

Board Responsibility Guide



Work Cohesively and with Transparency

Any and all matters concerning the Council are to be communicated in writing.

The Executive Board and or the Trustee's will make decisions involving the Council. There may be times when only a decision from the Executive Board may be required.

Presentations will be presented to the Executive Board/Trustee's for review, discussion, research, etc. If it is approved it will then be presented to the full Council on the Agenda as New Business.

All members may participate in various other activities, meetings, etc.

If the member(s) aren't appointed, assigned nor asked by the Council to represent the Council on any such committees, etc. outside of those established within the Council, then those individual(s) shall not be representing the Council, obligate or otherwise have the authority to commit the Council on any matters of the outside Committee's.

Council members that have been appointed to represent the Council on any outside matters shall be reporting such activities in the monthly reporting required by the Council, but does not have the authority to commit the Council on anything until such time as a presentation and voting has taken place.

If you serve on an outside committee and any matter presented for a vote from such committee, you must reclude yourself from voting.

No individual(s), organizations, etc. shall have the right or authority to append the Council's name, logo or likeness on any materials, handouts etc. unless approved by the Council.

No materials shall be disseminated at the Council meetings without prior approval or review by the Council and or the Secretary. If on the Agenda, materials should be given to the Secretary or designated person for disseminating.

Members not adhering to these established procedures shall recuse themselves from voting.

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 who 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. 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 the chief executive should be high.

Ensure Effective Fiscal Management

Ensuring that income is managed wisely is especially important for a tax-exempt non-profit 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 non-profit 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 decide what changes it should make to function more effectively in the environment.

Approve and Monitor the Organization's Programs and Services

A non-profit 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 program 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 new reporter requests an interview about possibly controversial issue.