

Board Manual: Guidelines for CASA Program Directors

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Chapter 1

BOARD OPERATIONS

BASIC BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

To be a successful and valuable member of your board, you will want to keep the following items foremost in your mind. These are your basic board member responsibilities:

Supporting your director

Without your director's day-to-day management skills, the policies and plans adopted by the board would be of little impact. He or she truly is the person who makes your ideas and visions real. As you work together to achieve CASA's goals, however, you must also remember that your job and the director's job are quite different. You make the plan, but the director decides how the plan is implemented and the goals accomplished.

Setting policy

Your primary board function is to fashion policies that ensure your organization is run effectively, legally, and ethically. These policies are building blocks for your director who, in turn, is responsible for implementing your policies and managing the organization in accordance with them.

Guiding long-range planning and development

The board gives direction to your organization through long-range goals ranging at least three to five years into the future. During the planning process, you will be asked to assess the present and future needs of the community and to determine how CASA fits into that picture.

Raising money and monitoring finances

As a "trustee" for your organization's money, you are responsible for seeing that it is spent effectively in delivering programs and services. You're also responsible for looking into the financial future. When you plot CASA's goals, you must review your ability to pay for your plans. That means fundraising when appropriate.

Working cooperatively with other board members

If you cannot work with your peers, then your board will accomplish nothing. This is true in every aspect of board service -- meeting efficiency, conflict management, recruitment, training, and director evaluation.

CODE OF ETHICS

A code of ethics lists actions that are essential to your board's integrity and it lends credibility to the goals that CASA is striving for. In your community's eyes, the code keeps the board honest. Behind boardroom doors, the code serves as a reminder that your organization's mission takes priority over personal agendas.

As a member of this board, I will:

- Represent the interests of all people served by this organization and not favor special interests inside or outside of this non-profit.
- Not use my services on this board for my own personal advantage or for the advantage of my friends or associates.
- Keep confidential information confidential.
- Respect and support the majority decisions of the board.
- Approach all board issues with an open mind, prepared to make the best decisions for everyone involved.
- Do nothing to violate the trust of those who elected or appointed me to the board, or of those I serve.
- Focus my efforts on the mission of the non-profit and not on my personal goals.
- Never exercise authority as a board member except when acting in a meeting with the full board or as I am delegated by the board.
- Consider myself a "trustee" of this organization and do my best to ensure that it is well maintained, financially secure, growing and always operating in the best interests of those we serve.

PLEDGE FORM

My Role

I acknowledge that my primary role as a board member is to contribute to the defining of the organization's mission and governing the fulfillment for that mission, and to carry out the functions of the office of Board Member and/or Officer as stated in the bylaws.

My role as a board member will focus on the development of broad policies that govern the implementation of institutional plans and purposes. This role is separate and distinct from the role of the Director/Administrator, who determines means of implementation.

My Commitment

I will exercise the duties and responsibilities of this office with integrity, collegiality and care.

I Pledge

1. To establish as a high priority my attendance at all meetings of the board, committees and task forces on which I serve.
2. To come prepared to discuss the issues and business to be addressed at scheduled meetings having read the agenda and all background material relevant to the topics at hand.
3. To work with and respect the opinions of my peers who serve this board, and to leave my personal prejudices out of all board discussions.
4. To always act for the good of the organization.
5. To agree to serve on at least one committee or task force, attend all meetings, and participate in the accomplishment of its objectives. If I chair the board, a committee, or task force, I will:
 - a) call meetings as necessary until objectives are met;
 - b) ensure that the agenda and support materials are mailed to all members in advance of the meetings;
 - c) conduct the meetings in an orderly, fair, open and efficient manner;
 - d) make committee progress reports/minutes to the board at its scheduled meetings, using the adopted forms.
6. To participate in the annual strategic planning retreat, board self-evaluation programs, and board development workshops, seminars, and other educational events that enhance my skills as a board member.

If, for any reason, I find myself unable to carry out the above duties as best as I can, I agree to resign my position as a board member/officer.

Board member signature

Date

SAMPLE BOARD MEMBER JOB DESCRIPTION

Title:	Member, CASA Board of Directors
Reports to:	Board President/Chairman
Purpose:	To serve the board as a voting member; to develop policies, procedures, and regulations for the operation of CASA; to monitor finances of the organization, its programs and performance.
Term:	Two years, expiring December 31, 1996
Expected Meeting Attendance:	4Regularly attend meetings as scheduled (about 12 per year) 4Attend standing committee meetings if a member (about 6 per year) 4Participate as an ad hoc committee member if appointed 4Attend board retreats, in-service workshops and other board development activities 4Attend and participate in special events as needed
Obligations of the Board:	4Create vision/establish mission 4Establish policies 4Hire/fire/supervise and evaluate director 4Secure adequate funds 4Monitor finances 4Maintain and update long-range plans 4Evaluate and perpetuate itself 4Fulfill boards legal responsibilities
Specific Duties:	4Attend meetings and show commitment to board activities 4Be well informed on issues and agenda items in advance of meetings 4Contribute skills, knowledge and experience when appropriate 4Listen respectfully to other points of view 4Participate in organizational decision-making 4Financially support the organization 4Assume leadership roles in all board activities, including fundraising 4Represent the organization to the public and private industry 4Educate yourself about the needs of the people served 4Know other board members and staff 4Remain informed about the organization 4Know the organization's history, mission and goals
Time Requirements:	4Five to ten hours a month

BOARD JOB DESCRIPTIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND POLICIES

Title: President

Description:

The President is the chief executive officer of the organization. As such, he/she should believe in the value of the CASA program; consider CASA to be his/her major community concern during term of office; keep informed regarding issues pertaining to children and youth; give leadership, guidance and encouragement to the board and staff; and promote the CASA program within the community at large whenever possible.

Duties:

- a) Keeps well informed on matters pertaining to the organization through communications with national headquarters, state-wide CASA, and staff and shares that knowledge with the board.
- b) Meets frequently (suggested two times a month) with the director to facilitate the efficient internal operations of the organization.
- c) Acts as a liaison between staff and board membership and maintains contact with all committees between meetings.
- d) Prepares agendas (with the help of the director) and presides at regularly scheduled meetings, any specially called meetings, executive committee meetings, and annual meetings.
- e) Appoints the standing committees of the board and makes other board appointments as needed, in consultation with the board and the director.
- f) Serves as an ex-officio member of all committees except the nominating committee.
- g) Works closely with the treasurer and the fundraising chair to ensure that the organization operates on a sound fiscal basis.
- h) Sees that all contracts and legal documents are reviewed by the organization's legal counsel. Signs, with the appropriate officer or the director, all contracts and obligations authorized by the board.
- i) Is accountable for all legal documents; i.e., federal income tax returns, articles of Incorporation, bylaws, leases, insurance policies and contracts.
- j) Sees that policy decisions are made after the review of all available information.
- k) Works with the executive committee and the director in the preparation of the annual report which is to be published and distributed to membership.
- l) Officially represents CASA at any conference or public function, when appropriate.
- m) Holds check signing responsibilities with the treasurer, the director, and any others as designated by the executive committee from year to year.

Title: Vice President

Description:

The Vice President should have the qualities, conviction and knowledge described as desirable in the section above entitled “president”, since he/she assists the president in carrying out his/her duties.

Duties:

- a) Assists the chairman in the responsibility for leadership of the organization.
- b) Presides over the executive committee and the board in the absence of the chairman.
- c) Updates the board manual including the scheduling of all meetings for the year.
- d) Conducts board orientation to ensure that all board members understand their role and responsibility.
- e) Schedules on-going board training in consultation with the chairman and the director.
- f) Serves as chair of the bylaws committee.
- g) May be assigned by the chairman to act on his/her behalf and to undertake special assignments where needed and as appropriate.
- h) Plans and coordinates all arrangements for the annual meeting.

Title: Treasurer

Description:

The Treasurer is the custodian of the funds of the organization.

Duties:

- a) Keeps complete and accurate accounting records.
- b) Informs the board (upon request) of the financial status of the organization at any regular board meetings, executive committee meetings, and any special meetings.
- c) Prepares quarterly financial reports and disseminates to board at quarter meetings.
- d) Works with the director to prepare budget for next fiscal year.
- e) Assists where necessary with the annual audit.
- f) Is responsible for coordinating the receipt and deposit of all corporate funds with the director.
- g) Authorizes timely payment of all bills.
- h) Works with the director ensuring all monies are handled in a sound manner.
- i) Holds check signing responsibilities. Co-signs contracts and legal documents as required by the board.
- j) Advises board of the financial implications of actions being considered.

Title: Secretary

Description:

The Secretary is the custodian of the corporate records.

Duties:

- a) The Secretary shall record, keep and compile the minutes of all meetings of officers, directors and members with the time and place of holding. If a special meeting is called, the Secretary shall also record how it was authorized, the notice given, the names of those present or represented at meeting and the proceedings.
- b) The Secretary shall receive a copy of the board agenda from the chairman no later than 10 days prior to board meetings. The Secretary shall also have prepared the typed minutes 10 days prior to the board meetings. The Secretary shall mail the board agenda and board minutes so that they reach board members at least seven days before the scheduled meeting.
- c) The Secretary shall attend all meetings of officers, directors and members, and during those meetings verify a quorum when voting takes place, read or circulate correspondence when necessary, keep the chairman informed of unfinished business held over from one meeting to the next, and have the minute book, bylaws, and *Robert's Rule of Order* available for reference.
- d) Co-signs contracts and legal documents as required by the board.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

POLICY MAKING

- Define organization, process of governance, nature of workplace and resource management
- Provide stable framework for organizational change
- Address who agency serves and what services are provided

LEGAL/LIABILITY ISSUES

- Develop articles of incorporation and bylaws
- Obtain and guard 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt status
- Ensure compliance with all laws and regulations
- Approve and safeguard all legal documents
- Maintain records (i.e., minutes, audits, and annual reports)
- Hire, evaluate and support Director
- Set staff compensation levels
- Reduce risk of liability by “performing duties in good faith manner”
 - ◆ using good judgment and common sense
 - ◆ attending meetings and staying informed
 - ◆ making well-considered decisions
 - ◆ avoiding conflicts-of-interest
- And by exercising “due care”
 - ◆ making decisions and recording votes
 - ◆ reviewing financial statements and audits
 - ◆ supervising Director
 - ◆ bonding employees handling funds

FINANCIAL ISSUES

- Responsible for raising funds to meet budget
- Ensure that resources are well managed by:
 - ◆ approving final budget
 - ◆ monitoring fund balances and cash flow
 - ◆ reviewing annual audit
- Set fiscal policy by:
 - ◆ making investment decisions
 - ◆ establishing fee policies
 - ◆ approving contracts
 - ◆ establishing reserves
 - ◆ approving wage scales and fringe benefits

PLANNING/EVALUATION

- Plan for strategic change, based upon:
 - ◆ external opportunities and challenges
 - ◆ internal strengths and weaknesses
- Periodically review/revise mission statement
- Evaluate all proposals and activities for compliance with mission and long-term impact
- Monitor progress towards meeting goals by assessing what is being accomplished and how well

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- Interpret organization to public and provide ongoing information to develop linkages through community coalitions and partnerships
- Authorize spokespersons to deal with media and general public (usually Board Chair and Director)
- All board members enhance visibility of organization as good will ambassadors.

from "Organizational Development for Children's Advocacy Centers" manual, The Western Regional Children's Advocacy Center and the Community Resource Center. Additional copies available from the National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, 115 Manning Drive, Building D, Suite 202, Huntsville, AL 35801-4341.

MEMO TO NONPROFIT BOARD MEMBERS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LEGAL LIABILITY

by Stephen H. McCurley

With the increased authority that comes with service on a nonprofit board, the decision-making volunteer also assumes an increased responsibility, particularly from the legal standpoint: Once an individual agrees to serve on a board, he/she accepts all the responsibilities for properly managing and supervising the organization -- to its best interests and by the rules under which it has been created.

Nell Karn discusses in depth the primary responsibilities of a non-profit board member in the accompanying article. The board is responsible for seeing that each of these functions, as well as other tasks necessary for the successful operation of the organization, is carried out-- either by board or staff - and is carried out properly.

Judging Performance

In determining whether a board member has adequately met his or her responsibilities for overseeing the nonprofit organization, courts look at a theoretical standard of conduct. That standard, which can vary somewhat from state to state, usually reads like the following (from the New York Not-for-Profit Corporation Law):

Directors and officers shall discharge the duties of their

respective positions in good faith and with the degree of diligence, care, and skill which ordinary prudent men would exercise under similar circumstances in like positions.

The key points of that standard are *exercise of due care* and *diligence* and *good faith*. The standard generally exempts the board member from personal liability as long as he or she performs board service acting in the best interests of the organization and pays sufficient attention to the business of the organization.

The board member who acts in good faith is allowed mistakes in judgment, but is not allowed gross errors or (most importantly) to act toward his/her own enrichment rather than that of the organization.

The standard mandates active involvement on the part of the board -- a director can be held liable for all acts of the board of which he/she knows (or should reasonably know) but does not oppose. That means that board members may be held responsible for actions undertaken at meetings from which they are absent.

Protecting the Board

There a number of simple measures that can be

undertaken to lessen the risk of a director's personal liability:

1. Conducting an agency risk appraisal. Think about what the agency is doing and how it is doing it and what might go wrong in that process. Then, either eliminate the problem or train volunteers and staff in how to minimize any harm that might result. This will prevent suits from occurring, which is the best defense.
2. Be familiar with the organization's charter and bylaws. These tell what the agency is supposed to be doing and by what rules it should be operating.
3. Keep informed of agency programs and personnel. Read publications and reports. Ask questions. Try to find out whether the organization is really doing its job in the community.
4. Make sure that minimum legal requirements are met. Make sure the annual tax forms are filed. Be certain that reports to funders are done on time.
5. Pick good people to be on the board. Maybe they'll correct any careless mistakes that you might make.
6. If you don't think the right decisions are being made, then object to what

is going on. Your silence will be viewed as agreement with the decision. If you're really concerned about something, make sure that you keep a written copy of your disagreement, either in the minutes of the board meetings or in a separate letter of dissent.

7. Avoid any conflict of interests or semblance of a conflict of interest. If there is a possibility of conflict, make sure that you inform others about your situation, then remove yourself from the decision-making process on that issue.
8. Investigate insurance to cover your board service. This can be done either in a director's and officers' insurance policy purchased by the

organization, or by adding coverage to your personal insurance plan.

Overall, the best protection is simply to do a good job. Treat being a board member seriously and don't accept positions on a board unless you are seriously interested in the organization and are willing to put in the work necessary to be effective.

Keeping Informed

One of the best methods of protecting yourself against suit while serving on a nonprofit board is to keep informed about the organization and be able to make informed decisions. The list below contains suggestions for the types of information that all board

members should have about their organization.

1. List of current board members and their committee assignments.
2. List of current staff and their responsibilities.
3. Copy of organizational charter and bylaws.
4. Copy of most recent financial audit.
5. Copy of recent reports to funding sources and a list of all funding sources.
6. Minutes of recent board meetings.
7. Copy of staff personnel policies manual.
8. Copy of accounting procedures manual.
9. Any other written policies.
10. Copies of any special reports or analyses done about the organization.
11. Update on current programs and projects.

Further Reading

"The Fiduciary Duties of Loyalty and Care Associated with the Directors and Trustees of Charitable Organizations." 54 Virginia Law Review 449, 1978.

Jarvis, "The Nonprofit Director's Fiduciary Duty: Toward a New Theory of the Nonprofit Sector" 77 Northwestern University Law Review 34, 1982.

"Not for Profit Corporation Director: Legal Liabilities and Protection" 28 Federation of Insurance Counsel Quarterly 57, 1982.

From Voluntary Action Leadership, P.O. Box 4179, Boulder, Colorado 80306.

NONPROFIT BOARDS: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

For Board members of nonprofit organizations, conflicts of interest occur whenever a member acts in a position of authority on an issue in which they have financial or other interests. In other words, when there is a dual interest or the appearance of a dual interest for any board member, the potential for a conflict of interest exists. For example, board members of agencies could be in conflict of interest if they offer services to the organization on whose board they serve even if the charge for these services is at or below the market value. Similarly, if a board member contemplates purchasing or leasing property that the organization may wish to purchase, the board members may be placed in a conflict of interest situation.

In cases of potential conflict of interest, board members must act to preserve and enhance public trust in the organization by putting the interests of the organization ahead of all other business and personal interests. In addition to the public's sensitivity to self-dealing, activities which appear to have a conflict of interest can be the basis for lawsuits against the board and officers.

When board members are confronted with an actual or apparent conflict of interest, there are reasonable steps that the organization can take to preserve its integrity. Members need not be disqualified from boards simply due to conflicts of interest. Perhaps the most important step is for Board members to disclose information related to the possibility of dual interests to others on the board. Minimally, the member needs to inform the board of the important facts and details and must abstain from voting on the transaction. These actions should be recorded in the minutes to document the disclosure.

Conflict of Interest Policies

Many organizations adopt a Conflict of Interest policy. **Carver Governance Design, Inc.** (2060 Kingdom Drive, Columbus, IN 47201) suggests the following Director's Code of Conduct which influences information regarding conflict of interest.

