

What Board Members Should Expect

Certain kinds of support by staff, or board leadership if your board is all volunteer, are required for board members to be able to fulfill their duties. Board members should expect, and insist on, the following:

1. A board job description, which includes clarity on what roles you are expected to play beyond regularly attending board meetings, how many hours a month you are expected to commit, and whether you are expected to donate money to the organization. (See list of what should be included on the next page.)
2. An orientation for new board members to the history, mission, goals, structure and budget of the organization and to the expectations of board members;
3. Copies of all governing documents and board policies;
4. Regular board meetings, scheduled well in advance;
5. Board packets providing the information needed to make well informed decisions as required by the agenda, several days before each board meeting;
6. Regular financial reports which include income and expense statements that include a comparison with the budget and balance sheets at least quarterly, an annual budget presented for approval, an independent audit provided annually (for large organizations and those owning property), and sufficient time in board meetings to answer any questions board members have about finances;
7. Willing engagement by staff and/or board leadership in providing information the board needs to make good decisions;
8. Formal, written minutes for board meetings presented to the board for review and official approval at or before the next board meeting;¹ and,
9. An active role in setting policy for the organization. What this will look like will vary from organization to organization, and will change over time inside organizations. At minimum, the board should have a very active role in any changes to the mission, values and primary goals of the organization, and to the bylaws or articles of incorporation, and be part of the strategic planning work for the organization.

Board members should NOT expect, except in the early stages of a new organization where there is little or no paid staff, to be involved in the daily running of the organization.

¹ These are public records and should be filed in a way that makes them easy to access if questions arise.

Items Usually Included in Board Job Descriptions and/or Service Agreements

- 1) **Overview of the Mission and Goals of the Organization** (which board members are committing to support)
- 2) **Overview of the Board Structure** (as defined in the bylaws and board policies/resolutions)
 - How many serve on the board (usually a range)
 - How they are selected
 - Length of terms
 - Who may serve (residency requirements, income requirements, must they have e-mail access? etc.)
 - Identification of any special categories of board members and any requirements about the make-up of the board (from bylaws, funders, others)
 - List of board offices and any special requirements for this level of service
 - List of standing board committees with requirements for who must/may serve
 - List of current ad hoc or time-specific committees, requirements for who must/may serve, and procedure for creating and dissolving such committees
- 3) **Overview of Organizational Staffing** (particularly as it relates to the board)
- 4) **List of Board Responsibilities**
 - Basic legal responsibilities
 - Duties specific to the organization
 - committee service requirements
 - giving requirements
 - fundraising requirements
 - involvement in other organizational activities
 - others (How available must board members be for consultations between meetings? Are they expected to review materials before meetings? Are they required to participate in any trainings? etc.)
 - Attendance requirements (at meetings, at special events, etc.)
 - Clarity about how many hours per month board members are expected to give
- 5) **Board Meetings**
 - How often the board meets and for how long and location of board meetings (if regular)
 - Dates and times of regular board meetings (if they are regular)
 - Decision-making structures, processes, roles, and expectations
- 6) **Statement of whether the organization has directors and operators insurance**