

BOARD DEVELOPMENT: Board Functions

There are several standard functions performed by non-profit boards. Boards vary in how they perform these functions. Some boards choose not to take on certain functions. States usually have some legally required functions. Other functions and their priority in the organization's life need to be arrived at based on the needs of the organization at this point in its development. Decisions about what a board's functions should be and how to act on those functions are best made:

- Against the backdrop of a clear organizational mission,
- With an understanding of the organization's culture and working style,
- In relationship to an overall systems analysis,
- As appropriate to the organization's stage of development (age and size), and
- Along with work on other board development issues (e.g., board role in regard to management and staff, recruitment, working as an effective team, and structure).

PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

A. BROAD ORGANIZATIONAL OVERSIGHT

The overall governance of the organization, its mission, long term goals and strategy, significant financial and property matters, selection of an executive director, etc.

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Interpreting the organization to the community and helping the organization stay attuned to the external environment.

C. FUND RAISING

Giving and raising money.

D. ADVISOR

Providing advice on organizational operations based on some particular knowledge or skill of the board member.

E. OTHER

SPECIFIC TASKS WITHIN EACH FUNCTION

A. BROAD ORGANIZATIONAL OVERSIGHT

1. Participate in shaping the mission statement and long term goals/strategy. Modifying them as needed.
2. Oversee significant financial and property matters.
3. Select the Executive Director.
4. Establish and oversee personnel policies.
5. Assessment of the organization's work and operations.
6. Performance appraisal of the Executive Director (and other top managers?).
7. Review and approval of significant management proposals.
8. Review and approval of operational matters.
9. Recruits and trains new board members.
10. Support the Executive Director.
11. Assessing board performance.

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

1. Actively interpreting the mission and work of the organization in the board member's own community/constituency/network.
2. Participating in the development/implementation of the organization's public relation's approach.
3. Representing the organization with public officials and others.
4. Helping the organization stay attuned to the external environment.
5. Recruits members of the organization.

C. FUND RAISING

1. Giving money to the organization.
2. Representing the organization with potential funders.
3. Sponsoring fund-raising events among contacts (e.g., coffee/cocktail gatherings).
4. Using contacts with foundations, corporations, and other funders for the organization.
5. Participating in planning and carrying out an organization sponsored fund raising event.

D. ADVISOR

1. Participate in special problem solving sessions with board members and others.
2. Offer particular knowledge and skills in a consulting role with management or the board.
3. Serve on committees related to particular knowledge or skills.