Director's Code of Conduct

The board expects of itself and its members ethical and businesslike conduct. This commitment includes proper use of authority and appropriate decorum in group and individual behavior when acting as directors.

1. Directors represent unconflicted loyalty to the interests of the ownership.
 - This accountability supersedes any conflicting loyalty such as that to advocacy or interests groups and membership on other boards or staffs.
 - This accountability supersedes the personal interest of any director acting as an individual consumer of this agency's services.

1. Directors must avoid any conflict of interest with respect to their fiduciary responsibility.
 - There must be no self-dealing or any conduct of private business or personal services between any director and the agency except as procedurally controlled to assure openness, competitive opportunity and equal access to otherwise "inside" information.

- Directors must not use their positions to obtain for themselves or for their family members employment within the agency.
 - Should a director be considered for employment, s/he must temporarily withdraw from board deliberation, voting and access to applicable board information.
3. Directors may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the agency except as explicitly set forth in board policies.
- Directors' interaction with the program director or with staff must recognize the lack of authority in any individual director or group of directors except as noted above.
 - Directors' interaction with the public, press or other entities must recognize the same limitation and the similar inability of any director or directors to speak for the board.
 - Directors will make no judgments of the program director or staff performance except as that performance is assessed against explicit board policies by the official process.
4. Directors will deal with outside entities or individuals, with clients and staff, and with each other in a manner reflecting fair play, ethics, and straightforward communication.

The Charities Review Council of Minnesota recommends that nonprofit board have their members sign an annual statement regarding conflicts.

**Board Members
Annual Statement Concerning Possible Conflict of Interest**

The undersigned person acknowledges receipt of a copy of the "Conflict of Interest" policy dated ____/____/____. By my signature affixed below I acknowledge my agreement with the spirit and intent of this policy and I agree to report to the President of the Board of Directors any possible conflicts (other than those stated below) that may develop before completion of the next annual statement.

_____ I am not aware of any conflict of interest.

_____ I have a conflict of interest in the following area(s):

Signed _____

Date _____ Print Name _____

Chapter 2

BOARD/STAFF INTERACTIONS

RELATING TO THE DIRECTOR, STAFF, AND VOLUNTEERS

Your relationship with your director is especially important because he/she is your lifeline to the organization. As Board Member Jeff Harwin (Phoenix, AZ) puts it, "It's imperative that the director be involved in every decision that the executive committee or board makes. Sound advice from our director helps the board stay focused and moving in the right direction."

The director is a vital member of your board team. But at the same time, your director is different. He/she handles different problems, has different responsibilities, and considers the board a supervisor as well as a partner. This means you have certain responsibilities to your director -- as an employee.

Your director's role

Before you can fully understand your responsibilities to your director, you must have a solid grasp of what he/she is expected to do--namely, to handle the day-to-day nuts and bolts management of your organization. Specifically, your director has the following responsibilities:

Short-term planning to fulfill long-term objectives

It's up to the director to decide just how the goals laid out in CASA's long-range plan will be met. He/she will play a significant role in helping you develop a long-range plan and will then organize a series of short-term plans to move the organization toward its ultimate goal. It's your job as a board member to monitor the implementation activities of these short-term plans and see that the long-range plan is completed on schedule.

Organizing the non-profit's internal structure

The director determines who does what within your non-profit. You might think a volunteer coordinator would be an effective addition to the staff, but your director may prefer an administrative assistant. As the manager, your director should be able to create the kinds of positions and internal structure he/she deems necessary.

Staffing (hiring, firing, evaluating, discipline, grievances)

Staff and volunteer problems are handled by the director. On the other hand, you are responsible for one employee: your director. You need to step back and let your director supervise staff and volunteers as he/she sees fit. As a board member, you judge your director by the performance of the entire organization--not that of individual staffers and volunteers.

Directing, leading and motivating staff

This is closely related to the previous duty. Your director should inspire, direct and lead staff and volunteers in the direction board members have laid out in their policy-making and long-range planning roles. Although board members are leaders of the entire organization, they are not the staff leaders - and shouldn't tell staffers how to do their jobs.

Controlling the non-profit's activities and budget

Internal and operational activities of CASA are handled by the director. For instance, the board sets and approves an annual budget, but your director makes the day-to-day decisions about how money is spent.

Steer clear of involvement in administrative tasks

Board members have an unfortunate tendency to get involved in the administrative responsibilities. Don't misunderstand -- not all board members stray into these waters. And those who do usually have the best of intentions.

Nonetheless, meddling in your director's job is some thing you need to be wary of. Not only does it damage the work relationship you share, but it undermines his/her her authority and sends conflicting messages about your organization's priorities, as well.

Your role as a board member is to set policy and plot the general direction in which you want your organization to go. The role of your director is to take your long-range plan and devise objectives to achieve the goal you desire, and manage day-to-day events accordingly.

If your board is thorough and diligent in making policy, writing plans and hiring the best director it can find, there should be no reason for you to be involved in your director's job.

Talk it over with your director

Now you know what your director's responsibilities are and how they are different from your own. So what's the secret to a strong, productive board and administrator relationship?

COMMUNICATION!

It really doesn't matter whether you do it in person, over the phone or in writing, so long as all lines of communication are open. A director must have clear direction from his/her board to make effective day-to-day decisions. That is why it is important that the board's priorities and those of your director are in sync.

Here's a quick test to discover if your board and director have the same goals. At your next meeting, have each board member, and your director, write down the most pressing issues facing CASA. If the board and your director have the same answers, you're in the clear!

If your responses differ, it is time to sit down and discuss your mismatched priorities. Perhaps goals and objectives were changed but not communicated to your director, or perhaps they were misunderstood from the beginning. In any case, this miscommunication could cause your non-profit to fall a step behind in serving the community.

Also, you should feel free to approach your director at any time with questions for concerns. Don't consider it bothersome -- it's the best and most efficient way to get the answers you need.

BOARD/STAFF RELATIONS: HANDLE WITH CARE

Although the board is responsible for overseeing and evaluating the director, it has no such commitment to staff and volunteers. In fact, you should deal with staff issues the same way you would walk across rocks in bare feet -- gingerly.

Staff and volunteer management is the exclusive domain of your director, the person accountable for staffers' and volunteers daily actions. When board members get involved in staff affairs, the chain of command is broken, leading staffers and volunteers to questions who is really in charge.

Board Member JoAnn Foster explains how quickly leadership roles can become blurred: "A few years back, our board decided to interview and hire all new staffers because it wanted to exercise more control. What happened, however, was a disaster." "The more the board got involved in hiring, the more staff members came to us with their questions and concerns," she says. "Since we made the decision to hire them, they automatically assumed that the chain of command began with us!"

EXPECTATIONS

A director expects a board will:

- Counsel and advise -- giving the benefit of its judgment, expertise and familiarity with the local setting.
- Consult with the director on all matters which the board is considering
- Delegate responsibility for all executive functions
- Refrain from handling administrative details
- Make all the staff responsible to the director
- Share all communications with the director
- Provide support to the director and staff in carrying out their professional duties
- Support the director in all decisions and actions consistent with policies of the board and the standards of the organization
- Hold the director accountable for the supervision of the organization
- Evaluate the work of the director

A staff member expects the board members will:

- Advocate for our organization and its mission
- Attend meetings and return phone calls
- Read materials that are provided
- Show a caring attitude towards our clients/constituents
- Respect expertise and experience
- Honor mutually-agreed upon deadlines
- Help identify and locate resources
- Be part of the planning process
- Contribute valuable skills and collective wisdom
- Recognize staff accomplishments
- Carry the CASA mission to places staff cannot go
- Respect staff members thoughts and opinions

A board member expects the staff will:

- Actively promote our mission
- Do their jobs with competence
- Be an honest liaison to the board
- Keep the board informed of problems and successes
- Be part of the planning process
- Be aware of board responsibilities
- Provide complete, concise and accurate information
- Use my volunteer time judiciously
- Promptly return phone calls
- Utilize the unique experience of board members
- Recognize board member accomplishments
- Respect Board Members thoughts and opinions

RIGHTS OF VOLUNTEER BOARD MEMBERS

1. To be fully informed about the responsibilities, time commitment, organization, etc. before accepting the position of board member.
2. To be informed about orientation and continuing board training which will enhance the board members ability to function effectively.
3. To be kept fully informed through accurate financial reports, management reports, regular and thorough briefings by staff, etc. about the operation of the organization.
4. To expect that volunteer time will not be wasted by lack of planning, coordination and cooperation within the organization or within the board.
5. To be assigned jobs which are worthwhile and challenging with freedom to use existing skills or develop new ones.
6. To be able to decline an assignment if it is felt that the match of skills and interests is not appropriate.
7. To have successful job experiences that provide opportunities for personal growth.
8. To be trusted with confidential information that will help the board member carry out assignments and responsibilities.
9. To know whether the volunteer work is effective and what results have been obtained, and access to an evaluation process which will measure that performance based upon measurable, impartial standards.
10. To be recognized at appropriate times for one's work and involvement as a board member.

Developed as extra material for Organizing/Governing workshop, United Way of King County, Washington, Margaret Ceis, Trainer (2/14/84).

IS IT POLICY OR IS IT MANAGEMENT?

If there is a stumbling block to watch for as a board member, it's distinguishing between making policies and actually managing their implementation.

Trust me, you're not alone if you are confused over "who does what." Many board members aren't always sure which decisions are considered policy (and therefore their responsibility), and which are considered management (falling into the director's duties).

Knowing your domain -- and your director's -- enhance your working relationship because you'll be less likely to step on each other's toes. And it will benefit your non-profit, as well, since there will be no duplication of effort.

The litmus test

Policy decisions are those that affect your organization as a whole; management decisions affect individual programs, services, or people.

When you are faced with an issue and are wondering if it's a policy decision (one to give your full attention to) ask yourself these questions:

Will this decision help determine procedures, activities, programs or services that affect the entire organization?

Is this decision required by law or regulatory agencies?

Is this an issue that our director has requested our assistance on?

If your answer to any of these questions is "yes," then this is a policy-making decision. You should get involved. On the other hand, if you suspect the issue may be a management decision, ask yourself these questions.

Does this issue affect an individual staff member?

Does it relate to the efficiency and quality of service provided by a specific department or program?

Does it relate to an administrative area that is operational in nature, or affect specific parts versus the entire organization?

If you answered "yes" to any questions in the second group, leave the issue alone. It's a management decision that should be handled by your director.

Board members must survey policies and bylaws

Closely related to distinguishing between policy-making and day-to-day management is your responsibility to monitor and review your board's policies and bylaws. It is important to understand the difference between policies and bylaws.

BYLAWS	BOARD POLICY
• affect board only	• affect entire CASA organization
• written by CASA founders	• written by board
• direct board operations	• direct CASA program operations
• ex. member terms, quorum	• ex. staff selection

As a board member, you should continually make sure your bylaws are an accurate reflection of how your board operates. If your board hasn't recently reviewed its bylaws, you should probably look through them. Often, changes are made, but neglected to be written down -- such as adding a board member, for example.

Like bylaws, board policies need to be monitored. Once a year, your board should sit down and review current policies to make sure they are accurate and up-to-date. If you find that a policy is no longer appropriate, it should be changed or eliminated.

Reading and evaluating all of your board's policies at once is a Herculean undertaking. Your board may want to review one or two a month so that the task isn't so overwhelming. Then, as new policies are added, they can be dated and reviewed on their anniversary. Another option is that your board may choose to delegate this review responsibility to a special policy review committee. It's a simple way to ensure that the policies are always given attention without burdening the entire board.

Checklist for meeting discussion

You're clear on what types of issues your board should handle and what items are rightfully left to your director. Now you need to put that knowledge into practice. Board Member Mike Kabat (Ypsilanti, MI) shares several techniques for helping board members stay focused on policy-making and letting the director manage day-to-day operations.

1. Define the board's role periodically
Kabat says when new members receive an orientation, the entire board takes time to discuss roles and responsibilities. "We've been asked to help govern, plan and set policy. This review is a good refresher on the differences between operations and policy-making."
2. Make sure management issues are not open for board discussion
"The board chairperson receives each meeting agenda before the board convenes. If he/she spots something that appears to be a management issue, it gets checked into. Perhaps the item shouldn't be on the agenda, or maybe the director just wants to update the board. Either way, the item is carefully considered to see if it should be discussed at all."
3. Keep board discussions focused away from day-to-day issues
"During the board meeting, we do not let a policy discussion become management-oriented," he adds. "If we are talking about an issue and it crosses into management's role, our board attorney reminds us we are getting off track."
4. Separate the "how" and "whats"
"When an issue is on the table, determine if you are discussing 'what.' If you are, that's fine -- you are doing your job as board members. On the other hand, if you are discussing 'how,' you are actually doing the director's job."

Who handles emergencies

Generally speaking, your director manages all crises and it is your role to support him/her in solving the problem. For example, if a staff member is arrested for stealing from your organization, the director will handle the situation -- using policies the board has previously laid out. If your policies are legally sound, then there should be no reason for you to worry.

There is, of course, an exception to this rule. In some emergencies, you may be held liable for both the cause and the outcome -- so you will need to get your feet wet. For example, as a board member, you are responsible for the financial well-being of your non-profit. If your non-profit suddenly faces a huge loss of funds, you will be asked to make some tough budget decisions -- and raise money if necessary.

If your organization finds itself in a crisis, no matter what kind, follow these three steps:

1. *Keep yourself informed from the right source -- your director*
When serious problems occur, there will be members of your community who demand that the board members do something. Your local paper may even print an editorial encouraging board involvement. And, of course, questions will fly at you from all directions. When questioned, you will want to accurately report on what is being done to correct the problem. That means communicating with your director -- the person handling the situation.
2. *Operate as a board, not as individuals*
In an emergency, don't run out and tell your own personal story about the situation. You have to remember that the people you serve are already concerned -- and 10 or 20 different accounts of the problem will only leave the public thinking that the board has no idea what is going on. Designate one person -- probably your director since he/she is in charge of solving the problem -- to speak about the situation.
3. *Support your director*
Get questions out of the way at board meetings and then back the director during the crisis. Tell him/her that you appreciate the appropriate and timely fashion in which the problem is being handled.

BOARD AND STAFF...WHO DOES WHAT?

Goal: To improve board-staff relationships by coming to consensus on who has primary responsibility for various organizational tasks. Read each task and determine who has primary responsibility for doing it and write a “1” in that column. If someone/group has strong secondary responsibilities, or the task/decision shouldn’t be made without input from them, place a “2” in that column.

FUNCTION/TASK	BOARD	EXEC. DIR.	STAFF
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I. Planning

1. Determine basic organizational purpose and goals			
2. Determine which community needs should be met and to what extent			
3. Determine categories of service to be provided			
4. Develop long-range plans for the organization			
5. Develop programs to meet identified needs			
6. Set specific program objectives			
7. Establish funding level needed to run organization			
8. Develop program evaluation system			

II. Policy

1. Provide background information necessary for policy decisions			
2. Give input to policy			
3. Make policy			

III. Fundraising

1. Develop fundraising plan			
2. Develop funding sources			
3. Solicit funds and other resources			
4. Evaluate fundraising success			

IV. Financial Management

1. Prepare agency budget			
2. Monitor how funds are spent on a day to day basis			
3. Monitor total funding picture			
4. Hire a CPA for annual audit			
5. Do bookkeeping			

FUNCTION/TASK	BOARD	EXEC. DIR.	STAFF
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V. Personnel

1. Develop agency personnel policies			
2. Recruit, screen, hire, supervise, and terminate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • executive director • paid staff • board members • direct service volunteers 			
3. Provide training and development opportunities for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • executive director • paid staff • board members • direct service volunteers 			
4. Develop evaluation procedures and evaluates the performance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • executive director • paid staff • board members • direct service volunteers 			

VI. Public Relations

1. Develop a formal public relations plan			
2. Implement the public relations plan			
3. Serve on the boards of other community agencies			
4. Maintain contact with state, regional, and national organizations with similar interests			
5. Establish method of assessing management practices which impact "internal" public relations			

VII. Board Recruitment

1. Develop board nominating procedures			
2. Suggest potential members to the nominating committee			
3. Develop board orientation and training			

from *Gaining Momentum for Board Action*, 1983

SUPERVISING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by Andrew Swanson

How far should the board go in supervising the executive director?

Supervision of the executive director is an important, but frequently misunderstood, responsibility of any governing board of directors. Board members need to know what is and what isn't appropriate supervision. Someone once said that board members need to know how to "keep their hands *on* the organization, but not *in* it". Keep this little aphorism in mind as a sort of philosophical background for what is to follow.

The Job Description

Appropriate board supervision of the executive director begins with the job description. Such a document should be drawn up at the time the executive director is hired. It should clearly state what is expected, and both the board and the executive director should agree to its provisions. If such a job description is not in place, then developing one should be a high priority of both the board and the director. The job description ought to be results oriented and avoid going into detail about how the job is to be done.

The Budget

The next level of board supervision is involvement in the budget development process. The proposed budget should be prepared by the executive director. It should then be reviewed by a budget committee (not the

finance committee), made up in equal measure of people with financial orientation and people with program orientation. Since the "bottom line" in any nonprofit organization is responsible service, it is important that people with both these orientations be involved. Once this committee and the executive director are agreed, then the proposed budget must go to the full board for final approval, after which it will provide guidelines within which the executive director must operate during the coming year.

