

The background of the entire page features a bright sun in the upper right corner, with rays extending across a light blue sky. In the lower left, the dark silhouettes of two business professionals, a man and a woman, are shown shaking hands. The overall composition suggests a positive, forward-looking business deal or partnership.

RECRUITING A STRONGER BOARD

A BoardSource
TOOLKIT

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Dear Nonprofit Leader,

When it comes to building a strong and successful nonprofit, few would argue that you need the right talent. Sadly, the discipline that we apply to recruiting and engaging the right staff talent, doesn't always translate into board recruitment. All too often, organizations leave board recruitment to chance or circumstance, relying on "who do we know that would do it?" as the primary criteria for board selection.

But the job of building a board is about more than just filling slots. It is about finding leaders who have skill sets and perspectives that align with your organization's strategies, goals, and needs — not just now, but into the future. And it's not just about recruiting one great individual; it's about having the right blend of skill sets, expertise, community connections, and diverse perspectives and spheres of influence across the board as a whole — which takes some discipline and planning to determine.

In short, recruiting a strong and strategic board takes hard work, and an ongoing commitment to securing the talent your organization needs to advance your mission and maximize your positive impact.

Fortunately, this toolkit is designed to make it a lot easier. It provides the practical tools you need to streamline your board recruitment process and focus on the strategy behind your efforts. The information provided will help your board sharpen its focus in key areas of recruitment, including:

- defining the recruitment roles of the board, the governance committee, and the chief executive
- identifying potential candidates
- cultivating potential candidates
- nominating and electing new board members
- ensuring a diverse and inclusive board

The tools and resources included in this toolkit are culled from BoardSource's library of board leadership resources. If — after reading this toolkit — you think your board could benefit from additional support, I encourage you to visit www.boardsource.org, where you'll find information about our year-round board development program, in-depth training programs, assessment and consulting services, and our full governance library.

Nothing is more important to the health and sustainability of your organization than getting highly qualified, engaged, skilled, enthusiastic people to serve on your board. It is the foundation for all other efforts to strengthen your board's performance, and I hope that this toolkit plays a valuable role in building that foundation for your organization.

Sincerely,



Anne Wallestad
President & CEO
BoardSource

PART 1

GETTING READY TO RECRUIT

re·cruit *v*

attempt to acquire the services of a person



BUILDING A COMPETENT BOARD

TOOL 1

There is no fixed formula for determining the size and composition of a board. Form follows function. The ability of a nonprofit board to help an organization reach its goals depends entirely on how decisions are made and by whom, so each organization needs to evaluate its own needs and priorities and build its board accordingly.

THREE PRINCIPLES TO KEEP IN MIND

These three principles apply to most nonprofit boards:

- Every organization's governing board will only be as effective as its individual members. Who is on the board matters, of course. Personal attributes such as commitment to the organization, professional skills, philanthropic spirit, and experience with complex organizations are appropriate to virtually all governing boards. Other attributes are particularly idiosyncratic to the organization, including various demographic considerations such as ethnicity, need for geographical representation, gender, and affiliations with other organizations relevant to the organization's mission. The board's membership composition matters if it is to be seen by others as a responsible and civic-minded enterprise in the service of all people. Thus one question a board and chief executive need to answer is: How should we define the ideal mix of professional skills, backgrounds and experience, demographics, and other characteristics we should seek in our board members?
- Members of governing boards will respond only to the level of expectation persistently articulated to them by the organization and its leaders. It follows that clarifying expectations for individual board members before they are invited to stand for nomination and accept appointment can greatly influence how energetic and effective they are likely to be. Board members should do their best to help scout for exciting prospective nominees for election or appointment to the board.
- A well-balanced and functioning board depends on the sustained hard work of the governance committee. In earlier times, it was typically named the nominating committee and its charge was largely limited to identifying and nominating candidates. Now, a nominating committee usually exists in the early stage of an organization, when the board and founders share an obligation to fill all board positions. As the organization evolves, however, this committee becomes a governance committee or a committee on board leadership, which deals with all aspects of good governance, not just the nomination process. Its members are usually veteran board members. The board's immediate past chair or current vice chair may chair the committee, with the current board chair and the chief executive usually serving as ex officio members.

TURNOVER AS REVITALIZATION

No matter how good any board member is, the organization will need to replace that person at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way. Among the highest honors for any outstanding board member should be the opportunity to retire while leaving a legacy as someone who truly helped the organization.

Effective boards reframe turnover as revitalization. They

- tap veterans in myriad ways — for example, as mentors, coaches, orienters, members of task forces, and spirit builders on campaign teams
- intentionally focus time and attention on building relationships among current and former board members to promote an attitude of sharing what you know and what you learned
- deliberately introduce promising prospects to committees, task forces, study groups, and special projects, recognizing that doing so converts turnover into continuity

Chairs and chief executives of performing boards translate turnover of the board chair into opportunity through succession planning. Beyond insisting upon a succession plan as an operational practice, they manage the risk of re-forming as a group every time a new board is sworn in. Many organizations, for example, identify potential chairs early and prepare them for their role by providing various leadership opportunities.

A variation on succession planning translates turnover of officers and committee chairs into opportunities as well. A high-performing board frequently invites its members to express interest in leadership positions and state their preference for committee and task force assignments. It does not assume that the chair or chief executive knows every member's qualifications. Also, a high-performing board treats assessing the effectiveness of groups and individuals as opportunities to spot and develop assets. Committee chairs are prospectors intent upon finding their replacements with enough time to groom them. These boards realize that a nonprofit board represents a wealth of human resources from which to draw.

Flourishing nonprofit organizations have boards committed to directing not only the course of their organizations but also the dynamics of their own group. They resist losing momentum when terms of members and officers end. Instead, they deliberately attend to their own dynamics by taking ownership of their operations and their culture.

Excerpted from Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards, Second Edition, by Richard T. Ingram. BoardSource, 2009, and from Structures and Practices of Nonprofit Boards, Second Edition, by Charles F. Dambach, Melissa Davis, and Robert L. Gale. BoardSource, 2009.



GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE JOB DESCRIPTION

TOOL 2

The Governance Committee is responsible for ongoing review and recommendations to enhance the quality and future viability of the board. It focuses on the following five areas, with specific duties dependent on board needs at any specific time, as well as evolving practice:

BOARD ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Lead the board in regularly reviewing and updating the board's statement of its role and areas of responsibility, and the expectations of individual trustees.
- Assist the board in periodically updating and clarifying primary areas of focus for the board — the board's agenda for the next 1-2 years based on the strategic plan.

BOARD COMPOSITION

- Lead in assessment of the current and anticipated needs for board composition. Determine the knowledge, attributes, skills, abilities, influence, and access the board will need to consider the issues that will arise in the foreseeable future.
- Develop a profile of the board as it should evolve over time.
- Identify potential board candidates, present them as possibilities, and explore their interest and availability (i.e., establish a pool of candidates).
- Nominate qualified individuals under criteria to be elected as board members.
- In cooperation with the board chair, contact each board member to assess his/her continuing interest in board membership and the term of service. Work with each board member to identify the appropriate post (member role) she/he might assume.

BOARD KNOWLEDGE

- Design and oversee a process of orientation, including information prior to election and during first cycle of board activity for new members (usually one year).
- Design and implement an ongoing program of board information and education.

BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

- Initiate the periodic assessment of the board's performance. Propose, as appropriate, changes in board structure, roles, and responsibilities.
- Provide ongoing counsel to the board chair and other board leaders on steps she/he might take to enhance board effectiveness.
- Regularly review the board's practices regarding member participation, conflict of interest, confidentiality, etc., and suggest improvements as needed.
- Periodically review and update the board's policy guidelines and practices.

BOARD LEADERSHIP

- Take the lead in succession planning, e.g., recruit and prepare for future board leadership.
- Nominate board members for election as board officers.

Excerpted from Governance Committee by Berit M. Lakey, Sandra R. Hughes, and Outi Flynn. BoardSource, 2004.



THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TOOL 3

More than a few nonprofit board members, particularly business owners, think the board should be made up only of people the chief executive chooses. That's the way many small businesses work. But the board must own the responsibility to improve its own strength and effectiveness, which includes taking the lead in recruiting new members.

In fact, recruitment requires a collaborative effort of the board and the chief executive, with the board leading the process. When board members are actively involved in recruitment, they become more committed to helping their new colleagues succeed at board service. In addition, the chief executive will be more accountable for his or her actions when reporting to a board that includes people other than personal friends. It is a clear conflict of interest for a chief executive to handpick the board members who ultimately assess his or her performance and determine his or her compensation.

Chief executives should certainly be involved in the process of selecting board members, but they should not vote on who is elected. Specifically, it is entirely appropriate for the chief executive to

- help the board draft appropriate criteria for board membership
- be engaged in identifying candidates along with other staff and board members
- nurture the interest of potential board members
- consult with the board during the recruitment process, expressing concerns about candidates when appropriate
- brief candidates on the organization and the nonprofit sector in general
- follow up the board's election with a welcome call or letter and an orientation program

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS

1. Board members: Identify ways in which the board selection process can be a balanced partnership between the board and the chief executive.
2. Board members: Interview the three newest members of the board to learn their opinions about the recruitment process, the chief executive's role in it, and their suggestions for improvement.

Excerpted from The Nonprofit Board Answer Book: A Practical Guide for Board Members and Chief Executives, Second Edition, by BoardSource. BoardSource and Jossey-Bass, 2007.

TOOL 4



CHIEF EXECUTIVE DOS AND DONT'S

How involved should the chief executive be in recruiting board members?

Whether board members of a nonprofit organization are elected by the organization's members or by the board, or even whether they are appointed by another authority, the chief executive has a role to play. What kind of a role and how extensive a role are questions that the board needs to explore.

There are four related roles for chief executives in the recruitment process: identification of potential board members, recommendation of potential board members, participation in interviews with potential candidates, and raising cautionary flags, if necessary, related to possible nominees. There are also roles that are not appropriate: appointing or handpicking members of the board (except during the founding stage when the first board is being assembled).

Identification: Because chief executives serve as key ambassadors for their organizations, they develop extensive networks of people and organizations that share similar values. These networks can be invaluable in identifying potential board members. Nominating bodies should be asking chief executives to be on the look out for individuals with the qualifications and attributes needed by the board.

Recommendation: When a chief executive knows of someone who exemplifies what the board needs, the chief executive should make a recommendation to the nominating body outlining what the person would bring to the table, but also stating how he or she knows the potential nominee. The nominating body can then decide how to proceed.

Participation in interviews: At times, it might be useful for the chief executive to participate with others in interviews with potential board members, but it should be as a supporting actor providing information about the organization. No potential board member should be given the impression that the chief executive is the one who decides who sits on the board or that the chief executive is recruiting supporters for his or her management approach.

Raising cautionary flags: If the chief executive is aware of someone being recommended as a possible nominee who would potentially bring negative publicity or serve as a negative influence on the board, the chief executive must make the nominating body aware of the need for extra caution during the vetting process prior to formal nomination.

Inappropriate roles for the chief executive: To safeguard the organization's reputation for integrity and accountability, it is crucial to avoid even the impression that the chief executive exerts undue influence on the election or appointment of board members. The chief executive should therefore not even recommend for possible nomination individuals with whom he or she has a personal, business, or family relationship. And boards or other nominating/appointing authorities should ensure that they do their own due diligence resulting in a board full of capable and independent-minded individuals committed to the organization's mission.

After board elections, the chief executive is usually an important participant in the orientation of new board members, who need to know about the organization's programs and services as well as to be introduced to its facilities and key staff.

Excerpted from "Ask Our Consultants" by Berit Lakey. Board Member®, September/October, 2008.



FORMING THE FIRST BOARD

TOOL 5

The first challenge for a founder of a new nonprofit organization is to build a board. This means recruiting committed and resourceful board members, organizing the first board meeting, and most importantly, guiding the new board immediately on its future role and responsibilities. The full board must get involved in fine-tuning the mission and setting the guidelines for effective governance.

IMMEDIATE DEMANDS ON THE FIRST BOARD

After the initial decision to create a nonprofit, the founder must form a board. Sharing the workload with the board reduces the founder's burden and gets everyone oriented as a group. Board members need to participate in developing strategic issues with the founder, thus allowing them to build the future together and establish ownership for the plans.

The start-up phase serves as the initiation for the board. If there is no staff yet, the board must serve also in that capacity. Everybody is a volunteer and must be willing and able to commit the necessary time in setting up the organization. For instance, if the nonprofit exists only in theory, the board immediately needs to file tax-exemption application and possibly incorporate the organization. At the first board meeting, assign additional tasks for everyone. Often the board continues to be a working board for some time. As soon as the organization is settled and financially stable enough to hire staff, the board can devote its efforts on its primary task — serving as the governing and oversight body.

WHAT SHOULD THE FIRST BOARD LOOK LIKE?

The first board is the foundation for the organization. Find the skills and expertise that you need to get started. Find people who are familiar with your constituents and their needs. If you are dependent on outside funding, engage someone who can assist in developing a fundraising plan. Find someone who understands the field or mission area that you are involved in. Bring in innovative people who have new ideas. You need someone who understands technology. Make sure they can work as a team. Accept only leaders to secure the board's future leadership.

Start with a small but committed group. If you have a working board, decide what the ideal size is to get the initial work done. If you can hire staff, define your own role either as a board member or part of the management team.

WHERE TO FIND BOARD MEMBERS

Board recruitment can be difficult. Where can you find individuals who are interested in the mission of the organization, who have the time to get involved, bring in needed skills and expertise, and also provide leadership for the organization? The following sources may provide references or actual candidates:

- Circle of friends and neighbors,
- Professional and business contacts,
- Other organizations and their annual reports,
- Professional associations,
- Major corporations and their community outreach programs,
- Local business people,
- Local United Way chapters or community foundations, and
- People who are featured in the news or printed media.

