

STRONG PARKS, STRONG COMMUNITIES

Tool 12: Board Responsibilities and Staff Support

RESPONSIBILITY 1: THE BOARD ENGAGES IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

Board Activities

- The board focuses on the long-range strategic issues confronting the organization. The board may choose to create a standing Strategic Planning Committee as well as temporary task forces or ad hoc committees around specific strategic issues.
- The Strategic Planning Committee works with the executive director, and often a consultant, to plan retreats.
- Each board member understands the organization's strategic plan or vision.
- Each board member participates in a periodic strategic planning retreat, with specific focus on the organization's vision, mission, goals, and strategies.
- The full board approves the final strategic plan, including financial projections for the period of the plan.

Staff Activities

- The executive director schedules periodic strategic planning retreats.
- The executive director ensures that board members are familiar with the existing strategic plan. The executive director also provides board members periodically with relevant information about the external environment in which the organization operates.
- The staff collects and formats all information needed for planning in an understandable, accurate manner.
- The staff writes all or most of the plan, starting from the board-approved mission and goals, and submits it to the Strategic Planning Committee for review.

RESPONSIBILITY 2: THE BOARD DETERMINES ORGANIZATION'S MISSION AND PURPOSE

Board Activities

- Each board member knows and understands the mission.
- The entire board reviews the mission in the context of strategic planning every few years.
- Board members specify the information they need for review of the mission and purpose.
- The entire board attends planning retreat(s); reads appropriate materials; participates in discussion.
- The board revises the mission if necessary. The mission should be clear, concise, and understood by board and staff.

Staff Activities

- The executive director ensures that the organization’s mission statement is provided to every new board member when recruited and is explained thoroughly during new board member orientation and included in the board member handbook.
- The executive director schedules planning and mission review every few years.
- The staff gathers information needed to review the mission and purpose.
- The executive director ensures that revised mission is circulated to all.

RESPONSIBILITY 3: THE BOARD APPROVES AND MONITORS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Board Activities

- Each board member understands the organization’s current programs and services.
- The board specifies what information it needs on an ongoing basis to monitor the quality and impact of programs and services (e.g., funding targets, outcomes, etc.)
- During planning, the board ensures programs and services are consistent with the mission.
- The board reviews and approves new programs. During planning and/or budgeting, the board reviews programs and evaluates their effectiveness at achieving the outcomes desired within the plan.

Staff Activities

- The executive director ensures that new board member orientation allows board members to understand existing programs and services. The executive director schedules educational presentations during board meetings.
- Staff collects, formats, and provides program-related information in an easy-to-understand and timely manner.
- Staff develops new program proposals for review by the board. Proposals contain both program and financial information and present options when possible. Grant applications that contain new program proposals should be reviewed by the board prior to submission to the prospective funder.

RESPONSIBILITY 4: THE BOARD ENSURES EFFECTIVE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Board Activities

- Generally, the board elects a treasurer who also serves as Chair of the Finance Committee. The board chair appoints the other members of that committee.
- The full board understands the charge of the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee reports to the full board.
- The full board approves the annual operating budget on the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

- The full board receives periodic (no less than quarterly) financial reports following review by the Finance Committee. Discrepancies are explained by the Treasurer, Executive Director, or Chief Financial Officer.
- The full board approves the annual selection of an auditor on the recommendation of the Finance Committee. The audit report and management letter are presented to the full board by the auditor.
- The Finance Committee recommends fiscal policies and procedures to the full board.
- Where needed, the board creates an Investment Committee to oversee the investment of the organization's assets. The board chair appoints the committee chair and members. The committee reports periodically to the full board.
- The committee that recruits new board members seeks members with financial skills.

Staff Activities

- The executive director ensures that the new member orientation educates members about the organization's financial status and strategies.
- Staff prepares the annual budget and presents it to the Finance Committee for discussion.
- The staff prepares financial reports that are understandable, accurate, and timely.
- The staff explains and provides plans to remedy variances in the operating budget.
- Staff provides a plan to respond to any recommendations in the audit management letter.

RESPONSIBILITY 5: THE BOARD ENSURES SOUND RISK MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Board Activities

- The board assigns risk management to a committee, generally the Finance Committee.
- The Finance Committee collects information about probable risks, reviews existing policies and risk abatement strategies, and recommends appropriate policies to the full board.
- The Finance Committee periodically reviews all insurance carried by the organization.

Staff Activities

- Staff maintains insurance policies, pays premiums.
- The executive director schedules review of insurance coverage and makes all needed information available to the committee.

RESPONSIBILITY 6: THE BOARD SELECTS AND SUPPORTS NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Board Activities

- The board creates a Board Development Committee to recruit and nominate new board members, re-nominate existing board members, and nominate officers. The board chair appoints the chair and members of the Board Development Committee.

- The Board Development Committee identifies needed board skills and attributes and searches for individuals who have an interest in the organization and meet the criteria. The Committee works with the entire board to cultivate and recruit those individuals.
- The Board Development Committee reviews and recommends a new member orientation process to the full board.
- The Board Development Committee identifies training needs for the organization and facilitates the board's access to training opportunities.
- The Board Development Committee coordinates a board evaluation process and works with the chair to follow through on any issues that arise for individual board members.
- The Board Development Committee takes steps to help ensure all board members receive appropriate recognition for their contributions.
- The Board Development Committee may recommend nonperforming board members be given an opportunity to participate in the organization in a role other than Board member.
- The Board Development Committee recommends policies (often from the bylaws) on board size and composition, length of board service, and other matters related to governance.