Financial Reports

Monthly review of financial reports is the next level of board supervision. The monthly financial statements (actual income and expense compared to the budget) ought to be mailed with the call to each board meeting so that all board members have time to review it thoroughly. Some boards review financials quarterly, relying upon the finance committee in the interim. I am far more comfortable when I see a board involved on a monthly basis with this most important report.

The Organization's Objectives

If the board is in the habit (as it should be) of setting objectives, with timetables for completion, and has a simple follow-up mechanism to hear progress reports and to

assure completion, then the board has yet another supervisory tool available. Large organizations may have formal management-by-objectives systems with their boards plugged in, but smaller organizations can do just as well with a simple follow-up device for each objective set.

Reports to the Board

The executive director's monthly written and/or oral reports to the board constitute the next level of supervision employed by most boards. Board members should recognize the importance of these reports to their supervisory role and give adequate time to them at board meetings.

Annual Evaluation of Executive Director

The annual evaluation of the executive director by the board is potentially the most useful supervisory tool available to a board of directors - and unfortunately, the least often used. A properly conducted annual evaluation, based upon the job description and the organization's objectives, can provide great benefits for both the executive director and the board--and therefore, the organization.

What's Appropriate, and What's Not?

All of the above constitute appropriate supervision on the part of the board of directors. The board should avoid second-guessing the executive director's decisions or telling the director how to

do the job. Individual board members (including the president) and board committees normally lack the authority to direct the activities of the executive director or of subordinate

staff. If they do any of these things, board members will be in the position of keeping their hands *in* the organization, rather than where their hands ought to be -- *on* it.

from Swanson, A. (1989). *Nonprofit World*, 7(3) 1989.

Chapter 3

COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS

ALL COMMITTEES ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

The Board of Directors

- 4 Governing role
- 4 Represent key constituencies

Responsibilities:

- fiscal management -- ensure proper practices
- personnel management -- supervise director, ensure proper practices
- program administration -- oversight, long term planning
- public relations -- represent the organization to the public
- fundraising -- give and get
- evaluation -- ensure independent assessment

Other key features:

- officers posts
- terms of office
- directors and officers insurance

The Advisory Committee

- 4 Advisory role
- 4 Usually represent expertise in one specific area

Responsibilities:

- not responsible for fiscal management, personnel, and fundraising
- most often involved in programmatic areas and in evaluation

Other key features:

- sometimes involves officers and terms of service
- many are on-going bodies

The Task Force

- 4 Typically called together for a specific purpose, i.e., investigating an issue or administering a grant

Responsibilities:

- most often involved in program, evaluation -- some in limited fiscal management, public relations, and fundraising

Other key features:

- often have limited life span related to its raison d'être
- usually represent key constituencies (like a board)

THE ROLE OF COMMITTEES

Committees develop policy options for the board and recommend actions for its consideration and approval. A committee's size, the expertise of its members, and its focused charge enable it to deal with issues in greater detail than can the full board. Small groups are often more adept at problems solving than are large groups. They can analyze issues more completely, arrive at more thoroughly deliberated recommendations, and usually reach consensus more quickly.

Much of the board's work is accomplished through its committees. The key word here is *through*: Committees make a critical contribution to the board's deliberations and decision-making, but they do not supplant the responsibilities of the full board. Every board member remains accountable for the actions the board takes on committee recommendations. The fact that a committee has prepared the way and recommend a policy option does not relieve individual members of their obligation to make informed, carefully considered judgments based on their understanding of the issues and their determination of the needs of the organization.

Committees operate at the board level, not the staff level. Some boards create committees that are designed to advise staff, but this arrangement can blur the distinction between board and staff roles. These committees should be limited, or better still, not created at all. It is important to remember, however, that in some organizations committees may be involved in day-to-day operations. Boards in the earliest stages of organizational development, when there is no staff, clearly must take on what would be staff work in a mature organization.

When to establish committees

Boards create committees when they can no longer operated efficiently as a "committee of the whole." There is no hard-and-fast rule, no precise moment at which board members know for sure that they should subdivide their responsibilities. At some point, though, it becomes apparent that the business of the board has become complete enough to require a different approach. Committees are often the answer.

Boards also establish committees to undertake a special project or initiative at the board level. An organization involved in its first strategic planning process, for example, may form a planning committee that carries out -- or, in an organization with staff, oversees and participates in -- the process. Board fundraising and development responsibilities also generally require the leadership of committees. When the organization launches a major endowment or capital campaign, a board committee usually directs it.

Two types of committees

STANDING COMMITTEE	AD HOC COMMITTEE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• permanent• established in bylaws• related to on-going governance of organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• time limited• created for specific purposes• focus on narrow array of tasks aimed at one goal

When boards set up committees simply because they think they are supposed to have them, the result can be too many committees with overlapping functions -- and, in the end, board and staff members who are frustrated and dissatisfied with the committee structure. Ineffective committee organization can be avoided if each committee has a specific statement of responsibilities that spells out its job, its relationship to the full board, and its role in relation to the staff. For a standing committee, this charge is expressed in the bylaws; an ad hoc committee should also have formal, written statements of responsibility. A review of the charge and an assessment of the need for the committee should be part of the committee's annual evaluation process.

Committee size

The size of a committee depends first on a common-sense assessment of how many people are needed to do its work. Size also relates to the needs of the board and the organization, the size of the full board, and the availability of board members. An executive committee with an active meeting schedule and continuing responsibilities might have five to ten members while an audit committee whose work centers on one annual event, might require just two or three members. If a committee is too large, a small group of its members may assume too much responsibility, and others may feel uninvolved. If a committee is too small, there may be too few people to get the job done.

Committee composition

A committee's work will be most productive when its members are knowledgeable, committed and work well as a team. For this reason, committee appointments should be made with careful attention to the mix of skills, perspectives, and personalities that is being created.

Every board member should serve on at least one committee, but preferably no more than two. Although all members should share the board's work, it is essential that they not be overextended. Board members should be assigned to committees based on an evaluation of their experience, skills, interests, and availability. Many boards invite new members to indicate which areas they would most like to be involved in and consider these preferences when making committee assignments.

Each committee should include members who are well versed in the subject area of the committee's work. This is not to say that there is no role for the non-specialist. Someone who is not an expert can perform a valuable function in challenging the committee to try new approaches to familiar problems. An outside viewpoint can also be obtained by appointing people who are not board members to board committees. Some boards, for example, include representatives of the organization's constituent groups on program or strategic planning committees. This form of committee work can be valuable preparation for board service.

Committee members are appointed by the board chairperson, usually in consultation with the nominating committee, the chief executive, and the committee chairperson. Some boards specify

terms of service for committee members. A one-year term, with the possibility of renewal, provides the frequent opportunity to bring in new members if the committee is not functioning effectively. A longer term contributes to continuity and gives the committee the chance to develop a cohesive working dynamic.

Committee leadership

The importance of effective community leadership cannot be over-emphasized. Committee chairpersons should have a record of experience with and commitment to board service. Prior membership on the committee is not necessarily a prerequisite for the job, but it is helpful. It is also beneficial to identify future committee leadership in advance. Sometimes the best chairperson comes from among experienced committee members who have in-depth involvement with the subject. It is sometimes appropriate to appoint a chairperson from outside the committee.

The board chairperson, in consultation with the director, appoints committee chairpersons. This is a serious task that merits an investment of time and thought, not only in making the choice but also in introducing the new chairperson to his or her responsibilities and explaining the board's expectations of the chairperson and the committee.

What the chairperson and committee members do

Written job descriptions for the committee chairperson and committee members clarify responsibilities and, as a result, contribute to the committee's effectiveness. The following responsibilities should be included in these job descriptions:

Chairperson

- Sets the tone for committee work, ensures that members have the information they need to do their jobs, and oversees the logistics of the committee's operation. As the committee's link to the board, he/she frequently consults with and reports to the board chairperson.
- Reports to the full board on committee decisions, policy recommendations, and other committee business. He/she works closely with the director and other staff liaison to the committee.
- Assigns work to committee members, sets meeting agendas and runs meetings, and ensures distribution of minutes and reports to members.
- Initiates and leads the committee's annual evaluation, a process in which committee members review their accomplishments in relation to committee goals and reflect on areas of the committee's work that need improvement.

Committee Members

- Must make a serious commitment to participate actively in the committee's work, including substantive participation in committee meetings and discussions.
- Should volunteer for and willingly accept assignments and complete them thoroughly and on time.
- Must stay informed about committee matters, prepare themselves well for meetings, and review and comment on minutes and reports.
- Should get to know other committee members and build a collegial working relationship that contributes to consensus.
- Should be active participants in the committee's annual evaluation.

Committee relationships

The most effective committees relate to their other board colleagues and to staff with mutual understanding and respect. The first obligation of a committee to the board is to provide adequate information that enables board members to review committee actions and recommendations thoroughly. Board members, in turn, must devote time and thought to studying committee recommendations, which reflect a considerable investment on the part of committee members. Both board and committee should remember that the board is not simply a rubber stamp for committee recommendations. The board always has the option to reject a committee proposal or refer a matter back to the committee for more work.

Clarity of committee and staff roles is especially vital. The director or an appropriate staff member should support the work of each committee. It is important to assess the level of staff support that is realistically required, to avoid drawing staff members away from their primary responsibilities. Committees do not advise staff but advise and make recommendations to the board on matters of governance and on board participation in organization-wide activities, such as strategic planning and fundraising. Just as committees must not supplant the responsibilities of the board, they must not become involved in day-to-day staff work.

GUIDELINES FOR KEY STANDING COMMITTEES

Executive Committee

Purpose: The executive committee recommends actions for approval of the full board and sometimes acts for the board, within carefully designed boundaries, between meetings. This committee is central to the effective operation of the committee structure, the board, and the entire organization.

Tasks: The committee meets regularly to review operational, programmatic, and financial matters. It might deal with urgent situations that cannot wait for the next full board meeting, specific questions referred to the committee by the board, issues that need preliminary discussion and refinement before the board considers them, or routine matters that do not require full board disposition. The executive committee is usually charged with establishing and implementing a process for assessing the performance of the director and serving as his/her principal support and sounding board. Some organizations delegate most responsibility for governance to the executive committee, which takes action and reports on them to the full board.

Board Relationship: The executive committee must report thoroughly and regularly to the board. In most organizations, the committee is composed of board officers, with the board chairperson as committee chair.

Staff Relationship: The director works closely with this committee. Other key staff are involved when their contributions are necessary or appropriate.

Points to Consider: The executive committee is the committee most fraught with the potential for controversy. A frequent complaint is that this committee has supplanted the authority of the full board and put the governance of the organization in the hands of a few. Sometimes, as in the case of very large boards, a strong executive board can be an advantage. At other times, as when it takes on a life of its own and fails to maintain appropriate relations with the full board, a strong executive committee threatens the health of the board and of the organization.

If the board is concerned that the executive committee has too much authority, it should determine why. Is the board too large? Is its organizational structure unwieldy? Does the board receive adequate information? Are the other committees working effectively? What safeguards can be put into place to prevent the executive committee from dominating? Is the concept of an executive committee unworkable for this board?

The keys to keeping the executive committee-board relationship smooth and functional are candor and clarity. Even a powerful executive committee can be effective if it operates openly, with the full knowledge and approval of the aboard. The committee's role should be clearly defined in the boards' operating policies, and the board should issue clear guidelines as to what matters must, without exception, be reserved for full board action.

Development Committee

- Purpose:** The development committee leads the board's participation in development and fundraising.
- Tasks:** The committee develops policies, plans, procedures, and schedules for board involvement in fundraising. It helps educate board members about the organization's program plans and the resources needed to realize those plans. It can familiarize members with fundraising skills and techniques so that they are comfortable raising money. The committee is the board's central source of information about fundraising climate in general, and about the status of CASA's fundraising activities in particular. The committee sometimes sets minimum guidelines for board member contributions and then solicits those contributions. It also plays a strong role in identifying, cultivating, and approaching major donors.
- Board Relationship:** The development committee sets the tone for the board's fundraising endeavors. It works closely with the executive and finance committees.
- Staff Relationship:** The director is the staff members most actively involved with the development committee.
- Points to Consider:** The development committee should not have to do all the board's fundraising; all board members share this crucial responsibility. The committee's relationship to the staff deserves special attention. The committee usually focuses on board involvement, while the staff creates the overall strategies, procedures, and schedules for fundraising. When the organization has no staff, development committee members must take a more active role.

Nominating Committee

- Purpose:** The nominating committee determines the composition of the board by identifying, recruiting, and proposing board members. In some organizations, this committee is called the board development or governance committee and has expanded responsibilities, including orientation, continuing education, and evaluation of board members.
- Tasks:** The nominating committee leads the board in identifying the type of board members the organization needs. The committee develops written descriptions of board member responsibilities and creates a plan for identifying prospective members. Once the process is under way, the committee plays an active part in cultivating new board members; screens and interviews candidates; and recommends candidates to the full board for approval. The committee also develops and nominates board officers. In addition, it may plan and conduct orientation for new members, organize continuing education programs that enhance member's knowledge of governance responsibilities in general and CASA in particular, and lead an annual evaluation of individual board members and the board as a whole.
- Board Relationship:** This committee works closely with the board chairperson. If the expanded responsibilities described above are assigned to a separate committee, the nominating committee works closely with it.

Staff Relationship: The director should work closely with the nominating committee. He/she has a great deal to contribute to the process of board member selection, from identifying the type of board members the organization needs and cultivating candidates to conducting new-member orientation.

Points to Consider: The nominating committee could be considered the most influential board committee because its recommendations can ultimately affect the success or failure of the organization. Unfortunately, in too many organizations, it tends to be the weakest committee, and board selection becomes a haphazard or inbred process. The leadership and composition of this important committee deserve the close attention of the board chairperson and the director. A strong nominating committee pays dividends in the form of a stable and effective board.

Finance Committee

Purpose: The finance committee coordinates the board's financial oversight responsibility by recommending policy to the board, interpreting it for the staff, and monitoring its implementation.

Tasks: The committee oversees CASA's assets; reviews the annual budget and recommends it to the full board for approval; monitors budget implementation and financial procedures; and reviews monthly financial reports. It may manage the organization's investments, including the endowment, but the board may place these tasks in an investment committee or an individual outside the organization who has special expertise.

Board Relationship: As the board's resident experts on financial matters, the members of this committee may work closely with a number of other committees, including the executive, development, audit, strategic planning, and investment committees. They consult with every board committee and communicate with the full board on financial matters.

Staff Relationship: The director, chief financial officer, and development director are the key staff who work with the finance committee.

Points to Consider: In most organizations, finance committee members function as advisers and reviewers. The staff, not the finance committee, prepares the draft annual budget and periodic financial statements. In organizations without staff, however, the finance committee is involved in the nuts and bolts of financial management.

Audit Committee

- Purpose:** The audit committee provides board oversight of CASA's annual financial audit.
- Tasks:** The committee reviews the organization's internal audit and, in larger non-profit agencies, recommends an independent accounting firm to conduct the board's own audit; the firm is approved and appointed by the full board. The committee then meets with the auditors in advance to discuss the process; reviews and evaluates audit reports; and presents and explains the audit to the full board. When an audit reveals the need for improvement in financial management or reporting procedures, the audit committee monitors the implementation of the necessary changes.
- Board Relationship:** The audit committee works closely with the finance committee.
- Staff Relationship:** The director and chief financial officer are the staff liaisons.
- Point to Consider:** In some organizations, the audit committee is a subcommittee of the finance committee.

Personnel Committee

- Purpose:** The personnel committee advises the director on personnel policy issues.
- Tasks:** The committee develops personnel policy guidelines in cooperation with the director recommends the executive's compensation to the full board; reviews the annual personnel budget; and may be involved in the policy level in such matters as staff selection and evaluation. The personnel committee also keeps the board informed about labor-related legislative issues at the national, state, and local levels.
- Board Relationship:** The personnel committee may work with the finance committee.
- Staff Relationship:** The director is the staff liaison.
- Points to Consider:** The duties of this committee vary widely, depending upon the organization's structure and its stage in the organizational life cycle. In young organizations, for example, the committee will take a more active role in developing personnel policy and procedures. Many more mature organizations have not found it necessary to have a separate board committee on personnel. In general, this committee must be especially careful to focus its work on policy issues and avoid becoming involved in staff hiring, promotion, and evaluation -- matters that are properly within the purview of the director.

Program Committee

- Purpose:** The program committee is the link between board and staff on CASA's programs and activities.
- Tasks:** This committee recommends program policy to the full board for approval, sets guidelines for board involvement in program matters, and monitors implementation of the organization's strategic plan with regard to programs. On behalf of the staff, it recommends major program initiatives to the full board for approval and reports regularly on the organization's programs.
- Board Relationship:** The program committee may interact with a number of other committees, including finance and strategic planning.
- Staff Relationship:** The director and key program staff, when appropriate, work with the program committee.
- Points to Consider:** Like other committees, the program committee must restrict its focus to the policy and planning levels. Clarity of board and staff roles is essential. A program committee might be more suitable for a board of a young organization with a small staff and developing program objectives.

