New to a Board?
Helpful tips every Board Member should Know

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While the board as a whole has certain roles and responsibilities, the board is, after all, composed of individuals. These individuals (board member, board chair, chief executive, other board officers, and former board members) each play a part in ensuring that the board functions effectively.

Most boards will provide you with a clear statement of individual board member responsibly adapted to the organization's mission and needs serve at least two purposes. First, when recruiting new board members, it helps to clarify what the organization expects before candidates accept the invitation to be nominated. Second, it can provide criteria for identifying and recruiting prospective nominees and for identifying and recruiting prospective nominees and reviewing the performance of current board members who are eligible for reelection or reappointment.

Example of Individual Board Member Responsibilities:

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

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

MEETINGS

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

FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITIES

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

FUNDRAISING

- Give an unrestricted annual gift and restricted program or project support in line with your particular interests and personal means. Always do your best to set an example for other board members.
- Assist the development committee and staff by helping to identify potential givers and implement fundraising strategies through personal influence where you have it (corporations, individuals, and foundations.)

AMBASSADORIAL SERVICE

- Represent your organization responsibly and diligently in the community it serves by telling the organization's story and presenting its accomplishments as well as its needs and current challenges.
- Represent your community to your organization. Bring back concerns, ideas, suggestions, and compliments when you believe they have merit or possibility.