

# Unit 1

## Roles & Responsibilities of the Board





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In order to be an effective board member and to have an enjoyable experience in your role as a director, it is critical that you understand the responsibilities of the board and of a board member.

### What are the responsibilities of the Board of Directors?

- Set the strategic direction for the organization, including developing and continually re-evaluating the mission, vision and direction of the PSO.
- Develop, implement and ensure compliance with the constitution, bylaws, policies and procedures of the organization.
- Monitor the budget, revenue and expenses to ensure the financial health of the organization and ensure that adequate resources exist to carry out your programs and services.
- Promote and enhance the public image of the PSO.
- Oversee the operations of the board, including determining its role, doing recruitment, training and evaluation.
- To hire, evaluate and support the Executive Director.

# 1.1

**“The Board of Directors** is responsible for the highest level of decision making and legal authority in an organization. By law, it is ultimately accountable for and has authority over the organization’s resources and activities. The board articulates and communicates the organization’s vision to the membership and community. Through policy, the board defines the parameters within which the organization will carry out its work.”

*Source: Roles and Responsibilities of Not-for-Profit Board – resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations*

## **FAQ: As a new board member, how do I know what I am responsible to do?**

Providing new board members with an orientation allows them to be educated and informed about the PSO and their responsibilities as a board member. Here are some ideas to assist in the orientation:

- 1) Provide new directors with a board member binder that includes bylaws, policies, program descriptions, annual budget, last audited financial statement, board list, copies of previous meetings' minutes and a copy of your strategic plan.
- 2) Assign new board members to a committee so that they will become actively involved and feel as though they are contributing right away.
- 3) Consider assigning a "mentor" who will provide support during the initial 3 months. The mentor is there to answer questions and ease their transition onto the board.
- 4) Provide opportunities for board members to receive special training related to their interests and committee assignments, including leadership training for board members.
- 5) It is critical that all board members have a job description.  
*See Tool 1 for a sample.*

**Sport Fact:** There are over 725 volunteers serving as board members for the PSOs. The average PSO board consists of 9 positions.



# 1.2

# 1.3

## Characteristics of Effective Board Members

### 1. Participation

- Attend board meetings and functions
- Arrive informed on agenda items
- Respond to requests, ask questions at meetings, follow-up activities
- Active on at least one committee

### 2. Commitment

- Give a high priority to the affairs of the organization
- Belief in the long term viability of the cause and organization
- Knowledgeable about the organization's programs, policies and services
- A financial contributor to the organization (if agreed on by board)
- Follows the three T's of boardmanship: time, treasure, talent

### 3. Responsibility

- Willing to assume responsibility
- Willing to pitch in
- Acts in the best interests of the organization

### 4. Self-Starter

- Degree of initiative – will assume leadership when requested or when an issue requires

### 5. Positive outlook

- Forward-looking
- Optimistic about the activities of the organization

## **6. Booster**

- Promotes the organization every chance he/she gets
- Represents the organization at community events and in any other way that promotes understanding of its purpose and programs

## **7. Special attributes**

- Skills, knowledge, experience of value to the organization

## **8. Representation**

- Represents a constituency, interest group, profession, educational level, etc. that has a direct connection with your group
- Informed about needs and trends within that community and the membership

## **9. Relations with staff**

- Understands difference between roles of board and staff

## **10. Loyalty**

- Interest and duty to the agency must not be brought into conflict nor should personal profit be made from this position
- Support board decisions once made; even if voted against decision or resign if can't

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## Characteristics of the Effective Board

### 1. Dedication / involvement

- Belief in the aims of your organization
- Exude faith, confidence, enthusiasm, determination, concern and responsibility
- Take on tasks willingly and complete tasks

### 2. Structure

- Efficient board structure is in place, ie. Governing documents, legal aspects, etc.
- Members are well informed about agency's operation and structure; each board member is adequately trained and their role is specific
- Board is organized so that committees function effectively

### 3. Diversity

- The board as a whole contains wide differences in talents, skills, experience, interests and social background
- The areas of expertise are covered: planning, program development, marketing, public relations/promotions, personnel, finance

### 4. Board / staff relations

- Productive working relationship
- Define the degree of contact between board member/staff
- Establish a sense of team



## 5. Leadership

- Chairperson is respected and skilled at ensuring everyone participates and arrives at “good” decisions
- Effective balance between board and Executive Director

## 6. Rapport

- Board works as a group
- Members have mutual respect for each other, regardless of differing opinions and maintain a productive working relationship

## 7. Public relations

- Board understands the importance of and its involvement in public relations
- Board is representative of and sensitive to different viewpoints, community factions, etc.

## 8. Financial responsibility

- Control over long range and substantial financial commitments, financial structure, objectives, policies

## 9. Strength

- Board is strong enough to achieve effective policy decisions

## 10. Results

- Board is concerned with planning and long-range issues, not trivial matters
- Board has a genuine sense of progress and they obtain satisfaction from their work
- Board gets results and the results are evaluated

1.6

# Sample Job Descriptions for Members of Boards of Directors

## Tool #1

### Board President Job Description

1. Is a member of the board.
2. Is a partner with the Executive Director in achieving the organization's mission.
3. Provides leadership to the board of Directors, who sets policy and to whom the Executive Director is accountable.
4. Chairs meetings of the board after developing the agenda with the Executive Director.
5. Encourages board's role in strategic planning.
6. Appoints the chairpersons of committees, in consultation with other board members.
7. Serves ex-officio as a member of committees and attends their meetings when invited.
8. Discusses issues confronting the organization with the Executive Director.
9. Helps guide and mediate board actions with respect to organizational priorities and governance concerns.
10. Reviews with the Executive Director any issues of concern to the board.
11. Monitors financial planning and financial reports.
12. Formally evaluates the performance of the Executive Director and informally evaluates the effectiveness of the board members.
13. Evaluates annually the performance of the organization in achieving its mission.
14. Performs other responsibilities assigned by the board.

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### **Board Treasurer Job Description**

1. Is a member of the board.
2. Manages finances of the organization.
3. Administrates fiscal matters of the organization.
4. Provides annual budget to the board for members' approval.
5. Ensures development and board review of financial policies and procedures.

### **Board Member Job Description**

1. Regularly attends board meetings and important related meetings.
2. Makes serious commitment to participate actively in committee work.
3. Volunteers for and willingly accepts assignments and completes them thoroughly and on time.
4. Stays informed about committee and board matters, prepares themselves well for meetings, and reviews and comments on minutes and reports.
5. Gets to know other committee members and builds a collegial working relationship that contributes to consensus.
6. Is an active participant in the committee's annual evaluation and planning efforts.
7. Participates in fundraising for the organization.

*The following job descriptions were adapted from materials from [www.mapnp.org/library/boards/brdjobs.htm](http://www.mapnp.org/library/boards/brdjobs.htm)*

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