Other potential standing committees

Depending upon the needs of the board and the organization, other committees may be created. They include:

- **Board development committee** - responsible for board orientation, continuing education, growth, and evaluation
- **Strategic planning committee** - coordinates the board's role in the long-range planning process
- **Investment committee** - administers the organizations portfolio, including its endowments
- **Buildings and grounds (facilities) committee** - represents the board in matters related to physical plant management
- **Public Affairs** - coordinates the board's role in media and public relations and in public advocacy activities

BOARD MEETINGS

Conducting short, efficient meetings is vital to board success. I know of several boards whose meetings drag on for hours. No one wants to be there and it is reflected in board member enthusiasm and creativity.

It doesn't have to be that way however, and it shouldn't. As a board member, there are many things you can do to shorten meetings and head off a lethargic attitude.

The first rule of meetings is preparation

Nothing slows down a board meeting more than board members who don't know what is going on. That's why you should always do the following three things before your board convenes:

1. Thoroughly read the agenda packet.

Several days before the meeting, your director or board chairperson will deliver materials about the topics scheduled for discussion or action. Your packet should contain any or all of the following items:

- Cover letter or agenda summary highlighting important information
- Structured agenda, indicating items for discussion or action
- Previous meeting minutes for approval or changes
- Director or committee reports, including recommendations
- Financial report highlighting unusual expenditures or new revenue sources
- Updates on goals and organizational accomplishments
- Reference materials relating to issues on the agenda, including charts, graphs, and notes specific to each item.

Review all of this information. If you don't, you will not be able to contribute to the debate or cast a well-informed vote.

2. Call your director with questions.

Agenda information is sometimes unclear, and board members cannot always remember what was discussed from one meeting to the next. If you have questions about anything at all, contact your director. He/she will be glad to answer your concerns -- and thankful you took the time to prepare yourself.

3. Review the previous meetings minutes.

Why? Because minutes are the official and legal record of what happens at your meetings. If you should find an error, make sure it's corrected before voting to approve the minutes.

Participate, participate, participate

When you serve on a board, the people sitting beside and across from you expect to hear your opinions. After all, you were chosen for board service because your experience and background are assets to the decision-making process. The rest of the board relies on your contributions to be sure that all sides of the story are told -- and the best decision is made.

Also, you should be aware that all board members, whether they were present at the meeting or not, are personally liable for every decision the group makes. Regular meeting attendance keeps you “in the know” on controversial issues, and affords an opportunity to prevent legal blunders.

Meeting preparation checklist

As a board member, I...

- o attend all meetings and arrive on time
- o prepare for meetings by reading the agenda and support materials
- o take part in all discussion
- o keep my discussion focused on the issue at hand
- o understand the basics of parliamentary procedure
- o am flexible and practice the art of compromise
- o listen to the comments of other board members
- o work toward consensus on all issues
- o focus on the mission of the non-profit rather than the needs of a special interest group

Sticking to business

Board meetings are tightly structured according to parliamentary procedures. However, that doesn't mean your board won't get sidetracked discussing a difficult or controversial issue.

To prevent wandering discussion at your board meeting, use these techniques:

Plan discussion across the entire year

Board Chairperson Carolyn Jones (Ames, IA) dealt with her board's tendency to discuss non-agenda items by developing a “skeletal” calendar which plugs in topics to be discussed at each monthly meeting. “We've found that in using the calendar, we stay focused only on those items board members are prepared to discuss and avoid becoming overwhelmed with issues,” she says.

Move that non-agenda item to be added to the next month's agenda

Unless an issue is of particular urgency, there's no harm in putting it aside until your next meeting. If someone brings up a non-agenda issue, simply note that it was mentioned, then move that it be tabled until another time. This procedure has three benefits -- it acknowledges the topic's importance, preserves the current agenda, and gives board members time to prepare discussion on the new item.

Don't discuss day-to-day management issues

Board Chairperson Mare Draper (Atherton, CA) says re-prioritizing the items which her board spent its time on, significantly improved its meetings. “We used to spend lots of time discussing our financial statements,” she says. “While it's an area of importance, it's not our role. The board should focus on policy-related issues.”

Eliminate unnecessary recesses

“At the start of the year, I told board members that there would be no breaks of any kind during meetings,” says Board Chairperson Joan Harvey (Lakewood, CA). “If someone needs to stretch, get a cup of coffee, or use the restroom, he/she is free to do so. We won’t, however, disrupt the entire meeting for one individual’s needs.”

Make your board time-conscious

This is a simple suggestion that your director could implement in the minutes by literally adding time constraints to the agenda. For example, “Accept financial report, 4:15 - 4:20 p.m.” Or you could do as Board Member Sue Lieglund (Bozeman, MT) -- bring an alarm clock to your board’s meetings. “The constant ticking let everyone know that time was running out,” she explains. “It really helped keep our discussion to the point.”

Cut off a poor or irrelevant discussion

It sounds a bit harsh, but if someone is off on a tangent, or just not giving the information the board needs, redirect the conversation. I know a board president who keeps a notebook in front of him and writes down the core issue of each discussion. When board members digress from the main idea, he gently reminds them why the subject is on the table.

Hold questions until the speaker stops talking

When you ask someone to clarify himself/herself during a presentation, you run the risk of prompting him/her to speak about irrelevant issues. It is best to wait until a speech is over before going for the details.

No one benefits from a closed session

This discussion of meetings would not be complete without saying a few words about boards that occasionally meet in “executive session” without their director. You’re making a big mistake!

Your director is your lifeline to the non-profit. He/she knows every aspect of the organization and absolutely must be involved in the decision-making process. How else will you know if your plans are feasible?

Once that sense of teamwork is damaged -- and closed sessions will do that in short order -- communication will suffer. And that means the organization suffers too. Leadership teams must work and stand together, and that means keeping everything out in the open.

Leadership duties fall to your board chairperson

The board chairperson is your board’s director. As such, he/she is responsible for overseeing the board activities and ensuring that meetings progress smoothly and fairly. He/she makes sure everyone is heard and mediates board conflicts.

You can also expect the board chairperson to be the primary conduit of communication between your board and the director. Read carefully as Jim McReynolds -- himself a board chairperson -- summarized his strategies for acting as a liaison between the board and director.

Strategy #1: Keep board members informed about issues and developments.

“I personally contact half of the board every 10 days, usually by phone,” McReynolds says. “When a complex issue is on the table, I discuss it with everyone prior to the meeting to make sure he/she understands what is going on.” ‘Or if there is a project in the works. I keep board members filled in on any changes,” he says.

Strategy #2: Talk regularly with the director.

“Each week, I meet with our director to discuss her priorities. I then relay these to the board,” says McReynolds (Nacogdoches, TX). “This way we are not surprised when the director didn’t have time to work on board issues because he was out of town. We experience very few setbacks and delays during meetings because board members and the director are on the same wave-length.”

Committees often get a bad rap. Although they are sometimes inefficient, when managed properly, committees are tremendous time-savers. Their members do a lot of legwork for the board by researching issues and developing recommendations.

Your board likely has two kinds of committees: 1) standing committees that watch over a continuing process, and 2) ad hoc committees which are established as they are needed. As a board, you can make your committee's successful and productive by following a few simple guidelines:

Develop a clear purpose and focus on nothing else

Forming a committee without a specific need to do so will end badly. When an ad hoc committee is formed, write clear goals and objectives so its members know exactly what problem they must solve. This also gives the committee a definite life span, after which it should dissolve. Standing committees, on the other hand, should have written "job descriptions" that also outline their goals and objectives.

Meet only when there is work to be done

When you serve on a board, there never seems to be enough hours in a day. So it is only logical that committees should never meet unless there's work to finish or reports to be reviewed. Otherwise, committee members are wasting their time.

Make your report part of the agenda packet

Unless you are making a final recommendation to the board, don't waste valuable meeting time updating everyone on your committee's progress. A simple one-to-two page summary in the agenda packet should satisfy everyone's curiosity and serve as a check to keep you focused.

Evaluate your committee's performance

Do this annually for standing committees and at the final meeting of an ad hoc committee. The assessment results will help you learn how to improve as a committee member, as well as determine the overall usefulness of the committee.

Disband unnecessary committees

To rid your board of out-dated committees that still meet and use meeting time to make recommendations, you may want to try a "clean-slate" exercise. This involves disbanding all committees, preparing a list of functions a committee can handle more efficiently than the whole board, and then re-establishing only those committees for which there is a genuine need.

When you sit on a committee...

The expectations for serving on a committee are the same expectations for serving on the board itself. You must prepare for meetings, attend and participate. After all, the entire board is depending on you to explore and issue and make the best possible decision for the organization.

Obviously, it's dull to serve on a committee in which you have little interest. That is why you should talk to your board chairperson about what your interests are and what activities you'd like to help out with. That way, he/she can keep you in mind when committees are forming or openings occur. You will be less likely to find yourself on a committee "just because they needed one more person."

Committees

Board committees come in all sizes, shapes and titles -- standing, task force, ad hoc, and temporary.

Committees are sometimes written into the by-laws or constitution. They can be formed through board action at which time they are given their charge. Each committee is given a task to perform. In addition, the membership of each committee is usually spelled out, the authority the committee holds will be specified, and the date for termination or report back to the board will be designated.

The membership of a committee may include others besides board members. The committee chairman will be appointed or details will be given as to when and how a chairman will be chosen.

If you are the committee chairman, be aware and practice:

Effective Leadership Skills

- ◆ Have agenda for each meeting and, if possible, let other committee members have it in advance.
- ◆ Be sure the task is defined so the committee knows its responsibilities.
- ◆ Stick to the issue.
- ◆ Seek views of all committee members.
- ◆ Encourage different views of the task, so alternatives can be considered.
- ◆ Use research and consultants to be sure members have all the information needed to make decisions.
- ◆ If action is called for, plan in detail.
- ◆ Agree on steps to be taken to carry out action.
- ◆ If the report recommends use of staff, consider time and cost of staff.

Subject and Format of Reports

- ◆ Explain the charge to the committee.
- ◆ Include the facts or steps considered in reaching final conclusion or action
- ◆ Detail the final conclusion of committee (give dissenting members a chance to report)
- ◆ Explain the steps needed, with time and resource allocation, if the task of the committee entails planning a future action
- ◆ Share the resources used in committee preparation
- ◆ Be prepared to answer questions

Ways to make committees work effectively

- ◆ Make sure the committee has a real purpose for existence.

- ◆ Make sure that everyone knows what that purpose is.
- ◆ Have the right people on the committee.
- ◆ Remove committee members who are not right for the committee or who do not participate.
- ◆ Don't hold meetings without a clear reason.
- ◆ Give advance notice of meetings.
- ◆ Whenever possible, distribute materials in advance.
- ◆ Encourage everyone to participate during the meeting.
- ◆ Discourage members who monopolize the discussion.
- ◆ Start and end meetings on time.
- ◆ Schedule important items first on the agenda.
- ◆ Allocate time for discussion according to the importance of each issue.
- ◆ Send members a summary of the meeting, focusing on the decisions made and on the assignments given.
- ◆ Don't have more than eight people on a committee.
- ◆ Be specific about tasks and deadlines.
- ◆ Don't discuss, re-discuss, and continue to discuss items.
- ◆ Provide an agenda for each meeting.
- ◆ Conclude each meeting with a summary of what is to be done by whom.
- ◆ Double-check for agreement on important issues.
- ◆ Don't allow unrelated discussions during meetings.
- ◆ Make sure everyone gets credit for the accomplishments of the committee.
- ◆ Utilize seating arrangements where everyone can interact.
- ◆ Use name cards if attendees do not know each other.
- ◆ Allow some social time following each meeting.

GUIDE TO THE PREPARATION OF AN AGENDA

The chairman of the meetings has a duty to see to it that the meeting keeps moving. He/she and all members should know what is supposed to be acted on first and what should come next during the meeting. Planning an agenda before the meeting helps to set priorities and ensures that everyone understands what will be discussed during their time together.

Why is an agenda needed?

When meetings are dull and disorganized, members don't come. An agenda helps the chairperson run a good meeting. The outline will help him/her get the important business taken care of smoothly and quickly.

Who prepares the agenda?

The top officer of the board (chairperson, director, president) has the responsibility for preparing the agenda. The officers or leadership team of the organization (such as the staff director, the secretary, treasurer) should help the chairperson decide what things are important for each meeting.

When is an agenda prepared?

The chairperson along with other members of the executive committee should meet at least a week before the regular meeting to draw up an agenda. Sometimes the bylaws provide that the agenda be sent out to members a certain number of days before a meeting.

How is an agenda used?

The chairperson must see that the important things are not crowded out of a meeting; he/she uses the agenda as a guide for timing the action of the meeting. The chair calls for one item at a time and completes the discussion and action on that item. Then he/she moves on to the next item on the agenda. The agenda should not be used as a weapon or tool to push people around. Members must be allowed time to express their ideas and views. By following an agenda, the presiding officer will help the members organize their thoughts and the action they want to take. The time and work that it takes to prepare an agenda will improve community action meetings and the interest of those who attend. "Action" will become the name of the game.

How is an agenda prepared?

To prepare an agenda, the chairperson and other officers should:

- ◆ check the minutes of the last meeting and note any unfinished business
- ◆ include committees for members who are to make reports on the agenda
- ◆ make sure the right people will attend the meeting in order that information needed for action or discussion at the meeting will be available.

The secretary should go over all correspondence that has been received since the last meeting. Important letters should be summarized and a report of them prepared. Put this on the agenda.

The financial officer should have all the bills and figures in order and a report prepared. Put this report on the agenda.

Check on all new business which has come up since the last meeting and everything that is scheduled to come up before the next regular meeting will be held. Note everything that the members must take action on. Include time for new business from the floor or for general discussion at the end.

Sample Agenda Outline

- I. Call the meeting to order
- II. Approval of minutes of the last meeting
- III. Reports:
 - a. Treasurer
 - b. Committees
- IV. Correspondence
- V. Old or unfinished business
- VI. New business
- VII. Adjournment

Agendas that work: keep your board focused

The following agenda outline is designed to facilitate effective, productive meetings. The suggested time limits, both for individual segments and overall, are based on a recommended two-hour meeting and recognize the inescapable late arrivals and early departures. A strict time-keeper other than the chairperson or director is recommended.

Parliamentary procedure should be utilized as appropriate. The agenda should be mailed in advance with information materials.

Sample Board of Trustees Agenda

- A. Topics for Discussion (one hour or less)
 - List one to three topics with a specific time-limit for each
 - Discussion of each topic should be completed. If consensus is apparent, the topic may be proposed for a vote. If not, the topic should be referred back to the committee for additional research or tabled for further discussion at the next meeting.
- B. Proposals for Action/Approval (30 minutes for less)
 - Minutes of previous meeting
 - Treasurer's report
 - Proposals/motions expected to generate minimal discussion proper to voting. If consensus is not apparent, the motion should be referred back to the appropriate committee and/or placed on the agenda for the next meeting for further discussion.
- C. Information (30 minutes or less)
 - Committee reports (2 minutes per report). This may be progress reports, requests for assistance from another committee or staff, or request for inclusion on the agenda at the next meeting.
 - Administrative report (10 minutes). The director report should be in writing with the verbal report just touching on the highlights. The report might be divided into internal affairs (programs, issues, organization concerns), external events (meetings attended, community concerns) and miscellaneous.
 - Correspondence
 - New business (2 minutes per topic). Other than the occasional crisis, topics mentioned here should be handled with dispatch, usually referring each to the appropriate committee for evaluation, investigation, and research.
- D. Motion for Adjournment

COMMITTEE REPORT FORM

Directions: Each committee should complete a Committee Report Form and return it to the director prior to the board meeting, as it will be included in the agenda packet.

Today's Date: _____

Committee Name: _____

Meeting Date: _____

Issue(s) in Question: _____

This committee is:

- Reporting/updating
- Recommending board action
- Recommending policy changes

Background information and possible impact of issue being studied:

Recommendation for board action, if any (state in the form the motion to be acted upon by the full board):

MEETING RECORD: ACTION PLAN

Date: _____

Meeting Of: _____

SUBJECT	SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION	DECISION MADE/VOTE TAKEN	NEXT STEPS	TO BE DONE BY WHOM/WHEN

This form developed by Energize, Inc., 5450 Wissahickon Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144.

Chapter 4

FINANCES

YOUR GUIDE TO FINANCE & FUNDRAISING

Although your organization's mission is to provide services without generating profit, monitoring its finances is an important part of your board role.

Please note the emphasis on monitoring, not managing. The board member's role is not to scrutinize where every penny is spent--that's your director's job. Rather, the board's responsibility is to keep an eye on the overall picture.

Fitting hand in glove with your monitoring role is your responsibility to ensure that funds are available when they're needed--and this means raising money when it's necessary. In this chapter, you will find clear guidelines as to what you need to know about your organization's money, and also some strategies for getting your fundraising efforts off the ground!

Your financial responsibilities

As board member, you are a legal "trustee" of your organization's assets--that is, you're liable for its fiscal health. That's why monitoring finances is so important.

"Monitoring" is a vague term, but in this case it is made up of four very distinct components. They are...

1. *Setting financial policy.*

This sounds much more complex than it actually is. Put simply, it means that as a board, you allocate money based on the non-profit's long-range plan. If a project is of high priority, then more dollars should be funneled into that direction.