THE FIRST BOARD MEETING

For some boards the first board meeting is the first official opportunity to meet fellow board members. For other boards there may already have been plenty of communication but this meeting starts the formal activity of the board as a legal entity. During the first meeting, besides getting to know each other, the board must

- fix the name and the legal address for the organization to be included in its legal documents
- elect officers
- authorize new officers to make business decisions for the organization (open bank accounts, sign checks, sign a lease)
- adopt a set of bylaws (if they already have been drafted) or start creating this document
- assign duties for everyone

THE NEXT STEP

A group is as efficient in accomplishing its mission as its guidelines are explicit. Create a governance committee that is constantly involved in renewing the board and educating it. This committee may need to do some research and educate itself sufficiently before it can guide the rest of the team. Make sure that each board member understands his or her responsibilities. Implement term limits to bring in additional new ideas to your board on a regular basis. Organize orientation for new board members. Create other committees or task forces to engage your board members individually. Finally, stress that boards act only as a collective entity — decision making is a group function.

Excerpted from the BoardSource Topic Paper “Forming the First Board.”



SIZE OF THE BOARD

TOOL 6

Is there an ideal board size? Possibly, but the ideal size is likely to be different for each board. One size does not fit all. Each board needs to define its optimal capacity at any given time.

HOW TO DETERMINE THE BEST SIZE FOR YOUR BOARD

Start by asking what your board needs to accomplish. Optimal board size may vary according to the moment in the board's life cycle, its mission, its fundraising necessities, and whether it is a national or a local board.

In most states the laws dictate the minimum size for nonprofit boards. Usually it is three, but in some states only one board member is required. Some boards function under a representational mandate; their composition needs to reflect the constituency, and this creates an upward pressure on the size. As productive communication is affected by the size of a gathering, group dynamics may become a criterion for structuring your board.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF LARGE AND SMALL BOARDS

LARGE BOARDS:

Pros:

- A larger size provides enough people to more easily manage the work load of the board.
- Fundraising becomes less of a burden when the responsibility is divided among many members.
- More perspectives are represented.

Cons:

- Bigger boards may not be able to engage every board member in a meaningful activity, which can result in apathy and loss of interest.
- Meetings are difficult to schedule.
- There is a tendency to form cliques and core groups, thus deteriorating overall cohesion.
- There is a danger of loss of individual accountability.
- It may be difficult to create opportunities for interactive discussions.

SMALL BOARDS:

Pros:

- Communication and interaction is easier. Board members get to know each other as individuals.
- Potential satisfaction from service can be greater due to constant and meaningful involvement.
- Every person's participation counts.

Cons:

- Heavy work load may create burnout.
- Fundraising may become a major burden on the shoulders of a few.
- Important opinions or points of view might not be represented.

AVERAGE BOARD SIZES

Remember that every board is different. Average figures only reflect what exists, not a recommended norm. Newly formed boards often start cautiously with a small number of members, and expand as the organization gets more established and the programs and services diversify. It is common to encounter large boards in older, more institutionalized organizations where a principal role of the board members tends to be fundraising. Small community-based nonprofits are often governed by a few devoted volunteers. A recent BoardSource survey found that, among those nonprofits that responded, the average size of the board is 16, the median 15.


REGULATION OF SIZE IN THE BYLAWS

Normally the size of the board is determined in the bylaws of the organization. It is wise to set a guideline within a certain range, not an exact number, so that an unforeseen situation does not force the board to contradict its bylaws. Term limits and constant recruitment secure a continuous balance. Some boards find it important to have an uneven number of members to avoid a tie vote. This, however, can be managed by the chair who can either abstain from voting or cast a determining vote to break a tie.

RESIZING

Structural factors, including size, can have consequences on the board's efficiency. Down-sizing or increasing the size may eliminate some road blocks, but the board's core problem may lie elsewhere. Before restructuring the board, it may be wise to search elsewhere for reasons of malfunction. Is there a lack of commitment or lack of leadership? Involving outsiders in committees, task forces or advisory groups is another way to benefit from skills and perspectives without actually changing the board's size. Executive committees may also facilitate the functioning of a larger board.

Excerpted from the BoardSource Topic Paper "Size of the Board."



QUESTIONS THE BOARD SHOULD ASK

TOOL 7

1. What constitutes a balanced board for our organization in terms of member skills, experience, capacity for philanthropy, commitment, and demographic considerations (ethnicity, gender, geography, etc.)?
2. Have we articulated and communicated a comprehensive list of responsibilities and expectations for board members?
3. Does the size of our board provide different perspectives for discussions and analysis while enabling all members to actively engage in our work?
4. Do some of our most effective board members serve on the governance committee?
5. Does the governance committee, in collaboration with the board chair and the chief executive, evaluate its own needs and priorities to determine the qualifications for prospective board members?
6. Is the governance committee active throughout the year, assessing strengths and weaknesses and identifying and recruiting the best possible prospects for election?

7. Do we periodically assess both the board and the members who are eligible for renomination?
8. What criteria does the governance committee use to rigorously evaluate board members who are eligible for re-election? What evidence do we have that such criteria have been applied?
9. Do we have policies (e.g., on term limits) and procedures that ensure adequate turnover and renewal on the board?
10. Do we continually assess the effectiveness of board orientation and continuing education and make revisions?
11. How does our board gauge the potential contributions of its members and tap them for the greatest benefit to the organization?
12. How does our board address its own development?

Excerpted from Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards, Second Edition, by Richard T. Ingram, BoardSource, 2009, and from Structures and Practices of Nonprofit Boards, Second Edition, by Charles F. Dambach, Melissa Davis, and Robert L. Gale. BoardSource, 2009.

PART 2

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES

i·den·ti·fy(ing) *vt*

to recognize or establish as being
a particular person or thing

TOOL 8



DEVELOPING THE BOARD MATRIX

The search for new board members is a strategic activity; it has long-term implications for the board's effectiveness. It should be driven by considerations of what resources the board will need among its members in order to serve the organization well during the next few years. Having a strategic plan in place will guide the

DEVELOPING THE BOARD MATRIX

board in its choice of whom to bring onto the board. The organization's strategic direction can help to clarify the special skills and resources required on the board. For example, an organization planning to develop more of a presence on the Internet or enhance its internal technology capacities may need to recruit board members with a technology background. A symphony orchestra struggling with declining concert attendance may need board members who represent constituencies that are currently missing from the audience. Such board members may better understand the needs and interests of the audiences that are currently not being served.

What if no strategic plan or strategic framework currently exists or what if the organization is facing significant challenges and opportunities that might require a change of priorities or a change of direction? In such cases, it may be doubly important to consider the personal characteristics of potential members, such as analytical abilities or open-mindedness, as well as particular professional expertise or connections in the community.

A board matrix worksheet can assist the governance committee in developing an ideal board matrix. No board is going to need everything listed on the worksheet, and many will add items that are unique to their organization and their mission. The important thing is to consider each of the major categories listed and then to develop a profile worksheet that meets the unique needs of each board.

Some of what the board will need from its members over the next several years will depend both on the organization's mission and its stage of development. The board of a five-year-old private school will have very different needs than the board of a similar school with a fifty-year-old track record. In the early years, the board will probably need members who are prepared to take on jobs that can supplement the work of a small staff, while the board of the well-established school will probably be faced with major responsibilities for fundraising. During the early years, most board members may turn out to be parents, while the mature school may realize the need for expertise and perspectives that must be found in the wider community.

IDENTIFY NECESSARY SKILLS

No matter what particular needs are dictated by the issues facing the organization, each board must look for people with leadership skills, the ability to work as part of a team, and who ask good questions and can follow through on commitments. Community involvement, political connections, and fundraising abilities will be important for most organizations. A commitment to the organization's mission and values should be a must. Professional expertise related to the organization's mission can provide important insights during strategic planning and decision making. In addition, most boards need people with financial expertise. These days, people with an understanding of information technology, entrepreneurial

skills, public relations, and marketing may add value to a board's work on behalf of the organization. These professionals add value by the questions they ask, by their understanding of issues the board must deal with, and by their connections in the community. However, they should not be expected to provide their professional services to the organization.

By identifying candidates with proven leadership skills, the board ensures its pool of potential future leaders. Someone with organizational leadership experience — whether in the for-profit or nonprofit sector — may have demonstrated skills in managing groups of people, strategic planning, or finances. Not every new recruit can or should be a corporate executive; however, focusing on a prospective member's capacity for leadership can help the board to groom members for leading the board to success in the years to come.

Some organizations are required to fill a certain number of board seats with people who reflect the needs of specific geographic locations or other organizations, or who are directly affected by the organization's services. Others choose to do so because they recognize the need for the perspectives that come from different experiences and interests. A statewide organization may need board members from different parts of the state. A local social service organization may benefit from close connections to one or more religious institutions. An organization serving people with developmental disabilities may be required to have clients' family members on the board.

ADD VALUE WITH DIVERSITY

In addition to the attributes just described, each board must also seek to incorporate the different perspectives represented by individuals from different age groups and racial/ethnic groups as well as a balance of men and women. For example, increasing numbers of boards are finding it useful to include young people in their ranks because they tend to bring different assumptions to the board table. For example, their ideas about the varied use of technology tend to outstrip those of their elders. They are also less likely to feel constrained by a “we tried this already” mentality, and may, by their questions and comments, help identify “the elephant in the room.” A study conducted in 2000 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison found that adults who worked with young people in making decisions about the organization reported a higher level of commitment and energy around the room.

In ethnically and racially diverse communities, it can be crucial that boards diversify their membership in order to respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of the community. For example, a retirement community struggling with declining enrollment might be disadvantaged by a board that does not incorporate the perspectives of the major population groups in the area. Not only does demographic diversity add depth and nuance to the board's discussions, it also serves as a symbol of the organization's values. People will consciously or unconsciously draw conclusions about what an organization stands for based on the composition of its board.

In many communities there can be a competition for “the best” board members. These people typically fall into categories such as white-collar professionals, business people, or organizational leaders. However, when considering potential board members, don't overlook individuals employed in the trades, such as carpenters and plumbers, or people in nonmanagement positions such as secretaries and technicians. The fact is that such individuals could most likely fill many of the slots on the board matrix sheet and have the kind of practical minds and wisdom that would be great assets to a board.

The chief reason for developing a board that is not homogeneous is to promote exploration of a wider range of ideas and options and to reach forward-looking decisions. All organizations now operate in a very complex environment, and research has shown that systems perform best when internal diversity reflects the diversity of the environment. Boards that include men and women with different skills and professional backgrounds, ages, financial situations, and cultural and ethnic backgrounds may be better positioned to steer the organization through frequently turbulent environments than may boards where members are more homogeneous.

WHAT DO WE NEED AND WHOM DO WE WANT?

In beginning the search process, the governance committee needs to guide the board in asking the following questions:

- Thinking about the challenges facing our organization, what characteristics, skills, experience, and backgrounds will we need on the board for the next 3–5 years?
- What personal qualities are important for our board members to have?
- What is the current composition of our board?
- What gaps will we need to fill over the next few years?

ROUND OUT THE BOARD

Once it is clear what kind of composition the board will need over the next several years, the governance committee must assess what characteristics and attributes its current members bring to the table. By comparing the two lists it becomes clear what gaps need to be filled in order to support the

organization's strategic direction. By identifying what is needed for the future before examining the current profile, the committee is less likely to simply replicate current patterns. For example, if a well-known community leader is retiring and moving to Florida, the board may wish to fill that board spot with someone who has the same solid community leadership credentials but who is younger or possibly from a different ethnic group.

Consider the traditional “Ws” that every board depends on: Work, Wealth, and Wisdom. Every board needs people who are willing to roll up their sleeves to get things done; who have access to financial resources; and who possess the wisdom to ask the right questions, provide the needed knowledge, and support healthy discussion. Ideally, every board member should bring at least two of these attributes to the table. But there are two other Ws essential to an effective board: Wit and Witness. Humor can make it easier and more enjoyable for the board to work together, and all board members need to be able to give witness to the organization's valuable work, to tell the story so others will add their support.

The governance committee's final draft of the proposed board matrix should be presented to the board for review, possible revision, and affirmation. Upon approval, the governance committee can then go to work looking for prospective new board members, not only to fill immediate vacancies, but also to meet the board's future needs over the next several years.

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

BOARD MATRIX WORKSHEET

TOOL 9

EXPERTISE/SKILLS/PERSONAL DATA

This worksheet can be adapted by organizations to assess their current board composition and plan for the future. The governance committee can develop an appropriate grid for the organization and then present its recommendations to the full board.

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 made board structure changes 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.

BOARD MATRIX WORKSHEET

	Current Members						Prospective Members					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	A	B	C	D	E	F
Age												
Under 18												
19 – 34												
35 – 50												
51 – 65												
Over 65												
Gender												
Male												
Female												
Race/Ethnicity												
African American/Black												
Asian/Pacific Islander												
Caucasian												
Hispanic/Latino												
Native American/Indian												
Other												

(continued on next page)

BOARD MATRIX WORKSHEET (Continued from previous page)

	Current Members						Prospective Members					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	A	B	C	D	E	F
Resources												
Money to give												
Access to money												
Access to other resources (foundations, corporate support)												
Availability for active participation (solicitation visits, grant writing)												
Community Connections												
Religious organizations												
Corporate												
Education												
Media												
Political												
Philanthropy												
Small business												
Social services												
Other												
Qualities												
Leadership skills/Motivator												
Willingness to work/Availability												
Personal connection with the organization's mission												
Personal Style												
Consensus builder												
Good communicator												
Strategist												
Visionary												
Bridge builder												


(continued on next page)

BOARD MATRIX WORKSHEET (Continued from previous page)

	Current Members						Prospective Members					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	A	B	C	D	E	F
Areas of Expertise												
Administration/Management												
Entrepreneurship												
Financial management												
Accounting												
Investments												
Fundraising												
Government												
Law												
Marketing, public relations												
Human resources												
Strategic planning												
Physical plant												
(architect, engineer)												
Real estate												
Representative of clients												
Special program focus (e.g., education, health, public policy, social services)												
Technology												
Other												
Number of years (or terms) on the board												

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

TOOL 10



WHERE TO FIND BOARD MEMBERS

WHERE TO FIND SUGGESTIONS OF GOOD BOARD MEMBERS

- Colleagues
- Board members of other nonprofits
- Articles and reports in the local media
- Chief executive and other senior staff
- Board members
- Volunteer centers
- Local leadership programs
- Current volunteers
- Current advisory council members or task force members

WHOM TO CONSIDER FOR BOARD MEMBERSHIP


- Community leaders
- Executives of local or national corporations, including those not at a senior level
- Owners of small businesses
- Individuals in professions related to the organization's mission
- Current and prospective major donors
- People who have benefited from the organization's services, or their relatives
- Current or past volunteers (where applicable)
- People who have an affinity with the mission

WHERE TO LOOK FOR PROSPECTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

- Religious institutions and congregations
- Major corporations' outreach programs
- Trade, professional, and fraternal associations
- Local businesses
- Organizations representing various racial and ethnic groups
- Local colleges and universities, community colleges
- Electronic databases (www.guidestar.org, www.boardnetusa.org)
- Hobby centers, clubs, community centers

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

TOOL 11



SHOULD CONSTITUENTS SERVE ON THE BOARD

An organization's constituents, or stakeholders—those people to whom a board feels primary accountability—should be involved in the work of the board. They might participate by serving on board committees, task forces, or advisory groups. They can feel engaged through regular communication with the organization, such as town hall meetings or focus groups in which their feedback is solicited. In some organizations, it may be appropriate for them to serve as voting members.

