

# BOARD MEMBER SELF-ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE



## OVERVIEW

It's time to stop operating from a place of scarcity when it comes to your nonprofit board. The number one reason that boards do not engage in any kind of assessment of board members is that they are volunteers and can only do what they can do. And heaven forbid the assessment causes them to bolt. Then we have to fill another seat?????

With this mindset you will never have a high-functioning board. Can you imagine having a job for two years or three years or five years and never having a sit down with your boss about how you are doing?

Welcome to board service.

The nonprofit sector needs a new approach. Consider my model of a thriving nonprofit as a twin-engine jet. The strong nonprofit has two high functioning engines, and each engine gets regular maintenance.

Evaluation of board members is "engine maintenance".

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN ANY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Commit to including either a board member job description or a list of the ten roles of the nonprofit board in every single new board orientation packet. It *must* be reviewed during an orientation. Can you imagine being evaluated at work for a job that had no written goals or responsibilities? Right.

So in addition to the template I have created, you will also find two other documents you can use for these purposes (if you don't already have them). From Bridgespan, an international nonprofit consulting firm, a job description and from Board Source, a list of the ten core responsibilities of a nonprofit board.

## APPROACH

People who join boards are typically Type-A personalities accustomed to getting 95s on their book reports. They want to know how to get an "A" in board service, and they expect to be graded. They are accustomed to good grades.

Now board members do indeed have day jobs and so the approach you want to take is different. It's a bit like grading on a curve, but better yet, think about it as a conversation about how the experience is going so that the board member can reveal her own thoughts and reflections. The conversation should result in either a recommitment, a refocus, or in some cases, an opt-out.

## PROCESS

In an ideal world, your nominating and governance committee would be responsible for board member evaluation. Ideally, it would be an annual process. Ideally, the evaluation would include the voices of fellow board members.

But I prefer a real process over an ideal one. Why? 1) The more complicated the process is, the less likely it will happen at all (Let's remember, most executive directors are not formally evaluated.), and 2) this is a volunteer gig, and it should, in my mind, feel less formal.

So I suggest the following:

- Governance committee runs the process and ensures it gets done.
- A month before the anniversary date, each board member gets the attached template along with a copy of either the job description or the ten roles or whatever document was given out at orientation.
- Simultaneously the board chair and the E.D. get the same eval form.
  - E.D. provides input to the Chair about board member X that is either attached to the eval form or board chair makes notes to include.
  - Board chair should also seek input from the executive committee or the governance committee of the board before the evaluation conversation. Nothing lengthy but input from a few other board members seems right and fair.

As you'll see, the template is not formal. It is intended to be a catalyst for discussion. Essentially, it offers the board member an opportunity to reflect about the contributions she has made, what she wants out of board service, and what is needed to ensure that the conversation with the board chair is a productive one that generates a set of goals or next steps.

- The evaluation should ideally occur in person over a meal.
- Ideally, the board chair will have these conversations, but it may be burdensome for her (depending on the number of board members). The responsibility could be spread out amongst executive committee members or the board chair and the Nominations Committee chair. You just want to be sure that there is a process that is thoughtful, fair, somewhat formal, and very clearly communicated.
- The board chair should provide the governance committee with some kind of written document summarizing the conversation. This becomes part of that board member's file, and the board member should get a copy as well.

## BOARD MEMBER EVALUATION FORM

Name:

Date:

Date of First Board Meeting:

Term Expiration Date:

All of us on the board, as well as our staff leader, are grateful for your service this year. We recognize there are many demands on your time and many nonprofit organizations would benefit from your participation. We consider ourselves fortunate that you selected us.

The purpose of this evaluation is several fold:

- To understand your experience as a lead volunteer - what is working for you and what could be working better;
- To discuss the board's performance as a group;
- To reflect on roles and responsibilities of board service and to share thoughts about how you feel you deliver on each. We also want to talk about what you feel you need to be successful.
- To seek greater understanding of what you believe you bring to board service and how you would like to contribute in the coming year.
- Approximate time needed for completion: 15-30 minutes.

## BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT, PART 1:

### INDIVIDUAL SELF-EVALUATION SURVEY

Please offer your observations on the following statements. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is "strongly agree" and 1 = "strongly disagree."

1. I consider myself a board member who is engaged in the work of the organization.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2. I have a solid understanding of the core programs of the organization.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3. I am literate about the finances of our organization, understanding both our strengths and potential vulnerabilities.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4. I am an effective fundraiser for the organization. I make my own annual contribution and regularly ask and/or introduce donor prospects to the organization.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5. I am an active participant in strategic discussions offering insights or asking thoughtful questions.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6. I make valuable contributions to the committee(s) on which I serve.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

7. In the past year I have brought new assets to the organization (e.g., experts, volunteers, donors, corporate sponsors, etc.).

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

8. I am deeply passionate about the mission.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

9. I have been an enthusiastic public ambassador for the organization.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

10. I make every effort to attend regularly scheduled board meetings.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

11. I read and respond to emails from the Executive Director.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

12. I frequently encourage the Executive Director through my words and actions.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT, PART 2:

### KEY BOARD ROLES - COLLECTIVE & INDIVIDUAL EFFECTIVENESS

The following are, according to Board Source, eight of the key responsibilities of a nonprofit board. Review each of the following roles and rate your board's collective effectiveness. Then, reflect on your role as an individual board member. Where do you see your areas of strength, vulnerabilities, and areas you'd like to grow in?

Please offer your observations on the following statements. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is "We're great at this!" and 1 = "We let the ball drop."

- **ROLE #1: SUPPORT AND EVALUATE THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE.**

The board should ensure that the Executive Director has the moral and professional support they need to further the goals of the organization.

The Board as a Whole (Collectively) 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

You as an Individual Board Member 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- **ROLE #2: ENSURE EFFECTIVE PLANNING.**

Boards must actively participate in an overall planning process and assist in implementing and monitoring the plan's goals.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- **ROLE #3: MONITOR AND STRENGTHEN PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.**

The board's responsibility is to determine which programs are consistent with the organization's mission and monitor their effectiveness.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- **ROLE #4: ENSURE ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES.**

One of the board's foremost responsibilities is to secure adequate resources for the organization to fulfill its mission.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- **ROLE #5: PROTECT ASSETS AND PROVIDE PROPER FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT.**

The board must assist in developing the annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- **ROLE #6: BUILD A COMPETENT BOARD.**

All boards have a responsibility to articulate prerequisites for candidates, orient new members, and periodically and comprehensively evaluate their own performance.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



- **ROLE #7: ENSURE LEGAL AND ETHICAL INTEGRITY.**

The board is ultimately responsible for adherence to legal standards and ethical norms.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- **ROLE #8: ENHANCE THE ORGANIZATION'S PUBLIC STANDING.**

The board should clearly articulate the organization's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public and garner support from the community.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## BOARD EVALUATION, PART 3: LOOKING AHEAD

What do you need to be successful in the coming year?

When you step down from the board, what would you like to be able to say you accomplished?

Is there anything else you would like to add?