2. *Helping to develop and approve the budget.*

As the end of your fiscal year approaches, the board should communicate to the director what its goals and priorities are for the coming year. Your director will then determine how much money is available, decide generally how it will be spent and make a budget proposal to the board.

When the proposal comes to the board, you should review it carefully, making sure that all planned expenditures are in line with your commission and that nothing has been omitted. If there are no problems, the board will vote to approve the budget. Your director will oversee specific expenses throughout the year.

If the board wishes that changes be made, then you must sit down with your director and, through a give-and-take process, arrive at a budget you both can live with.

3. *Delegating implementation of the financial policies and the budget to your director.*

It's your director's job to spend the money you have budgeted. So once you've approved the budget, step back and let him or her take over.

4. *Monitoring financial outcomes.*

As your director spends the budget, you should pay attention to the outcome--for example, specific expenses that help you meet your goals--rather than focusing solely on when, where and how the money was spent. Board members need to watch the bottom line. You can do this by reviewing financial statements and asking yourself the following questions:

- Are we on target with our planned expenses and revenues?
- Are we financially solvent (money in the bank to pay current expenses)?
- Will we have income to meet future expenses?

Not all financial documents must be reviewed

Obviously, you shouldn't review every receipt your director collects--but you will need to see some financial records to answer the questions listed above. Your director should provide you with each of the following items every month so you can make a quick spot check on your non-profit's financial health:

A basic financial statement

Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to be an accountant to decipher a financial statement. A well-organized statement will present the month's income and expenses in a simple, straightforward way, giving emphasis to the bottom-line number. Remember, item-by-item analysis is not important--the end result is.

Historical figures to be used for comparison

It's important that you be able to put the numbers you're looking at into some sort of context. To do this, you'll want to have the previous month's figures and the figures of the same month from last year, in addition to the current month's total.

As you compare these sets of numbers, concentrate on significant changes. If your bottom-line numbers are suddenly very different from what you had expected, or if you see sharp upturns or declines, it's time to contact your director and ask questions.

Fundraising is your responsibility too

Mention fundraising and most people relieve bad memories of door-to-door sales for a school, club or church group.

If this description fits you, rest assured that you're not alone. Many board members are hesitant, reluctant and downright scared when their directors say, "We need to raise some money."

This is a fear that you need to work hard to overcome. Board members are constantly asking to bring in new money--and for good reason too. Although your funding sources are stable now, they may dry up without notice during the next year or two. It's a frightening thought, but it happens!

The first step is yours

The best way to begin fundraising is to make your own personal donation. That's right--in addition to the time and effort you pour into raising money and making decisions for the non-profit, you're also expected to make a financial contribution. Your donation doesn't necessary have to be large, but it does reinforce your commitment to CASA's cause.

You'll also be expected to take the initiative in developing new ways to bring money into your organization.

The “Big Four” of raising money

There are many ways to go about fundraising as there are non-profit organizations. How your board chooses to raise money will naturally depend on the personality of the board, how much money you'd like to raise, what the funds are for, and your potential donor base. The four basic types of fund raisers include:

1. Annual campaigns.
Revenue earned from an annual campaign is often used to cover expenses over the year. These campaigns usually involve several steps like direct mail, telephone solicitation and personal contacts.
2. Special events.
These fund raisers are often--but not necessarily always--used to generate money for operational expenses. They are the most creative--and often the most fun to sponsor. Events can be elaborate or simple, and raise lots of money or just a little--depending on your level of expertise and the type of donors you've targeted.
3. Planned giving.
Funds obtained through planned giving come via life insurance policies and bequests in wills. They are most often put into an endowment or trust, and used to fund future growth.
4. Capital campaigns.
These campaigns are held intermittently to raise extra funds for special purchases. Since these expenses are generally separated from your normal operating expenses, your campaign should clearly specify what the money will be used for.

Contacts generate revenue and support

You know the adage--it's not what you know, but who you know. It rings more true than ever when applied to fundraising.

One of the reasons you were accepted on your board is your contacts within the community. They are especially important to the fundraising process. Here's an example why...

As your annual campaign gets under way, you will call four friends--they may be people you know at work or who belong to civic clubs or the Chamber of Commerce--and talk about how they can lend a helping hand.

Your friend in the civic club may agree to make a contribution--then put the word out among fellow members. Or better yet, he or she may encourage the club to organize a mini-campaign on your organization's behalf. The benefit of using your contacts is clear. In this case, you've put CASA's name and mission in front of quite a few people--and with only one phone call!

Finding contacts and prospects

Stable, long-term contacts are hard to come by--people change jobs, move to new places and pass away. As a board member, you're expected to maintain and contribute to CASA's donor prospect list.

Members of a Utah board have made adding names to their donor prospect list a monthly ritual--it's even on the board meeting agenda! Before members can leave the board meeting, they must place at least three names on the worksheet, according to how much the board member believes a particular prospect can contribute. In fact, the board has collected \$80,000 in new gifts because of this practice.

Evaluation means continued success

Although you'll breathe a sigh of relief when your fund raiser is over, the work isn't done. You still need to assess what worked, what didn't and what could have been better planned.

A Pennsylvania board put a twist on the evaluation process by asking the fund raiser's participants for feedback. The group even designed a questionnaire for this purpose.

A few words about popping that question

No discussion of fundraising would be complete without mentioning direct solicitation or, as it is also known, the fine art of asking someone for money.

Virtually every kind of fund-raiser requires some direct solicitation of donors. The following tips are from a Michigan administrator, who reviews them annually with her board.

Decide what you want the outcome of your meeting with the donor prospect to be

Before you go anywhere or talk with anyone, you need to sit down and decide what you hope to come away with--you know, a specific dollar amount. If you look at your prospect's professional position and his or her donations to other organizations, you should arrive at a reasonable request. Make sure that you prepare some options for that prospect too, like offering a monthly payment plan, or making a partial monetary contribution/partial in-kind donation.

Set the tone of the meeting by beginning with a compliment

You might begin by saying, "I know you give generously to many important causes." This approach makes the donor prospect feel good because you're acknowledging his or her generosity.

Try to relate what you like about your nonprofit

"You can talk more effectively about something that grabs your attention. And chances are that your enthusiasm will excite the donor's interest," the administrator says.

Know when to be quiet

"After you've told the donor prospect how much you hope he or she gives, it's time to shut up. Just look at the person in the eye and smile," she says. "The donor won't take very long to react."

Before the call, mentally work through the worst case scenario

Board members can easily become obsessed by the possibility that a prospect may turn them down. You can expect this -- it's part of the job. But you should also know how to turn rejection around.

“If people say they’re not interest in giving you money, let them know that you respect their decision,” the administrator says. “But also be sure to tell them that you’d still like to explain your non-profit’s services”.

“Your visit then becomes an opportunity to talk about your non-profit’s mission--and that’s OK. You’ve just laid the ground work for future solicitations.”

Action: Before your next solicitation call, take some time to write down possible donor rejections. Then, beneath each rejection, write your response. You’ll feel much more confident knowing what to say if the prospect turns you down.

Lobby--a frequently overlooked funding tool

I know there are some board members out there who sit back and complain about what their state and local governments don’t do for their organizations. Stop criticizing their actions and take a proactive approach--by learning how to be an effective lobbyist.

Lobbying can take several forms, the most common being a personal visit over lunch or a phone conversation to discuss CASA’s position. It may also mean writing letters to the editor for or against a piece of legislation, or organizing others to support CASA’s mission.

No matter what approach you take, lobbying keeps you current on what’s happening and keeps CASA in the minds of lawmakers. When you approach a legislator, keep the following terms in mind:

- Show that your goals match the goals of those you’re lobbying (i.e., saving money).
- Develop the attitude that you’re a valuable aid to decision-makers who need expert input.
- Identify those decision-makers who hold the greatest influence and concentrate your efforts there; one-on-one lobbying is most effective.
- Make lobbying a year-round effort, not just in time of crisis.

Never underestimate the value of public relations

Successful public relations is invaluable to your fundraising efforts. After all, people won’t be willing to give to a cause they dislike.

When asked about CASA’s services, be enthusiastic and positive. If a civic club would like you to speak on your board service, by all means do so. Do whatever you can to raise your organization’s profile in the community--it’s part of your job.

You need to get your name out there in front of the public so it has a good understanding of what your nonprofit does, what it needs and how it can help. Once the public knows this--and a positive image has been built--fundraising becomes much easier. Here are some easy ways that other boards let the community know what they’re all about...

- **Cable television ads.** “Franchise offices usually reserve free public service spots for community organizations during program schedules,” says Board Member David Fleming (Wichita, KS).
- **Support materials.** Board Member Elizabeth Magee carries a purse full of fliers, brochures and newsletters to pass out to anyone who shows interest in her organization--whether it be at work, the mail or her hairdresser’s salon. “It’s an opportunity to speak to somebody who speaks to somebody

else who speaks to somebody else,” says Magee (Springfield, IL). “After all, you never know when a person who’s heard about you is going to win the lottery and might remember you with a gift.”

- **Public speaking.** Often, civic groups will ask board members to speak at their meetings. Seize the opportunity to discuss your organization’s goals and accomplishments. A Canadian board even holds an annual meeting to polish members’ public-speaking skills. Board members conduct mock interviews and then critique one another’s performances.
- **News releases.** Make sure the news releases you send to the local newspaper contain the information its editors need--who, what, when, where, how and why the happening is of significant. Call to find out exactly whom you should address the release to as well.
- **Data distribution where you work.** “Most companies or organizations are willing to help out their civic-minded employees,” says an Oregon Board Member. “For example, many of our board members work in schools, and administrators often see that materials are sent home with the kids and on to the parents”.

1. Make a personal contribution
2. Ask others to give
3. Serve on the development committee
4. Provide information about contacts who are possible givers
5. Solicit for in-kind contributions
6. Serve on the committee for a fundraising event
7. Sell tickets to an event or function
8. Develop fund-raiser strategies
9. Accompany others to help sell the organization
10. Cultivate potential funders

from "Organizational Development for Children's Advocacy Centers" manual, The Western Regional Children's Advocacy Center and the Community Resource Center. Additional copies available from the National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, 115 Manning Drive, Building D, Suite 202, Huntsville, AL 35801-4341.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF FUNDERS

Foundations

Advantages

- Larger sums of money
- Not much paperwork
- Will fund special projects and general support

Disadvantages

- Takes a long time
- Good for only three years
- Over-dependence on large grants

Corporations

Advantages

- Self-interest
- Receive money over long periods of time
- Good to leverage other private money
- Brings credibility to your organization

Disadvantages

- Can be “nickel and dimed to death”
- Small amounts
- Long wait
- Not always responsive to new or controversial organizations

Churches

Advantages

- Long-term sources of income (local and judicatory)
- Involvement of membership
- Donated services
- High leverage - good potential with other church money (national)

Disadvantages

- Takes a long time to receive money
- A lot of paperwork

Government

Advantages

- Funds new initiatives
- Larger sums of money

Disadvantages

- Difficult to learn of grants
- Sometimes cumbersome application and accountability processes
- Subject to political trends and changes

Individual/ Patron

Advantages

- Reliable over the long-run
- Introduction to friends; build network
- Short timetable

Disadvantages

- Takes staff and volunteer time
- If not planned well, does not bring in much money

Special Events/Grassroots

Advantages

- Involves membership
- Short-term money
- Recruits new people
- Demonstrates involvement when approaching corporations, foundations, and churches

Disadvantages

- Takes staff and volunteer time
- If not planned well, does not bring in much money

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WHERE IS THE FUNDING PIE?

FUNDING SOURCES	ADVANTAGES	DIS-ADVANTAGES	AMOUNT	LEAD TIME
<u>FOUNDATIONS</u>				
Local			\$2,000-up	6-18 months
National			\$5,000-up	12-18 months
Other				
<u>CORPORATIONS</u>				
Neighborhood Businesses			\$100-1,000	short term 1-3 months
Financial Institutions			\$1,000-up	up to 6 mos.
Large Corps. (local)			\$1,000-up	up to 6 mos.
Branch Corps.			\$2,500-up	6-12 months
Other				
<u>CHURCHES</u>				
Local Congregations			\$500-2,000	12-18 months
Judicatory			\$2,000-7,500	12-18 months
National			\$5,000-up	6-12 months
<u>INDIVIDUAL/ PATRON/DIRECT MAIL</u>			\$25-up	short term 1-3 months
<u>SPECIAL EVENTS</u>			\$100-up	3-6 months
<u>CANVASSING</u>				3-18 months
<u>UNIONS</u>				3-6 months
<u>UNITED WAY</u>				12-18 months
<u>SERVICE CLUBS/ PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS</u>				6-12 months
<u>BUSINESS VENTURES</u>				6-18 months
<u>OTHER</u>				

from "Organizational Development for Children's Advocacy Centers" manual, The Western Regional Children's Advocacy Center and the Community Resource Center. Additional copies available from the National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, 115 Manning Drive, Building D, Suite 202, Huntsville, AL 35801-4341.

FUNDRAISING DIFFICULTIES: COMMON ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

- Lack of clarity regarding organizational mission and goals
- Failure to consider funding trends and adopt a long-range development perspective
- Expectation that “start-up” funding will automatically continue
- Failure to solicit support of founding agencies and individuals through donations of funds or contributions of assistance
- Lack of involvement in fundraising efforts by the board of directors = over-reliance on staff
- Failure to look at costs vs. benefits of various funding strategies
- Little diversity within the funding base with over-reliance on a limited number of funding sources
- Failure to gain support of the community through media awareness and educational activities

REMEMBER: FUNDRAISING = FRIEND RAISING

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ASKING FOR MONEY

Things to Remember - Things to Do

- Before -

Research - Know your prospect, how much they can give, and some personal background.

Be Prepared - Make a list of any questions you may be asked and know the answers.

Practice - Role play with the other board members.

- During -

Smile - Be pleasant and use eye contact and positive body language.

Be Interesting - Use visuals, humor, and anecdotes.

Be Clear and Concise - Describe the organization's accomplishments and needs. Don't use jargon unless you are sure they will understand.

Listen - Let the prospect express opinions. Ask questions.

Ask - Be direct about asking for a specific amount of money or in-kind contribution. Stop talking and smile. Wait for an answer.

- After -

Acknowledge - Send a thank you.

Evaluate - Discuss the visit with the other board members.

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SPECIAL EVENTS

Why Have a Special Event?

1. Visibility in the community
2. "Fast" money
3. Membership participation
4. Fun
5. Generates new members
6. Not as much dependency on outside sources
7. Foundations and corporations will always ask how much your organization has raised from the community

How to Choose an Event

1. Number of volunteers needed
2. Amount of upfront expenses
3. Ratio of work to revenues
4. Do revenues meet goals - what are the \$ highs and lows?
5. Participation by board members, members of the organization
6. Time commitments, time frames
7. Is it "sellable" - will people pay money even if they don't support your cause?

Steps to a Special Event

1. Draw up a budget
2. Draw up a timetable - set deadlines for each task (2 weeks shorter than absolute)
3. Organize volunteers
4. Contact people, places - always ask for donations, then a price break
5. Promotion: set up media file (most important); it will make or break your event
6. Hold event
7. Follow-up: thank yous, pay bills, evaluation

Prepared by C. Wakefield Heit for the Community Resource Center, Inc. for the "Organizational Development for Children's Advocacy Centers" manual, The Western Regional Children's Advocacy Center and the Community Resource Center. Additional copies available from the National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, 115 Manning Drive, Building D, Suite 202, Huntsville, AL 35801-4341.

Chapter 5

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

MAKING YOUR BOARD THE BEST IT CAN BE

Individual boards can be either good or bad. However, with a little work, bad boards can become good--and good boards can get even better.

This chapter is about board development--those things you need to do to improve yourself and your board as a whole.

Development begins with recruiting

All board members are responsible for tapping new talent for the board. After all, who is better qualified to scout prospects than you? You know what the job requires, and you'll be able to tell if someone has what it takes to be successful.

Always remember, though, that CASA's future rests in the hands of the board members you choose today. If you make good choices, you'll reap the benefits. If not, you're putting the nonprofit at risk. So take your time, and don't settle for less than the best!

Assess your board's needs

To make your board as strong as possible, you'll want to take prospects who can fill any "talent gaps" you currently have. So before you begin pounding the pavement, you need to determine just who will be an asset to your board. Sit down with your board peers and evaluate the talents each of you offers. Then identify the skills your board lacks.

"It pays to base board recruitment on the talents needed to address our mission and plans," says an Ohio board member. "Once we can imagine a candidate who fills the bill, it's much easier to match names with the slot."

How does your board measure up?

Here's a simple exercise to help you conduct a board member talent assessment. Just answer the following:

- What is the purpose of this organization?
- What specific actions do we need to take to accomplish this mission?
- What skills does our board not have, but needs to carry out these actions?
- Whom do we know who has the skills we need and will commit to our board?

RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

The nominating committee has been elected by the membership or appointed by the board. In either case all members will have been selected because of their wide or varied background in community involvement, sound judgment, availability to meet, and their willingness to accept this all important task. (Nominating committees should operate on a year around basis). Committee members with a like interest tend to know the same people thus leaving one person with no resources. The representative composition of this committee is of the utmost importance.

In order for the nominating committee to fulfill its responsibility to the board of submitting names for board membership, they must establish certain procedures with their own committee.

