

Basic Board Responsibilities

A board, whether new or well-established, must maintain focus on its basic responsibilities. Acting on behalf of the community, the board attends to the organization's impact, effectiveness, and integrity.

1. **Determine mission and purpose.** It is the board's responsibility to create and review a statement of mission and purpose that articulates the organization's goals, means, and primary constituents served.
2. **Select the chief executive.** Boards must reach consensus on the chief executive's responsibilities and undertake a careful search to find the most qualified individual for the position.
3. **Support and evaluate the chief executive.** 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.
4. **Ensure effective planning.** Boards must actively participate in an overall planning process and assist in implementing and monitoring the plan's goals.
5. **Monitor and strengthen programs and services.** The board's responsibility is to determine which programs are consistent with the organization's mission and monitor their effectiveness.
6. **Ensure adequate financial resources.** One of the board's foremost responsibilities is to secure adequate resources for the organization to fulfill its mission.
7. **Protect assets and provide proper financial oversight.** The board must assist in developing the annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.
8. **Build a competent board.** All boards have a responsibility to articulate prerequisites for candidates, orient new members, and periodically and comprehensively evaluate their own performance.
9. **Ensure legal and ethical integrity.** The board is ultimately responsible for adherence to legal standards and ethical norms.
10. **Enhance the organization's public standing.** The board should clearly articulate the organization's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public and garner support from the community.

A nonprofit organization's success rests, in large part, on the effective execution of these ten tasks. Turning these points into questions may offer an effective evaluative tool for your board.

Source: Richard T. Ingram, *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards* (BoardSource 2009).

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Board Recruitment

According to the 2015 governance report, *Leading with Intent* (BoardSource), the three most important areas that boards must address to improve performance are fundraising performance, outreach and ambassadorial efforts, and recruitment practices. One extremely heavy thread runs through all three: it's all about relationships.

Recruiting and selecting board members includes four basic steps.

Define Your Need

Using a board profile tool determine the characteristics needed for the board to function effectively at this particular time. These may include demographics, technical/professional expertise, styles of leadership, positions in the community, and more. Next, assess what your current board members bring to the table, and then what remains is the unmet need. (Board profile tool available at ONEplace) The list of needed characteristics provides the criteria for your recruitment and evaluation of candidates.

Evaluate Your Candidates

This step often is the stumbling block. "Where do we find candidates?" is an often heard cry from the governance committee. By far, the most effective way is through personal invitation. Board, staff, volunteers, donors, interested friends – even Facebook friends – offer the opportunity to those they believe would enjoy the chance to serve. While this is not a short-term solution, it encourages board members to start nurturing relationships and connections now so there will be a good pool of candidates next year and the year after. For a broader-based search, postings may be placed with LinkedIn (in partnership with BoardSouce) and with Volunteer Kalamazoo.

Screen Your Selections

Screening is a process of checking your assumptions and assessing your risks. Does the candidate bring all the characteristics we were seeking? Do they have the passion for our cause? Do they understand the commitment and have the wherewithal to participate fully? Will they work well with the existing board? These and similar questions ensure there is a good fit before a commitment is made.

Onboard New Members

An effective onboarding process (orientation, education, mentoring) provides a successful transition into board service. The new members feel welcomed, informed, and confident to begin participating in meetings and events. And, don't limit it to just new members. The process also allows returning members to refresh their understanding and deepen their commitment.

Other resources

Developing a Board Recruitment Process: <http://www.wildapricot.com/articles/developing-a-board-recruitment-process>

Developing a Board Recruitment Plan: <http://www.createthefuture.com/developing.htm>

Recruiting Board Members (several BoardSource articles): <http://www.bridgespan.org/Publications-and-Tools/Hiring-Nonprofit-Leaders/Recruiting-Board-Members.aspx>