In membership organizations, such as trade associations, board representation is described clearly in the bylaws. The majority of the board members typically are elected by the organization members, who are the primary stakeholders. In other types of nonprofit organizations, which may have self-perpetuating or appointed boards, the board should not only define the organization's constituents but also develop ways to ensure that their voice is heard. Even primary beneficiaries of an organization's mission-related activities could be elected to the board in certain cases. For instance, health and social-service agencies might recruit current or former clients to serve on their boards.

The key is for each board to define the organization's constituency and then determine how these people should be involved with the board. It is important to remember that constituent board members need to serve the interests of the whole organization. They are not spokespersons or watchdogs for their particular interest groups.

Donors are certainly worthy of consideration for board membership, with some cautions. First, some donors are enthusiastic about the organization but not interested in serving on the board. Inviting them would put them on the spot, and they may be embarrassed to say no. Instead, invite donors to become involved in a special project or event.

In addition, donors may not necessarily make good board members. When inviting a donor, be sure he or she fits the characteristics the board requires. You also run the risk of losing that donor's support if he or she becomes a board member and doesn't like how the board functions or the policies it adopts to guide the organization.

A board can sort out these options by assessing what expertise, skills, and personal qualities are needed to help the board do its work. Many boards develop a board matrix and revise it as needed. This process forces the question of whether, how many, and which constituents should be considered for the board.

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS

1. Board members: List the ways your board currently links with the organization's constituents. What other communication tools might increase constituent involvement?
2. Board members: Articulate board member qualifications — based on a board matrix — that will ensure adequate representation of your key constituents.

Excerpted from The Nonprofit Board Answer Book: A Practical Guide for Board Members and Chief Executives, Second Edition, by BoardSource. BoardSource and Jossey-Bass, 2007.



AVOIDING NEPOTISM

TOOL 12

Nepotism — the practice of showing favoritism toward relatives — usually falls under the purview of management when hiring practices come under scrutiny and supervisory relationships are challenged. Governance can also become a victim of nepotism when family members or close relatives work or serve together.

The mere situation of having multiple family members affiliated with the same organization can raise questions concerning accountability, conflict of interest, and an individual's ability to make independent decisions. Both the board and staff must be sensitive to these concerns. Each situation needs to be analyzed separately.

CLOSE RELATIONS AMONG BOARD MEMBERS

One of the benefits of a diverse board is a multitude of perspectives. This kind of board tends to welcome new ideas and nontraditional thinking. Family members or close friends who are eager to serve on the same board often share objectives. In a small group setting, this approach may hinder innovation and keep the board from exploring new avenues. To avoid nepotism, the board should pose following questions:

- Do we have well-defined criteria for board service? Are these applied to each candidate? Are we choosing candidates for their individual qualifications?
- Is the nomination process producing candidates whose qualifications and motives are genuine?
- Do we have good processes in place to promote independent decision making?
- Can we trust that couples and family members leave personal issues outside of the boardroom?
- Can we discourage the formation of cliques by not recruiting couples or family members together?
- Is our board small enough to be vulnerable if family members with similar interests make decisions? Are we limiting diversity on the board by inviting members of the same family to join the board?
- If one member of a family or couple leaves the board will the other one follow suit?
- Is it unfair to focus on established relationships? Couldn't similar challenges affect other close friendships formed before or during board service?
- Are we discriminating against candidates on the grounds of their family or marital status?

BENEFITS OF FAMILY SERVICE

It is perfectly understandable that in family foundations the board includes numerous family members from different generations. Family is the backbone of the organization. However, family foundation boards should also embrace diversity and bring in outside members who could help balance and facilitate potential internal dilemmas. Similarly, some nonprofits get started by the force of a couple working together. However, it is not necessary for both to serve on the board as voting members. There are many other ways that the spouse of a founder can help or get involved without turning the nonprofit into a family enterprise.

CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN A BOARD MEMBER AND STAFF

Some organizations have nepotism and fraternization policies that forbid board members from having family or other close relations with staff. If you do not have a policy, each situation needs to be treated as a special case. The board must determine whether it can or wants to live with this potentially problematic situation.

It is not acceptable for the spouse or a close relative of a board member to be the chief executive of the organization. It is impossible for the board member to remain unbiased and detached when the board discusses the chief executive's compensation, evaluates performance or, in general, needs a critical eye to assess the overall success of the organization. Abstaining from voting could keep this board member out of the boardroom during most decisions. If the family member remains a candidate, the board member should resign.

If a close relative of a board member is in another staff position the burden falls to the chief executive. She hires and supervises the staff and must be free to choose the best possible person for a position without any fear of repercussions from the board. Here are some questions that the board and the chief executive should discuss as a proactive measure to avoid future problems:

- Do we have a strong conflict-of-interest policy?
- Do we have a confidentiality policy?
- Is a board member able to make unbiased decisions when a close friend is possibly benefiting from the outcome?
- Should the board be concerned about confidential issues being passed on to staff?
- How does the chief executive feel about a staff member having a direct contact with a board member and possibly passing on unfiltered information to her supervisor?
- Is it possible that this staff member gains an indirect influence in the operations of the organization? Would this encourage micromanagement?


CLOSE RELATIONS AMONG STAFF MEMBERS

Family or close ties among staff members is mainly a supervisory issue. Every organization should be prepared for a situation where a staff person is supervised by a relative or a close friend. A policy preventing this can help avoid preferential treatment, including the perception of favoritism, reverse discrimination, and concentration of power. In addition, a policy can help promote a principle that superior performance matters for every employee.

HOW TO DEAL WITH NEPOTISM

Disclosure is important. Discuss ethical behavior. Pay attention to accountability and internal controls. Expand your notion of family relations to include other close relationships. Have a policy addressing conflict of interest, confidentiality, and prevention of nepotism.

Excerpted from the BoardSource Topic Paper "Nepotism and Boards."



FIND THE BEST MATCH

TOOL 13

Once you have identified what you need to round out your board's overall composition, you can start looking for candidates who meet those criteria, and help individuals searching for board service opportunities find you by posting your openings on a job board.

When developing a board service posting, remember to include the following:

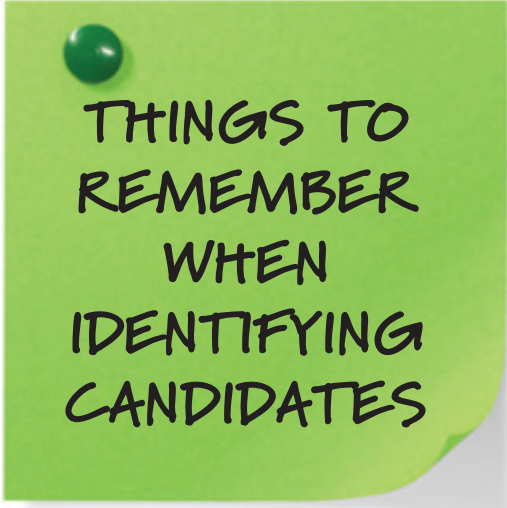
- A brief description of your organization and its mission
- The profiles you are looking to fill (skills, areas of expertise, backgrounds, etc., from your board matrix)
- The board member job description
- The application process and deadlines (what do they need to submit, how, and by when?)

There are several nationwide websites that allow you to either search for candidates or post open positions. A few of these opportunities include:

- LinkedIn for Nonprofits, <http://nonprofits.linkedin.com>
- Volunteer Match, <https://www.volunteermatch.org>
- Create the Good, AARP, <http://createthegood.org/sso/required/post-opportunity>
- boardnetUSA, Volunteer Consulting Group, <http://www.boardnetusa.org/public/home.asp>
- BoardProspects, <http://boardprospects.com/>
- Nonprofit Job Board, Bridgespan, <http://www.bridgespan.org/Services-and-Expertise/Services/Nonprofit-Job-Board.aspx>
- Idealist, <http://idealist.org>

BoardSource has also researched a variety of board posting and matching programs throughout the United States. Please visit the Board Recruitment Center (available at www.boardsource.org/board-recruitment-center) for the most up-to-date list.

TOOL 14



THINGS TO
REMEMBER
WHEN
IDENTIFYING
CANDIDATES

- Annually review the organization's mission and strategic direction in order to identify the needs of the board better.
- Carefully consider the diversity of intellectual, social, financial, demographic, and reputational resources needed on the board.
- Develop a profile of characteristics needed on the board and compare it with what is currently available among its members.
- Ensure diversity of backgrounds, knowledge, and other resources — without becoming too big — by looking for members who represent more than one desired characteristic.

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

PART 3

CULTIVATING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES

cul·ti·vat (ing) *vt*
to seek, promote, or foster

TOOL 15



CULTIVATING RELATIONSHIPS

Identifying potential board members relates to the board's needs. Cultivating potential board members, on the other hand, is all about the prospects and candidates. Cultivating should be an ongoing activity. When the time comes to nominate new board members, it is useful to have a pool of people to choose from. Because board membership requires a significant investment of personal time and energy, it is important to find candidates who care deeply about the organization's mission and who have what it takes to be an effective board member.

So, once prospects have been identified, the next step is to develop a relationship between the prospect and the organization. Create a file for each individual or complete a Prospective Board Member Information Sheet (see Tool 16). The information gathered on each prospect should include the person's contact information, special interests, other board service, professional affiliations, and the name of the person referring this individual, along with other relevant information. Make sure the files are updated when an individual's information changes. The files should be maintained by the governance committee and may be kept in the chief executive's office or some other place with restricted access in order to safeguard private information. When the time comes to identify candidates for the next election, the committee will have a ready resource.

Begin to bring prospective candidates into the fold by letting them know that you would like them to get to know the organization. Send them annual reports, brochures, newsletters, and other basic information. When the organization gets a favorable mention in the press, send them clippings along with a brief handwritten note. Invite them to special events and ask if they would like to observe the organization's programs.

Invite potential board members to serve on a committee or a task force, or to participate in other volunteer activities. Some organizations require that prospective board members serve in some volunteer capacity for as much as a year before they are invited to join. As they become more familiar with the institution and the board, it may become apparent that they have additional skills or interests that could benefit the organization, or it may turn out that they would not be the right match for the board.

Don't dismiss people who serve on other boards or whose schedules would not allow them to join the board right away. It could be months, or even years, before they are ready. Keep in mind that the more boards people serve on, or the more irons they have in the fire, the less time they will likely have to devote to the work of your board. So be prepared to wait and keep them on the prospect list. The important thing is to keep in touch and keep them updated on the organization's activities and achievements.

PRACTICE DIPLOMACY

Avoid misunderstandings by being clear with prospects that not everyone who is invited to take an active interest in the organization's work — including the possibility of board service at some point in the future — will end up as a board member. If someone seems to meet some of the criteria listed in the desired profile, it may be wise to say that the governance committee might be interested in talking with them at some point about possible board service and ask if this would be of interest to them. Let them know that the committee considers a variety of factors, including getting the right mix of talents, perspectives, and experiences on the board.

As stated earlier, the cultivation process will not necessarily lead to board membership. While getting to know individuals in the prospect pool, it is important to take note of behaviors that indicate whether they would serve the board well. Are they inquisitive? Do they care about the mission? Do they follow through on commitments? Do they listen? The board matrix will provide guidance in developing the prospect pool, but remember that while the board needs a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds around the board table, it also requires individuals who are able to understand and accept the perspectives of those who differ from them.

One word of caution: When looking for prospective board members, sometimes the names of a husband and wife team, or others who share a close personal relationship, will be suggested. Often couples are interested in the same things and will get involved in the same causes. While it is smart to keep both persons in mind for the future, it is generally not a good idea to have couples serve on a board at the same time — particularly on a small board. They may personally feel that they can think independently and make their own decisions, but there is a potential for their board colleagues to view them as holding a voting block or feel uncomfortable if they were to disagree with each other during contentious discussions. The one who is not the best match for the board matrix at a particular time might be cultivated for a different volunteer role in the organization or kept in mind for a later time.

In family foundations, it is customary and accepted that several members of the board will come from the family. The objective is to ensure that the wishes of the founder are respected or that the distribution of funds continues to meet family members' consensus. However, even family foundation boards benefit from the wisdom and detachment of some independent minds.

So long as the board has clearly documented its needs, selection criteria, and its process for recruiting and nominating new board members, it is in a better position to protect itself from accusations of unfair discrimination. Because board service does not involve an employment contract, there is generally no legal recourse that can be taken. An organization can still be open to public criticism if disgruntled constituents sense that the selection process was unfair or unbalanced.

At times there is little distinction between the work done during the cultivation step and the recruitment step in the board building cycle. The cultivation period should be a time not only to develop a pool of prospective board members, but also to begin to narrow down the choice candidates so when the board is ready to bring on a new member, the process is ready to deliver.