1. Establish an ongoing file of prospective board members.
2. In your search for effective board members utilize all communities resources, present board members' suggestions, resource file from the membership committee, the executive director, members of other boards who are retiring, and volunteers working with the organization.
3. Keep continually informed regarding what skills and strengths are needed, what jobs need to be done and the qualifications needed in terms of the job.
4. Establish an evaluation system for each prospective member to determine if he/she will be a "valid inclusion". Will the prospect contribute to the goals of CASA and the short and long range plans? Does he/she have the time? Is he/she unencumbered by overlapping or conflicting business or voluntary affiliations?
5. Establish an awareness of the danger of tokenism on the basis of age, color, sex or ethnic group. Avoid "Letterhead" members. All board members must be valid inclusions.
6. Advise the president of special capabilities and experiences of nominees so that they may be utilized to their fullest extent.

Essential board members qualifications

- ◆ Interest in the field of the organization.
- ◆ Tact and ability to work with other people.
- ◆ Time and willingness to be of service on the board (often a valuable person has far too many obligations to assume further responsibilities.
- ◆ Ability and interest to do a particular job. It is desirable that every member offer some skill to be used in a standing committee or that he/she, through his personality and experience, can make a definite contribution to the board.
- ◆ Community point of view as well as organizational point of view.

The top 10 ways to find--and get--quality recruits

- 1. The self-replacement method.** “On my board, I’m responsible for naming a replacement when my term ends,” says a Wisconsin board member. “I’ve worked hard in this job, and I want my successor to do the same--so I’ll take extra time to make sure my recommendation measures up.”
- 2. Call on past board presidents.** A Canadian board member says his board’s nominating committee consists of 10 past presidents who are still active in the organization. “They actively look for people who want to serve and will add balance to our board,” he says.
- 3. Invite potential recruits to be “board members for a day.”** “We bring prospects into a board meeting and also circulate the candidates among staff department heads for a day,” says a Southeastern board member. “It’s a good way for them to learn about this organization and decide if we’re right for them--and vice versa.”
- 4. Making qualitative rankings.** “We start with 40 names provided by our nominating committee,” says California board member. “Then nominating committee chair calls the eight candidates who receive the most support and asks them if they’d serve. It’s very effective because there’s always a fallback position if our first choice declines.”
- 5. Share materials.** Board Member Jan Harner (Lovington, IL) says her board gives all potential candidates a clear picture of what it means to be a board member. “We send the board packet, minutes and materials to anyone who express an interest in our board,” says Harner. “These materials show the time commitment involved and deter anyone from joining the board for all the wrong reasons.”
- 6. Return to former board members.** “We just brought two former board members back from a second ‘tour’ at our organization,” a Nebraska board member reveals. “The advantages in having them return are that they get up-to-speed in a very short time and offer a historical perspective that other recruits may not possess.”
- 7. Match recruits’ skills with the skills of the outgoing members.** “We know who’s rotating off the board, then look for individuals with similar talents. It helps us keep a balanced board,” says Board Member Paul Freeman (Minneapolis, MN).
- 8. Develop a list of standard questions for current board members to use when interviewing potential candidates.** Board Member John Wolf (Valparaiso, IN) says the questions help uncover the prospect’s ability to serve and willingness to make the commitment. “We weed out those who just want to add our nonprofit to their résumé, and invite to the board only those with the skills we need and the ability to be a team player.”
- 9. Approach major corporations in your community.** “Our nominating committee keeps in touch with local corporations and lets them know that we’d be interested in putting one of their employees to work. Often, they’ll send an individual our way,” says Board Member Wanda Stanley (Walnut Creek, CA).
- 10. Ask potential board members to serve on an advisory council.** “We use our advisory council as a training ground,” says Board Member Roy Lindsey (Fort Worth, TX). “The council meets separately from the board, but conducts meetings just like the governing board. Twice a year it meets with the full board. Those who serve on the advisory council come to understand the time commitment involved and have a good feel for the organization.”

Professional recruitment speaks volumes

If you owned a business and needed a secretary, would you hire the first person to respond to your ad? No way! You'd request résumés and ask candidates to fill out employment applications.

That's exactly what you should do for board candidates. Asking prospective members to make a formal application sends a clear signal that yours is a professional organization--and that you're serious about finding quality board members.

Bring newcomers up-to-speed quickly

When an individual joins your board, it's imperative that he or she receives thorough orientation. This kind of introduction makes newcomers immediately feel that they're part of the "board team"-- which means they'll be more comfortable offering input!

Ideally, new board members should meet with your director and at least one board veteran. The meeting should cover some combination of the following topics: the organization, meetings, committees, the board member role, policies and bylaws, annual reports, plans, and the names and phone numbers of fellow board members.

Read how two non-profit organize board members orientation...

- New board members at a Minnesota nonprofit receive two orientation meetings. The first with the director and the full board, who give a general explanation of board responsibilities. Then, after the newcomer has three or four meetings under his or her belt, the director meets with him or her one-to-one. At this meeting, the board member discusses his or her special concerns, questions or interests.
- In Central Point, Oregon, new board members spend part of a day--or all day--at the nonprofit, getting a firsthand look at which it does for the community. "Our director conducts an orientation that includes staff presentations on the programs we provide," says Board Chairperson William Mansfield. "New board members go to one of our buildings and discover, firsthand, what our nonprofit is all about. The half-day 'hands-on' visit provides an understanding of the programs and people they'll be helping as board members."

Continuing your board education

Whether you're a new or veteran board member, there's always something more to learn about serving on your board. Listen to Board President Pat Loyd (Hiawatha, KS)...

"Board members cannot just attend meetings and then hang it up until next month," she says. "You expect professional growth in staff and, as a board member, you also have to make a personal commitment to improvement."

In order to be effective, you must constantly educate yourself about the issues that face your nonprofit. Here are four quick ways to do just that...

1. **Workshops.** Many nonprofit boards actively seek out conferences or seminars to which they can send two or three of their members. Carefully evaluate training sessions to make sure they are worth attending.

2. **Put board training on the meeting agenda.** A Carbondale, Illinois, board set aside 15 minutes of each meeting to discuss issues that members want to know more about. Here's how they do it...

During a regular meeting, board members came up with a list of 40 possible training sessions, including board liability, chain of command and management philosophy. Individually, they then ranked the 40 topics--with the overall top 12 becoming the monthly sessions.

3. **Peer presentations.** Board Member Wendall Mohr (Rockville, MD) says he and his board peers take turns conducting brief presentations on board member roles and responsibilities.

"For instance, I'm the treasurer, so I gave a presentation on the financial responsibilities board members have. We're a better board as a whole because we know from a peer standpoint what our responsibilities mean--not just what they are."

4. **Expert education sessions.** Board Member Rich Pierele (Geneva, NY) says his board brings in professionals from various fields four to six times a year. For example, if the nonprofit needs to lobby on an issue, board members might approach a professional lobbyist to explain the ins and outs of working with legislators.

"Retreating" to build your board team

There's another option you can use to educate your board--and at the same time become a strong, cohesive team. A retreat!

Unlike regular board meetings, which are businesslike affairs that follow a rigid agenda formed, retreats are informal gatherings designed to produce a free flow of ideas. Board Member Jack Gorden (Lufkin, TX) offers these tips for your next getaway...

1. **Leave town.** "Our retreats are only a few miles from our organization, but even this makes a big difference," says Gorden. "The lodge-type setting we use is very informal and relaxing. This atmosphere is a nice break from the board room and helps us open up."

2. **Dress casually.** "The more informal dress is, the more conducive the retreat will be to any easy exchange of information--no formalities needed," says Gorden.

3. **Sit in a circle.** “I’ve found that sitting around a table, where everyone can see one another, is best for the free flow of discussions,” says Gorden. “This format encourages speaking in the same way sitting around the dinner table does at home. The circle also heightens everyone’s awareness that he or she is part of a team.”

Editor’s Note: When you plan your next retreat, don’t forget your administrator!

Squelch board conflict before it happens

Knowing how your board peers deal with conflict can go a long way in preventing a full-scale eruption.

We all have our individual styles. You may be the type of board member who prefers to hold in your feelings until after the meeting--and then talk one-on-one with your adversary. Or, you may like to blurt out what you’re thinking right away.

If you know how the people sitting next to you will react, you’ll be less likely to think, “Joe is overreacting,” or mistake Jane’s silence for tacit approval. In turn, misperceptions, miscommunication, and the conflict that comes with it, is avoided.

Don’t let conflict impede decision-making

No matter how tightly knit your board team is, or how smoothly your meetings progress, conflict is bound to occur.

Not all conflict is bad, however. A healthy exchange of opinion usually means that all sides of an issue are being presented--which in turn allows the board to make a well-informed decision.

Occasionally, you’ll find your board divided into two or more factions, screaming at each other and refusing to budge from their respective positions. When this happens, you need to resolve the conflict quickly, before your entire meeting is consumed by a single argument. Use one of these strategies...

1. **Remove discussion from the regular board meeting.** “Set aside at least one hour for a special meeting to focus exclusively on the inflammatory issue,” says Board Member Sherry Mattson (Castro Valley, CA). “If you try to make a different decision at a regular meeting the rest of the agenda gets ignored and the meeting often ends in disarray.”
2. **Table the issue.** “If we’ve laid out the pros and cons, and members are still at loggerheads, we table the issue until the next meeting,” says Board Member Karen Nixon (Afton, WY). “Board members go home, where they have time to cool off, rethink their opinions--and gather materials to support their positions. This way, no board members have to be angry because they didn’t get their way. After all, they’ve had plenty of time to substantiate their side of the issue.”
3. **Put the answers in writing.** To minimize the effects of personal grudges in their board room, warring members of a New York board anonymously write down five solutions to the conflicting dividing their board, then submit the ideas to their administrator. As a group, the board prioritizes the possible solutions and agrees to use the top-rated one.
4. **Refer the issue back to committee for further study.** If part of your board blows its stack over unanswered questions or projections, send the proposal back to its committee. When all questions are answered and the board can make a decision without speculation, a vote can be held.

What to do when your side loses

Even if you're part of a minority on a particular vote, you're obligated to support the full board's decision. You may not know it, but your board must present a unified front if it plans to be effective.

Do your best not to take the loss personally--remember that the board voted down your position, not you as a person. The best thing you can do is shrug it off and move on to the next problem. Holding on to a dead issue will only lead to frustration and resentment--a "team-bursting" attitude that alienates your peers and hurts the board.

How long should I serve on my board?

An important--but often overlooked--part of your personal development as a board member is deciding how long to continue serving. It's a difficult decision many board members struggle with.

It's important to take stock of your feelings and gauge whether you've lost interest in serving on a board. Consider your value to the board and monitor the movement of the board. If the organization is going in a direction you don't support, consider discontinuing your service.

ASSESSING BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Organizations operate within geographic limits and it is very important that the characteristics of the community be known to those setting organization policy. The following checklist allows you to compare characteristics of the overall community with the profile of the board of directors of your organization

STATISTICS	OUR COMMUNITY	OUR BOARD
1. Sex		
Male	_____	_____
Female	_____	_____
2. Economic Level		
Under \$10,000	_____	_____
\$10-19,999	_____	_____
\$20-29,999	_____	_____
\$30,000 plus	_____	_____
3. Population Statistics		
Ages 1-11	_____	_____
Ages 12-18	_____	_____
Ages 19-54	_____	_____
Ages 55+	_____	_____
4. Ethnic Background		
Hispanic	_____	_____
Black	_____	_____
Asian	_____	_____
American Indian	_____	_____
Caucasian	_____	_____
5. Households - % of		
Single	_____	_____
Couples	_____	_____
Families with children	_____	_____
Single parents	_____	_____

ORIENTING YOUR PROSPECTIVE/NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Things board members should know about your organization

- The client benefits of CASA
- The goal/mission (purpose) of CASA
- How and why you are unique
- How you rate to other organizations in the community
- The role of volunteers in CASA
- Your organizational structure
- Your funding base
- The basic budget of the program
- The history of CASA
- Who is on your Board of Directors
- Who is the Executive Director
- Who are your key staff
- What a typical client is like
- Basic staff relations policies (whom to call if sick, dress code, etc.)
- Confidentiality procedures

from the Public Management Institute

APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE BOARD

Directions: Please complete all of the following questions to be considered for board service at CASA.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____

Occupation: _____

Please check the education or skills you could contribute to our board:

accounting	management	public relations
investment	marketing	knowledge of services
fundraising	education	public speaking
community relations	planning	lobbying
other (please specify) _____		

On what other boards have you served?

What charitable or community activities have you been part of?

Could you regularly attend board meetings

How many hours per month, in addition to meetings, could you serve on this organization? _____

Would you attend a training session for new board members? Yes No

Will you make a financial commitment to support this nonprofit? Yes No

What is your interest in this organization?

Please write a brief statement of your understanding of this organization's mission.

SIGNATURE

DATE

PLEASE PROVIDE REFERENCES ON A SEPARATE SHEET

BOARD CHAIRPERSON QUALITIES CHECKLIST

Directions: Read the following qualities of a good board chairperson before nominating candidates for the position. It will help ensure that the individuals best suited for the job are selected.

Manager: Capable of conducting effective board meetings (understand parliamentary procedure); can work with others, especially in areas of orientation and board development.

Organizer: Can coordinate materials, and draft and organize agendas with the director for productive board meetings that start and end on time, move along and accomplish goals.

Communicator: Can facilitate communication between board and director; is a clear and fluent speaker.

Decision-maker: Will help board members in the decision making process by presenting information and discussing issues thoroughly; understands decision-making powers as board chairperson.

Motivator: Will get all board members to speak up on important issues, and encourage participation in and outside the board room.

Listener: Will listen to the director and board member comments and suggestions, and will analyze, coordinate and develop advice and recommendations.

Planner: Can manage the board's long-range planning process and review progress toward the long-range plan.

Leader: Involvement in community activities and able to represent organization's mission effectively in public.

PLANNING A BOARD RETREAT

by Andrew Swanson

Board retreats offer a unique opportunity for in-depth discussion, rarely possible in regular meetings of the board. Away from the distractions and pressures of competing activities, telephones, and other day-to-day concerns, it is amazing what can be accomplished in such a short time (typically a day and a half to two days over the weekend). The key to a successful retreat is proper planning far in advance of the event.

Birth of Ideas

Unless the idea for a board retreat springs spontaneously from the board at one of its meetings, it should probably first be discussed among a small group of the board's core leaders. For example, the idea might originate in talks between the director and the board president. The board president might then discuss it with several other members of the board, seeking reactions and suggestions.

After this informal group is persuaded that a retreat would serve a useful purpose, you can present the idea to the full board for its approval. As you will be asking board members to commit to giving up most of a weekend, your case for the retreat must be carefully prepared and presented. Once the board has formally approved the idea, then the president should appoint an ad hoc committee to plan and oversee preparations for the retreat.

Your Objectives

Your very first concern, even before you present your idea to the board, is to set worthwhile objectives for your retreat. Board members must see real value in a retreat which will demand such a commitment of time and energy.

What, then, are our objectives in holding a board retreat? There are a number of possibilities. For example:

- Board development, typically focusing on the board's role and responsibilities, board-staff relations and division of duties, and leadership development
- Board self-assessment
- Review of mission--past, present, and future
- Program evaluation
- Long-range and short-range planning
- Policy review
- Structural review
- Resource development planning
- Orientation for new board members

It is no accident that board development heads this list of possible retreat objectives, because a board must first "have its act together" before pursuing any of the other objectives. It is senseless to set a retreat objective such as long-range planning for a board which needs fundamental training in such matters as board-staff relations and the role of the board.

Be sure that your objectives are not only appropriate but attainable as well. It would be unrealistic, for example, to think that a board could fully develop a long-range plan during a single weekend retreat.

The Leadership

Next, you will need to decide whether to conduct the retreat with your own in-house leadership or to bring in an outside expert or facilitator. Experienced retreat planners agree that an outside facilitator is preferred, provided that this person takes the trouble to become well acquainted with your organization, with emphasis on the retreat objectives. Coming from outside the organization, this person has no ax to grind and therefore is better able to bring up important issues which insiders might feel uncomfortable raising.

This expert's role will depend on the retreat objectives. In the case of board development, for example, the outside leader should be an experienced trainer, thoroughly grounded in all aspects of governing boards of directors. In a retreat dealing with planning, the outside person should be both trainer and facilitator. If the retreat objective is organizational policies, then the leader's role might be purely that of discussion facilitator.

The Participants

The next question is who the participants should be. Again, the answer will depend on the objectives of the retreat. For instance, if the purpose is to develop a more effective board of directors, participants will include all of the board, any non-board committee chairs of importance, and any senior staff who relate to the board in some way. Or, if the objective is to begin the long-range planning process, then the participants may also include outside experts to assist in developing ideas and other staff who will play a role in implementing such a plan.

The Location

Once the number of participants is determined, you can turn your attention to choosing a location. Economics will usually have something to say about where you hold your retreat. If possible, the organization should pay all expenses.

Also, if possible, the locale should be a reasonable distance away; a hotel or resort one to two hours from your office is ideal. Participants should stay overnight so that momentum can develop without interruption. Ideally, the accommodations should be at least good, the food "excellent", and the surroundings pleasant. Such factors will help you "sell" participation in the retreat to your board members. Check with other organizations that have used the facility recently to be sure that it lives up to its reputation and its advertising.

