



BUILDING AND MAINTAINING AN EFFECTIVE BOARD

THE BOARD BUILDING CYCLE

- ❖ Identify
 - Create a board profile
 - Review mission, vision, and strategic plan. What skills, characteristics, background, and experience do we need for the next 3-5 years?
 - What personal qualities are desirable?
 - What is the current composition of the board?
 - What gaps need to be filled?

- ❖ Cultivate
 - Continually create a pool of prospects
 - Involve everyone: board, staff, former board, major donors
 - Cast a wide net
 - Current volunteers
 - Current major donors
 - People who have benefitted from service of organization
 - Board members of other organizations
 - Universities with programs in philanthropy or graduate programs that fit the organization's mission
 - Membership associations
 - Local business owners with vested interest in community
 - Local leadership programs
 - Corporate board placement programs
 - Begin building a relationship with prospects
 - Let them know you would like them to learn more about the organization

- Send annual report, brochures, newsletters
 - Invite to special events
 - Observe behavior
 - Do they care about the mission?
 - Are they inquisitive?
 - Do they listen?
 - Do they follow through on commitments?
 - Invite to sit on advisory council or board committee
 - After each meeting, evaluate prospect
 - Did they ask questions about the organization?
 - Did they seem committed to mission?
 - Any red flags: travel, overcommitted?
 - Does this person fit the culture of the board?
 - Prepare for nomination
- ❖ Recruit
- Schedule meeting
 - Board chair and/or executive director meeting
 - At meeting:
 - Let person know why they are being nominated
 - Present them with board job description and letter of agreement
 - Discuss specific requirements: donation, involvement in fundraising, providing professional advice.
 - Discuss board meeting times and what is required in terms of preparation
 - Beware of Red Flags
 - People who are trying to enhance their position in community
 - People who have a personal agenda
 - Ask nominee to carefully consider board service
 - After board member is officially nominated by board, Board Chair should call to welcome
- ❖ Orient
- Mandatory board orientation
 - Consider creating a formal policy
 - Create orientation packet
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Fundraising initiatives
 - History of organization
 - Mission/vision/values and programs

- Board/staff structure
 - Strategic plan
 - Finances
- Assign an existing board member to a new board member to ask questions, mentor
- Plan a follow up session six months to one year after orientation

- ❖ Involve
 - Inspire board members by showing them your organization makes a difference
 - Mission moments at each board meeting
 - Meaningful board meetings that require participation
 - Clear objectives for each meeting
 - Focus on strategic issues
 - Consent agenda
 - Time for questions and discussion
 - Opportunities to learn something new
 - Discussion that involves entire board, not just a few members
 - Ask for feedback
 - New board members should be asked for feedback after a few months of service
 - Solicit wide range of opinions. All board members need to be heard and respected.
 - Schedule retreats
 - Seek ways to use board members areas of expertise and assign tasks accordingly
 - Executive Director to provide necessary information about organization

- ❖ Evaluate
 - Regular check ups to evaluate performance and determine ways to strengthen board
 - Evaluate board meetings
 - Verbal feedback
 - Written survey
 - “The thing I liked most...” and “One thing that could have been improved”
 - Chair provides summary of feedback at next meeting
 - Create meeting agreements
 - A few people are not allowed to dominate discussion
 - Conduct a board assessment

- Every two to three years
- How well has board carried out its responsibilities?
- How well has board served the organization?
- How could the board perform more effectively and efficiently?
- Examine:
 - Composition of board
 - Effectiveness of recruitment process
 - Relationship between board and constituency and board and executive director
 - Committee structure
 - Effectiveness of meetings
- Outcomes
 - Measure board's progress
 - Identify areas of improvement
 - Establish goals for the future
 - Team building
 - Greater trust between executive director and board
- Self Assessment
 - Yearly exercise
 - Helps remind board member of roles and responsibilities
 - Defines areas of strength and weakness

- ❖ Rotate
 - Bring new members onto the board for fresh insights
 - Establish term limit policies
 - Create policies that outline removal of board member before term is over

- ❖ Celebrate
 - Recognize successes
 - Determine formal ways to show gratitude
 - Recognition event
 - Token of appreciation
 - Treats
 - Raise a glass
 - Build relationships among board member
 - Social events
 - Create opportunities to share good news
 - Board check in