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

TOOL 16

PROSPECTIVE BOARD MEMBERS INFORMATION

PROSPECTIVE BOARD MEMBER INFORMATION SHEET

Name of prospective board member: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Mobile Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Source of referral/information: _____

SPECIAL SKILLS

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing/Public Relations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel/Human Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finances | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> For-profit business | <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit organization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

EDUCATION

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Some graduate coursework |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some college | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate college degree | |


Other affiliations: _____

Other board service: _____

Known levels of giving: _____

Other pertinent information: _____

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.



EXPLORING INTEREST AND DETERMINING MUTUAL FIT

TOOL 17

Determining fit is a highly personal activity — and a two-way street. It is a process of actively exploring the interest in possible board membership with potential candidates. This is a prospect's opportunity to learn about the organization and the board and to find out what the expectations are of board membership. But it also gives current board members a chance to gauge prospects' interest and determine whether they are right for service on this board at this time.

This activity involves exploring the prospect's interest in board service. What is the person's interest in the mission area? Does the board present a good fit for this individual? Are there constraints that would prevent him or her from fully participating on the board?

To aid in exploring interest, particularly if a number of potential candidates are to be interviewed, many boards use a rating sheet outlining key issues that will help compare candidate qualifications and assist in developing the final slate. The issues listed on the rating sheet should be reviewed before each election since particular needs may change from year to year. For example, one year a board was faced with the sudden resignation of its lone technology "guru" because of illness. Because the board would have to make a substantial investment in new technological systems in the near future, finding someone with a technology background became urgent. Another year other specific issues might rise to the top of the list, but never would a single characteristic be sufficient to elect someone to the board. Demographic diversity and personal qualities must also be considered. (See Tool 22 for a sample Board Candidate Rating Form.)

ENGAGE THE PROSPECTS

This step might be delegated to a couple of people from the governance committee or to a board member who seems appropriately matched to a particular candidate. If the chief executive will be involved, it is beneficial to have a board member also be part of the interview team.

First, review the information that is available about the candidate prior to having an exploratory conversation; then contact the candidate to set up a meeting time. During the meeting, let the candidate know that:

- the board will need to fill a number of seats over the next couple of years
- he or she has been suggested as a person who might have a great deal to offer
- you are acting on behalf of the board to explore interest and availability for board service with a number of people before a slate is put together

During the meeting provide a brief description of the organization, its mission, its services, and its strategic direction. Bring brief, up-to-date materials to leave with candidates for their review at a later date or to prompt questions on the spot. If the person has been involved as a committee or task force member, a volunteer or a financial supporter, affirm their previous knowledge and tailor the description accordingly. Be sure to invite their questions about the organization and find out how the candidate feels about your organization's mission, its work, and its reputation.

Describe in general terms the roles and responsibilities of the board and what is expected of board members. Again, invite their questions about board service and find out if they would be interested in having their name presented to the governance committee as a possible board candidate. If so, determine whether there are any constraints in terms of their participation (e.g., conflicts of interest, commitment to other boards, etc.).

If candidates have not already been involved in the organization's work, this would be a good time to invite them to participate in a project or on a task force. The recruitment period provides an opportunity to get a sense of how dedicated and effective candidates would be if chosen for the board. Many organizations try to involve potential board candidates in some of the organization's hands-on activities, such as helping to build a house or cleaning up the shoreline along a polluted river. By rolling up their sleeves and volunteering, it gives them a more intimate understanding of what the organization is all about and demonstrates to current board members a genuine desire to serve. Ideally some of this is happening during the cultivation period, but may not happen until the conversation about board service turns serious.

EVALUATE THE PROSPECTS

After each interview, prepare a report for the governance committee summarizing what you learned, raising any red flags, and concluding with a general rating of the candidate as a potential board member, or complete the rating schedule if the governance committee has provided one. If the person did not ask questions about the organization or about the board, he or she might not be a promising board candidate since one of the important responsibilities of a board member is to ask questions.

Questions concerning time for committee work or comments about a heavy travel schedule might raise red flags concerning the person's availability for active board participation. This may also be relevant for celebrity/well-known persons. If they are unlikely to be able or willing to participate in the work of the board on a regular basis, it may be wiser to design a special support role for them rather than elect them to the board.

As part of narrowing down the list of prospective candidates, it is often a good idea to do some confidential research about them. This can provide valuable information about their past performance on boards, the extent of their expertise, and their willingness to be a team player. These days, background checks are routinely used when hiring a new employee. It may be equally important when selecting members of the board, which, after all, is the group that is expected to assure the public that the organization is in good hands. This usually means that board members ought to have a clean legal slate as well as a good reputation in the community and the ability to carry out their duties. If board members will be expected to provide financial support, it might be helpful to check the latest annual report from other organizations on whose board the person has served to see what kinds of gifts he or she has given. However, not all organizations publish their lists of donors, and a gift to one organization does not guarantee a gift to another. In any case, it might be disappointing to elect a well-to-do person to the board with the assumption of a generous contribution only to find out that he or she does not engage in philanthropy.

Take a good look at the culture of the board and be truthful about the kinds of members the board is looking for. A board that finds itself falling into repetitive cycles may talk about getting someone who will "mix things up." However, the reality is that someone could shake things up a bit too much and either become ostracized from the board or challenge the board so much that it ultimately fractures. Therefore, take care when discussing board service with prospects who do not fit the mold of the traditional board member.

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.



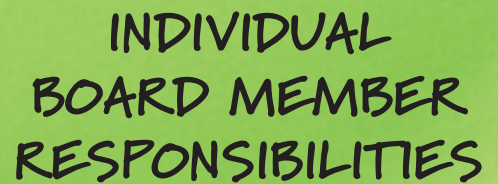
**MATERIALS TO
SHARE WITH
POTENTIAL
BOARD
MEMBERS**

TOOL 18

- Annual reports
- Brochures
- Board rosters
- Newsletters
- Publications and programs list
- The organization's Web site address
- Schedule of board meetings
- Annual calendar
- Roles and responsibilities of the board
- Roles and responsibilities of individual board members
- Brief written history or fact sheet on the organization
- Current case statement
- Committee job descriptions
- Schedules of committee meetings
- Recent press clippings

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

TOOL 19



INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Although governing boards have the responsibilities discussed in this book because they have the legal authority to exercise them as their organization's "fiduciaries," their individual members don't. Indeed, while individual board members possess considerably different yet complementary responsibilities to those held by the board, they do not possess the board's legal authority (except when the board specifically authorizes its officers or other members to have certain and limited authority to act on its behalf).

Clearly articulating the board's corporate responsibilities and authority (preferably in the bylaws) and the responsibilities and expectations of board members (preferably codified as a separate policy statement), are best practices. Asking leading peer organizations with missions similar to your own for copies of what they have developed can be helpful to developing your own versions. Alternatively, use the sample below as a framework to write your own statement of individual board member commitment and responsibilities.

A clear statement of individual board member responsibilities adapted to the organization's mission and needs will serve at least two purposes. First, when recruiting new board members, it helps to clarify what the organization expects before candidates accept the invitation to be nominated. Also, such a statement can provide criteria by which the governance committee identifies and recruits prospective nominees and reviews the performance of incumbents eligible for re-election or reappointment. Prospective and incumbent board members should commit themselves to these illustrations of generally accepted responsibilities.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

- Know the organization's mission, purpose, goals, policies, programs, services, strengths, and needs.
- Serve in leadership positions and undertake special assignments willingly and enthusiastically.
- Avoid prejudiced judgments on the basis of information received from individuals; urge staff members with grievances to follow established policies and procedures through their supervisors. All significant matters coming to you should be called to the attention of the chief executive and/or the board's elected leader as appropriate.
- Follow trends in the organization's field of interest and keep informed.
- Bring goodwill and a sense of humor to the board's deliberations.
- Suggest to the appropriate committee possible nominees for board membership who are clearly women and men of achievement and distinction and would make significant contributions to the board and organization.

MEETINGS

- Prepare for and conscientiously participate in board and committee meetings, including appropriate organizational activities when possible.
- Ask timely and substantive questions at board and committee meetings, consistent with your conscience and convictions, while supporting the majority decision on issues decided by the board.
- Maintain confidentiality of the board's executive sessions and when confidential information is given to you. Never speak for the board or organization unless authorized to do so, but also remember that all utterances from board members carry great weight with those within and outside of the organization. Private opinion on any matter is often construed by others as the board's official posture whether it really is or isn't.
- Suggest board and committee meeting agenda items occasionally to board leaders and the chief executive to ensure that significant, policy-related and strategic matters are discussed.

RELATIONSHIP WITH STAFF

- Counsel the chief executive as appropriate, providing support through often difficult relationships with groups or individuals.
- Avoid asking the staff for favors, including special requests for extensive information that may take extraordinary time to gather and are not part of ongoing board or committee work — unless you have consulted with the chief executive, board chair, or appropriate committee chair.
- Remember that it is most appropriately the chief executive who is responsible for assessing staff performance, not board members or the board. Most chief executives, however, welcome comments or opinions, offered during private conversations, that are complimentary or constructively critical of a senior officer.

AVOIDING CONFLICTS

- Serve the organization as a whole rather than any special interest group or constituency. Even if you were invited to fill a vacancy reserved for a certain constituency or organization, your first obligation is to avoid any preconception that you “represent” anything other than the overall organization's best interests.
- Avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest that might embarrass the board or the organization; disclose any possible conflicts to the board in a timely fashion.
- Maintain independence and objectivity and do what a sense of fairness, ethics, and personal integrity dictate, even though you are not necessarily obliged to do so by law, regulation, or custom.
- Never accept (or offer) favors or gifts from (or to) anyone who does business with the organization.

FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITIES

- At all times, exercise prudence with the board in the control and transfer of funds.
- Faithfully read and understand the organization's financial statements and otherwise help the board fulfill its fiduciary responsibility.

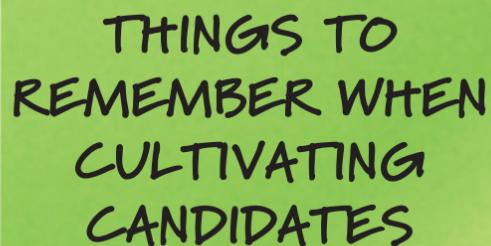
FUNDRAISING

- Give an unrestricted annual gift and restricted program or project support in line with your particular interests and personal means. Always do your best to set an example for other board members.
- Remember, giving one's time and expertise, as important as they are, are not substitutes for providing financial support according to one's capacity. As one experienced and exemplary director candidly said, "Nonprofit organizations need money, and money simply has to come from those who have it. If board members don't support their own organization, why should anyone else?"
- Assist the development committee and staff by helping to identify potential givers and implement fundraising strategies through personal influence where you have it (corporations, individuals, foundations).

AMBASSADORIAL SERVICE

- Serve your organization responsibly and diligently by telling the organization's story and presenting its accomplishments as well as its needs and current challenges. You are your organization's logo.
- Represent, as well, your community to your organization. Bring back concerns, ideas, suggestions, compliments, and the like when you believe they may have merit. Remember, as a board member, you are at the nexus of two-way communication.

Excerpted from Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards, Second Edition, by Richard T. Ingram. BoardSource, 2009.



THINGS TO
REMEMBER WHEN
CULTIVATING
CANDIDATES

TOOL 20

- Involve a wide range of people in the cultivation process, including board members, senior staff, major donors, and other constituents.
- Cultivate relationships with individuals who seem promising.
- Invite prospects to participate in some way in support of the organization.
- Keep records of individuals who might be potential board candidates in the future.
- Continually develop a pool of potential board members.

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

PART 4

NOMINATING AND ELECTING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

nom·i·nat (ing) vt

propose for appointment or election to an office

e·lect (ing) vt

choose or select by vote, for an office



PREPARING FOR NOMINATION AND ELECTION

TOOL 21

This phase of the recruitment process begins once the governance committee has identified and cultivated a group of viable and interested candidates. It is now time to determine the final slate of nominees to be presented to the board, the membership, or the appointing authorities. The chief executive will usually participate in the deliberations and have a voice, but not necessarily a determining voice, in the selection of nominees. Some

organizations seek to have more than one candidate for each open position; in others, the board prefers to be presented with just one nominee per position. If the bylaws stipulate one way or the other, the bylaws must be followed.

In preparation for board elections (or new appointments), the governance committee should start by looking at who is leaving the board and who is eligible for re-election (or re-appointment) to a new term. Make sure that everyone who is eligible for re-election is carefully evaluated both in terms of the needs of the board (as spelled out in the board matrix) and in terms of the person's past performance. Ask each board member who expresses an interest in serving another term to submit a completed self-evaluation to assist the governance committee in preparing the new slate (an example of a board member self-evaluation is found on page 61). If a letter of agreement was signed at the beginning of a board member's term, this may be the time for the member to review the letter with the chair and reflect on whether they believe the board member upheld that agreement.

Re-election to the board should not be automatic. If the board matrix indicates that the board needs someone with very different qualifications, the governance committee might recommend against renominating a current member in favor of bringing on someone with much needed expertise. For example, an organization faced with building a new facility for its services might add someone with solid knowledge of real estate and construction issues. In these situations, the committee must act with care and compassion toward the person not being renominated and share its reasoning with the full board. Circumstances like these have no easy answers, and each situation must be handled differently.

INTERVIEW THE CANDIDATES

As a final step before formally nominating someone for the board, it is wise for the board chair, the chair of the governance committee, and/or the chief executive to have a talk with the person. In order to make sure that candidates are fully aware of what board membership in this organization entails, here are important things to cover:

- Let candidates know why they are invited to stand for election. Is it because they work in the technology industry? Because of their corporate contacts? Because of a personal quality such as being known as a consensus builder? If they are representative of people served by the organization, are they known for asking good questions or having a particularly good understanding of the issues facing the organization's customers? Present them with a board member job description or the letter of agreement that new board members are asked to sign, and discuss any specific expectations, such as levels of financial contribution and involvement in fundraising or providing professional advice related to board decisions.

