

Effective Boards

An effective, well informed and well trained board of directors is essential to the success and operation of your Provincial Sport Organization. Board members have accepted the responsibility of governing, managing and developing a PSO and this requires commitment, skill and considerable time. The following tips and information should further support your board in its operations and effectiveness.

Standards of Performance for Board Members

As a Director, you have been elected by your members to carry out duties in an ethical and professional manner. Meeting appropriate performance standards make it possible to do the work of the board in an efficient and effective way.

Performance standards of board members include:

- Being loyal to the PSO and its membership
- Avoiding conflict of interest
- Not exercising individual authority over staff or members
- Being prepared for and actively participating in meetings
- Foster positive working relationship between volunteers and staff
- Maintaining confidentiality of board business
- Speaking positively of the PSO to the public

Source: Resource Centre of Voluntary Organizations – Articles Online

Board Orientation and Ongoing Training

As a new board member you will benefit from an orientation. This will allow you to be educated and informed about the PSO and your responsibilities as a board member. This helps to minimize potential frustrations resulting from feeling unproductive and overwhelmed.

- 1) As a new director ask for a board member binder that includes bylaws, policies, program descriptions, annual budget, last audited financial statement, list of board, copies of previous meetings' minutes and a copy of the strategic plan.
- 2) Ask to be assigned to a committee so that you will become actively involved and feel as though you are contributing right away.
- 3) Ask for a "mentor" who will provide support during the initial 3 months. The mentor is there to answer questions and ease your transition onto the board.
- 4) Inquire about opportunities for board members to receive special training related to your interests and committee assignments, including leadership training for board members.

Did you know?

That the Terms and Conditions funding agreement between PSOs and Sport Manitoba requires that all PSOs are volunteer based not-for-profit organizations that are democratically governed by a duly-elected board of directors.

Effective Committees

Committees are a good way to spread out the responsibilities of board members and make more efficient use of a volunteer's time. Effective committee operation is possible when the committee and the board both have clearly defined roles and authority.

What makes an effective committee?

- An effective and qualified chair that:
 - Recruits new committee members that are well suited for the committee
 - Assigns responsibilities to committee members
 - Plan and leads regular meetings
 - Coordinates activities with the board and with other committees
- Clear goals, duties and purpose of each committee that are explicit, have been written down and are understood by the board members and by other committees.
- One that enjoys the authority to make recommendations to the board, put forward their own propositions and implement plans approved by the board.
- One that is accountable to the board. The board's expectations must be clear and may be tied to an annual goal or plan with measurable outcomes. The board should make clear the manner and frequency with which it expects committee progress reports.

Does your board use best practices? Go through this checklist and find out.

A Good Board Practices Checklist

Answer yes or no to each of the following questions.

- 1) The board of directors meets at a regular time and date?
- 2) The board operates according to the constitution or bylaws under which the association is incorporated?
- 3) All board members have a copy of the constitution and bylaws under which the association is incorporated?
- 4) The board or executive committee normally plans the board's meeting agenda?
- 5) The board meeting agenda is normally completed in the allotted time.
- 6) Minutes, committee and staff reports are distributed to directors at least a few days in advance of board meetings?
- 7) There is a written job description or statement of responsibilities for members of the board?
- 8) The board has approved policies outlining its expectations in the following areas:
 - a. Financial management practices
 - b. Personnel management practices
 - c. Conflict of interest
 - d. Fundraising practices
 - e. Quality of services to members and public
 - f. Safety of staff, volunteers and members
- 9) There is a policy manual containing all existing organization policies?
- 10) The board receives regular financial reports and monitors the performance of the PSO in relation to its budget?

If you did not answer yes to each of the following questions, consider the development of new policies and procedures to ensure that your board is following the best practices possible.

Source: 2003 Non-Profit Sector Leadership Program, Dalhousie University.

Publication of the PSO Unit

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