate, it may be equally important to do *more listening* than talking.

Introduction

(Two or three minutes):

- Thank the person for meeting with you.
- Say that you would like to have him or her consider having his or her name placed in nomination to be a board member of your nonprofit, but acknowledge that the board makes the final decision based on perceived needs of diverse qualifications and skills required by the board at that time.

Central Part of Meeting

(Twenty minutes, but be prepared to extend this part of the meeting if the prospect has more questions or concerns):

- Explain your connection with the nonprofit. (Briefly.)
 - Explain the mission, history, and programs of the nonprofit. (Briefly.)
 - Ask whether the prospect has questions.
 - Listen to and remember the questions and the comments the person may make. (Take a few notes, if necessary.)
 - Respond to the questions, if you can, or say you will seek an answer and let the candidate know.
 - Explain why you are interested in presenting the person's name as a prospective board member.
 - Explain that there is a board orientation for new board members involving the board chairperson, the chief executive, and senior staff, also including more detailed information and written material about your nonprofit and board governance.
 - Explain that a "board partner" is assigned to each new board member to welcome and respond to questions.
 - Explain that there are generally _____ board meetings a year and that each new member will serve on at least one committee that generally meets _____ times per year.
 - Explain that each board member is asked and expected to make an annual financial contribution to the organization, according to his or her circumstances, and to contribute in other ways, such as special events and capital campaigns.
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- Be prepared to include the most recent audited financial statement in the information packet, if requested.
- Ask whether the person has more questions.

Closing of the Meeting

(Five minutes):

- Thank the person again for meeting with you and, if appropriate, reiterate interest in having the person serve on your governing board.
- If the person declines to serve as a board member at this time, ask whether he or she would like to participate in other ways: as an advisory board member, volunteer, donor; provide in-kind goods or services; and/or serve as board member in the future.
- Invite the person to attend a meeting or an event to meet other board members, or to see some program in action.
- Ask whether you may place the person's name in nomination. Reiterate that the final decision is the board's and is based on perceived needs at that time.
- Leave an information packet of material about your nonprofit and about board governance with the prospect as you leave. (Do not give it to the person at the beginning, because it could distract the person from a focused exchange of information, ideas, and feelings.)

APPLICATION FOR NOMINATION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Name _____ Title _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____ Fax _____

BACKGROUND

Please list past and present memberships in service, community, social or civic groups. Please indicate whether you served as an Officer, Director, Committee Chair, or Member.

What skills or expertise can you contribute to the Board of _____ ?

Organizational & Strategic Planning Legal Financial Management Community Relations

Board Development Volunteer Recruitment Marketing & Promotions Fundraising

Event Planning Computer/IT Programs Other _____

AVAILABILITY TO SERVE

Directors are required to attend all Board Meetings, currently held every month. Absence from two (2) consecutive meetings per year or three (3) nonconsecutive meetings per year shall be considered cause to consider that Director has resigned from the Board. Are you able to attend the Board Meetings on a regular basis? Yes No

Most committee meetings are held monthly. Can you commit to attending your committee's meeting on a regular basis? Yes No

Board members are expected to contribute financially to the organization in a way that is meaningful to them, and to help connect the organization to other donors. Can you commit to supporting the organization in this way? Yes No

The Board hosts seasonal events and fundraising campaigns. Can you commit to assisting and/or attending these activities? Yes No

Personal Interest

Please briefly state your understanding of the purpose of _____.

Please briefly state your interest in serving on _____ Board of Directors.



SAMPLE AGENDA FOR THE ORIENTATION MEETING WITH NEW BOARD MEMBERS

TIME	WHAT	WHO
(5 minutes)*	I. WELCOME	Board Chairperson
(25)	II. SELF-INTRODUCTIONS	ALL (Signals opportunity for discussion and questions from anyone in meeting)
(10)	III. YOUR ORGANIZATION Overview of past and present (This is a good place to show a slide show or video if your nonprofit has one)	Board Chair or Director ALL
(5 each)	IV. PROGRAMS / TOUR _____ _____	Director ALL
(10)	V. FINANCIAL INFORMATION Budget, investments Other_____	Treasurer or Financial Officer ALL
(15)	VI. FUNDRAISING/ DEVELOPMENT Annual Fund Board of Directors' Fund Special Events Other_____	Chair of Fund Development Committee or Director ALL
(25)	VII. BOARD GOVERNANCE Board Responsibilities Board Meetings Committee Structure Strategic Plan	Board Chairperson ALL
(5 each)	VIII. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE	Board Chairperson Chief Executive ALL

* Time for each item will vary according to content and number of people participating.