- During discussions about personal financial contribution and fundraising, some candidates may balk at the thought of asking friends for gifts. Hear them out, but remind them that asking for donations is a small part of fundraising — and often not a necessary role for every board member. Cultivating donors, telling them about the organization, keeping them updated on its activities, and sending hand-written notes to thank them for their interest is all some board members may need to do to help bring in generous gifts. The actual request for money may come from the board chair, other board members, or the chief executive. It is important for potential board members to understand that for organizations that solicit contributions, every board member should be a donor, no matter the amount of the gift — though it helps to have a few board members who have access to substantial financial resources. Some funders now make a point of asking if all board members contribute financially. One hundred percent participation shows that the board is committed to the organization.
- Ensure that they know how often the board meets and what is expected concerning meeting attendance and committee work. Give them a general sense of how much time will be required and provide them with a schedule of board and committee meetings. What if the board always meets in the evening on the first Tuesday of the month and the candidate has a standing teaching commitment at that time? Better to find out now rather than after the election.
- Ask potential nominees about the other boards on which they serve and whether they'd be overcommitted if they joined another board. Some board members like to ask where their organization stands on a candidate's list of charitable priorities. Being too far from the top is a good indication that he or she might not be able to commit the time or resources expected of board members.
- Explore a candidate's reasons for wanting to join the board. To understand what might motivate candidates, consider the things about the organization that persuaded current members to join. Was it the chance to help shape a new program? To develop fundraising skills? To keep a hand in a lifelong professional interest after retirement? To give back to the community? To be part of a group that is accomplishing something important? Or mostly for the camaraderie?

Some people are flattered just to be asked. Some people join boards in gratitude for an organization that helped a loved one. Being a board member of certain organizations can bestow prestige and facilitate professional contacts. There is nothing wrong with any of these motivations, as long as the individual also supports the mission and is prepared to actively participate in the work of the board.

If potential nominees have not yet had an opportunity to be involved with the organization's work, encourage them to visit and, if appropriate, to observe programs and services in action. Meeting current board members and key staff, and possibly some of the constituents, can also help candidates reach a decision about whether this is for them. Sitting in on a board meeting or two might do the same thing.

BEWARE OF RED FLAGS

When interviewing candidates during the recruitment process, be aware of the “red flags” that could cause trouble down the road. It is advisable to exercise caution with people

- who are trying to pad a resume or enhance their position in the community without actually expecting to do much work or who expect to be deferred to because of their celebrity status
- who bring a personal agenda to the board such as the music lover bent on making the orchestra play more pop music, the health center patient who is intent on fixing the clinic's scheduling problems, or the political activist committed to changing the organization's approach and values
- who present themselves as champions of “what is just and right,” as such people often fail to hear or respect what others are saying and have a way of driving other board members away

Surprisingly, caution may also need to be exercised when encountering individuals with previous board experience. While such experience in general is a plus, it can be a negative if they assume that they already know how things should be done even though they do not yet understand the history and culture of this particular board and organization.

Appointing potential board candidates to a committee or task force may provide a better sense of whether they are team players or lone wolves. Keep in mind that the power of a board is collective teamwork. Too many lone wolves — no matter how bright and enterprising — can stand in the way of consensus building and prevent the board from getting its work done. A diversity of opinions and ideas is crucial, but the board must eventually come to a collective decision.

Be honest throughout the process of recruiting new board members. Organizations occasionally go all out to recruit someone who is prominent in the community or who has financial resources. In doing so, they may paint too rosy a picture to lure a candidate onto the board — a tactic that can backfire. Not being completely forthcoming about what is involved in board membership can result in a hasty and embarrassing resignation. Similarly, inviting an individual with financial resources to sit on a board with a promise that he or she won't have to do any work or even attend meetings can create resentment among other board members — with no guarantee that those financial resources will end up in the organization's coffers. It is wise to keep in mind that when a board asks little of its members or its potential members, that is usually what it gets.

CLOSE THE DEAL

Assuming the interview revealed no negative or worrisome information, before concluding, ask potential candidates if they would be willing to serve if nominated and elected, and encourage them to make a thoughtful and informed decision. People who are overly ambitious — or feeling pressured — may join but soon find themselves pressed for time and money — particularly if they are asked to make substantial financial contributions to more than one organization.

If a candidate expresses willingness to serve, let the candidate know when the election is expected to take place and how he or she will be notified of the outcome. Mention the board orientation process and ask the candidate to pencil in the time scheduled for the orientation session on his or her calendar and make it clear that all new board members are required to go through board orientation to ensure that they will quickly be able to become an active participant in the work of the board.

If a candidate declines the invitation to stand for election to the board, thank the person for considering the possibility and ask if he or she might be willing to be considered again in the future. For example, if candidates are currently on other boards, they might be willing to join when their term is up. Whether the answer is yes or no, keep the door open and continue to cultivate their interest in the organization. Even candidates who decline board membership altogether may become regular donors or decide later on to become involved in another capacity.

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

TOOL 22

BOARD CANDIDATE RATING FORM

BOARD CANDIDATE RATING FORM

Name of candidate: _____

Name of rater: _____

Interviewed by: _____

Date of interview: _____


On a scale of 1 – 5 (1=not acceptable, 5=great), please rate the candidate on each item listed below.

		Rating
1.	Proven interest in our mission	
2.	Knowledge and understanding of our work	
3.	Professional knowledge and skills needed by the board (technology, statistics, health policy)	
4.	Connections in the community (media, politics, health care)	
5.	Fundraising experience and willingness to participate	
6.	Ability to make a substantial financial contribution	
7.	Experience in working with people from other ethnic backgrounds	
8.	Ability to listen well	
9.	Ability to express ideas and opinions clearly	
10.	Ability to participate effectively in a conversation (neither monopolizing nor hanging back)	
11.	Sense of humor, positive presence	
12.	Ability to ask appropriate questions	
13.	Ability to participate on a regular basis in the board's work	
	TOTAL	

Other strong points:

Red flags:

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.



FORMAL NOMINATION AND ELECTION

TOOL 23

The final phase in the recruitment process is for the governance committee to present the slate of candidates to the board or to the appointing or electing body. Membership associations hopefully have clearly spelled out election procedures. Self-perpetuating boards sometimes do not. To prepare the board for voting, distribute information about the names on the slate to the board

prior to election. It is not appropriate to have nominees present in the boardroom during the election since board members should feel free to raise questions about a nominee or to share recent information that might be relevant. To avoid possible awkwardness, any discussion of nominees should be conducted in executive session prior to the formal election, which should be held in open meeting, whether by voice vote or by written ballot, and the results recorded in the minutes.

For boards with current board members up for re-election, having those members in the boardroom during the vote might introduce some confusion and tension. It might be wise for boards to develop a written policy for these circumstances or to request candidates to leave the room during election. The policy may state that when current members are up for re-election, all voting is done by written ballots instead of a voice vote.

While some boards prefer the governance committee to present a preselected slate of candidates that have been properly vetted, this may have the appearance of the governance committee controlling the election, not the board as a whole. Other boards may prefer that the board have more influence over the final slate and ask the governance committee to present more than one candidate per slot, thus allowing the board to make its final determination. A respected, carefully composed governance committee should earn the trust of peers to create the right slate or proposing the right candidates for board confirmation. Whichever procedure a board chooses to follow should be clearly outlined in its bylaws or policies.

As soon as the board elects its new members, the board chair should contact the newly elected to welcome them. This may be done by phone, but to emphasize the importance of the role they are accepting, the candidates should be informed in writing about their election to the board and asked to indicate their acceptance in writing. Some boards now ask board members to sign a formal agreement that outlines the mutual expectations between the board and its members. Some may also include an official swearing-in ceremony when new members attend their first board meeting, at which time they pledge their service to the organization and its mission and formally acknowledge their responsibilities as board members.

Along with a warm “welcome aboard,” new members should be reminded of the upcoming board orientation session which is hopefully already designed and organized.

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

TOOL 24



SAMPLE BOARD MEMBER LETTER OF AGREEMENT

As a board member of the XYZ, I am fully committed to the mission and have pledged to help carry it out. I understand that my duties and responsibilities include the following:

1. I will be fiscally responsible, with other board members, for this organization. I will know what our budget is and take an active part in reviewing, approving, and monitoring the budget.
2. I know my legal responsibilities for this organization as a member of the board and will take an active part in establishing and overseeing the organization's policies and programs.
3. I will act in accordance with the bylaws and operating principles outlined in the manual and understand that I am morally responsible, as a member of the board, for the health and well-being of this organization.
4. I will give what is for me a substantial annual financial donation.
5. I will actively participate in fundraising in whatever ways are best suited for me and agreed on with those in charge of the organization's fundraising. These may include individual solicitations, undertaking special events, writing mail appeals, and the like. I am making a good faith agreement to do my best and to help raise as much money as I can.
6. I will actively promote XYZ in the community and will encourage and support its staff.
7. I will prepare for and attend board meetings, be available for phone consultation, and serve on at least one committee, as needed.
8. If I am not able to meet my obligations as a board member, I will offer my resignation.
9. In signing this document, I understand that no quotas are being set and that no rigid standards of measurement and achievement are being formed, and trust that all board members will carry out the above agreements to the best of our ability.

Signed:

Date:

Received by:

Date:

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.



THINGS TO
REMEMBER WHEN
NOMINATING AND
ELECTING BOARD
MEMBERS

TOOL 25

- Conduct personal interviews with candidates and gauge their willingness to serve on the board if nominated.
- Steer clear of overcommitted candidates who may not be able to commit the necessary time or money.
- Make sure the board has sufficient information on each nominee prior to holding elections.
- Ensure that an overall consensus exists on the election process.

Excerpted from The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

PART 5

EMPHASIZING DIVERSITY IN ALL ITS FORMS

di·ver·si·ty *n*
difference; unlikeness; variety



HOW CAN OUR BOARD BECOME MORE DIVERSE?

TOOL 26

Boards that become too insular, either by electing the same people to leadership positions or by selecting new members in their same mold, can easily miss opportunities to strengthen the organization by introducing fresh perspectives and diverse voices. In addition, donors and the community at large will look at your board as a reflection of the entire organization. If they perceive that you are

stuck in a rut or out of touch with what's happening in the wider world, they are more likely to lend their support elsewhere.

Diversity encompasses many elements: age, gender, ethnicity, geographic location, occupation, professional affiliation, skills set, and so forth. For a suburban-based nonprofit, for instance, diversity might mean board members from urban or rural areas. A board governing a nonprofit dedicated to young women's issues might seek to diversify by recruiting men and older women.

Reducing a board's homogeneity opens it to a variety of viewpoints and avenues of action. People from different backgrounds, who have had different experiences, will add a richness to the board's discussions, often raising points that other members would never have thought about. Of course, once a board has spoken with one voice on policy, those holding contrary opinions must be loyal to the majority.

One caution: a board should beware of tokenism — having, for example, “the young member” or “the Asian member” or “the member from the inner city.” This type of approach does not reflect a serious attempt to diversify the board's composition and does a disservice to the people who were recruited to bring a fresh, personal perspective to board discussions and decisions. It is unfair and dangerous to expect one person to be the “representative” of a specific population. No one person can — or should — reflect the viewpoints of an entire group.

To encourage more diversity within its ranks, a board should

- emphasize to the governance committee the importance of finding candidates who would bring a broader variety of experience and views to the board. They may be found among constituent groups, on boards of other organizations, or within subgroups of the membership or donor base.
- provide the governance committee with the names of people you believe would bring needed expertise or diversity (gender, age, ethnic, or geographic) to the board.
- actively solicit different points of view during board discussions, led by a chair who welcomes a broad spectrum of ideas and perspectives. No one should feel penalized for voicing what might be an unpopular view.
- to build more diverse networks and relationships that could yield future board members, invite nonboard members to sit on advisory councils or certain board committees.
- hold joint meetings with leaders from groups that have traditionally been underrepresented on the board.

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS

1. Board members, have an open discussion about how well the board reflects the diversity of its constituencies.
2. Board members, develop a list of desired qualifications for board membership, including the need for people of different ages, genders, religious beliefs, races, professional experiences, and so forth.
3. Board members, strategize about how best to identify and recruit people who will bring new perspectives to the governance process.

Excerpted from The Nonprofit Board Answer Book: A Practical Guide for Board Members and Chief Executives, Second Edition, by BoardSource. BoardSource and Jossey-Bass, 2007.



TEN STEPS TO DEVELOP A DIVERSE BOARD

TOOL 27

There's a good chance that, like many nonprofits, you aren't happy with your attempts to achieve diversity. If your best-intentioned efforts are failing, consider these 10 steps to promoting inclusion on your board.

1. Know why you need diversity.

We live in a very complex world. Few problems have simple solutions. Having a board made up of different kinds of people makes it more likely that issues will be looked at from a variety of perspectives. It opens the possibility for more creative solutions. Including different backgrounds on your board also sends a signal to others that you are not an insular and narrow-minded group.

2. Be clear about what you need.

The composition of your board should be dictated by your strategic plan or your vision for the future. It may mean that the board will look and sound different at different times. For example, a symphony orchestra trying to reach a younger audience would be foolish not to include younger people on the board. There are some kinds of diversity needed on just about every board: gender, age, skills, and personalities. Everything else depends on the resource needs of the organization and is dictated by the mission, location, and racial and ethnic mix of the area.

3. Don't succumb to tokenism.

By adding one person from a demographic group previously not represented on your board, don't think you are getting someone who will know how everyone from the same group thinks and feels. Each person will bring particular perspectives and opinions growing out of his or her life experience. But they cannot be expected to speak for everyone else. If possible, bring on two people simultaneously from the same group who have different skills or other attributes.

4. Realize that diversity comes with a price.

When you put people from different backgrounds and with different personalities around the board table, expect disagreements — even conflicts. The point is to explore the differences in order to gain a deeper understanding and to make smarter decisions. Working through differences requires time and a willingness to keep an open mind. You might need some training on how to deal with conflict — or even an outside facilitator if things get really hot.

5. Provide opportunities for social interaction.

To be an effective board, members must have opportunities to get to know each other, to learn what each person cares about, to discover shared interests, and to laugh together. Such opportunities may be built into board meetings or may be arranged via social events or retreats. However, beware of social events where those of different backgrounds do not participate. Such events easily give the impression of a board with two classes: insiders and outsiders.

