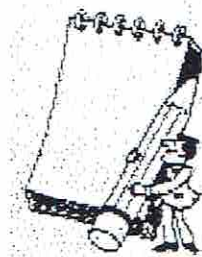


Board Responsibility Guide



**THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS SOME
BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE
RESPONISIBILITIES OF A BOARD OF
DIRECTORS/BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF A
COMMUNITY-BASED NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION.**

**IT IS INTENED AS A GUIDE, SUBJECT
TO ADAPTATIONS IN VARYING
ENVIRONEMENTS AND SCENARIOS.**

Determine the Organization's Mission and Purpose

One of the board's fundamental responsibilities is to establish the mission of the organization. In addition, the board should review the mission periodically and revise it if necessary. The mission statement should be clear and concise, and each member of the board should understand and support it.

Select and Support the Executive, and Review His or Her Performance

Perhaps the most significant decision a board makes is whom to select as chief executive. An effective board will draft a clear job description that outlines the duties of the chief executive, and will undertake a carefully planned search process whenever the position is vacant. In addition, the board will support its chief executive by providing that person with frequent and constructive feedback, and by periodically conducting an evaluation to help the chief executive strengthen his or her performance.

Carefully Select and Orient New Board Members

A good board is made up of individuals who can contribute critically needed skills, experience, perspective, wisdom, and time to the organization. Because no one person can provide all of these qualities, and because the needs of an organization continually change, a board should have a well-conceived plan to identify and recruit the most appropriate people to serve on the board. Once new members are selected, a board should orient new members to their responsibilities and to the activities of the organization. In addition, a board should regularly rotate people off the board to ensure that it can be infused with new ideas without making the board so large that it becomes unwieldy.

Understand Relationship Between Board and Staff

One of the most important responsibilities for a board is to define and understand its relationship with the staff, and in particular the chief executive. The old dictum that "a board sets policy and the staff carries it out" is oversimplified; an effective board should have a clear understanding of the differences between its role and the role of the staff. Because many important organizational issues require a partnership of the board and staff if they are to be addressed effectively, the quality of the working relationship between the board and chief executive should be high.

Ensure Effective Fiscal Management

Ensuring that income is managed wisely is especially important for a tax-exempt nonprofit that is operating in the public trust. The board should approve an annual operating budget, and then monitor throughout the year the organization's ability to adhere to the budget. In addition, the board should require an audit once a year by an independent accountant to verify to itself and to the public that the organization is reporting accurately the sources and uses of its funds.

Engage in Strategic Planning

One of the major contributions that a board can make to a nonprofit organization is to consider what the organization needs to accomplish over the next three to five years, and to recommend action to reach those goals. Given the amount of time that the staff has to concentrate on day-to-day operations, the board can much more easily focus on the future. At least every three to five years, the board should engage in a formal planning process to better understand the fluctuating environment in which the organization is operating, and to then decide what changes it should make to function more effectively in that environment.

Approve and Monitor the Organization's Programs and Services

A nonprofit organization carries out its mission by offering specific programs. The board is responsible for deciding which programs, among the many that an organization could offer, are the most consistent with the mission. In addition, the board is responsible for monitoring the programs to ensure that their quality is as high as possible. Such monitoring can be done, for example, by reviewing performance data, seeing the programs first-hand, conducting a survey of program participants, or retaining a consultant to carry out an evaluation.

Raise Money

The board must take an active role in raising money for the organization regardless of the amount of time that the chief executive or development director devotes to fund raising. Board members can, for example, make personal contributions to the organization, ask friends and colleagues to consider supporting the organization, and recommend to the staff particular individuals, corporations, and foundations that might be asked for support. In addition, the board should help develop the organization's fund-raising strategy, including the formulation of the critical case statement that sets out the rationale for financial support.

Enhance the Organization's Public Image

Board members, coming from various parts of the community or nation can do much to develop the organization's image. If an organization is successful but its achievements are kept secret, it will not succeed in raising money, attracting new leaders for positions of responsibility on the board and staff, or most important, serving a broad range of people. Accordingly, the board should ensure the development of a marketing and public relations strategy that includes written and visual communications pieces such as annual reports, newsletters, fact sheets, flyers and press releases.

In addition, board members should periodically seek out key business, government media and other leaders to inform them about the activities and plans of the organization, and to learn about concerns and interests of various groups. While encouraging board members to spread the word about the organization's official spokesperson when, for example, a news reporter requests an interview about a possibly controversial issue.