Staff Activities

- The executive director or a designee maintains the records on board service and publishes a board roster with appropriate information.
- The executive director staffs the Board Development Committee, maintains records on prospective board members, and coordinates the new board member orientation process

RESPONSIBILITY 7: THE BOARD ORGANIZES ITSELF TO OPERATE EFFICIENTLY

Board Activities

- The board assigns to a committee, generally the Board Development Committee, the responsibility for overseeing and evaluating board operations.
- The Board Development Committee annually conducts a board self-evaluation and makes recommendations for change to the full board.
- The Board Development Committee periodically reviews the bylaws.
- The board chair and committee chairs ensure that their method of planning and conducting meetings results in efficient and effective meetings with appropriate participation by board or committee members and staff.
- The board chair appoints committee chairs and members in consultation with the executive director. The board chair considers leadership training as he/ she appoints committee chairs.
- Committee chairs understand their charges and develop annual goals and work plans.
- The Board Development Committee seeks individuals with leadership potential as it recruits new board members.

Staff Activities

- The executive director assists the Board Development Committee in finding evaluation instruments.
- The executive director calendars the board self-evaluation process.
- Staff maintains the board handbook and keeps it up to date.
- The executive director maintains the bylaws and ensures that each board member has an up-to-date copy.
- The executive director provides materials to the board chair and committee chairs on running an effective meeting and works with chairs on meeting agendas.
- The executive director recommends committee chairs and members to the board chair.
- The executive director ensures that each committee has appropriate staff support and access to the information needed for their deliberations.

RESPONSIBILITY 8: THE BOARD SELECTS AND SUPPORTS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Board Activities

- The board chair appoints the appropriate committees directly related to the executive (e.g., search, evaluation, and personnel) and ensures their charges are clearly understood.
- The committees report their recommendations to the full board.
- In an executive search, the full board approves the search process, job description, and salary range; meets the final candidate(s); and votes to hire. The board chair or a designee makes the job offer and negotiates salary and employment conditions.
- In an evaluation process, the full board approves the evaluation process and salary adjustment range and receives a summary report of the evaluation outcomes. An evaluation committee reviews the executive director job description and makes recommendations for change if necessary.
- The board chair meets frequently with the executive director to provide feedback, to help set priorities, and to offer advice.
- Board members are responsive to the executive director's requests for advice and assistance and support the executive director in public.
- Board members take any concerns about the executive director to the board chair.

Staff Activities

- The executive director ensures that the board chair is familiar with the evaluation process and has access to any relevant files.
- The executive director schedules their own evaluation.
- The executive director reviews the executive director job description and makes recommendations for change.

RESPONSIBILITY 9: THE BOARD UNDERSTANDS THE BOARD / STAFF RELATIONSHIP

Board Activities

- Each board member understands that unless otherwise specified, the board's point of contact with the staff is through the executive director.
- The board reviews and approves personnel policies including compensation and benefits policy, professional development, and grievances. The board may create a temporary ad hoc committee to develop and/or periodically review these policies.
- The board holds the executive director accountable for the performance and behavior of the staff as a part of the executive director's annual evaluation.

Staff Activities

- The staff understands that unless otherwise specified, their point of contact with the board is through the executive director.
- The executive director hires, fires, and evaluates all staff.
- Staff adheres to the personnel policies.

RESPONSIBILITY 10: THE BOARD RAISES MONEY

Board Activities

- Each board member understands the role of contributed funds in the organization's finances as well as the organization's case statement and fundraising strategies.
- Each board member makes an annual personal financial contribution. The board chair or chair of the committee that oversees fundraising generally solicits each board member.
- Each board member identifies specific fundraising activities in which to contribute (e.g., cultivating, soliciting, or thanking donors; planning or hosting events, etc.).
- The board job description contains a clear statement about the expectation for personal giving and participation in fundraising.
- The committee that recruits new board members seeks new board members who can be helpful in the fundraising process.
- The board chair appoints an individual or committee(s) to oversee the board's activities in fundraising.
- The board ensures the fundraising program has adequate resources in the annual budget.

Staff Activities

- The executive director ensures that prospective board members are informed about the fundraising expectations.
- The executive director ensures that the new board member orientation and the board handbook educate board members about the fundraising case statement and strategies.

- Staff works individually with each board member to identify the area(s) in which the board member will participate in fundraising.
- Staff works with the board chair to identify an appropriate gift level for each board member and makes certain that board members are appropriately thanked for their gifts.
- Staff ensures that board members receive adequate recognition for their participation in fundraising.
- Staff provides all needed information to board members working on fundraising.

RESPONSIBILITY 11: THE BOARD ENHANCES THE ORGANIZATION'S PUBLIC IMAGE

Board Activities

- Each board member proactively promotes the organization with their circle of contacts.
- Board members respond to requests from staff to make presentations or help the organization make needed contacts.
- The board ensures that a marketing communications plan exists, has adequate resources, and is being implemented.
- The board identifies the official spokesperson for the organization.

Staff Activities

- The staff provides board members with good information (talking points, etc.) to use in promoting the organization.
- The executive director determines each board member's circle of contacts and ensures that they are appropriately used.
- The staff prepares the marketing communications plan.