6. Get new board members involved right away.

No matter what their background, give new board members an adequate orientation. Find out what their interests and abilities are and get them involved in a task. Expect full participation. If they do not follow through on commitments, check in with them to find out what the problem is. You may have had different understandings about what was expected. If you leave things hanging, they will likely get the impression that their participation was not valued anyway.

7. Ask for feedback.

A board can learn a lot by asking its members for feedback. New board members often have valuable insights on the way the board operates. Those who have different life experiences from the rest of the board may raise questions that had not occurred to anyone else, but that may turn out to be crucial in dealing with challenges facing the organization. Don't just solicit feedback on the board's work, but on their own participation. Is it what they had expected? Hoped? Are there ways to make the experience more fulfilling?

8. Make use of everyone's gifts.

Everyone who sits on a board should be there for more reasons than their demographic group membership. Each person should also be recruited because he or she has a particular skill that is needed on the board as well as the ability to participate actively in board deliberations. Individuals may bring valuable insights or access to resources outside the board that is needed by the organization. They may have time available and interest in taking on specific tasks that need to be done. Don't assume that someone is willing to use his or her professional skills on the board. An accountant may not want to be on the finance committee, but might prefer to get involved in a different challenge. Make use of what they have to give.

9. Be aware of differences.

Don't pretend (or believe!) that "differences don't matter." If differences did not matter, we would not have to work so hard to create and maintain diverse boards. There is truth to the fact that men and women often think differently and value different things, that ethnic groups have values and practices not shared by other groups, that people from economically different backgrounds look at the world with different lenses, that introverts and extroverts communicate in different ways, that baby-boomers have different expectations than Generation Xers. But also, don't assume that all people with the same demographic profile think and act the same. To avoid falling into the traps set by unexamined assumptions, become aware of your own assumptions and then proceed with caution. Check things out. A diverse board can be a wonderful opportunity to expand one's horizon and understanding of the human condition!

10. Use the governance committee to build a diverse board.

Building a board that continually has a diversity of skills, perspectives, and other resources is an ongoing task. It must be institutionalized in the charge to the governance committee as part of its responsibility to identify prospective board members, to orient and involve them, and to evaluate the needs of the board from year to year.

Excerpted from "Ten Moves to Develop a Diverse Board" by Berit Lakey. Board Member®, October/November, 2003.



DIVERSITY FINDINGS FROM LEADING WITH INTENT

TOOL 28

To succeed in an increasingly diverse world, nonprofit organizations need to remain relevant and connected to their communities. Their leaders — board members and chief executives — need to represent diverse points of views. While the nonprofit sector has seen modest progress on increasing racial/ethnic, gender, and age diversity among chief executives and board members, diversity is more than a numbers game. It also requires inclusive policies, practices, and behaviors that nurture and value different perspectives and experiences. To value diversity is to respect and appreciate race, ethnicity, and nationality; gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation; age; physical, mental, and developmental abilities; religion; and socioeconomic status.

According to BoardSource's *Leading with Intent: A National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices 2015*:

- People of color remain underrepresented in nonprofit leadership. According to the 2010 U.S. census, 64% of Americans were White. Of our 2014 survey respondents, 89% of CEOs are White and 80% of board members are White. Small, local organizations have slightly more diverse boards in terms of gender and age.
- The demographics of board officers — chairs, vice chairs, secretaries, and treasurers — generally parallel overall board diversity, with the notable exception of the chair: Women account for 48% of board members and 43% of chairs. The larger the organization, the more likely the chair is to be White, over 40 years of age, and male.
- Only 35% of CEOs give their boards an A or B on increasing board diversity. Our findings show a lack of concerted planning and follow-through. Most CEOs report that their boards have discussed the importance of expanding board diversity (74%) and actively recruited members from diverse backgrounds (80%). Yet only 56% report that the board has reviewed and revised its recruiting efforts, and only 19% indicate that the board has developed an action plan to increase diversity.
- More than half of nonprofit boards have practices and policies that support *functional* inclusion, but less than half describe behaviors that reflect social inclusion. *Functional* inclusion is characterized as policies, structures, practices, and processes designed to increase the inclusion of individuals from diverse or traditionally marginalized communities. In 2012, 38% of participating organizations had a written diversity statement. In 2014, that number increased to 50% and more organizations incorporated diversity into formal policies.
- *Social* inclusion occurs when individuals from diverse backgrounds participate fully in the interpersonal dynamics and cultural fabric of the board. In terms of board work, roughly one-third of CEOs report that diverse members participate *to a great extent* in contributing to, influencing, and making board decisions. In terms of board member relationships, less than one-third of CEOs report efforts to cultivate personal friendships with diverse members.

Excerpted from Leading with Intent: A National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices, January 2015.



DEVELOPING A DIVERSITY STATEMENT

TOOL 29

Having a conversation about diversity and inclusion is a key step to understanding how the board feels about diversity and inclusion, its value, and its priority within the board and organization. It will also help the board identify potential obstacles that must be overcome in order to move forward and build commitment.

Here are some questions to help facilitate the discussion and to help draft a diversity statement.

1. How do we define diversity?
2. Why is diversity important to us?
3. Have we had an open discussion about changing demographics in our community and how it affects our services, programs, and mission?
4. How might diversity and inclusion increase our ability to serve our mission?
5. What are the potential points of contention or resistance related to diversity?
6. Can our practices, traditions, or culture be perceived as biased or unwelcoming?
7. What, if anything, will we have to change in order to become more diverse and inclusive?
8. Is our chief executive committed to inclusiveness? If so, how has this been demonstrated?
9. Is the board committed to inclusiveness? If so, how has this been demonstrated?
10. As a board, what is our culture?
11. Are we welcoming to people with diverse backgrounds?
12. What are the elephants in the room?

Excerpted from Diversity in Action, A BoardSource Toolkit. BoardSource, 2011.

KEY ELEMENTS OF A DIVERSITY STATEMENT

- The board is responsible for drafting its own policies as well as those that guide the chief executive in handling major organizational issues. For diversity and inclusion, the tone starts at the top: It is up to the board to ensure that necessary policies and guidelines exist and that they are followed and enforced.
- Define the terms diversity and inclusion in your policy.
- Include guidelines for dealing with vendors, customers, clients, and any other individuals the organization interacts with.

Indicate that the policy applies to all employment practices, including but not limited to recruitment, hiring, training and development, promotion, transfer, termination, layoff, compensation, benefits, social and recreational programs, and all other conditions and privileges of employment in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws.

Excerpted from The Nonprofit Policy Sampler, Third Edition by Barbara Lawrence and Outi Flynn. BoardSource, 2013.




SAMPLE DIVERSITY STATEMENT

TOOL 30

The XYZ board practices a culture of openness and encourages candid communication.

- The greater diversity of opinions and backgrounds the board possesses, the better foundation it has for sound decisions.
 - Board members' different perspectives help us address all sides of an issue.
 - Even if "difference" is desired, there are times when the majority must take the lead. It is up to the chair to keep the peace and integrate all opinions.
- A culture of openness and candor defines communication.
 - Rich communication dares to discuss the elephants in the room.
 - Sincere conversation, however, does not include insults or hurtful words.
- Divergent views are explored in a respectful rather than adversarial manner.
 - A debate is always welcome; arguments are kept out.
 - At times board members need to weigh their words in order not to offend anyone.
 - The board is cognizant of unacceptable terms or vocabulary.

Excerpted from The Nonprofit Policy Sampler, Third Edition by Barbara Lawrence and Outi Flynn. BoardSource, 2013.



HOW TO AVOID TOKENISM

TOOL 31

- Announce your board's commitment to diversity and put it in writing.
- Recruit more than one person from a particular demographic at the same time.
- Involve every new member immediately and personally.
- Focus on the board as a diverse mixture, not on the individual representation of each member.
- Once new members are elected, treat each board member the same and expect the same effort from each board member.
- Give each board member, whether a novice or a veteran, clear responsibilities.
- Assign tasks independent of cultural or ethnic background while still respecting individual differences and preferences.

Excerpted from Governance Committee by Berit M. Lakey, Sandra R. Hughes, and Outi Flynn. BoardSource, 200



**BEYOND
POLITICAL
CORRECTNESS:
BUILDING A
DIVERSE AND
INCLUSIVE
BOARD**

TOOL 32

Achieving diversity on a nonprofit board is a challenging but doable and essential task.

Exceptional nonprofit boards recognize that diversity is essential to an organization's success. They see the correlation between mission, strategy, and board composition and understand that establishing an inclusive organization starts with establishing a diverse and inclusive board.

Many board members already understand that a homogeneous board can result in near-sightedness and group think. By contrast, a heterogeneous board — one composed of individuals with a variety of skills, perspectives, backgrounds, and resources — promotes creativity and innovation and yields differing voices that can play important roles in accomplishing the organization's mission and increasing understanding of constituents and community needs. Diverse boards also are more likely to attract diverse donors, and grantmakers are increasingly focused on diversity.

That said, many — if not most — nonprofit boards are not making meaningful headway toward achieving diversity. According to *Leading with Intent: A National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices 2015*, people of color increased from 16 percent in 2010 to 20 percent in 2014, but 25 percent of boards remain all White. Board members under 40 years of age increased from 14 percent in 2010 to 17 percent in 2014. Furthermore, only 35 percent of CEOs give their boards an A or B grade on increasing board diversity. Our findings show a lack of concerted planning and follow-through. Most CEOs report that their boards have discussed the importance of expanding board diversity (74 percent) and actively recruited members from diverse backgrounds (80 percent). Yet only 19 percent indicate that the board has developed an action plan to increase diversity.

If the nonprofit sector is to remain relevant, effective, and grounded in the needs of our increasingly diverse communities, nonprofit boards must become and remain inclusive. Unfortunately, it's more easily said than done, as many boards have found. It requires asking what is holding you back from achieving the level of diversity you desire and then working to overcome those restraints and create an environment that encourages dialogue and interaction on diverse views. It requires confronting difficult issues and answering tough questions.

BoardSource has identified three strategies to assist boards in embracing and integrating diversity and an inclusive environment. To implement these strategies, you should begin by appointing a task force to oversee the process.

COMMUNICATE

Don't assume everyone agrees about what diversity and inclusion mean for the board. Before asking "How do we become more diverse?" boards must ask "Why do we need to become diverse?" Your board should have an open, thoughtful discussion to consider how it and your organization, community, and constituents might benefit from diversity within the board. Equally important, your board should discuss the opportunities that might be missed if it remains homogeneous. Also, you must anticipate and address how the board will react and potentially resolve challenges that arise due to different opinions, approaches, and attitudes.

Discussing race, culture, ethnicity, gender, and even age and generational issues in the boardroom may ignite personal awareness and, for some, discomfort. The simple truth is, most people develop prejudices and stereotypes from friends and family at a very early age. To think about diversity objectively requires intellect, energy, integrity, and time. Your board members must consider if they are ready as individuals and as a group to identify, confront, and work to eliminate their personal biases, blind spots, and prejudices as well as those embedded in the board and organization's culture.

In *Inclusiveness at Work: How to Build Inclusive Nonprofit Organizations*, Katherine Pease suggests a few questions your board can ask itself:

- Are people of color comfortable serving on the board?
- Does the board consider issues relating to race and ethnicity when it sets policies and makes decisions for the organization?
- What could the board do differently to become more inclusive and welcoming?
- What could the board do differently to address the needs of communities of color?

ACT

Now it's time to "walk the talk."

Develop a case and plan for change

Some boards will buy into the need for becoming more diverse and inclusive based on their individual visions and values. Some will require a business case to convince them of the necessity. To help your board develop, articulate, and embrace a shared vision for inclusiveness, it is important to write a compelling case statement.

Consider incorporating your board's definition of inclusiveness (one organization's definition may not be another's definition), data about your community, a description of what your board will look and feel like when inclusive, an indication of how inclusiveness relates to or will impact the board's ability to fulfill your organization's mission, and information about how you plan to put your commitment to inclusiveness into action. Think of it as an inclusiveness vision statement with detail.

To put your commitment into action, develop a plan that includes strategies, concrete goals, objectives, tasks, and a timeline. Boards are more likely to focus on an issue if an official goal or policy exists to remind them of what they want to achieve.

When setting goals, your board will have to decide whether it wants numerical goals. On one hand, some may argue, it helps define the target. On the other hand, trying to reach a numerical goal can overshadow the more important goal of identifying individuals who have the experiences and interest that best fit the board's needs. In no event should diversifying the board become a matter of filling a quota.

When Brian Gallagher joined the United Way in 2002 as president and chief executive officer, he expressed his commitment to having a person of color serve as the board chair of the organization, which had not had an African-American chair in the organization's 116-year history. Eighteen months later, Johnetta B. Cole became the chair.

Create a pipeline of candidates

Once your board is clear about what it wants to achieve, the task force should create a pipeline of diverse board member candidates. So often, board members approach the "usual suspects" — their best friends

or individuals who travel in their same social circles and networks — resulting in a pool of candidates without much variation. To achieve a different result, the task force should cast a wide net and look at nontraditional as well as traditional sources for candidates.

LinkedIn Board Member Connect is an effective way to search for professionals interested in board service as it allows you to post your board opportunities on LinkedIn. Its advanced search feature further enables you to target specific qualities while searching for your ideal candidate. (BoardSource members can post an unlimited number of open board positions for free through the BoardSource Recruitment Center.)

Other sources might include the local chamber of commerce; members of other nonprofit boards; community leaders; clients or customers; professional, trade, or fraternal associations; organizations representing various racial or ethnic groups; local colleges and universities; MBA programs; and executive leadership programs.

Consider using an executive search firm if funds permit or if it will donate its services for free or at a reduced cost. Search firms often have databases of people with diverse backgrounds. Another option are board matching services, which match their databases of volunteers with nonprofit organizations.

The increased demand for minority board members is also spurring efforts such as United Way of Greater Houston's Project Blueprint to help match minority professionals with nonprofit boards. Be aware, however, that high-profile people of color are often asked to serve on nonprofit boards, and your invitation might be declined. If so, ask why. This is an opportunity to learn how your organization is perceived. Then ask another individual to join the board.