Also ask your facilitator or presenters for their recommendations. For example: will you simply need a large room in which to meet and a second room in which to eat? Or will you also need several smaller rooms for workshops or group discussions? What equipment will be required?

Before committing to a facility, check the details personally. Is the temperature in the meeting rooms comfortable? Does the room ventilation system operate quietly? Can the rooms be arranged so as to encourage lively discussion?

One person from your organization should be in charge of all dealings with the facility, both before and during the retreat. This person may be the chair of the retreat planning committee or a staff member assigned by the director. Without such a liaison person, you are likely to encounter mixed signals and unnecessary expense.

The Invitation

Three to four weeks before the retreat, mail prospective participants an invitation, an agenda for the retreat, and a reservation card. Also include any background materials which participants ought to study before coming to the retreat.

Follow-up telephone calls should be made to all invitees who have not responded a week to ten days prior to the retreat date (or sooner if the facility requires a guarantee number by an earlier date). These follow-up calls are best made by members of the retreat committee. And at the board meetings immediately prior to the retreat, the board president or chairperson should exhort board members to attend (and to do the necessary "homework" beforehand).

The Agenda

The details of your agenda will, of course, vary considerably depending on the retreat objectives. Indeed, in some instances, an overly detailed agenda might impose too much structure and thus inhibit the give and take essential to your objectives. Some agenda topics, however, can be useful whatever your objectives. For example:

It can be helpful to begin any retreat with a review of board responsibilities, not only those universal to all boards but those specific to your organization as well. Success, it is said, begins with fundamentals; no matter how experienced a board, a review of fundamentals is appropriate from time to time. A brief review of the mission of your organization may also be fruitful (bearing in mind that the purpose statement should define the reasons you have organized and establish the boundaries within which you will operate).

Another useful exercise is to have the facilitator, early in the agenda, ask each participant to name a retreat outcome which would benefit the organization and those it serves. These hoped-for outcomes can be written down and then, during the wrap-up session, reviewed against the actual results of the retreat.

An unstated, but nonetheless real, objective of any retreat is the group development that can take place. Too many boards are made-up of people who aren't very well acquainted; yet boards with a certain camaraderie are usually more effective. In planning the agenda, then, it is wise to provide opportunities for your board members to get to know one another better. Such opportunities exist, of course, in the small group activities planned during your formal agenda. But don't pack your schedule so tightly that no time is available for socializing. The evening social hour can be time well spent in developing a more effective board.

Be sure to schedule mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks with refreshments, and also have refreshments (including some hard candy) on hand all day. Another nice touch is to have a board member host or hostess assigned to greet participants as they arrive and to help them in any appropriate way.

What if they Don't Come?

What if you give a retreat and only a handful of people show up? Or, if you have asked for reservations, what if only a small percentage of board members sign up?

If a least a quarter to a third of your board is in attendance, you should proceed with the retreat. But you need to take a close look at why so many board members are uncommitted. Such a poor response suggests that your board has serious questions of leadership to address. Thus, the agenda of the

retreat ought to be modified to devote time to examining your future leadership needs and to developing a plan to meet those needs.

Ready for Action

Your retreat should not supplant a regular meeting of the board. Neither should it be considered a formal board meeting at which business may be conducted. Thus, any conclusions arrived at during the retreat should be presented to the full board, at a subsequent regular or special meeting, as recommendations for action. These recommendations should be summarized during the final wrap-up session of the retreat. At this time, specific assignments should be made as to which person or what committee will be responsible for carrying out these recommendations to the board. In short, before leaving, retreat participants should begin the process of translating the fruits of their labors into specific actions to benefit the organization and those it serves. For this, of course, is the ultimate reason for holding your retreat.

Swanson, A. (1989). Planning a board retreat. Nonprofit World, 70(1), 19-20.

THE WORKING BOARD: RETREAT SITE SELECTION

In selecting a site for a retreat, a number of factors should be considered. Below is a checklist for assessing the appropriateness of a site for your organization's special meeting.

1. Accommodations (per person per night)

1 person \$ _____

2 people \$ _____

3+ people \$ _____

2. Food

Meals (per person per day X the number of days)

Snacks/breaks during the retreat

Snack packs at the end of the retreat

3. Meeting Space

Large room for all participants to meet together (tables, chairs, adequate lighting),
decent acoustics, audio/visual outlets & equipment

Break-out rooms for small group discussions (tables, chairs)

Recreation rooms for breaks and after hours (Comfortable chairs, couches)

Sufficient restrooms

4. Physical Accessibility

Accessible to disabled persons & senior citizens (ramps, bathrooms, lighted paths)

5. Proximity to City/Entertainment Area

Number of miles/time needed to travel

Type of entertainment available

6. Equipment

TV, VCR, overhead projector, flip charts, paper, tape, recorders

7. Retreat Center Pamphlet

Rules of the site

Directions & phone number

Security of site

How messages are received/delivered during retreat

8. Total Person Cost

Peak v. Off-season

Special discounts

9. Contact Person at Site

Name & title

Phone number

Hours of work

BOARD COMPOSITION ANALYSIS

BOARD MEMBER	# OF YEARS ON BOARD	RACE	VOCATION	RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT					INTERESTS					
				Fund-raise	Ser-vices	Mat-erials	Con-tacts	Self Give	Bud-get	Bd. Dvlp.	Per-sonnel	Long-Range	Pro-gram	Other
1.														
2.														
3.														
4.														
5.														
6.														
7.														
8.														
9.														
10.														
11.														
12.														
13.														
14.														
15.														
16.														
17.														

adapted from: Institute for Voluntary Organizations

**BOARD/STAFF EXPERTISE
NONPROFIT AGENCY LIFE CYCLE**

BOARD EXPERTISE	START UP	STRUCTURING	ESTABLISHED	MATURE	INSTITUTIONAL
Program Passion	High	High	Medium	Medium	High
Operations Involvement	High	Medium	Low	Low	High
Program Competence	High	High	Medium	Low	Medium
Resource Generation	Low	Medium	High	Medium	Low
Policy Making	Low	Medium	High	High	Medium
Strategic Planning	Low	Low	Medium	High	Low
Marketing/PR	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Low
Interpersonal Skills	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium
Business Expertise	Low	Medium	High	High	Medium
Community Influence	Low	Low	Medium	High	Low

from "Organizational Development for Children's Advocacy Centers" manual, the Western Regional Children's Advocacy Center and the Community Resource Center. Additional copies available from the National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, 115 Manning Drive, Building D, Suite 202, Huntsville, AL 35801-4341.

Chapter 6

EVALUATION

A YARDSTICK FOR MEASURING THE BOARD

Suggested Criteria for Boards to Use in Self-Evaluation

Criteria or Measures of:	Yes	No	Need to Work on	???
A. <u>Selection and Composition</u>				
1. The agency has a written statement of qualifications for board members.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. The Nominating Committee works on a year-round basis and solicits staff, board, clientele, and organization suggestions for nominations to the board.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. The agency is always thinking ahead and has a pool or reservoir of potential board members for the future.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. The board is composed of persons vitally interested in the work of CASA.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. The board is widely representative of the community.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. There is a satisfactory combination of experienced and new board members to guarantee both continuity and new thinking.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. CASA has a formal plan for limiting the tenure of board members which specifies rotation so as to assure a steady supply of new board members.	_____	_____	_____	_____

A YARDSTICK FOR MEASURING THE BOARD

Criteria or Measures of:	Yes	No	Need to Work on	???
A. <u>Orientation and Training</u>				
1. CASA has a clearly written statement outlining the duties and responsibilities of the new board member.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. CASA has a written plan which it follows in its program of orientation for its new board members.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. CASA has a board member manual which it supplies to all board members. The manual is revised periodically.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. CASA has a plan for and program of board member training carried on throughout the year.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Board members participate in community, state, regional, and national training opportunities.	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. <u>Organization of the Board</u>				
1. The board has a simple, concise set of bylaws which provide clear duties for the officers of the board and spell out the procedures by which the board transacts its business.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. The board has an elected executive committee to handle matters which may come up between meetings.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. The board has working committees such as program, personnel, legislation, public relations, etc. through which work is channeled.	_____	_____	_____	_____

A YARDSTICK FOR MEASURING THE BOARD

Criteria or Measures of:	Yes	No	Need to Work on	???
4. Committee assignments and responsibilities are in writing and copies are supplied to committee members.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Committee assignments are reviewed and evaluated periodically.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Working relations between the director and the board are clearly defined and understood.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Board and staff members are clear about their specific duties and responsibilities.	_____	_____	_____	_____
D. <u>The Board at Work</u>				
1. There are regularly scheduled board meetings at least ten times per year.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Meetings begin on time and end on time as per agreed-upon schedule.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. There is adequate preparation of material including agendas, study documents, etc., in advance of board meetings.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Board meetings are characterized by free discussion, general participation, and active thinking together.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Board meetings deal primarily with policy formulation, review of plans, making board authorizations, and evaluating the work of CASA.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Routine matters, that is, items requiring official action but little discussion, are handled with dispatch.	_____	_____	_____	_____

A YARDSTICK FOR MEASURING THE BOARD

Criteria or Measures of:	Yes	No	Need to Work on	???
7. Minutes of board and committee meetings are written and circulated to members.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Regular reports of committee work are made to the board.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. The board spends some time on matters of community, state and nationwide concern within the field of service of the agency.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Individual members of the board accept and carry out assignments within the area of their special talents and competencies.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Board and staff members work together on special programs and projects from time to time.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Executive functions and direct services are left to the staff.	_____	_____	_____	_____
E. <u>Evaluation of the Board</u>				
1. Board members give sufficient time to the work of CASA and have a good record of attendance at regularly scheduled board and committee meetings.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. The board conducts an annual review of its own organization and work.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. The board has an agenda of future plans for CASA scheduled in terms of program priorities.	_____	_____	_____	_____

A YARDSTICK FOR MEASURING THE BOARD

Criteria or Measures of:	Yes	No	Need to Work on	???
4. New leadership is emerging constantly from the board and its committees.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. The board participates actively in community-wide social welfare planning programs.	_____	_____	_____	_____

EVALUATING THE BOARD FOR PROGRESS

This is to be used as an internal document, for the board's own information. It can be used by the executive committee as a means to make the board effective and the experience a valuable one.

1. As you see it, what is the purpose of the CASA board?
2. List some important things that you have gained from involvement on the board:
3. List some areas of frustration or possible improvement:
4. What do you obtain from participation on the CASA board now?
5. What factors influence burn-out for you and others?

6. When you first joined the CASA board, what did you think board involvement meant?

7. What would make CASA board meetings more satisfying?

8. How would you improve the current membership composition of the board?

9. How many hours can you give to the CASA board - with contentment?

What would you like to do for the CASA board with your volunteer hours?
(Is this consistent with what you are currently doing for the board?)

10. From the list you made of what you do for the board, prioritize the 5 most important tasks with #1 as the most important and #5 as the least important. Then estimate the volunteer time you feel is needed to accomplish each of the 5 tasks.

How does this compare with what you feel is the board mission (check previous page), and the number of hours you want to give this board?

11. Board Recruitment

- A. What do you feel are the current gaps on the board?

- B. What groups would be most useful in helping the board achieve its goals?

- C. From these groups, list the people you can get (be specific - who knows who?)

12. Fundraising

- A. What fundraising projects do you have planned or are currently working on? Prioritize the fundraising projects in order of importance.

- B. How many hours will your current fundraising agenda take?

- C. What kinds of support do you need to accomplish these activities?

from "Organizational Development for Children's Advocacy Centers" manual, The Western Regional Children's Advocacy Center and the Community Resource Center. Additional copies available from the National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, 115 Manning Drive, Building D, Suite 202, Huntsville, AL 35801-4341.

END-OF-TERM INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: You've reached the end of your term as a board member. Please answer the following questions honestly. Your answers will help you evaluate whether you are committed to further board services.

1. Are you interested in serving a second term? Why or why not?

2. Would you be interested in serving the board in any of the following ways? (*Please check all that apply*)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Chairperson	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vice chairperson
<input type="checkbox"/>	Secretary	<input type="checkbox"/>	Treasurer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nominating Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance Committee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fund Development Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personnel Committee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Relations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Buildings & Grounds
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	Committee

3. As a board member, I consider the following to be my strengths and weakness:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
-----------	------------

-
4. What is your role on this board? Are you comfortable with it?

5. How do you feel your term on the board *improved* CASA's services, program or image in the community?
6. How many board meetings were you unable to attend? Why?
7. Do you feel that you've adequately prepared for each meeting by studying the issues that affect CASA? Why or why not?
8. How often do you *actively participate in*--not just attend--board meetings?
- Always Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never
9. Please list all non-board activities--e.g., legislative hearings or civic functions--you attended as a representative of our non-profit's board.
- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |
10. Has your experience on the board been challenging, interesting and satisfying? In what way?
11. How do you plan to become a better board member if you choose to service a second term?

EVALUATING THE DIRECTOR

One responsibility of the Board of Directors is appraising the work of the organization's director. An evaluation can help to improve the confidence, support, growth, and working relationship between the Board and the director. While this review is sometimes avoided or done poorly, it represents an opportunity to identify challenges in program or performance, reward the director, and strengthen the organization's overall administration.

Because at least once a year the director should expect to receive a coherent view of the Board's opinion of his or her work, the evaluation process will be more effective with advance planning. At a minimum, the appraisal can take the form of a pre-arranged discussion between the director and the Board Chairperson, although the evaluation should have a written component.

The director's performance should be measured in relation to his or her job description, and the evaluation may cover the following activity areas: staff relations; administration; planning; leadership; fiscal management; external public relations; effectiveness in working with the board to fulfill the annual plan; and effectiveness in helping the board achieve its own accountability and level of responsibility. The specifics of the evaluation process should be determined by the Personnel Committee or a task force of the Board, and the director should be informed of the process in advance. An Executive Committee or the Board Chair can report the conclusions of the evaluation to the director. The type of evaluation the organization uses can include any of several elements:

- input from all of the individual Board members
- self-evaluation
- intermittent observation
- a formal rating system
- an open-ended discussion of career goals and paths
- opportunity for the director to respond

One system that seems to work well for many nonprofit organizations is for the Board Chair to circulate a questionnaire to all of the board members asking specific questions about the director's performance during the past year. The questionnaire can use a ranking system (i.e. 1=outstanding, 2=expected, 3=below expectations, 4=not satisfactory) and include space for narrative comments. The chair can then summarize these responses and communicate them to the director, seeking his or her reaction. At that point, the Chair and the director can set performance objectives for the coming year, and then a report can be made to the full board for review. After that, changes in compensation can also be discussed.

from The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, 2700 University Ave., W. #250, St. Paul, MN 55114, (612) 642-1904.
www.mncn.org.evaled.htm.

DIRECTOR EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Directions: This evaluation tool assesses your director's relationship with the board. As you read through each section, check off the items he or she does well. Leave blank any items where improvement is necessary.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BOARD:

- Keeps board informed of CASA's activities, progress and problems
- Is receptive to board member ideas and suggestions
- Makes sound recommendations for board action
- Facilitates the decision-making process for the board
- Accepts board criticism as constructive suggestions for improvement
- Gives constructive criticism in a friendly, firm and positive way
- Follows up on all problems and issues brought to his or her attention

COMMENTS:

MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND ABILITIES:

- Maintains a smooth-running administrative office
- Prepares all necessary reports and keeps accurate records
- Speaks and writes clearly
- Proposes organizational goals and objectives prior to each fiscal year
- Plans well in advance
- Is progressive in attitude and action
- Adequately follows through on set plans

COMMENTS:

SERVICES TO PEOPLE SERVED:

- Understands and stays current with the needs of people served
- Focuses all activities on serving people's needs
- Accepts criticism from the people served and responds appropriately

COMMENTS:

FISCAL MANAGEMENT:

- Prepares a balanced budget
- Completes the year with a balanced budget
- Displays common sense and good judgment in business transactions

COMMENTS:

PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL ATTRIBUTES:

- Projects professional demeanor
- Participates in professional activities

COMMENTS:

COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS:

- Represents CASA in a positive and professional manner
- Actively promotes the organization to the public

COMMENTS:

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP OF STAFF:

- Hires and maintains competent staff members
- Encourages staff development
- Follows personnel policies closely
- Maintains high staff productivity

COMMENTS:

Board Member Signature

Date

CHAPTER 7

LONG RANGE PLANNING

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning should answer questions such as:

- What is the purpose or mission of this organization? Why does it exist?
- What vision does the organization have about what it might become in the future?
- What services does this organization provide? What services should it provide in the future?
- Who benefits from these services? How might this clientele change in the future? How might the organization respond to these changes?
- Given the surrounding environmental conditions and the current capability of CASA, where should it concentrate efforts and resources to carry out its vision of the future?
- What performance measures will be used to track implementation of these priorities?
- What efforts will be made to revise CASA's priorities as conditions change?

Strategic planning will affect all aspects of an organization's life including programs and services; recruitment of volunteers, or supporters; financial and capital plans; employment and development of staff; information systems and communication, public relations, and relations with constituencies.

The process of strategic planning therefore will affect and be affected by all constituent groups or stockholders who have an investment in the organization's success. These include such groups as service recipients, the board, NCASAA, VCASAA, other local CASA programs, funding sources, staff, the media, suppliers, and competitors.