BOARD JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Board Roles and Responsibilities

1. **Determine the organization's mission and purpose** - A statement of mission and purposes should articulate the organization's goals, means, and primary constituents served. It is the board's responsibility to create the mission statement and review it periodically for accuracy and validity. Each individual board member should fully understand and support it.
 2. **Select the executive** - Boards must reach consensus on the chief executive's job description and undertake a careful search process to find the most qualified individual for the position.
 3. **Support the executive and review his or her performance** - The board should ensure that the chief executive has the moral and professional support he or she needs to further the goals of the organization. The chief executive, in partnership with the board, should decide upon a periodic evaluation of the chief executive's performance.
 4. **Ensure effective organizational planning** - As stewards of an organization, boards must actively participate with the staff in an overall planning process and assist in implementing the plan's goals.
 5. **Ensure adequate resources** - One of the board's foremost responsibilities is to provide adequate resources for the organization to fulfill its mission. The board should work in partnership with the chief executive and development staff, if any, to raise funds from the community.
 6. **Manage resources effectively** - The board, in order to remain accountable to its donors, the public, and to safeguard its tax-exempt status, must assist in developing the annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.
 7. **Determine, monitor, and strengthen the organization's programs and services** - The board's role in this area is to determine which programs are the most consistent with an organization's mission, and to monitor their effectiveness.
 8. **Enhance the organization's public standing** - An organization's primary link to the community, including constituents, the public, and the media, is the board. Clearly articulating the organization's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public, as well as garnering support from important members of the community, are important elements of a comprehensive public relations strategy.
 9. **Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability** - The board is ultimately responsible for ensuring adherence to legal standards and ethical norms. Solid financial internal controls, personnel policies, grievance procedures, and a clear delegation to the chief executive of hiring and managing employees will help ensure proper decorum in this area. The board must establish pertinent policies, and adhere to provisions of the organization's bylaws and articles of incorporation.
 10. **Recruit and orient new board members and assess board performance** - All boards have a responsibility to articulate and make known their needs in terms of member experience, skills, and many other considerations that define a "balanced" board composition. Boards must also orient new board members to their responsibilities and the organization's history, needs, and challenges. By evaluating its performance in fulfilling its responsibilities, the board can recognize its achievements and reach consensus on which areas need to be improved.
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Legal Responsibilities Of Nonprofit Boards

Under well-established principles of nonprofit corporation law, a board member must meet certain standards of conduct and attention in carrying out his or her responsibilities to the organization. These standards are usually described as the duty of care, the duty of loyalty and the duty of obedience.

Duty of Care

The duty of care describes the level of competence that is expected of a board member, and is commonly expressed as the duty of "care that an ordinarily **prudent person** would exercise in a like position and under similar circumstances." This means that a board member owes the duty to **exercise reasonable care when he or she makes a decision as a steward of the organization.**

Duty of Loyalty

The duty of loyalty is a standard of faithfulness; a board member must give undivided allegiance when making decisions affecting the organization. This means that a board member must avoid conflicts of interest and can never use information obtained as a member for personal gain, **but must act in the best interests of the organization.**

Duty of Obedience

The duty of obedience requires board members to be faithful to the organization's mission. They are not permitted to act in a way that is inconsistent with the central goals of the organization. A basis for this rule lies in the public's trust that the organization will **manage donated funds to fulfill the organization's mission.**

Responsibilities of the Individual Members of the Board

- ✓ Understand and support the mission of the organization
- ✓ Understand and follow the organization's policies, including conflict of interest and confidentiality policies
- ✓ Be informed about the organization's services, policies, and programs
- ✓ Follow trends and important developments related to this organization
- ✓ Assist with fund-raising and give a significant annual gift to the organization.
- ✓ Assist the board in carrying out its fiduciary responsibilities, such as reviewing and understanding the organization's financial statements
- ✓ Review agenda and supporting materials prior to board and committee meetings
- ✓ Serve on committees and offer to take on special assignments
- ✓ Attend all board and committee meetings and functions, such as special events
- ✓ Have a respectful and supportive working relationship with the chief executive
- ✓ Follow policies and procedures regarding Board member communication and interaction with staff. Respect channels of communication. Refrain from making special requests of the staff.
- ✓ Act as a good-will ambassador to the organization
- ✓ Suggest possible nominees to the board who can make significant contributions to the work of the board and the organization
- ✓ Contribute to making board service a satisfying and rewarding experience for self and for peers.

No individual board member or officer has the authority to act on behalf of the Board of Directors in any matter concerning the organization or in any manner in regard to any staff member unless given the authority by the entire board.

Personal Characteristics of an Effective Board Member

- ✓ Ability to listen, analyze, think clearly and creatively, work well with individual people and groups.
 - ✓ Willingness 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.
 - ✓ Willingness to 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; and 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.
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