Avoid tokenism

It is important to remember that building a diverse board is not about tokenism. No board member wants to fill a quota, and no one is able to represent an entire subsection of the population. You must treat each board member equally and expect the same from everyone.

Organizations are often more successful integrating new voices when the new group makes up 30 percent of the total — or, at a minimum, at least three people. This helps change the culture, and the new participants will not feel isolated. To better integrate new members, incorporate informal social time and training on diversity and inclusiveness into board meetings. Also consider whether your board and organization would benefit from cultural competency training.

Involve

When you have identified promising candidates, find ways to connect with them and cultivate their interest. The board's commitment to inclusiveness needs to be articulated and clarified early in the recruitment process. Discuss it as well as board member expectations and responsibilities. Tell prospective members why they are wanted and needed, invite questions, elicit their interest, and find out if they are prepared to serve and lead.

MONITOR AND MEASURE RESULTS

To stay focused on your objectives and goals, monitor your progress on a quarterly or semi-annual basis. Track your retention rates of diverse members. Conduct exit interviews to further assess your progress and identify areas where you could improve. Administer board self-assessments that include questions related to diversity strategies and goals. Survey staff, constituents, and stakeholders about their perceptions of the organization's culture of inclusiveness.

Meaningful change in board composition, dynamics, and culture will not occur overnight. It takes time and commitment. Creating a climate for change through ongoing communication and engagement of the board in the process will help sustain your efforts and overcome resistance along the way.

Excerpted from The BoardSource Spark!, April 2015.

TOOL 33



DIVERSITY IN ACTION

ALIGNING CHORUS AMERICA WITH THE VAST AND DIVERSE FIELD THAT IT SERVES IS IMPORTANT WORK.

Approximately 42.6 million Americans of every age, race, and background from big cities to small towns and everything in between make choral singing the most popular form of participation in the performing arts!

Key to this alignment is the efforts we have made to increase the diversity of our board, which today includes a broad array of outstanding leaders of different ages, races, and perspectives. They bring an astounding number of valuable skills and relationships that help us achieve our mission. We accomplished this by

- being intentionally inclusive. We made board diversity a strategic goal with specific plans and measurable objectives.
- learning together and being transparent. For example, a consultant in the area of diversity worked with our board, led sessions at our conference, and wrote for our magazine. We share what we learn.
- being future-focused. Our board committees tackle important questions for our field's future, often in response to research.
- Seeking out different perspectives and creating a culture of openness. Committed board leaders set an inclusive tone.
- Enjoying each other. Our board meetings are designed to be informative, yet fun and collegial—with lots of laughter!

By focusing on inclusiveness among other important changes in our organization, Chorus America's board has led the organization to a new position of relevance and strength. If there was a Board Olympics, ours would be gold medalists.

Excerpted from "Aligning Chorus America" by Ann Meier Baker: Board Member®, November, 2011.

TOOL 34



YOUTH BOARD SERVICE

More boards are dedicating time and effort to create youth partnerships. They are finding the youth perspective to be helpful, enlightening, and a functional asset. There are also some challenges for making it work. Study the benefits and challenges of youth board service to decide if this is appropriate for your organization. For the purposes of this paper, youth, young people or minors are defined as age 20 and under.

BENEFITS OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Every board benefits from diversity. All boards benefit from a member who is energetic, passionate, and active. Should the fact that this individual is a young person make a difference?

Young people can energize a board that is used to doing business in the same old way. By providing a new perspective, youth can clarify and sharpen the focus of an organization's mission, vision, and programs by asking questions or providing innovative solutions. This partnership also allows experienced board members to act as mentors, which can renew their commitment to the board and organizational mission.

Youth-related organizations can particularly benefit from having young people as board members. Youth add insight to current and future programs, offer new and fresh perspectives, are better able to reach constituents and pass on concerns to the board, and send a powerful message to funders about a strong commitment to youth development.

Overall, the partnership benefits young people by nurturing leadership, financial, analytical, and business skills. It can also cultivate future monetary support and volunteering with the organization.

CHALLENGES OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Youth involvement brings its own set of challenges and limitations. To prepare the organization for this partnership, additional time may be required from the board and staff. Due to this time commitment, gaining the full support of the board and staff may be one of the hardest hurdles to overcome. Here are some other issues to consider.

- State law may place restrictions on minors' voting. Minors and their parents may need special liability protection.
- Young people may have high turnover rates, due to planned moves for college, job acceptance offers, or school-related commitments.
- One youth serving on a board may be seen as tokenism.
- Meeting times and locations may need to accommodate a young person's schedule and availability of transportation. Keep in mind that youth attend school during the day and may not have a driver's license.
- Young people do not necessarily have a lot of practical experience or understand how to read and analyze statements or reports such as financials.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Before inviting young people to serve on your board, verify whether your state addresses age limits for board members and electing minors as officers. A few states do not allow young people to serve on boards and many states have laws prohibiting minors from signing binding contracts.

SUCCESSFUL YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Early preparation for a youth partnership can lead to a smooth and successful transition. Here are several key factors to consider.

- Assess the commitment of young people and the full board to this partnership.
- Understand that not all young people, just like anyone else, make good board members. Use strict criteria for finding the right match for your board.
- Clearly define board member roles and expectations.
- Create and implement a thorough orientation for all board members that addresses areas such as meeting logistics, voting, common language usage, and legal issues.
- Discuss intergenerational relationships. Educate both younger and older board members on how to communicate with each other and learn to understand each other's language. Discuss how to avoid stereotyping and learn patience.
- Bring young people up to speed on the issues and offer additional training. Empower and encourage them to offer opinions during meetings.
- Create a mentoring program that pairs up a young person with an experienced board member.
- Mix younger and older members in committees. Assign tasks to pairs of younger and older members. Take advantage of the younger members' special skills, such as ease with technology.
- Facilitate younger members' meeting attendance by choosing convenient meeting times and places. Help find solutions to transportation problems.
- Be open. Be willing to share and learn.

OTHER WAYS TO BENEFIT FROM YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Organizations that are not ready for this commitment, consider forming other partnerships with young people. There are many ways to benefit from the ideas and perspectives that they can bring. Invite young people to

- serve as non-voting members of the board in an advisory capacity
- become members on an advisory group or task force
- chair a committee or a special event
- act as a special assistant on a project or presentation
- intern with your organization

Excerpted from the BoardSource Topic Paper "Youth Board Service."

TOOL 35



THE MYTH OF GENERATIONAL TENSIONS

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP IS THE KEY TO GETTING GENERATIONS TO WORK TOGETHER.

“I’m tired of my generation being dissected by Boomers,” the 20-something young lady at the back of the room said, “as if I wasn’t in the room. How would you feel if a group of 130 Millennials were dissecting your generation—and you were one of only three Boomers in the room?”

She had an excellent point. The Boomers dissecting her and her generation were a group of people invited from business and academia to join key U.S. military figures in identifying its leadership development needs 15 years from now. The frustration of our Millennial was aired during a panel discussion that addressed the way young adults would be learning and processing training in 15 years.

The panel did an excellent job of describing the generational differences that now cohabit the marketplace — great stuff about Boomers, Gen X-ers, and Gen Y-ers (aka Millennials). One academic gave a masterful description of how technology has allowed a migration away from traditional lectures; our “information-pull” society is defining the pursuit of knowledge as “just in time, just enough, and just in case.” Generations, it was clear, view learning very differently: Baby Boomers read to retain, Gen-X-ers read just enough, and Gen-Y-ers head for the Web or poll Facebook. The same academic made the provocative statement that students today would rather skip schooling and learn what they need to know on the job.

All this fed right into the Boomers’ fears, and there was an inevitable discussion about the work ethic of young adults and their inability to relate socially in a world where major transactions — breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend, confessing mistakes to a best friend, engineering some gathering — are often conducted as text messages. It was somewhere at this point that our exasperated 20-something broke into the discussion. She countered with the inevitable arguments of indiscriminate stereotyping, pointing out the evident discomfort that most Boomers have with rampant technology.

Unfortunately, both are right. Social media has at some level replaced direct social interaction; a greater dependence on social media does tend to make social interaction more awkward; and many Boomers have a hard time keeping pace with the bewildering pace of technological change.

But fortunately, all that doesn’t matter. At least, it doesn’t matter any more than any other tension in the workplace — whether it is gender, ethnicity, race, or simply personality. This isn’t to say that generational differences are not real, nor that we should ignore them. But it is to say that a much deeper issue is being obscured by the generational debate.

THE BIG (REAL) ISSUE

The deeper issue is poor leadership. This isn’t what Boomers want to hear (or, for that matter, Xers and Yers in leadership roles). But there is plenty of research telling us that people quit bosses, not organizations. Millennials won’t quit because their Boomer bosses are technological dinosaurs. They’ll quit because they’re bad bosses. And Boomer bosses won’t keep their Millennials by becoming technologically savvy. They’ll keep them by providing great leadership.

If you want to recruit younger people to your board (and retain them), the same truth applies: Provide great leadership, and you will make generational issues irrelevant. And great leaders — both from the board and the executive suite — concentrate on articulating a compelling vision and seeking to understand the aspirations of the people they are recruiting.

Articulating a compelling vision presupposes having a deep passion for your organization's mission, and for that, you need to know what accounts for your passion. Great boards are led by men and women whose passion is rooted in a strong and healthy self-awareness. They know their own strengths and weaknesses, but more importantly, they know their own personal aspirations and values. They know what matters to them, and they lead by values more than by charisma. Such authenticity and purpose, rooted in healthy self-awareness, is very appealing to X-ers and Y-ers.


To their own self-awareness, great board leaders add an intimate knowledge of the aspirations and capabilities of the people they seek to recruit. They are students of the future leaders of their mission.

Great leaders take their cue from Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. She recruited three people to her team (or board) not by convincing them of the rightness of her own aspirations (getting back to Kansas), but by looking for a way to help them pursue their own aspirations in the context of her more immediate goal (getting to the Emerald City). She didn't cast aspersions on the Scarecrow's aspiration for a brain, the Tin Man's longing for a heart, or the lion's insecurities about courage. But instead, she thoughtfully wondered how joining her in her pursuit could help them in their own pursuits. She was both self-aware enough to know her own aspirations and caring enough to listen to and accommodate theirs. She led a diverse group of people with aspirations very different from her own. But the obvious differences — generational, gender, and, well, species — didn't interfere with her capacity to recruit and lead an effective team.

So what would I say to the 20-something young lady at the back of the room? I would — and when it came to my turn as a panelist, I did — tell her not to worry about secondary issues, such as generational tensions, but focus instead on the one issue that really matters: great leadership. Seek out and ally yourself with great leaders, I told her.

And to board members or chief executives recruiting 20-somethings, I'd give the same advice: Pursue great leadership, and your board will become a magnet for talent across many generations.

Excerpted from "The Myth of Generational Tensions" by Antony Bell. Board Member®, July, 2011.



START KIDDING YOURSELF

TOOL 36

During a meeting in 1991, members of National 4-H Council's board of trustees looked around the table and realized something was missing. We were working to improve 4-H, the largest youth development organization in America, and yet young people weren't represented on the board.

For more than a century, 4-H clubs have included young people in decision-making roles and given them “hands-on” learning experiences. Realizing these two key components of 4-H were missing within the board structure, the trustees knew they needed to invite young people to join. Since then, as many as 10 young people between the ages of 12 and 22 have served as trustees each year.

These young leaders have had great impact in moving 4-H forward. For example, during a revenue goal presentation, youth trustee Matt Cavedon spoke up and asserted that the goals were “not nearly aggressive enough,” which caused us to increase them.

A PARTNERSHIP OF EQUALS

The youth trustees are given more than a voice and a ceremonial role. They have full voting power — their opinions weigh equally alongside those of adult board members. The youth trustees also serve on one of the five board committees.

The National 4-H Council board took youth input a step further when we decided to ask a youth to serve on the executive committee. For 11 years, a youth board member has filled one of the eight executive committee positions, currently as the vice chair for mission and performance.

Having young people who can contribute to the conversation as current 4-H members brings a fresh perspective and new ideas to the table. Sometimes they are so simple we wonder why the adults didn't come up with them.

Once, during a large stakeholder meeting, the group was having difficulty grasping the concepts. A youth trustee stepped on the podium and so clearly summarized the goals that the entire group immediately understood and embraced the strategy.

Having young people on the board reminds the adults of the purpose of the organization and provides a missing perspective. Youth trustee Matthew Ternus spoke up during a lengthy debate on programming to remind us, “Let's not forget, young people like to have fun.” The comment caused the group to refocus the discussion. Another time, Andrew Duncelman told the group it was making assumptions about youth and technology that were not correct. Without his insights we could have made decisions about technology strategies that would have put us out of touch with our main audience, youth, for years.

YOUTH POWER IN FUNDRAISING

Youth board members have joined in promoting the work of 4-H to corporations too. Nancy Redd, a trustee since 2004, recently participated in meetings with the Toyota USA Foundation, New York Life, and NFL Charities. Coincidentally, Nancy had received a Toyota scholarship in college, so she took the initiative to bring along a poster featuring her as a scholarship winner. Her connections to the corporation and 4-H enhanced the conversations, and it didn't take long for Toyota to realize how strong an organization 4-H is for our young people.

Another board member, Nekeisha Randall, already had a relationship with Coke as a Coca-Cola, Inc. National Foundation Academic Scholar. Nekeisha participated in a meeting of National 4-H Council and Coca-Cola Foundation executives who were evaluating 4-H for a grant and was able to clearly articulate the value of the potential relationship.

Youth trustees can't be expected to serve the same fundraising role as the adults, in their personal donations or in leveraging professional relationships. But they are often the first to make contributions, and their checks of any size — coming from young people with no income — speak volumes about their commitment to the organization. In one case, the donation of a youth trustee far exceeded the adult board members: Nancy Redd donated half of her \$50,000 earnings from an appearance on *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire*!