The essential problem for strategic planning is the selection of priorities to implement the mission in the future. Some choices made in this process may have immediate effect; the impact of other decisions will be felt only over a longer period of time. Effective strategic planning depends on accurate, ongoing assessment of external and internal environments. It results in a future image of CASA and a concrete vision of what it will take for the organization to implement its mission successfully. Strategic planning involves deciding on the priorities and steps needed to implement the vision.

The board's role

A non-profit organization's board of directors is ultimately responsible for the welfare and future prosperity of the institution. For this reason, the board should make all final strategic decisions. But the board's role extends well beyond receiving and approving a written version of the plan. Through strategic planning, the board should ensure that the organization works towards the realization of its potential and that the needs of all constituents are considered in the process.

Board members provide a critical link to the outside environment surrounding the institution. They bring information about the outside environment to the attention of the organization, and they promote the

organization's programs and services to the external public. In this process, trustees often serve as catalysts for change, ensuring that the institution is responsive to external forces. The board is responsible for ensuring that the institution has an ongoing strategic planning process that works. Many boards establish a committee for strategic planning consisting of board members, staff, and representatives of key constituent groups or stakeholders. Typically, such a committee reports to the board through the director. The committee should follow a clear process such as the one outlined below and report to the full board regularly.

The board's role in the planning process is to define the desired results for the organization and to hold the institution accountable for achieving these results. One of the most valuable things a board member can do is to ask good questions and probe other board members and the staff to keep everyone focused on the critical issues. This effort involves a continuous effort to link CASA's programs and services to its basic mission.

Valid strategic information is critical to planning. For this reason, board members should see to it that institutional data are kept responsibly and presented to the board and to external constituents in a useful manner. Strategic information should include data about CASA's performance and results, as well as data about the external environment. Information about the attitudes and opinions of various constituent groups is also important.

Throughout the process, the board should build common understanding between board and staff members about the key issues facing the organization and about aspirations and goals. The board should reinforce these common understandings by ensuring that short-term and operational plans reflect the priorities in the strategic plan.

For a strategic planning process to achieve maximum impact in a nonprofit organization, the board and the staff need to work effectively as a team. The board must make sure that its own house is in order first. *A board facing problems of inappropriate composition, poor attendance, apathy, or conflict of philosophies and values need to address these issues through board development before effective strategic planning can take place.* The board must also be prepared to provide adequate information and expenditures to support the planning process.

The board chair and the director

Strategic planning is most effective when it works through the formal structure of the nonprofit organization. The responsibility of the director is to work hand-in-hand with the board to articulate a vision for the future and to work with the staff to ensure that the vision is implemented. The board, especially the board chair, oversees the implementation effort.

The director and the board chair should confer and agree on getting up the planning process and choosing participants from the various constituent groups. In effect, these two people work out the "plan to plan." Once a strategic planning committee is in motion, it should report to the board through the director. Policy decisions, including the setting of strategic priorities, should be recommended to the director and then presented to the full board for approval.

Steps in strategic planning

Strategic planning works best when careful attention is devoted to each step in the process:

1. *Prepare a “plan to plan”*

The first step in launching a new planning process or revitalizing an old one is to make a careful outline of who will be involved in the process, what work products will result from each stage, and how the planning process will be carried out. This effect usually involves establishing and recruiting a planning committee, presenting the committee with a clear charge, and outlining a schedule.

2. *Gather information toward a self-study or organizational analysis*

This step is often called environmental and internal scanning. It involves gathering data for external and internal analysis of the current situation and future possibilities. The important thing is to focus both on the opportunities and threats posed by the external environment and on the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization. The planning committee should review hard data about economic, demographic, and social forces, as well as about the organization’s past performance. It should examine trends in membership, clients served, and services offered. Questionnaires and interviews are useful in obtaining attitudes and opinions about the organization, the morale of the staff, and the satisfaction of members and clients.

3. *Identify the key issues for the future of the organization*

This is the second step in the self-study process. Presenting the data gathered without examining the key issues facing the organization leaves the process incomplete. The planning committee should analyze the data to see what light it sheds on the long-term future of CASA and then make a short but comprehensive list of six or eight key issues.

4. *Choose strategic priorities to guide the organization for the next several years*

Once the self-study phase is completed, it is time to make some decisions about the future by selecting a few strategic directions or priorities. Strategic priorities should affect the organization as a whole and address the relationship between the organization and its key constituents. These priorities should number no more than four or five, and should all support a central thrust or theme for the future. Depending upon the size and complexity of the organization, the ideal future envisioned could be for a time three to five years from now, or it could be a decade or more. Selecting a small number of priorities involves deciding what not to do or become as well as where to focus attention, and this is sometimes the most important part of the exercise. In the long run, the best way to carry out the mission of any nonprofit organization is to concentrate attention and resources in the right areas.

In most cases, choosing priorities is the most difficult step in the strategic planning process. Especially in non-profit organizations, people naturally resist focusing attention on only a few functions or activities, while neglecting others. However, plans that attempt to make everyone happy result in decisions that please no one. No step is more important than the decision to concentrate limited resources and time on the achievement of a few vitally important goals. These priorities can and should change over time. Areas not addressed now can receive more attention at a later time.

5. *Develop initiatives or plans of action for each of the strategic priorities*

The committee should brainstorm ways that CASA can improve its performance in each area. Assignment of authority, responsibility, and accountability is crucial to this step. The committee should communicate progress on the initiatives to the board and to all members. These initiatives become the basis for CASA’s operational, year-to-year plan, which can be completed by the staff.

6. *Select and monitor performance measures to track progress in implementing each of the strategic priorities*

At this step, it is important to keep in mind that the things that can be measured are often only partial indicators of the true value and character of the service provided. Especially in non-profit organizations, services offered (e.g., patient care, education) are often qualitative in nature and are therefore difficult to measure. For this reason, it is good practice to use performance measures with caution and to use multiple measures to track progress on each priority. The inadequacy of some measures should not become an excuse for avoiding performance measures altogether. The measures selected should deal with such issues as financial health, growth of the organization, and the quality of programs and services delivered.

7. Review progress toward accomplishing the organization's strategic priorities and revise the plan, at least once a year

This step should be done at least annually and any time that outstanding problems or opportunities present themselves. The annual review should encompass all aspects of the planning process—environmental scan, key issues, strategic priorities, performance measures, and the way the planning team works as a group to achieve consensus. The board should not be afraid to confront new issues and to make substantial changes in the organization's priorities. Changes in the external and internal environments often require new and different responses from the organization. For smaller non-profit, annual board retreats are an excellent vehicle for this review.

The board should also carefully review the strategic planning times of crisis or new opportunity. Many smaller nonprofit organizations exist in an environment where major changes in funding or service opportunity can occur unexpectedly within a few days. Responses to such crises and opportunities can and sometime should change the strategic priorities and even the mission of the organization. When decision-makers fail to review the strategic plan in deciding how to deal with a crisis or take advantage of an opportunity, participants and constituents lose a sense of continuity and clarity of purpose.

How to get started

To launch a strategic planning process, the board chair and the director should bring together a few board members and other key people in the organization to explore their commitment to the process. In these early discussions, it is important to include people who might champion or block such an effort. In cases where a planning process is already in place, such a small group can render a valuable service by critiquing the process and recommending improvements.

If the core leadership group is convinced of the need for a strategic planning process, the chair can designate a small group to put together a plan to plan. The plan to plan should include the establishment of a planning committee and a description of its role and function. It should also outline the steps in the planning process that the committee should follow. This task can be done by adapting the steps listed above to the need of the particular organization.

Once the plan to plan is approved by the board, the planning committee can begin to and work through the other steps listed above. The process works best when each step is completed sequentially. Effective planning requires discipline and regularity, on the part of both of the board and the staff. The planning committee should meet at least monthly. It is a good idea for the planning committee chair to assign responsibility for different steps to different groups on the committee or to divide up the responsibility for each step along the way.

Consultants can often be helpful in developing an awareness among key board and staff members of the importance of strategic planning. Consultants can bring expertise and discipline to the process. They can also offer an objective point of view about issues that may divide the organization. Consultants frequently facilitate key meetings of the planning committee, and they can contribute expertise in group process, strategic analysis, conflict resolution, board and leadership development,

questionnaire design, and performance measurement. Experience reveals that the sooner consultants are involved in the planning process, the more effective they can be. It is advisable to include a consultant in the initial discussions about how to get started.

Strategic planning involves an attempt to impose a measure of rationality and order to a world that is constantly changing and that sometimes appears chaotic. Because of this, planning is a never-ending effort. Patience and persistence are needed for a planning process to work. The leaders of each organization must simply do the best they can with the resources and time they have available.

The rewards

When properly conducted, strategic planning can be among the most satisfying and rewarding aspects of board membership. The process embraces a wide range of visions, ideas, people, feelings, specific data, hard realities, and grand dreams. The process of strategic planning builds the board's knowledge of CASA and its environment. This knowledge in turn enables the board to make informed decisions on the important policy issues of institutional mission, long-term priorities, and organizational goals and objectives. No other work the board does is as comprehensive, as much fun to carry out, or as important to the future of the organization. The benefits of any effective strategic planning process accrue simultaneously to the board member and to the organization as a whole.

Board membership in nonprofit organizations amounts to a trust bestowed on the bearer by the appointing or electing authority. Board members are entrusted not only with the current care and maintenance of their institutions, but also with the responsibility to design a clear, concrete, and compelling vision for the future.

WHAT SHOULD A STRATEGIC PLAN INCLUDE?

The end is in sight! Now that everyone has had a chance to contribute their ideas, the options have been wrestled with, the choices have been made, and the details worked out, all that remains is to commit the ideas to paper and make it official.

The Draft and Review Process

First of all, who actually writes the plan? Remember that writing is done most efficiently by one or two individuals, not by a whole group - the writer simply crafts the presentation of the group's ideas. Often a director will draft the plan, or the task may be delegated to a staff person, board member, or consultant who has been working with the planning committee. In the end, it really does not matter who writes the strategic plan; what matters is that it accurately documents the decisions made, that it represents a shared vision, and that it has the support of those responsible for carrying it out.

That is why the process of review and approval is the most important consideration in this step - much more so than who does the writing. The planners should decide in advance who may review and respond to the draft plan; obviously committee members will participate in the review process, but should the full board and full staff? The guiding principle of participation in the strategic planning process is that everyone who will help execute the plan should have some input into shaping it; whether or not this includes review of the final drafts of the plan is a judgment call that really depends upon particular circumstances of an organization.

Ideally, the big ideas have been debated and resolved, so that revisions only amount to small matters of adding detail, revising format, or changing some wording in a particular section. Still, if reviewers get bogged down in crossing too many t's and dotting too many i's, the plan could linger in draft form forever. The planning committee must exercise leadership in setting a realistic time frame for the review process and in bringing the process to a timely close: the committee needs to choose the level of review appropriate for the organization, provide copies for review to the selected individuals, and set a deadline for submitting feedback (usually allowing one to two weeks is sufficient). Upon receiving all the feedback, the committee must agree on which suggested revisions to accept, incorporate these into the document, and submit the strategic plan to the board of directors for approval.

Standard Format for a Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is simply a document that summarizes, in about ten pages of written text, why an organization exists, what it is trying to accomplish, and how it will go about doing so. Its "audience" is anyone who wants to know the organization's most important ideas, issues, and priorities: board members, staff, volunteers, clients, funders, peers at other organizations, the press, and the public. It is a document that should offer edification and guidance - so, the more concise and ordered the document, the greater the likelihood that it will be useful, that it will be used, and that it will be helpful in guiding the operations of the organization. Below is an example of a common format for strategic plans, as well as brief descriptions of each component listed, which might help writers as they begin trying to organize their thoughts and their material. This is just an example, however, not the one and only way to go about this task. The point of the document is to allow the best possible explanation of the organization's plan for the future, and the format should serve the message.

Table of Contents

The final document should include a table of contents. These are the sections commonly included in a strategic plan:

I. Introduction by the President of the Board

A cover letter from the president of the organization's board of directors introduces the plan to readers. The letter gives a "stamp of approval" to the plan and demonstrates that the organization has achieved a critical level of internal agreement. (This introduction is often combined with the Executive Summary below).

II. Executive Summary

In one to two pages, this section should summarize the strategic plan: it should reference the mission and vision; highlight the long-range goals (what the organization is seeking to accomplish); and perhaps note the process for developing the plan, as well as thank participants involved in the process. From this summary, readers should understand what is most important about the organization.

III. Mission and Vision Statements

These statements can stand alone without any introductory text, because essentially they introduce and define themselves.

IV. Organization Profile and History

In one or two pages, the reader should learn the story of the organization (key events, triumphs, and changes over time) so that he or she can understand its historical context (just as the planning committee needed to at the beginning of the planning process).

V. Critical Issues and Strategies

Sometimes organizations omit this section, choosing instead to "cut to the chase" and simply present goals and objectives. However, the advantage of including this section is that it makes explicit the strategic thinking behind the plan. Board and staff leaders may refer to this document to check their assumptions, and external readers will better understand the organization's point of view. The section may be presented as a brief outline of ideas or as a narrative that covers several pages.

VI. Program Goals and Objectives

In many ways the program goals and objectives are the heart of the strategic plan. Mission and vision answer the big questions about why the organization exists and how it seeks to benefit society, but the goals and objectives are the plan of action - what the organization intends to "do" over the next few years. As such, this section should serve as a useful guide for operational planning and a reference for evaluation. For clarity of presentation, it makes sense to group the goals and objectives by program unit if the organization has only a few programs; if some programs are organized into larger program groups (e.g., Case Management program in Direct Services Program group), the goals and objectives will be delineated at both the group level and individual program level.

VII. Management Goals and Objectives

In this section the management functions are separated from the program functions to emphasize the distinction between service goals and organizational development goals. This gives the reader a clearer understanding both of the difference and the relationship between the two sets of objectives, and enhances the “guiding” function of the plan.

VIII. Appendices

The reason to include any appendices is to provide needed documentation for interested readers. Perhaps no appendices are truly necessary (many organizations opt for brevity). They should be included only if they will truly enhance readers’ understanding of the plan, not just burden them with more data or complicating factors.

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HOW DO WE INCREASE OUR CHANCES OF IMPLEMENTING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN?

Organizations and their leadership are often reluctant to commit time and resources to a planning process because of the fear of the plan “ending up on the shelf”. This article addresses a key question regarding the strategic plan: What can I do to ensure the plan does not end up on the shelf?

There are three areas that must be addressed to ensure that the planning process and the resulting strategic plan are valuable and useful for the organization:

- The process that is used to develop the plan can guarantee success or failure. Credibility and ease of use are often direct results of how the plan was created.
- The format of the plan will influence how and when people use the document in the workplace. Complex, outdated documents are doomed to remain on the shelf.
- Management’s use and respect for the plan influences the acceptance of the rest of the staff and board members. There is no reason for board members to refer to established goals and objectives if the director does not.

Ensuring the Plan Has Impact

During the strategic planning process, it is important to include the following process, content, and usage elements to ensure the usefulness of the strategic plan to the organization.

Process Elements

Engage leadership

Include the informal and formal organizational leaders when conducting a process. Active involvement communicates a message of organizational importance and priority.

Work from a common understanding

Provide training on the process and establish a list of expectations and results to ensure that everyone is working towards the same outcomes.

Include individuals who will implement the plan

Encourage all levels of staff to contribute to the process. Involving these individuals will ensure that the plan is realistic and help motivate staff to implement the plan.

Address critical issues for the organization

Failure or unwillingness to put these critical issues on the table for discussion and resolution might lead staff to implicitly or explicitly challenge the credibility of the plan, its priorities, and/or its leadership.

Agree on how the plan will be operationalized

Specify who will implement which parts of the plan, scheduling routine evaluation meetings to review progress.

Content Elements

Include an internal and external focus

Remember to address structural, board/staff development, and communication issues in your plan.

Do not get too detailed

Use the strategic plan to articulate the broad framework, direction, and priorities of the organization and its programs. Extremely specific plans become quickly outdated and end up on the shelf.

Create a balance between the dream and reality

Ensure that your plan is grounded in the reality of what can and cannot be accomplished.

Keep the language, concepts, and format simple

Make sure that the language is easy to understand, especially for those that are unfamiliar with your organization. Structure the document so that it is user friendly.

Usage Elements

Actively use the plan as a management tool

Actively using the plan for short-term guidance and decision making will establish a model for use.

Incorporate sections of the plan in everyday management

Formalize the usage of the plan into the day-to-day activities of the organization. For example, one organization read the mission statement at the opening of every business meeting to remind the membership of the organization's focus and purpose. In another organization, the executive director requires that all ideas for program changes or expansion directly address how the changes relate to the organization's mission.

Organize the work of the organization in the context of the plan

Establish operational goals and activities within the context of the strategic plan (e.g., include goals and objectives in individual and program evaluations or have program directors refer to the plan to provide guidance in decision making).

Design a system for controlling the process.

Ensure that there are mechanisms (e.g., evaluation meetings, monthly report against plan) to inform management on progress.

By employing the strategies listed above, you can be sure that the effort you put into the strategic planning process will direct your organization and become a useful tool to both management and staff.