

Tips on Board Recruitment

Carryout a Board Assessment

If you are an organisation that is already formed and duly registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission, start by: reviewing the current state of your board to see if they are performing their roles and responsibilities (see our [sample nonprofit roles and responsibilities document](#) for traditional roles of the board). You can ask the following questions as a guide:

- Does the current board understand their roles and responsibilities?
- How does your board perform now with their roles and responsibilities?
- Do the current board member(s) make the organisation a priority within his or her busy schedule?
- What skills and expertise do your current board members have and what are the gaps that need to be filled.

If you are a new organisation about forming, we recommend you read our document on [Sample Nonprofit Board Roles and Responsibilities](#) and ensure anyone you are inviting to the board is clear on their roles and responsibilities. You can ask the following question:

- ◆ What kind of board members do we want (personality and leadership style)?
- ◆ What skills and expertise must our board members have?
- ◆ Will the individuals we are inviting to the board be able to make the necessary time commitment for the work of the organisation?

Document Assessment Result

Now that you have carried out the assessment, no matter what the findings are, understand that developing an effective board is a work in progress. We recommend that you document the outcome of your findings for the purposes of learning, reforming the board recruitment process and organisational accountability.

Develop Board Members Roles and Responsibilities

After the assessment, you should already be clear as to what the roles and responsibilities of your board should be. Using your assessment result and the sample nonprofit roles and responsibilities document develop a radical board member job description and a list of qualifications you want them to have. One important qualification to pay attention to is to ensure that individuals you are inviting to your board are passionate about the mission and vision of the organisation, are willing to offer their talent and time to support it.

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From our work, we have seen many nonprofits recruiting their first or replacing board vacancies based on friendship, name dropping, affluence, influence and sometimes just anyone available to lend their names. While this could work, experience from our decades of work on nonprofit management shows that this process is ineffective and is the foundation for a dysfunctional board. We have seen organisations investing more time and resources into attracting the right mix of expertise and deep commitment to the vision and mission of the nonprofit growing, becoming successful and on their way to sustainability.

If you are just forming, it is your role as the founder to champion best practices in recruiting your first board. For an organisation that has already formed, it is the role of the board and its governance committee to lead the recruitment process however both the founder and executive director can also tap into their networks to recommend potential candidates based on the agreed board job description.

- Develop a list of prospective new board members from the names submitted from all sources and share with the rest of the board for review or with a committee of volunteers if you are just forming.
- Send a board recruitment packet to all prospective members. The packet should include board member job description, organisation chart, list of current board members (if any) and management, current strategic plan, most recent audited report and annual report.
- Ask candidates to complete an application for board membership. Be sure to set a firm deadline for receiving the completed application. Include in applications questions that offer candidates the opportunity to share their volunteer leadership experience and unique role they can play in meeting your organisations needs.
- Where possible and practical, we recommend you interview prospective candidates to learn more about them and answer questions they may have. During the interview you may ask yourself: does this person look like a team player? Is he or she a fun person? Will his or her personality and expertise complement the current slate of our board? Answers to these questions will no double help in selecting the right candidate to join your board.

Set your board up for success

- ▶ As soon as a decision is made on who will be on your board send them a formal letter and plan an in-person orientation for the new board, usually before the next board meeting.
- ▶ Create a board orientation packet that includes: board member job description, one page overview of the organisation, org chart, list of current board members and their contact information, list of board committees and their membership (if any), calendar of meeting dates, times and location, current strategic plan, copy of the current budget, the organisations policies and by-laws, board meeting minutes, copy of the most recent annual and audit reports and agenda for the next meeting.
- ▶ Organise a tour of your offices and for board members to meet staff and also see your work in action.
- ▶ Work with each board member to review the board job descriptions and confirm the level of support they will need from the staff to fulfill their role most effectively.