CHALLENGES

Of course there are challenges to having young people on a board. One is the legal implications of giving minors a vote. National 4-H Council addresses that issue by including a requirement in our bylaws that stipulates that all board decisions made by vote must have a majority of trustees of legal age. We also make sure that the youth trustees do not constitute a majority of the members on each of the committees.

It sometimes takes a few meetings for the youth, who have been conditioned to not challenge adults, to be comfortable speaking their minds. They quickly learn that their voices matter, and they often speak more openly than adults. Once, an outside consultant made a presentation that completely misinterpreted the data. While the adults made mildly challenging comments, a youth trustee had the guts to tell the consultant that she was shocked at the report since it was contrary to everything we'd seen before.

School schedules can cause conflicts too. But both the young people on the board and their parents believe the long-term life benefits are worth the cost of missing some classes.

Cori Byrum, a freshman at the College of William & Mary, quickly learned the need for time management. Going into her first year of college, she realized she needed to pay special attention to arranging her class work around the semiannual board meetings. The benefits of joining discussions at the national level have outweighed the logistical challenges involved.

A STRONG FUTURE

There is research to support the value we've found in sharing the board table with youth. A study about youth in the decision-making role found that adults who work with young people to make decisions about the organization report a higher level of commitment and energy around the room.

The study also showed that having a voice in the organization at a younger age encouraged the youth board members to support that organization for a longer time. Their involvement also made them more likely to use what they learned when working with other organizations.

National 4-H Council has been measurably strengthened by having youth on the board of trustees for the past 15 years. We've been forced to think more clearly about the role of youth in the organization and to be more inclusive. We've made changes to employment practices; for example, we now compensate our interns.

This experiment of including youth on our board — now a permanent and essential part of the 4-H culture — yielded benefits to both the youth and adult board members. The youth trustees provide a fresh perspective, challenge outdated processes, and bring everyone closer to the fundamental mission of 4-H — to empower youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE THE KID ON THE BOARD?

Through my experience serving as a youth member of the National 4-H board of trustees, I have learned valuable lessons in leadership, public speaking, and teamwork. I have no doubt that this is a truly unique experience — a hands-on lesson that I could never have learned in school.

Of course, there were challenges when I first joined the board. Walking into a room of corporate executives and university presidents was extremely intimidating as I was just finishing high school. That feeling quickly faded, however, when I realized I shared a common focus with these adults.

I feel my input, and that of the other youth trustees, helps challenge board members to think innovatively, stay in step with the latest youth trends, and gain firsthand experience around the focus of 4-H's mission. As a 4-H trustee, I am able to take advantage of opportunities to help promote the organization that I wouldn't otherwise have.

I know this experience will have positive long-term effects in my life. I hope to use the skills I'm learning now in leadership roles in the future.

— Natalie Cheng

Excerpted from "Start Kidding Yourself" by Donald T. Floyd and Natalie Cheng, Board Member®, July/August 2006.

TOOL 37



GOING GLOBAL

An organization that is experiencing a shift in its constituent ethnicity or that is expanding its reach past national borders needs a board that understands the strategic implications of this change. One method of addressing these new needs is to bring in board members who contribute to a global perspective. These new board members may reside in another country, but this essential perspective may be easily found just around the corner.

WHEN TO ACT

Different stages in an organization's life may dictate the need for different board perspectives and skills. Experiencing a change in the population served, an interest in expanding services to a global market, or forming a partnership with an international organization are a few situations that may warrant widening the board's composition. Diverse perspectives can lead to greater success in assessing needs and developing programs that are culturally appropriate. In some cases, it may lead to acceptance of and respect for the organization within an ethnic or non-US community.

WAYS TO BROADEN PERSPECTIVE

Gaining a global perspective means something different for every board. A board must determine the method most appropriate to achieve it. Recruiting foreign-born individuals living in the U.S. who have a strong link to the mission of the organization and community it serves is a solid starting point. Another option is to recruit individuals from nearby countries such as Canada and Mexico, as one means to gain a broader perspective. An organization can also expand the search for board members to countries or specific regions where services are planned. However, it is important to keep in mind that one person cannot represent an entire demographic group, but the right person can certainly enlarge the thinking capacity of the board.

Consider creating an alternative structure to increase awareness of and provide guidance on broader perspectives. Advisory groups can allow a board to widen its perspective without increasing the size of the governing board. Advisory group members act as a bridge between the community and the board, bringing first-hand knowledge on the needs of the constituents.

RECRUITMENT

The governance committee plays an essential role in identifying and cultivating candidates with a global outlook. (It may be valuable to include non-board members to get a well-rounded and effective committee.) Generate a recruitment plan that includes a board matrix to help identify the missing skills and qualities that are necessary in candidates to meet the needed goals. Embassies, consulates, local cultural organizations, universities and colleges, houses of worship, cultural clubs, and personal contacts in foreign countries may serve as references in locating potential board members. An effective orientation includes training on board member expectations, responsibilities, cultural diversity, communication skills (verbal and non-verbal), and conflict resolution.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

A culturally diverse board also means different ways to communicate. Focus on breaking down barriers. Here are some ideas:

- Select an official language for the board. If the board chooses to have multiple languages, make sure that competent translators are available.
- Adopt a common language glossary. Make it free of jargon and provide an explanation on commonly used terms in a nonprofit board setting.
- Create standards for written and presentation materials. Consistent formats and terminology may help non-native speakers quickly understand the material presented.
- Provide cross-cultural training. Understanding how different cultures make decisions and handle conflict can play a big role in facilitating communication.
- Send out the agenda well in advance of the meeting. Mailing items to a foreign country typically takes longer than mailing to a U.S. address. It also allows board members time to study the materials and prepare questions before the meeting. This is especially true if your board uses consent agendas.
- Be clear about expectations of board members. New members with roots in non-US contexts may have radically different assumptions about what it means to serve on the board of a nonprofit organization. Careful orientation is a must.
- Allow time for board members to get to know each other. Making time for the members to socialize and communicate with each other outside of a meeting fosters camaraderie necessary for teamwork.

CONDUCT AN INTERNAL REVIEW

Anytime an organization goes through major changes or the board's structure or composition undergo transformation, it is wise to review existing policies and legal documents. Globalization of the board may require fine-tuning in the following areas:

- Board policies — Review meeting and communication procedures, reimbursement policies, and fundraising and personal giving expectations.
- Financial planning — Incorporate a line item in the budget for recruitment and education of board members. Assess additional cost for holding meetings abroad or reimbursing part of board members' travel expenses.
- Legal documents — Update your bylaws to reflect any changes in board structure.
- Meetings logistics — Review your present meeting procedures, location, meeting times, and number of meetings per year to determine the best way to integrate changes. Keep in mind that overseas meetings will require special details. If your board is considering virtual meetings, check your state laws for any special provisions and beware of differences in time zones.

Excerpted from the BoardSource Topic Paper "Global Perspective."

PART 6

A FINAL WORD

fi·nal *adj*
coming at the end



RECRUITING ACTIVE, INVOLVED BOARD MEMBERS

TOOL 38

How can we recruit active, involved board members? A good response to the question is, “How would you like to be recruited?”

Perhaps you came to service on a board without much knowledge, much commitment, or much expectation. You might have felt confused about your role, uninformed about the decisions you

were asked to make, or superfluous to the board’s way of doing business. That’s a recipe for inactive board members.

The seriousness with which a board member is recruited and selected is directly proportional to the seriousness with which that board member fulfills his or her role. So if you want to recruit people who are serious about governing the organization, you must take recruitment seriously. Following are the steps to take.

DEFINE THE BOARD MEMBER’S JOB

Develop a one- to two-page job description that suits the organization at this point in its lifecycle. Outline the basic responsibilities of each board member, as well as the expectations related to each of the three hats (governance, implementation, and volunteer) a board member wears.

For instance, in addition to providing direction and monitoring activities, is a board member expected to give much time as a volunteer with the organization? Do you expect, as you should, that every board member will make a financial contribution each year? On how many committees is a board member expected to serve? How will a board member’s performance be evaluated?

AGREE ON THE PROFILE OF THE FUTURE BOARD

The board should describe what the “dream team” it envisions will look like in a few years. For example, describe minimums, maximums, or percentages for whatever characteristics are important for your organization. These could include age, gender, and minority representation, as well as lay versus professional, rural versus urban, and other demographic variables. The profile should be unique to your organization’s current stage of development. The form below can be used or adapted to create profiles of current and prospective members.

Desired Characteristics	Current Members			Prospective Members		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
All Members Should Have These Characteristics						
Demonstrated interest before nomination						
Was a donor of record in previous year						
Has some experience in our area of service						
Board service is supported by his or her family						
Is able to attend meetings; is able to give eight to ten days a year						
Is known as good group decision maker						
Other:						
Each Member Should Have One or More of These Characteristics						
Is a recognized community leader						
Has prior experience on nonprofit boards						
Has knowledge of nonprofit law						
Has knowledge of nonprofit fundraising						
Has specialized knowledge of one mission or program area						
Helps balance the board in terms of gender						
Helps balance the board in terms of age						
Helps balance the board in terms of ethnicity						
Helps balance the board in terms of skills and expertise						
Has experience in marketing our services						
Is a good mediator of group disagreements						
Has knowledge of land use and facilities management						
Has experience in dealing with local government						
Has a network of donor prospects						
Has or had leadership in another organization important to us						
Other:						
Other:						

DEVELOP QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVING

After the board member profile has been created by the governance committee and approved by the entire board, use it to identify current or projected gaps in the desired experience and qualifications of board members. If, for example, a member with an expertise in fundraising will be rotating off the board in a year, at least one new member should have that same expertise. Doing this enables the organization to build a team of people who bring a balanced array of specialized talents and skills to the collective effort.

ADOPT A PLAN TO IDENTIFY AND NURTURE PROSPECTS

Using your expectations and needed qualifications as a guide, come up with a list of the people who might be best for the board at this time. All board members, the chief executive, and even senior staff members should be encouraged to participate in this ongoing process of identifying future leaders, either by suggesting names themselves or contacting major donors, friends in other nonprofits, or neighbors for possible names.

Once you have a list of people who meet most qualifications, find meaningful ways to involve them as volunteers before asking them to join the board. They might serve on a task force or committee, host an event, or contribute their expertise to a special project. If a person is responsive at this level, he or she is more likely to participate at the board level as well.

Gradually expand the prospective board member's involvement in the organization. Eventually, if he or she is not yet a donor, ask for a contribution. If you ask more than once but still get no response, beware. The person is probably not yet ready for board membership.

HAVE A RIGOROUS NOMINATION PROCESS

The governance committee is now ready to consider a slate of known talent to fill the most critical needs on the board. Look at balance. Determine who could be groomed for a key leadership role down the road, knowing who is likely to leave the board.

Assign someone to meet personally with each highly rated prospect. The board contact can invite the prospect to read the job description, review organizational documents (such as the bylaws or a brief history), and decide whether to be considered for board service.

When a prospect shows interest, provide a thorough explanation of what board service entails, so that there are no surprises later. In turn, find out the person's own motivations for serving by asking, "What three or four things would you hope to gain personally from serving on our board?" Whether the person hopes to develop new skills, find new friends, or achieve a higher visibility within the community, make sure those personal goals and expectations are reasonable and complement the organization's mission and values.

You might want to conduct a reference check at this stage in the nominating process. Few organizations hire a staff member without consulting references, and board members have an equally important role within the organization.

TAKE BOARD ELECTION AND NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION SERIOUSLY

Make the actual election and welcoming event memorable for new board members. These first impressions will last a long time.

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS

1. Board members: List your reasons for serving on the board. Do you have realistic expectations that match the mission of the organization and the roles and responsibilities of board members?
2. Board members: Reflect on how you were recruited for board service and how that experience could be improved.


Excerpted from The Nonprofit Board Answer Book: A Practical Guide for Board Members and Chief Executives, Second Edition, by BoardSource. BoardSource and Jossey-Bass, 2007.

PART 7

RECOMMENDED READING ON RECRUITMENT TOPICS

rec·om·mend(ed) vt

to suggest something as worthy of being
accepted, used, or done



CLICK TITLES
FOR MORE
INFORMATION

The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members, Second Edition, by Berit M. Lakey. BoardSource, 2007.

Governance Committee by Berit M. Lakey, Sandra R. Hughes, and Outi Flynn. BoardSource, 2004.

The Nonprofit Board Answer Book: A Practical Guide for Board Members and Chief Executives, Second Edition, by BoardSource. BoardSource and Jossey-Bass, 2007.

Structures and Practices of Nonprofit Boards, Second Edition, by Charles F. Dambach, Melissa Davis, and Robert L. Gale. BoardSource, 2009.

Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards, Second Edition, by Richard T. Ingram. BoardSource, 2009.



BoardSource was established in 1988 by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) and Independent Sector (IS). Prior to this, in the early 1980s, the two organizations had conducted a survey and found that although 30 percent of respondents believed they were doing a good job of board education and training, the rest of the respondents reported little, if any, activity in strengthening governance. As a result, AGB and IS proposed the creation of a new organization whose mission would be to increase the effectiveness of nonprofit boards.

With a lead grant from the Kellogg Foundation and funding from five other donors, BoardSource opened its doors in 1988 as the National Center for Nonprofit Boards with a staff of three and an operating budget of \$385,000. On January 1, 2002, BoardSource took on its new name and identity. These changes were the culmination of an extensive process of understanding how we were perceived, what our audiences wanted, and how we could best meet the needs of nonprofit organizations.

Today BoardSource is the premier voice of nonprofit governance. Its highly acclaimed products, programs, and services mobilize boards so that organizations fulfill their missions, achieve their goals, increase their impact, and extend their influence. BoardSource is a 501(c)(3) organization.

BoardSource provides

- resources to nonprofit leaders through workshops, training, and an extensive Web site (www.boardsource.org)
- governance consultants who work directly with nonprofit leaders to design specialized solutions to meet an organization's needs
- the world's largest, most comprehensive selection of material on nonprofit governance, including a large selection of books and CD-ROMs
- an annual conference that brings together approximately 900 governance experts, board members, and chief executives and senior staff from around the world

For more information, please visit our Web site at www.boardsource.org, e-mail us at mail@boardsource.org, or call us at 800-883-6262.